

I Know Whom I Have Believed

~Other Speakers G-L: Hymn Stories:

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" -1 John 5:13

There is much about the spiritual life we do not fully understand, but we can still live with certainty and triumphant faith. The apostle Paul understood when he exclaimed, "I know whom [not merely what] I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12a).

Daniel Webster Whittle and James McGranahan, author and composer of this hymn, supplied many other choice gospel songs, including "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing," "The Banner of the Cross," and "Christ Liveth in Me." Whittle was a Civil War veteran who accompanied Union general William Sherman on his march through Georgia. At the close of the war Whittle was promoted to the rank of major and was thereafter known as Major Whittle. After the war he returned to Chicago, where he became treasurer of the Elgin Watch Company. In 1873, at the urging of D. L. Moody, the major left his successful position to become an evangelist. He enjoyed a most effective ministry for the rest of his life. He was ably assisted musically by P.P. Bliss and later James McGranahan. Many of Whittle's hymns bear the pseudonym "El Nathan." The piece "I Know Whom I Have Believed" is known by that name.

James McGranahan had a limited formal education, but at the age of nineteen he was teaching in singing schools throughout the East. He became known for his beautiful tenor voice and commanding personality. After Bliss died in 1877, McGranahan became music director for Major Whittle's evangelistic campaigns in England and North America. McGranahan was a pioneer in his use of male choruses. He collaborated with Ira Sankey and other musicians in many gospel publications. In addition to supplying the music for many of Major Whittle's texts, McGranahan composed the music for such gospel favorites as "My Redeemer," "Christ Returneth," "Christ Receiveth Sinful Men," "Verily, I Say unto You," and "Go Ye into All the World."

Note that the chorus of this testimonial song repeats the apostle Paul's statement to young Timothy, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day, " (2 Tim. 1-12 AV). Make this Scripture a personal statement of faith. Another poet expressed the same confession this way:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand.
-Edward Mote