

Horatius Bonar

by Michael Haykin

Horatius Bonar was a Scottish hymn writer and preacher who emphasized the gospel and the importance of conversion, and whose ministry had a lasting impact on the Church and in hymnody.

Duration: 47:40

Scripture: Acts 13:38-39, Romans 3:21-28, Romans 3:31, Romans 5:1, Romans 5:6-8

Topics: "Evangelism", "Gospel Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of reaching people with the word of God. He suggests creating booklets that can be handed out to others, with titles that emphasize conversion and belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The speaker also highlights the significance of having a godly environment and a church where the gospel is preached. He mentions the testimony of Horatius Bonner, who emphasized the gospel and the reconciliation of sinners through the death of Jesus. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the impact of preaching the gospel for many years, which can create a heavenly atmosphere on earth.

Transcript

Well, I'd like to read as an introduction to looking at the life of Horatius Bonner. We looked at Andrew Bonner, his brother, for two weeks, and I'm not sure whether I'm going to do two weeks on Horatius Bonner or not. Depends on how we go today, but we want to read Romans 3, and I'm going to read verses 21 down to the end of that chapter, and then Romans 5, 6 to 8. Romans 3, reading from verse 21 to the end of the chapter.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference for all have sinned.

And fall short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood through faith to demonstrate his righteousness. Because in his forbearance God has passed over the sins that were previously committed to demonstrate at the present time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Or is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not. On the contrary, we establish the law.

And then Romans 5, 6 through 8. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Well, I read these two texts because really in many respects those are the grand themes of Horatius Bonner's ministry. We'll see this in a number of ways. We'll see it in a tract that he wrote and we'll see it in his hymns.

I want to look at some of his hymns in the grace hymns that we have. There's no doubt that if you were to think about Scottish hymn writers in the 19th century, Horatius Bonner is the leading Scottish hymn writer of that era. Unfortunately, in the words edition that we have of the grace hymns, maybe the word is regrettably, there is no listing of authors.

What you have is a listing of first lines. But you have no listing of authors and you can't see what you could see if you had the music edition, which is that Horatius Bonner is easily the third, maybe outside the fourth, but I think the third most represented hymn writer in our hymnal. And it's only a small smattering of his hymns.

He wrote around 600 hymns. A good number of them are still in circulation today. In his own day, he was very well known as a writer of tracts and small booklets.

In fact, one recent writer has said, his writings should be treasured as much as those of J.C. Ryle and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. We all know Spurgeon's name. Spurgeon's sermons have had a remarkable literary life.

Probably far more people reading Spurgeon today than ever heard him in his life or even read his sermons in his own day. And J.C. Ryle, it's thankful to see, the Anglican Bishop, who was a very strong evangelical, has been making a comeback too. There's a company in the United States that is dedicated to basically making J.C. Ryle's books and pamphlets available.

And bracketed with those two writers should be Horatius Bonner in terms of his influence. We'll see something of that in his own day. And I want to really think about some of his hymns.

I'm not going to go into all the details of his early life. We looked at some of that really with Andrew Bonner. Horatius Bonner is two years older than Andrew.

And he is one of three ministers who come out of that family. An older brother, John James Bonner, also became a minister of the gospel. He was born in December of 1808.

He would die in 1889. And like his brother Andrew, a long life that spans most of the 19th century. Like his brother Andrew, would go to Edinburgh University and would have the same influences on him there that

his brother Andrew had.

It's interesting that at a very early age he began to write verse. And one of his hymns, not a hymn, but a poem looking back on his early upbringing. He thanks God for Christian parents and a Christian environment in his home.

And he could say this. This is a poem, not a hymn. I thank Thee, speaking to God, for a holy ancestry.

I bless Thee for godly parentage, for seeds of truth and light and purity sown in this heart from childhood to earliest age. For word and church and watchful ministry, the beacon and the tutor and the guide. For the parental hand and lip and eye that kept me from snares on every side.

And what a great blessing it is to have a Christian home. And sometimes in evangelical circles, because of our focus on the importance of conversion, some people get the idea that because they haven't had a colourful, quote-unquote, past and they don't have some sort of conversion story to tell, they kind of look with wishfulness at those who've been raised in the world in a completely pagan environment. And oh, that I had some sort of radical change like that.

