

The Mission Choir Formed and Trained by Frank.

by T. Mardy Rees

The sermon highlights the formation and training of the Mission Choir by Frank, and his remarkable gift for making friends, as well as his legacy and ministry.

Scripture: Psalm 37:5, Proverbs 3:5, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16

Topics: "Faith And Ministry", "Perseverance Through Trials"

Description

T. Mardy Rees preaches about the remarkable journey of the Mission Choir formed and trained by Frank, highlighting their struggles, triumphs, and the divine interventions they experienced. The brothers' unwavering faith, dedication to making friends, and the impact of their ministry on various communities are emphasized. The sermon also delves into the challenges faced, such as financial burdens, health issues, and the effects of the Great War on Frank Joshua's health, leading to his eventual passing in 1920.

Transcript

The Mission Choir formed and trained by Frank. -- Secretary and Treasurer appointed in 1887. --Income in 1888. -- Coal supplied in answer to prayer. -- The brothers' genius for making friends. -- Oscar Snelling and Captain Harvey. -- Visits to Cornwall. -- Excursions to Ilfracombe and Porthcawl. -- Panic owing to a telegram. --Call to Bristol in 1888. --Rev. Caleb Joshua's visits to the Mission. -- Neath Mission taken over by the Presbyterian, Forward Movement. -- Frank ordained at Cilfynydd Association. -- Well-organised church. --Prominent workers. -- Second Hall built, 1903-4. -- Mr. and Mrs. Frank Williams. -- Effect of Great War upon Frank Joshua's health. -- Death in 1920. -- Memorial Cross and magnificent Organ. -- Inscription.

THE Mission Choir was brought together and trained by Frank. Sacred cantatas were performed at the Hall and in the outlying districts and the proceeds devoted to the funds of the Mission. Sometimes a choir from Glais or some other place would visit the Hall and give a concert for the same purpose. The good work done was recognised and many sympathisers rendered assistance, for the Mission was maintained entirely by voluntary contributions.

After about five years of hard struggling with finances the Mission appointed 'a secretary and treasurer, and this relieved the brothers of that which had become a burden to them. The financial report presented on 10 October, 1889, shewed that the expenditure for fifteen months from 17 June 1888, to 6 October

1889, was £379 3s. 11½d and the income £379 3s. 10d. "May my faith in days to come look back on this and be encouraged," wrote Seth. Direct answers to prayers for funds to carry on the work were numerous every year. On one occasion ten painters came and coloured the Hall for nothing. Mrs. Joshua wanted coal, and her husband told her, "Pray for it, Mary." During family worship they heard the tipping of coal before the house. Mrs. Joshua went out and asked the coalman for the paper and where was it, from. Thereupon a big woman with a big heart came to the door, and when asked if she had sent the-coal answered: Hold your peace, woman, and thank the Lord. Anyway I had to get out of bed to send it." Both brothers possessed a remarkable gift for making and holding friends. The Rev. Oscar Snelling found them faithful friends to the end in his great mission work at Swansea. Seth witnessed many marvellous conversions at the Gospel Hall and the Albert Hall services. Captain Harvey, whose vessel from Penzance came up the Neath river to the quay at certain seasons, was a warm hearted friend. The evangelists held prayer meetings on board in his cabin. On Friday morning, 10 May, 1889, Captain Harvey was found dead by the cook in his cabin on board ship at Taibach. He was with the Joshuas on the previous Monday and spoke at the Hall. Strange to relate, he told Seth: " If you hear in a few days that I am gone, you can reckon I am in glory." "He seemed to know his near approach. I went down with Mr. and Mrs. Trott to Taibach to see him. He looked natural. I have lost a dear brother, a man after my own heart. He is safe with Jesus."

Four visits to Cornwall were made by the brothers from Neath between 1888-1890. They were most enthusiastically received. On one occasion Frank took his harp, and as the boat conveyed them up one of the rivers many people thronged the banks to hear the Gospel sung and preached.

Penzance, Newlyn and other places witnessed wonderful seasons of refreshing. During the mission at Newlyn in October, 1889, Seth was taken ill and Frank had to work alone, yet not alone, the Lord being his great helper." The following entry is typical of Seth: - "Satan took advantage of my weakness, and told me I was going to die, and leave a young wife with a young family. His device was to get me to doubt my God's love, but I had the victory. I told him that a live dog was better than a dead lion." Eighty-four souls were brought into the light and Captain Harvey's son was one of them. On the way home to Neath he met a company of young men, emigrants to Canada who joined him in prayer and praise.

