

More than Conquerors

'Father, Thy mercy never dies'... the Bible is rich in passages telling us about the mercies of God. They are 'great' (2 Sam. 24:14); 'manifold' (Neh. 9:19); 'tender' (Ps. 25:6); 'endure for ever' (2 Chron. 7:3), and by them 'we are saved' (Tit.3:5). A personal story that illustrates what it means to trust in God's mercies comes from the life and ministry of the Revd Dr Samuel Parkes Cadman (1864-1936).

Between the years 1900 and 1930 Dr Cadman was the best-known evangelical preacher in America. For many years he was the minister of the very influential Central Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York. In his own pulpit and wherever he preached crowds gathered to hear him. Then began a ministry that gave him even-greater fame as a preacher. He became America's first radio preacher. He was the pioneer of this new means of communicating the gospel to millions of homes. In the 1920s and 30s, Cadman's was the most-recognised voice in every state in the nation. In fact he was so popular that the millions of people who listened to him thought he was an American.

Cadman, however, was born in Shropshire in England, into a very devout Primitive Methodist home. His father, a miner, was a local preacher and class leader. Samuel also became a miner and a Methodist local preacher. He trained for the ministry at Richmond College in London and emigrated to America in 1890. He often told of an incident that happened in his home when he was nine years old. His younger sister died suddenly and the whole family was engulfed in grief. That evening his father was due to take his weekly Class Meeting. He didn't want to leave his family but at the same time he didn't want to disappoint the people waiting for him in the Methodist chapel. After much heart-searching he decided to keep the engagement and he took Samuel with him.

Samuel could see that his father was struggling with his emotions. Was it right to go to the chapel? Should he not stay with his broken-hearted wife? Half way to the chapel, Samuel recounted later, his father did something that he remembered for half a century. His devout and godly father stopped on the road, took off his hat – and began to sing! In that hour when his heart was breaking with grief and loss and pain, he expressed his deep and unshaken faith in the words of a favourite hymn. He chose a translation made by John Wesley of a German Moravian hymn, beginning:

*Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain..*

'But,' said Dr Cadman, 'it was the fifth verse my father chose to sing that night on the road to the chapel, and I've never forgotten the impression it made on me. With his voice quivering and tears running down his cheeks, he sang his faith in God's unfailing mercies in those wonderful words.'

*Though waves and storms go o'er my head
Though strength, and health, and friends be gone
Though joys be withered all and dead
Though every comfort be withdrawn.
On this my steadfast soul relies
Father, Thy mercy never dies!*

Father, Thy mercy never dies! Like Samuel Cadman's father, we too can have faith in the love and mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a faith will hold us, and assure us, and strengthen us in the darkest hours. In him we are more than conquerors!

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