Well, every change conversion is radical, number one. But number two, oh, to have not gone through a lot of that muck and mess and to have had a godly environment. And he also mentions here a church.

And one of the things that Bonner stressed in his life was the gospel, which we're going to talk about really, the gospel that in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has reconciled sinners to himself. That's what makes a church. And what a privilege to have a church where the gospel is preached.

And this past week I had the opportunity to hear, among others, John MacArthur. And MacArthur was reminiscing on 40 years of gospel ministry. And he said, what does preaching the gospel for 40 years in the same congregation produce? He said, it produces something almost like heaven on earth.

It produces a church of believers, the real thing. And Bonner knew that growing up in his life. Like Andrew Bonner, he wasn't as brilliant as Andrew.

Andrew was quite a brilliant student. Horatius was able to get through, but he didn't appear to be as brilliant as his brother. Like Andrew, he would go to Edinburgh High School and then from there to Edinburgh University.

When he was dying, he specified that he wanted no biography written about his life. And he wanted all of his books and papers burned. And unfortunately, you can understand why I think a man would say that.

There is a desire not to exalt man. There is a desire, which I think is embedded in the British character to some degree, of reserve. But definitely the desire that man not be exalted.

But on the other hand, for those coming later, a hundred years later, wanting to know details about how the Lord worked in his life, it's extremely frustrating. What is sad in some respects is that subsequent generations appeared to have heeded Horatius Bonner's words and desires. And all that we have of his early life, we have two little books of kind of memoirs of people who knew him.

And we have no idea how the Lord led him to Christ. All we know is that at the age of 21, Andrew Bonner was sitting in the congregation and to his surprise, he saw his brother go forward to the Lord's table. And he realized that his brother had been converted and was going forward.

And he notes that in his diary. We know details about Andrew Bonner's conversion because we have his diary. Andrew Bonner didn't leave the same instructions to his daughter, Marjorie, who preserved his writings.

But Horatius Bonner to his children, destroy it all. And one can understand what's motivating that, but on the other hand, it's frustrating. He went to Edinburgh University.

He sat under Thomas Chalmers. It was him who said that Chalmers was the most godly man he had ever known. Chalmers impressed on him a number of things.

One, he re-impressed on him that the Calvinism in which he had been raised was indeed Biblical Christianity. And so his spirituality was a Reformed spirituality. Secondly, he impressed on him the urgency to preach the Gospel.

And you sometimes encounter, well today actually in the Southern Baptist denomination, there is a huge storm brewing. Some of you who have followed that denomination's history will know how the Lord has turned it around remarkably and how there was a great battle that lasted roughly from 1979 to the mid-90s for the control of the denomination in terms of conservative evangelicalism. And the conservatives won that struggle and the liberals pretty well all left.

But now some of those conservatives who dislike Calvinism intensely are beginning to preach against Calvinism. And I listened to a sermon online by a man named Ergin Kainer, who is the Dean of Faculty at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. And you can go online to the Liberty and listen to it.

I don't recommend necessarily. The sermon's title is, Why I Was Prodested Not to be a Calvinist. And man, it is as only a Southern Baptist could do.

One of those fiery, pull-out-all-the-stops, hammering of Calvinism. And it's brutal. He gets his facts wrong.

He gets all kinds of stuff wrong. But one of the things he emphasizes is, don't allow Calvinists in your church. You get them in your church, they'll destroy evangelism.

These people don't believe in evangelism. Well, the man's apparently a historian. I don't know what church history he's reading, but he should read The Life of a Man Like a Racist Bonner, who right from the early days after his conversion had two twin emphases, that we do nothing to earn our salvation.

Salvation is a gift of a sovereign God. We'll look at that in more detail. But on the other hand, we have to urgently proclaim the gospel and urge men and women passionately to put their faith in the Lord Jesus.

And these things were reinforced for him by his teacher in Edinburgh University, Thomas Chalmers. The other influence on Bonner in those days was the Circle of Friends that were the same influence on Andrew Bonner, men like Robert Murray McShane. And during their time at Edinburgh University, they would meet together Saturday mornings at 6.30 in the morning for prayer and Bible study.

