

Victory over Blindness



George Matheson (1842 – 1906) was born in Glasgow, Scotland. Before he reached the age of 2, it was discovered that his eyesight was defective.

He, his parents – George Matheson, a merchant, and Jane Matheson – and medical specialists fought a heroic fight, but before young George could finish his education at Glasgow University, he was completely blind.

Matheson refused to give in to this disability and continued his studies, graduating first in his class in classics, logic and philosophy. His resolve was to enter the ministry, and he gave himself to theological and historical study. In 1879, the University of Edinburgh conferred upon him the honorary degree of doctor of divinity.

In a few years' time after completing his college studies, Matheson became the minister of one of the largest churches in Edinburgh, where he carried on a memorable ministry. In addition to his laborious preparation for his services, he did a great deal of parish visitation, wrote numerous articles and 12 books, and continued his own studies throughout his life.

It must have been heartbreaking for Matheson's parents to have a strange infection in their baby's eye lead to his blindness. Yet, in that tragic situation, Matheson found God's resources available for him. God gave him victory over his handicap.

Through it all, his faith grew stronger. One of his hymns, *O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go*, has passed into the popular hymnology of the Christian church. It was written on the evening of Matheson's sister's marriage. Years before, he had been engaged, until his fiancée learned that he was going blind and there was nothing the doctors could do. She told him she could not go through life with a blind man.

Matheson's sister had been the one to care for him through the years, but now she was gone. He was 40, and his sister's marriage brought a fresh reminder of his own heartbreak. It was in the midst of this circumstance and intense sadness that the Lord gave Matheson the hymn. Matheson said of it:

"I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high." Here are the lyrics:

(more)

*O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

*O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.*

Perhaps there is some adversity or challenge you are facing. Most of us can admit there is a mountain of one kind or another we are struggling to climb.

May the Love, the Light and the Joy identified by Matheson guide you through the sunshine and the rain, giving you the strength, the peace and the contentment occasioned by the Cross of Jesus Christ.

– Beecher Hunter