

“Does Jesus Care?”

by Micky Galloway

All have experienced the joy and happiness of great anticipations only to have them crushed by sudden reality. Sometimes the hurt is so great and endures so long that we feel abandoned. Frank Ellsworth Graeff (1860 - 1919) was born in a coal mining town in Pennsylvania. In 1894, he married Mary Lourene Mauger. Graeff especially loved children and was known for his story telling ability, his cheerfulness, and sense of humor. But in spite of his cheerful disposition, he was a man sorely troubled by doubts and deep depressions. Though some sources say he and his wife had no children, one source suggests he had a daughter (Nickel Notes: Hymn History). As was the custom of the day, she wore a floor-length dress with many layers of lace. It is reported that as she stood in front of the fireplace, her long skirt caught on fire. The fire consumed her so rapidly, there was nothing that could be done. In search for solace he read, *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you”* (I Peter 5:6-7). It was from this text that he composed the hymn, “Does Jesus Care?” copyrighted in 1901.

Let us consider the lessons from this song:

Verse 1 “Does Jesus care when my heart is pained Too deeply for mirth or song, As the burdens press, And the cares distress, And the way grows weary and long?” There are some burdens that cause such emotional pain and mental anguish, there just doesn’t seem to be any relief. Jacob, believing his son Joseph had been killed by a beast, *“rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning”* (Genesis 37:34-35). There was no joy in his life (no mirth or song). Nothing that could relieve his distress. When David’s son Absalom, conspired to take away the kingdom, David fled from the city of Jerusalem on his way to Mahanaim. Every man who went with him covered his head, *“... weeping as they went up”* (II Samuel 15:30). Shimei cursed David and cast stones at him. When word came to David that the conspiracy was suppressed and that his son Absalom was dead, *“the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”* (II Samuel 18:33). *“And the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!”* (II Samuel 19:4). Almost as if the psalmist addressed himself he said, *“Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and he will sustain thee: He will never suffer the righteous to be moved”* (Psalms 55:22).

Verse 2 “Does Jesus care when my way is dark With a nameless dread and fear? As the daylight fades Into deep night shades, Does He care enough to be near?” How many in the dread of night long for the breaking of day? In Job’s affliction it appears that Job had indulged in doubts and questions. God brought him to a proper state of mind by asking him a series of questions, demanding answers. It was needful that Job’s doubts be removed before God would address him with words of consolation. God asked, *“Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began, And caused the dayspring to know its place?”* (Job 38:12). The laws determining the rising of the sun were fixed long before Job. Job could not control the rising and setting of the sun, but it is consoling to know Him who does and that He cares about me when the nights seem long. Even in times of sickness and death, God has promised He cares enough to be near. It is not a journey we have to take alone. David said, *“Yea, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me”* (Psalms 23:4).

Verse 3 (Not in our songbook.) “Does Jesus care when I’ve tried and failed To resist some temptation strong; When for my deep grief, There is no relief, Tho’ my tears flow all the night long?” Perhaps there is no grief greater than disappointment in ourselves. We are assured that *“There hath no temptation taken*

you but such as man can bear ...” (I Corinthians 10:13). However, sometimes we fail to seek “the way of escape.” Immediately prior to Jesus’ arrest, He said to Peter, “Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not ...” (Luke 22:31-32). Peter confidently said, “Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.” The Lord responded, “I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me” (Luke 22:33-34). Indeed, before morning Peter had denied the Lord three times. “Immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter ... And he went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:60-62). David said, “For I know my transgressions; And my sin is ever before me.” He acknowledged, “For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it; Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:3,16-17). Our grief caused by our own failures can be eased in forgiveness.

Verse 4 “Does Jesus care when I’ve said ‘goodby’ To the dearest on earth to me, And my sad heart aches Till it nearly breaks, Is it aught to Him? Does He see?” The loss of a loved one certainly causes deep pain. Jesus experienced sadness at the loss of a dear friend. After the death of Lazarus, Jesus saw Mary *“weeping, and the Jews (also) weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept” (John 11:33-35).* Paul wrote to comfort those who had lost their loved ones *“in Jesus.” “We that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thessalonians 4:17-18).* They did not die without hope.

All of us experience dark times in our lives; times of deep grief and sorrow. Not only did Jesus care enough to leave the glory of heaven, to live in the flesh of man and to die the cruel death of the cross for our sins, but he is risen, ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He serves as our high priest. We are assured, *“For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as (we are, yet) without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help (us) in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).* When dark clouds come our way and we dare ask the question, “Does Jesus Care?” Let us hear the resounding chorus ...

“O yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief; ... When the days are weary, The long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares.”