And somebody should, at the time and energy, really work out all of the intricacies of these men's lives. There was about 10 or 15 men he used to meet. And the way God used, most of them outlived McShane by many years.

We looked at McShane died very young. But the influence of these friends upon one another. The other influence on Bonner was Edward Irving.

And Irving was that man who Robert McShane would later describe when he heard of his death, a holy man in spite of all his errors. And Irving was the man who believed that God was restoring all the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of Apostle in his day, set up a church called the Catholic Apostolic Church, died a very broken, shattered man. But the one area of influence upon Bonner was pre-millennial eschatology.

And Christians have disagreed historically over how exactly are things going to work out in the last days. Is there a literal millennium? Is there a millennium of a thousand years? And if there is a millennium of a thousand years when Christ will come and visibly reign from Jerusalem, a restored Jerusalem, what actually precedes that? And in the 19th century Bonner is not a dispensationalist. But in the 19th century some would argue, J. N. Darby for example, one of the key leaders of the Brethren, that seven years before the coming of the Lord Jesus to establish the millennium, He would come, as it were, invisibly and rapture the church.

And the church would be therefore taken out of this world and God would pour out His wrath, the tribulation, upon an unconverted world. Some would be converted in that period of time, particularly the Jews. That would be the period when the Antichrist would arise, there would be seven years of terror, and then the Lord would come with His saints and establish the millennium.

And that's what lies behind the Left Behind series, if you followed that, or older books by people like Tim LaHaye and Al Lindsay. It's been very influential in the 20th century. I'm thankful to God that there has been a significant response to that.

I don't think that's a biblical pattern of the end times. But a lot of the turmoil in terms of evangelicals about what exactly is going to turn out begins in the 19th century. And Bonner was a premillennialist.

He believed the Lord would come and there would be an earthly millennium. And there is some indication, and I've not looked at this in great detail, but I think there's some indication that Charles Haddon Spurgeon, towards the end of his life, may have embraced premillennial ideas. Not a dispensationalist, but premillennial ideas.

And I think I mentioned how it was very helpful for me personally to find out that Bonners were premillennial, because I'd always been very suspicious of that whole system. And I thought, well, if these men could see it as biblical, I don't agree with them, but it helped me look with more respect, I think, and favour on those who did. This premillennial eschatology is in his hymns.

Here's one. Just as, for instance, postmillennial eschatology is in Isaac Watts' hymn. That hymn, Jesus shall reign where'er the sun.

Now, we can sing that with great fervour and great truth, even though we're not, well, I'm not postmillennial, which obviously tells you what I am. If I'm not premillennial and postmillennial, I'm a realized millennial, or amillennial. There is a millennium, but it's the church age.

But be that as it may, I can sing Isaac Watts' hymns, even though Isaac Watts, when he wrote that hymn, was thinking that the church would be so successful in history, the millennium would be established, then Jesus would come. Now, you might want to go home and compare that hymn to what I'm going to read now from Horatius Bonner. I know not in what watch he comes.

I know not in what watch he comes, or what hour he may appear, whether of midnight or of morn, or in what season of the year. I only know that he is near. The centuries have come and gone.

Dark centuries of absence drear. I dare not chide the long delay, nor ask when I his voice shall hear. I only know that he is near.

I do not think it can be long, this is 1880 when he wrote this, till in his glory he appear, yet I dare not name the day, nor fix the solemn advent year. I only know that he is near. And the premillennialism really comes out, the dark centuries of absence drear.

And premillennialism, if you were to kind of have a range, postmillennialists are optimists, and I tend to be optimistic by nature, and I'd love to be a postmillennialist, but I just don't feel Scripture goes there. And premillennialism tends to be pessimistic. And premillennialism is very popular when the Church is going through times of struggle.

And you can understand, in the latter part of his life, some of the influences that started to come into the world, the growth of liberalism, the impact of Darwinism, people like Freud, and so on. And these impacts were being made on the Church in the late 19th century. And you can understand why things are just not going the way we thought they were going to go.

And you can understand some of that anyway. His first ministry was a place called Leith. Leith is the port of Edinburgh.