The annual outings proved exceedingly popular and helped to create a fine 'esprit de corps.' Two steamers, Challenger and " Privateer," were chartered in June 1889, at Swansea, for a trip to Ilfracombe in July. The passage back to Neath was most rough. In connection with one of these annual trips the rumour spread in the town that the boat had gone down in the Channel. Someone who intended to return from Ilfracombe by the excursion boat wired at 2 o'clock: "Boat not arrived." The alarming news travelled quickly and all who had friends on board were smitten with terror. Neath was in a state of panic when two of the trippers walked into the town, "the observed of all observers." "How have you come home? Where are the others? How many are drowned?" were some of the questions hurled at, the bewildered men. "All are safe, of course, and enjoying themselves at the Mumbles," they said. " It was too rough to go over to Coombe (Ilfracombe), according to the captain, so we put into the Mumbles, and we have walked home" The annual excursions were never complete without an open-air service. At Porthcawl they held very successful meetings on such occasions.

In December, 1888, the brothers received an invitation to settle permanently in Bristol, but they decided to remain at Neath, much to the delight of their followers. However, in the spring of 1891, Seth severed his connection with the Neath Mission and began his marvellous work on the East Moors, Cardiff. When he left, the Church at Neath was flourishing and well organised. Afterward Frank was the sole minister in

charge. The cause continued to prosper, for he had with him a band of faithful workers.

The Rev. Caleb Joshua, * (Footnote: Born at Pontypool, 13 December, 1851; entered Baptist College, and was afterwards ordained at Desborough, Northants; in 1878. Removed to Landore, Swansea, in 1888. Became pastor of Pearl Street Church, Cardiff, in 1899, where he ministered with great acceptance till his death. His son, the Rev. Clifford Joshua, U.S.A., is also a Baptist minister. Caleb Joshua was a good preacher and a great Christian gentleman. Died 28 July 1923. Mr. Ifano Jones, Cardiff, kindly supplied us with these facts re. Caleb Joshua.) Baptist minister, their brother, was a frequent visitor to the Mission when pastor of the Salem Baptist Church, Landore. Seth frequently refers to Caleb with affection in his diaries.

In the year 1901 the Free Mission Church, numbering 350 members and its minister, the Rev. Frank Joshua, were admitted into fellowship with the Methodists as a branch of the Forward Movement. The South Wales Executive met Frank and representatives of the church on the spot--Dr. John Pugh, Rev. William James (Aberdare), Alderman John Jones Griffiths, Dr. J. Morgan Jones and Mr. D. J. Sims, After a prolonged conference it was resolved that the church be received, and the pastor as a duly qualified minister of the gospel, with a promise that he should not be removed without first consulting the wishes of the church at Neath. It was also agreed that the Executive would help to provide a large hall to meet the needs of the expanding church. Mr. Sims was authorised to purchase some old cottages near the first hall on the morrow of the conference and to bid up to £1, 500. Upon the site of these old ruins stands the larger hall with accommodation for about 2,200 people. It has held 2,500 people on many occasions. Every Sunday night the building is crowded. Frank was wont to say: "I am not a theologian, not having been to college, but I preach Christ crucified." Dr. Thomas Rees, Cefn, was deputed to question his views upon the great doctrines of religious faith - prior to his ordination - and his answers were so unexpected and wonderful that the reverend theologian turned to another well-known divine and said: " We have been quibbling all these years about these doctrines while our brother here has been acting upon them and getting magnificent results." Frank had no time to study apologetics. His apologetics were conversions.

At the Cilfynydd Conference of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Association the Rev. Frank Joshua was received as a fully-ordained minister on the motion of the Rev. J. Morgan Jones, seconded by Mr. John Lloyd. In his letter of application for admission Joshua stated that he did not take this step because he was not blessed in his work, for his mission was nevermore prosperous than at that time. He had been lately convinced that, however successful and undenominational a mission might be, there was no security for its future, as it depended largely on the lives of one or two persons, whereas, under the wing of a strong denomination like the Calvinistic Methodists it would be saved from extinction and become permanent.

