

- **\*READ Colossians 3:16\*** My friend Matt Bassford, who works with the Jackson Heights church in Columbia, Tennessee, is someone who (in my estimation) knows what he is talking about when it comes to discussing hymns. If you get a Hymns For Worship Supplement or a Psalmns, Hymns, and Spirituals Songs book then you will find His name on the pages for the song "Exalted." He was the man who authored that fantastic hymn. I asked Matt what he thought a hymn needed to possess in order for it to be considered a quality hymn, and his answers were threefold.
  1. Have Quality Content & Be Spiritually Rich
  2. Have Beautiful & Singable Music
  3. Have Congregational Appeal
- I am no music expert by any means, but I do believe that there is great merit to the answers that Matt gave to my question because I believe (and I'm confident in saying that Matt believes) that these answers can be tied back into the purpose of our singing that was detailed for us in the verse that we read together just a few minutes ago. In **Colossians 3:16**, we clearly see that there are multiple things taking place when we sing hymns to our God. Of course, there is the worship and praise that is being offered up to God as our God, the only One worthy of such worship. But, there is also an element where we are participating in teaching, admonishment, and encouraging, and all of this is to be done with thankfulness from our hearts as Christ and His Word are dwelling within us.
- This element is one of the main reasons why I really like the answers that Matt gave to my question because each answer is necessary to help us with our teaching, admonishing, and encouraging. Our hymns needs to have quality content and be spiritually rich if we want to encourage and teach our fellow worshippers in a quality manner. The music of the hymns need to be of a quality that is fitting for worship of the Creator of the universe, and it needs to fit in with the words that it is accompanying. And then the congregation actually needs to be able to sing it together in a way that every part is focused on the words to the extent that teaching, admonishing, and encouragement can actually take place. If we want for these things to take place as Paul seems to believe they need to take place then we need to be sure that we are singing songs that help this to happen.
- I am convinced this is the case because of the fact that these are basically the same demands that we would have for lessons that are presented from the pulpit. We would expect for sermons to be spiritually rich and full of good content. We would expect for the sermons to make sense and be easy to listen to. We would expect for the lessons to be written and presented in such a way that the hearers can actually do something with what has been said. At the end of the day, hymn writing and lesson writing aren't all that different, and this is especially true when we run across songs that are basically sermons that have been put to music. I believe that the song "Send The Light" is one such song, and I would like to examine it this morning. Let's begin by looking at its origins and inspirations, and then we will consider five lessons that it teaches us from its rich content and lyrics.

## **I. Origins & Inspiration**

### **A. Author: Charles H. Gabriel**

1. This man was born in 1856, and he grew up on a farm in Iowa. As a young man growing up on a farm, he experienced everything that one would expect for him to experience. He learned about hard work, the cycles of life, and the goodness of God's creation. And yet, his strongest interests were not found out in the garden or in the cow's pasture.
2. Instead, Mr. Gabriel found that he had a great love for music. However it wasn't just that he loved music, but he also had a great natural talent for it. Mr. Gabriel actually taught himself how to play on his family's reed organ as a teenager, and soon after he left home at age seventeen in order to pursue a life as an organizer for singing schools.

**B. Mr. Gabriel became a highly accomplished musician.**

1. There are many people who year after year leave home to pursue dreams of a career in music, but we are well aware that many of those dreams fizzle out. This was not the case when it came to Mr. Gabriel. In fact, he became a very famed musician having written over 7,000 hymns by the time of his death in 1931.
2. Upon moving to San Francisco, California, Mr. Gabriel began to devote his musical attention to music of the religious variety. He took keen interest in Sunday schools, and he ended up having 24 books of music published not just for Sunday schools but also for evangelistic ministries.

**C. In 1890, he wrote this hymn as a means of encouraging the members of his church to support missionary efforts.**

1. As a man who had a great talent for writing hymns of excellent quality, Mr. Gabriel was often asked to write hymns for special occasions. One such occasion was in 1890 as he was serving as the music director for the Grace Methodist Episcopal church.
2. His congregation was planning on having a special service on Easter Sunday that was to focus on some efforts they were putting forth in missionary work. He was asked by the Sunday school superintendent to write a song centering around the "Golden Offering" which was their special offering through which this specific missionary work would be funded. In response to this request, Mr. Gabriel authored this great hymn that we are still singing over 120 years later.