And he was there from 1833 to 1837. He had three churches in his life. And one of the things that these men remind us is how good is a long ministry in the same place.

And we should thank God for that in our Church's history. And pray that that would ever be the case. It's a blessing to a Church.

The current situation... I remember looking at a man's... A man gave me a resume. I forget what reason for. And he'd been in ministry about 30 years.

He'd been in about seven churches. And you compute that. That's about four or five years at the max in the Church.

It only takes you that long to get to know the people. And then you're moving on. Anyway, in his long ministry, he was from 1833 to 1889, he was in three churches.

The first one as an assistant. Four years at a place called Leith, which is the port of Edinburgh. And then he went to a church in 1837 in the Scottish Borders.

He was there for 29 years, a place called Kelso. The Scottish Borders is the area that is roughly between Glasgow and Edinburgh and then down to the English border. And the first sermon he preached set the tone for his ministry.

On John 3.7, you must be born again. And a later minister, a man named Robertson. Robertson Nicol, who was a minister who became a fairly well-known writer, said that when he came about 40 years later, he said you'd go into little villages and hamlets around Kelso and you'd mention the name Horatius Bonner and they'd all know his name.

Because Bonner took the point of during times of the week, he'd go out into these places in the midday and he'd stand on street corners or stand in the town centre and begin to preach the gospel or start little Bible studies. And one of the elders of the church lived near the manse. And when he'd go to bed at night,

I guess he used to check up on his minister, what he was doing in terms of were the lights on in the house.

And when he went to bed at night, around 10 or 11, he'd notice that Bonner's lights were still on in his study. When he got up in the morning, he was a farmer. Very early, he'd notice Bonner's lights were still on.

And Bonner allowed himself very little sleep. He was one of those men who was able to get by with not a lot of sleep. Always working for Christ, the elder would say, of his ministering.

At Kelso, Bonner became convinced of the day in which he was living was a day of rapid travel. People were going by train 60, 70 miles an hour. And people no longer were reading the way they used to read.

You know, the big books of the Puritans. How are you going to reach people? Well, he thought, what I need to do is write little booklets of four to eight pages. And in Kelso, he began what became known as the Kelso booklets.

And little booklets that you could hand out to somebody. The titles will tell you the sort of emphasis. Believe and Live.

The Well of Living Water. Luther's Conversion. The emphasis on conversion.

Let me read you a little bit from one booklet called Believe and Live. This was printed in 1839. Seventy years later, by 1909, by 1909, it had sold over a million copies.

This is about a ten page booklet. And what I want you to read, actually, I think you can hear the preacher. And I think what he probably did was take a sermon and shape it into this booklet.

How shall God, we're talking about actually Romans, the passage there. How shall God show His love to sinners, yet be just? The work of Christ declares this. It discloses to us the depth of God's love to man even when man became a sinner.

It shows us that having secured all the ends of holiness and justice by the death of His Son in the place of the sinner, He, that is God, is now at full liberty to let that love flow out to sinners. The blood of Christ proclaims to us how much God is in earnest in His hatred of sin on the one hand and His love for the sinner on the other. Do not say, I cannot believe.

Christ says, you will not. It's your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. Do not say, I'm seeking Christ, but cannot find Him.

That's not true. It's Christ who's seeking you and not you who are seeking Christ. Stop fleeing from Him.

Allow Him to save you. Do not mock Him by trying to save yourself or by trying to help Him save you or by trying to persuade Him to help you to save you. Do not say, I've done all I can and I'm waiting for the Spirit.

He's thinking of hyper-Calvinists. It's not true. He's waiting for you.

He would come in and dwell in you if only you would give over resisting Him. Do not excuse yourself and throw the blame on God. John 6.44, No one can come to Me except the Father drawn.

For the meaning of that is plain. It's showing the manner in which our unwillingness is overcome. We must be drawn.

For we struggle and resist. Here are glad tidings for you. There is but one step between you and life.

This very moment you may enter into peace. This very moment you may come and say, Father, all things are ready and you are welcome. Your Father seeks you.

He has no pleasure in your death. He is in real earnest when He asks you to turn and live. His interest in your welfare is sincere and deep.