The seven memorial stones of the new Forward Movement Hall were laid 5 November 1903 by the following: --David Davies, Esq., J.P., Maesteg; Mrs. R. A. Williams, Neath; Rev. John Pugh, D.D., Cardiff; Mrs. T. Grice Lloyd, Neath Abbey; Mrs. J. Fear Davies, Neath; Mrs. W. M. Jones, Neath; Rev. Frank Joshua.

The church has throughout been exceedingly fortunate in its officers and workers. The late Mr. T. Grice Lloyd was secretary for 25 years; he was also superintendent of the Sunday School, and a mural tablet commemorates the unique services rendered by him. * (Footnote: Sacred to the memory of Thomas Grice Lloyd, who fell asleep in Jesus on April 30, 1912. A pioneer of this Church, who also was Secretary for twenty-five years, and Superintendent of the Sunday School. He was much beloved for his Christ like life and character. A wise counsellor and friend. This tablet is erected by the members and officers of this

Church. "Fought the fight, the victory won." "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them."

Mr. Grice Lloyd was a fine product of the mission, being one of the first batch of converts. He went to hear the Joshuas out of curiosity, but remained an ardent admirer and pillar of the cause. Small wonder that his constitution gave way under the strain of his commercial and church work. Being chief official of the Main Colliery Company he would spend a week in Ireland, or France, or London, but was invariably back at his post on Sunday. Mrs. Grice Lloyd--the eldest daughter of Alderman Hopkin Morgan, C.B.E.-- is still associated with the church.

The Rev. H. G. Howell, Newport, and the Rev. C. L. Perry were also early converts of the Neath Mission. Their great work in connection with the Forward Movement is well known throughout South Wales. The Misses Gibbins have rendered great services to the mission as leaders and workers. Mr. Edwin C. Curtis, Carey Hall, late town clerk, had a magnificent Bible class at the mission for several years until ill health compelled him to resign his position as leader. Mr. Fear Davies had charge of the Men's Bible class also, and Mr. R. A. Williams, Borough Treasurer. Mrs. W. M. Jones, Brooklands, as treasurer of the poor fund, has distributed large sums of money among the needy and unemployed. Mrs. Fear Davies has always been a benevolent supporter of the evangelists and the mission.

The Sunday Schools in both halls--children in one and adults in the other--number over 650 scholars. Under the superintendency of Mr. H. H. Williams these institutions are most flourishing. The secretary is Mr., George Cross. At the time of the last revival the membership of the church reached 850; at present it is about 500. The present general secretary of the church, Mr. M. Luther Morgan, has held this important office for twelve years; and the treasurer, Mr. C. F. Poole, has acted for a like period. The financial secretary is Mr. J. Huckstable, and the statistical secretary Mr. Sutcliffe.

Although the Rev. Frank Joshua lived a bachelor, his niece and her husband, Mrs. and Mr. Frank Williams, looked well after his comfort. Mrs. Williams tenderly nursed her uncle during his last illness. Their hospitable home was always open to welcome all his friends. Great is their reward and honour.

Frank suffered greatly during the great world war, for a large proportion of the church and choir joined the army. The times were hard and trying, but he endured as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The strain told upon him and his health gave way in 1919. He gradually became worse and died 13 September 1920, and was buried at Llantwit Old Churchyard, on 19 September, in the presence of one of the largest crowds ever witnessed at a funeral in Neath. Poor people and little children wept in the streets as the body was conveyed to its resting place. He had been to them a true friend and minister. The mission choir placed a marble curb over his grave with a marble cross lying prone. "He lived and died near the Cross " seems a most fitting inscription. His father and mother, and John, his brother, lie buried in the same grave. The father, George Joshua, was born at Pontypool 16 April, 1820. Died at Neath 20 November, 1899. The mother, Mary Walden Joshua, was born in the same town 16 February 1822. Died at Neath, 30 April 1894. A magnificent organ has been installed in memory of Frank. He had always desired an organ. Seth had the pleasure of seeing it opened and the cost defrayed. The inscription is particularly suitable: "To the glory of God this organ was erected by the love-gifts of the people as a memorial to the Rev. Frank Joshua. He faithfully fulfilled his ministry from the commencement of this Church in 1882 until his death in 1920. His musical gifts and splendid voice were not the least among other qualifications."

A fuller description should be given of his personality; therefore our next chapter shall be devoted to that subject.

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