

## Reason to Shout

Margaret Sangster Phippen wrote that in the mid-1950s her father, British minister W. E. Sangster, began to notice some uneasiness in his throat and a dragging in his leg. When he went to the doctor, he found that he had an incurable disease that caused progressive muscular atrophy. His muscles would gradually waste away, his voice would fail, his throat soon would become unable to swallow.

Sangster was one of Britain's foremost preachers. At the outbreak of World War II, he was senior minister at Westminster Central Hall, the "cathedral" of Methodism. The cavernous basement of the church became an air-raid shelter when the German assault began. By the war's end, 450,000 people had found refuge in the church basement. In 1949, Sangster was elected president of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain and became the denomination's leader.

Upon the diagnosis of his disease, Sangster threw himself even more intensely into his work in British home missions, figuring he could still write and he would have even more time for prayer. "Let me stay in the struggle, Lord," he pleaded. "I don't mind if I can no longer be a general, but give me just a regiment to lead."

He wrote articles and books, and helped organize prayer cells throughout England. "I'm only in the kindergarten of suffering," he told people who pitied him.

Gradually, Sangster's legs became useless. His voice went completely. But he could still hold a pen, shakily. On Easter morning, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote a letter to his daughter. In it, he said, "It is terrible to wake up on Easter morning and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' -- but it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout."

Sangster is correct. Despite all that swirls around us on April 9, 2004 -- the work and the threat of terrorists, the war in Iraq, struggles in the nation's economy, and the illnesses that may beset friends and family -- the conquest of Christ over death and the grave gives us all reason to shout. In celebrating His resurrection, we are given the hope that we, too, will be resurrected into eternal life if we accept Him as Lord.

--Beecher Hunter