Oh then, return and be at rest. Believe what He has told you about the finished work of His Son. And arise and go to Him.

Ho, you that are far off wandering in misery through the vast howling wilderness of this world, return. The storm is rising. The last fatal storm.

And where will you find shelter? Here is the refuge from the storm and the cover from the tempest in the finished and accepted work of Emmanuel. It's a great text. And in that you hear the evangelist laying out before his reader the two ways.

There are only two ways. Both of them, as Al Mohler recently has said, both of them are the ways of fools. The way of the fool who commits himself to the world is truthful wisdom.

The other one is a way that is regarded by the world as foolishness. But it's the way of life. There are only two alternatives that stretch before us.

Either to bow to the Lord Jesus Christ or to burn in hell. And we need to, as we move among those who are not in Christ, take seriously. As Bonner did in his day, the weight of these things.

The solemnity of life. And that's a great example of a Calvinist there. A man who believes sincerely in the sovereign work of salvation but also one who is biblical in his evangelism.

And what I love about Bonner is he's been an enormous help to me because he shows me how a Calvinist does evangelism. And these little tracks prepared the way for other books. And from writing these small things, he began to write other books.

And his first book was on the Night of Weeping. And was a book that was greatly used in the lives of those who were sorrowing for the deaths of friends and family. Probably his best known book is a book called God's Way of Peace.

Which in his lifetime sold around 300,000 copies. That's enormous. Incidentally, if the New York Times listing of books and a lot of the secular times listing of the most sold books included Christian books, many of those Christian books would be at the top of the list.

And 300,000 books in the 19th century. That's an extraordinary bestseller. His final year of ministry was back in Edinburgh where he had grown up.

And in 1866, after 29 years in the Scottish borders, he was asked to come and start a new church. And thus in his 50s, 57, he goes back to Edinburgh to a church plant. Like his brother Andrew, both of them are convinced that the great work of gospel ministry has to be going on in the midst of these large mushrooming urban centres.

And Edinburgh was growing by leaps and bounds. Not as big as Glasgow, but it was growing by leaps and bounds. And so he accepted the call and went to what now is called what was then called Chalmers Memorial Church.

After Thomas Chalmers. It's now called St. Catherine's in the Grains Church. And he was there until his death in 1889.

By 1888, he began with about five or six people. By 1888, there were 800 communicant members. That is members who took the Lord's table.

There would be many others who would come to hear him preach, but that's 800 members from a very small nuclear. He preached up until 1887. Up until he was about 80, he was still preaching.

He was one of the last Scottish Presbyterian preachers to regularly preach out in the open air. He'd regularly go down into the heart of Edinburgh and stand on a street corner and begin to preach. And I'm not sure that methodology is as acceptable as it is today or as vital in one sense in terms of the method of evangelism today, but it was in that day.

In 19th century Scotland, you still had a large Christian influence in the culture. And when somebody was preaching, you'd stop and listen. And today, it's a bit of a different story.

Two things were focused in his preaching and in his writing. The centrality of the cross of Christ and the complete sufficiency of his death for the sinner. And in 1888, they wanted to celebrate 50 years of ministry.

He didn't want to do it, but he agreed to have a jubilee in his church. And he was asked to give a talk before they made some presentations at a dinner. And he wrote out, and we still have it apparently.

Well, I've seen it as a printed copy, but we still have a copy of the speech he began to write out. He wrote out about five or seven pages and then it stopped abruptly, as if he was writing it out and maybe put it on another copy or maybe thought, I'll just add a few notes or whatever. So, we know from his own hand, we know something of his early ministry.

And one of the things he did say about his ministry at Edinburgh is that like any faithful ministry, it has its ups and downs. And blessings and problems and triumphs and setbacks. Somebody has once said of the way I teach church history is I've got a romantic view of the past.

In other words, all the guy ever sees is all the blessings. You know, you never hear anything about the problems. And I am aware that there are problems.

And there is no golden age. Sometimes when I was much younger, I would say, oh, wouldn't it be great to live back then? Not now. But there's no golden age.

So, you look back and I've talked about a church going from a handful to 800. You know, it's easy to overlook the struggles that were in that. And here Bonner tells us about some of the struggles.