As we have already noted, we don't sing simply to express praise to God, but we are also singing so that we might teach and encourage one another. This leads me to ask the question, *"What lessons do we learn from this song entitled, "Send The Light?"*" Even though many of the lyrics are repetitive, I am convinced that there are some important and needed lessons that come from the words of this song. We would be remiss if we did not first consider the imagery that is painted in our minds by the lyrics of this song. It doesn't take very long in singing this song for us to realize that the imagery centers around a lighthouse and the sea that it illuminates. Of course, this makes perfect sense considering that this song was written in San Francisco, California which finds itself on a massive harbor along the California coastline of the Pacific Ocean. As we discuss these lyrics, picture within your mind these images of a lighthouse, pounding waves, and distressed sea-goers who are in need of rescue.

## **II. 5 Lessons We Learn**

**A. There are souls who are dying in sin.**

*"There's a call comes ringing o'er the restless wave...There are souls to rescue there are souls to save."*

1. Those imagers of helpless sea-goers is exactly what is first brought to our minds in the first verse. The idea that Mr. Gabriel was trying to put into our minds as we sing this song is that there are people out in the world right now who are drowning in a sense...not in the crashing waves of the ocean, but in the deadly grips of sin. There are people who are in need of rescuing from the grips of sin. The call that comes ringing is the call that men are dying in their sins!
2. This is the great problem that has plagued mankind from nearly the beginning. I say nearly the beginning because we know that in the beginning sin was not a part of the reality of the Garden of Eden. As God created Adam and then Eve, we can see the relationship between them was one of immense closeness and intimacy for they were just as God had created them to be...pure and unspotted from sin. This was the state that God desired for them to remain in, and He tells them that things could remain just as they were if they would only obey His command of abstaining from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **(Genesis 2:16,17)**
3. Unfortunately, the crafty serpent was able to persuade Eve through temptation to eat of this forbidden tree. She then shared with her husband, and upon God's confronting them of this

transgression, they were expelled from the very presence of God in the garden. This had to be done for our reading and considerations of Scripture clearly show us that a holy and righteous God cannot entertain and be in the presence of those who fall short of holiness. *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, your tongue mutters wickedness."* (Isaiah 59:2,3)

4. Paul paints the picture for us very clearly in **Romans 3**. In **vv.10-18**, the Apostle draws from numerous Psalms and writings of the prophets to paint the accurate but sad picture of the condition of the human race, as a whole. Those who have the ability to choose whether they will seek the righteousness of God or the self-fulfilling nature of pleasure have chosen the latter which leads to the collective statement of **Romans 3:23**, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* This is the reality, and the only just end of such living is death. (**Romans 6:23**) While this is a very grim and sad picture that comes to our minds with these lyrics...the song then shifts to the solution to the problem of sin.

B. Disciples of Christ have been given the responsibility to deliver the life saving message of the Gospel. *"We have heard the Macedonian call today."*

1. This line of the song is, of course, drawing upon what took place during the ministry of Paul in **Acts 16:9,10**. The opening seven verses of **Acts 16** seem to indicate that Paul was desiring to go north into Asia to preach the Gospel, but he was hindered to do such by the Holy Spirit. (**Acts 16:6,7**) It would seem that this was done so that Paul might receive a vision of a man from Macedonia standing before him and appealing to him that he might come to Macedonia and help them through the preaching of the Gospel. This was exactly the conclusion that Paul and his partners came to as they set out from Troas to preach in the area of Macedonia which includes the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica.
2. Mr. Gabriel seems to have written this line of the song to help the singers to understand that we too have received a divine calling from our Lord concerning the work of sharing the Gospel with those who are in need of rescue from the death grips of sin. We could certainly look to Jesus's words in **Matthew 9:35-38** and realize that there are plenty of people who are in need of rescuing. The fields surely are white for harvest, and Jesus plainly says in **Matthew 28:18-20** to His Apostles directly and all of His disciples indirectly that it is our duty to share the good news. It is our duty to man the lighthouse and direct the lost and struggling sea-goers to the light.

C. There are many different ways in which we can support this work of sending the light of the Gospel. *"And a golden offering at the cross we lay...Let us pray that grace may everywhere abound...And a Christlike spirit everywhere be found."*

1. The first line that speaks to the different ways in which we can support sending out of the Gospel message and that is through monetary means. The words "golden offering" tie directly into the occasion for which Mr. Gabriel composed this song. His church was having a special Sunday dedicated to the work of spreading the Gospel, and they recognized this great occasion by referring to the offering as a golden offering. The point being that the members of that church were presented with an opportunity to support missionary work through monetary means. Just as with anything else in this world, work in the ministry of the Gospel demands funding. I and other preachers are able to do the work that we do through support we receive from brethren both at home and beyond. For such we are very grateful, but we also recognize that this is the pattern we have seen even back to the ministry of Jesus.
2. In **Luke 8:1-4**, we read of numerous women who supported Jesus and His disciples in their ministry out of their private monetary means. Paul was also a recipient of support in his ministry of the Gospel. The church in Philippi was strongly connected with the work of Paul through their

supporting of him by financial means. (**Acts 18:5; II Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:15**) The reality is that many men would not be able to devote themselves fully to the ministry of Gospel if it were not for the support given by others, and I hope that all of those who support sending out the light of the Gospel in this manner feel as if they are true participants in the Gospel as they are.