God has been gracious. He has not disowned the work and the message. Righteousness without works to the sinner.

Simply on His acceptance of the divine message concerning Jesus and His sufficiency. This has been the burden of our good news. Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

And by Him, all that believe are justified from all things. Acts 13, 38-39 It is one message, one gospel, one cross, one sacrifice from which nothing can be taken and to which nothing can be added. This is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending of our ministry.

Sad and useless must be the ministry of anyone to whom this gospel in its simplicity is not all in all. And you know, that's as true now as it was then. When you look out on the evangelicals of North America and you see some of the things that are being passed off as the gospel and I'm not talking about liberal churches.

Many liberal churches have gone down into falsehood and God has taken away the lamp of their wisdom. I'm talking about evangelical churches that basically have been founded on the gospel. The gospel being that the good news that in the Lord Jesus Christ, in His death alone, sinners find favor with God.

But churches are starting to say all kinds of stuff. I've been reading a book about a group of churches that are known as the emergent churches or emerging churches. And the things they're saying the gospel is.

And they're just bringing long-term destruction into those churches. Well, let me look at some of his hymns. I've got about five or so minutes.

He began writing verse very early on. His son said, his only son said that he first probably began writing when he was about 19, verse. But the first hymns began when he was at Leith from 1833 to 1837.

One of the things he was noting that there was about 250 kids in the Sunday school eventually. When he actually, when he began at Leith, he rented a room for the Sunday school. He used to go up and down the windy medieval streets of that town.

Very hilly. And gather the kids and bring them to Sunday school. One thing he noticed was that these kids, a number of them hadn't been used to church life.

They were very fidgety. And he began to write little hymns for them to sing. To teach them truth and to get them to pay attention.

Tunes that the kids knew but set to Christian words. And that eventually led on to other hymns. Eventually led on to writing hymns for adults.

The first well known hymn he would write is this one. It's number 702 in the great hymns. It breathes very much the kind of man that Bonner was.

Go labour on. Spend and be spent. The joy to do the Father's will.

It is the way the Master went. Should not the servant credit still. Go labour on.

Tis not for naught. Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain. Men heed thee.

Love thee. Praise thee not. The Master praises.

What are men? Stanza four. Go labour on. While it is day, the world's dark night is hastening on.

Speed, speed thy work. Cast loss away. It is not thus that souls are won.

Toil on. Faint not. Keep watch and pray.

Be wise. The erring soul to win. Go forth into the world's highway.

Compel the wonderer to come in. Toil on. And in thy toil rejoice.

For toil comes rest. For exile home. Soon shalt thou hear the bridegroom's voice.

The midnight cry. Behold, I come. And again, you can see some of the biblical passages.

You're thinking of the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins. The midnight cry. Behold, I come.

Or that passage from Proverbs 11.30. He the winner of souls is wise. You've got the evangelistic passion coming through there very, very clearly. It's the passion that characterizes, as we've seen, all of his life.

He went on to publish about 600 hymns. Very few of them do we know the circumstances in which he wrote them. What we do know, his son tells us, often when he was going on preaching engagements and he was on a train, on the back of envelopes, he'd start to write down the verses.

He had always loved, the one area of literature he had always read avidly was secular poetry. People like Walter Scott and plays that had a poetic ring to them like Shakespeare. And he'd read that avidly all of his life and the words and images were in his mind and when coupled with biblical imagery, it produced some fabulous hymns.

Like this one, which was originally called The Voice from Galilee. It's hymn number 387. We don't know it that way.

Hymn 387. I heard the voice of Jesus say. This one we do know when it appeared.

It appeared in 1846. We don't know the exact circumstances though in which he wrote it. Each of the stanzas is based on a biblical text.

The first one is Matthew 11.28. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. That passage says, come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. I found in Him a resting place and He has made me glad. And the way in which he's divided the hymn up.

Jesus speaking and then the response by the sinner is the way the other two stanzas follow as well. The next one is based on John 4.10-14. Jesus' words to the woman the Samaritan woman at the well. That He is the well of living water.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, behold I freely give the living water thirsty one. Stoop down and drink and live. I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream.

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived and now I live in Him. I heard the voice of Jesus say, this is based on John 8.12, I am the light of the world. I heard the voice of Jesus say, I am this dark world's light.

Look on to me as I mourn shall rise and all thy day be bright. I looked at Jesus and I found in Him my star and my sun and in that light of life I'll walk so traveling days are done. It's a great hymn.

They pack a lot of powerful truth in them. The dreariness, the dreariness of this world without the Lord Jesus Christ. The utter darkness that men and women are in.

The despair. As soon as you prick the surface of all the glitter and the dazzle of this world, that's what all you find. But the joy of being in Jesus.

The quenching, the thirst of the soul and the light that guides us in this time of pilgrimage. Let me finish with this hymn. It's really a great meditation on the great truth of His life.

The grand theme of His life. Which is the substitution of Christ for the sinner. Not what these hands have done.

And I thought I had noted the number. Let me very quickly find it from the back. Thank you.

Oh, it's right there. It's right after 387. This is I think quintessential Bonner.

Three things to note as we go through the hymn. Number one, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Outside of Christ, our sinfulness is a lot more horrific than we know.

Otherwise, the Lord Jesus would not have had to come and die for us. The impossibility of us atoning for our sin, our own sin. It cannot be done.

And number three, therefore, the absolute necessity that God Himself, in the person of Jesus, die for sinners. Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul. Not what my toiling flesh have borne can make my spirit whole.

Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God. Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load. Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin.

Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within. Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee, can rid me of this dark unrest and set my spirit free. Thy grace alone, O God, to me can pardon speak.

Thy power alone, O Son of God, can this sore bondage break. I bless the Christ of God. I rest on love divine.

And with unfaltering lip and heart, I call this Saviour mine. Historical study, looking at the life of Bonner, the impact of his life in his own day, the way God used him, something of his literary fruit. The question I leave of you is, can you say the final stanza, I bless this Christ of God.

Are you resting only on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you trusting to what your hands or feelings or thoughts can do and they will fail you? The only place of safety for that coming storm, and that storm is coming. The only place of safety is in Jesus. Well, any questions before we conclude? Sorry? Now remember, some of these songs, some of the hymns are evangelistic.

So, he's leading the sinner in the pew who's singing it to realize the only place of salvation. So, he's not singing it from the point of view, the early part of it, as it were. He's not singing it from the point of view of

the believer resting in Christ, which is more the first one.

I heard the voice of Jesus say. That one, each stanza, the second part of each of the stanzas is the believer's assurance of being in Jesus. This is an evangelistic hymn.

So, he's doing in hymns, I think, sometimes what he did in preaching. He's evangelizing. I'm sorry, the third brother? Very little.

Well, I'm sure there's a lot. I don't know. I know very little.

John, he spent 60 years at Greenock in his ministry. John James Bonner. A year and a half before he died.

Yeah, they did. Which has a good side and a bad side. John Rippon did.

John Rippon was a minister of what became the Mitzvah on Tabernacle for 63 years. And the church at the height of his ministry was around 1500. But Spurgeon later said he outlived his usefulness.

I think one of the great... The goal of all of our lives is humility. Knowing our place and bending the knee to Jesus. And when a man has spent his life in pastoral ministry, in gospel ministry, and for reason of age, he can no longer do what he used to do.

He needs to know that. And he needs to know the Lord is calling him in a different sphere of prayer for the arising generation, maybe. But a lot of men don't know that.

And you see that the work they've done, they destroy it in their last year. By hanging on and hurting the work. It's not true from what we know of Bonner.

He seems to have had a sort of iron constitution like John Wesley. He would go right to the end. But most men aren't that way.

Just a note, next week we have Dr. Charles Woodrow in Sunday School. And then the following week, I'm away as well. So, it will be two weeks from now that we'll pick up again.

Let me close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank You for the witness of this brother that speaks across the decades to us. Reminds us of that great biblical truth that in Jesus and Jesus alone are we saved.

And do we find rest and peace with You. Our Father, we pray that that might be true of each person here. That we are resting on Christ, the Lamb of God.

Now, blessed in the hour to come, exalt Christ for His name's sake. Amen.

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