3. Secondly, this song speaks to our support in the ministry of sending the Gospel message through constant prayers dedicated to such work. We know well that *"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."* (**James 5:16**), and there is no area in which it might be able to accomplish more good than when the people of God are dedicated to praying for the work that is being done in spreading the Gospel message. In fact back in **Matthew 9:38**, Jesus specifically mentions that we ought to be beseeching or asking that God would have a part in sending out workers into the harvest. We can also pray that God would have compassion and patience on those who are lost in their sins. We might make these prayers for specific people that we know of who need the Gospel. In doing so, we would simply be imitating the example of Paul who said in **Romans 10:1** concerning his Jewish brothers and sisters, *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is for their salvation"* We could also pray that God strengthen us in our efforts to send the light of the Gospel. We can pray for our own opportunities. We can pray for our own boldness. We can pray that we say what is needed in the moment when we might have those opportunities. Just as prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian, so is it the lifeblood of the work of the Gospel.
4. Finally, this song speaks to us that we can support the sending of the light of the Gospel through our own efforts to make sure that our lights are shining in such a way that people might see Christ living through us. Paul's desire was that he would live in such a way that it would seem as if Christ Himself were living in Him. (**Galatians 2:20**) Jesus Himself said that we should give consideration to our actions and how they might be perceived by others. *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* (**Matthew 5:16**) If we ourselves are not committed to walking in the Light (**1 John 1**), then how can we expect to send the light to others? If we want to help support the ministry of the Gospel then we must be sure that we are walking as we ought to walk.

D. This work is not an easy work, and it demands endurance.

*"Let us not grow weary in the work of love."*

1. All of this work in helping to support the Gospel sounds all well and good, but the reality is that this type of work can be difficult and wearying work. This must have been the thought behind Mr. Gabriel's line in the last verse where he writes, *"Let us not grow weary in the work of love."* Anyone who has ever put effort into taking the Gospel to those who are in need are more than likely well aware of the difficulties that accompany such efforts. If you have done such work then you know the pain of seeing someone reject the saving message of the Gospel. You have felt the agonizing stress of those situations weighing down upon your heart. You have seen the roots of sin that have dug their way into people's lives. You have seen how men would rather have their ears itched than hear the truth that they need. You know this can be difficult work.
2. One man who really knew about the difficulties of the work was the Apostle Paul. In **II Corinthians 11:23-28**, we read of the incredibly awful circumstances that Paul often found himself in because of the work he was doing in spreading the Gospel of Jesus, and yet he is the same person who writes in **Galatians 6:9**, *"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we will not grow weary."* If you're like me then you must be amazed at the type of mindset that Paul was able to have even as he suffered so greatly, and thankfully Paul tells us exactly why it is that we ought to keep pressing on and persevering forward.

E. Our endurance in this work will lead to a great reward.

*"Let us gather jewels for a crown above."*

1. Paul ends that thought by reminding the Galatian Christians that they would eventually receive a great reward for their work in the Lord. Their work in living as Christ would have them to live, their work in shining their lights for Christ, & their work in sending the light of Christ out to the dark and dying world would eventually lead them to receiving an eternal reward beyond measure. Their work in focusing on the right things of this life would lead to them fulfilling the words of Jesus from **Matthew 6:19,20** within their own lives, and that same promise is extended to us. If we will work in such a way that we are storing up treasures for ourselves in heaven, then we will be able to have the confidence of a job well done at the end of our lives in the same manner in which Paul had his confidence.
2. In **II Timothy 4:6-8**, the Apostle Paul extends his final words to the preacher Timothy in which he concludes that he had run his race in such a way that he had confidence that there was going to be a crown of righteousness waiting for him when the Lord was ready to gather up His saints. He had confidence that there was such a crown waiting on him because he had put in much effort to store up those heavenly treasures. He had lived in such a way that he had gathered up jewels that would be on that glorious crown. What a confidence! And it is a confidence that we too can possess if we are dedicated to the work of sending the light to the dark world that is around us.

It can be so easy for us to sing songs that we have sung so many times and fail to grasp the important truths and lessons that they convey. It is my hope that these considerations this morning will help to remind us of those truths and lessons that are found within this song so that we might be able to sing it with a renewed sense of dedication to the work of sending the light to the lost. May God bless us in this great work, and may it result in souls be saved from their sins and the kingdom of God being further established and growing in this place and beyond.