

HOUND OF HEAVEN

(continued from inside)

there; entering eternity unprepared, without the loving Saviour...lost!

That lady had lost the lover earlier (3:1), but thankfully found him and said that she would not let Him go! That *first* time in the story, the city guards may have helped her find him. But this *second* time, they beat and bruised her, and took off her veil to shame her. This parable-story teaches a truth which all of us do well to take to heart immediately.

This song fits my subject well:

1) *The *gulf that separated me from Christ, my Lord,
It was so vast the crossing
I could never *ford;
From where I was to His domain,
it seemed so far,
I cried, "Dear Lord, I cannot come to where you are."*

- * "gulf" - a deep, wide gap
- * "ford" - means "to get across"
- * "Calvary" - where Jesus was crucified



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Let's open our hearts and let Jesus in. Many imagine or hope they will "enter heaven's gate," but don't or won't open the gate here. A closed gate here means a closed gate there. You see a child in the old picture on the left. To enter to Jesus, He said we must become as a child, that is, in simple faith. There is a "hound" right beside the lad to help enter that door/gate and to go with him on the journey! (Matt. 7: 13, 14; Jn. 10: 7, 9; Matt. 28: 19, 20). The Lord Jesus "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!" (see Jude 20-25—You keep yourself, and He will keep you! Like Phil. 2: 12, 13)

(Chorus)

*He came to me, O, He came to me.
When I could not come to where He was, He came to me.
That's why He died on *Calvary,
When I could not come to where He was, He came to me.*

2) *He came to me when I was bound in chains of sin,
He came to me when I possessed no hope within,
He picked me up and He drew me gently to His side,
Where, today, in His sweet love I now abide.*

God help us to **awake**, **arise** and **answer!** (Eph. 5:14; Rom. 13: 11, 12). **Awake** from "spiritual sleep," **Arise** from whatever may be holding and hindering, **Answer** the Lover at the door. In His great love, He "hounds" us... "dogs our steps"...not wanting us to be lost. **THANK GOD FOR "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN!"**

(L-o-v-e is the "4-letter word connection.")
[See first paragraph, page 1] God's love!

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THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

Gabriel L. Mancino



Our May-June issue, titled "The Great-Grandfather Of All Bombs," had a falling bomb on the front page. Now, here's a dog on a **rocket!** (...or is it another **bomb?**) The connection in the two issues is a four-letter word, but not "b-o-m-b!" What is it?

A "**Hound**" is a type of hunting dog. "The Hound of Heaven" is a poem published in 1893 by English poet, Francis Thompson, describing God's pursuit of man. No offense is meant by his poem or my clipart.

John Stott was a well-known London preacher and author. In his book, *Why I Am A Christian* (2003),

he titled the first chapter: "The Hound of Heaven." In that book, he said that he was a Christian mainly due to his being continually pursued by "The Hound of Heaven."

Stott was referring to Jesus continuing to search for him, and not giving up on him. Jesus does this wonderful "**hounding**" of us by the Holy Spirit. No matter who we are, where we come from, what our status in life is, or what kind of religion (or *non-religion*) we are from, God is searching for us.

In 1882, **George Matheson**, who went blind at 20, wrote the hymn—
(continued inside)



"GONE TO THE DOGS" is a usually-negative expression. Here's an exception! An "outsider" came to Jesus to get help for her demon-possessed daughter (Matt. 15: 21ff; Mk. 7:24ff). Jesus seemed rude and unwilling to help. Not so! She replied to Jesus, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs get the children's crumbs from under their owner's table!" "Characterised by the wit of faith," her reply to the Lord won the victory! She got what she came for! "Against prejudice she came, against silence she persevered, against exclusion she proceeded, against rebuff she won!"

HOUND OF HEAVEN

(continued from front page)

song, O Love That Will Not Let Me Go, in five minutes, making no changes. He said: “All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high.”

The “**hounding**” love of God is seen often in the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments. One example of this is Jesus’ story of the shepherd leaving his ninety-nine sheep, which were safe at home, to go and look for one lost sheep (Lk. 15:3ff). That story inspired the hymn-song, The Ninety And Nine, written by **Elizabeth Clephane** who, like Matheson, was from Scotland.

Ira Sankey read Miss Clephane’s poem in his newspaper as he and **Rev. D. L. Moody** rode a train to Scotland for a church meeting in 1874. Sankey tore the poem out and put it into his pocket. Moody preached one night on **The Good Shepherd** (Jn.10: 11, 14), then asked Sankey if he had a song. Sankey suddenly remembered the poem, pulled it out, said a quick prayer and began to compose music for it as he went along; not having ever written a hymn tune before! In tears, Moody came to him soon after and asked, “Where did you get that hymn?!”

So, Matheson wrote his masterpiece about God’s ever-seeking love within five minutes. “In a flash,” and even in front of a large audience,

Sankey created music, right then and there, to go with Miss Clephane’s poem about that same love of God!

God, who can inspire such rapid *thinking* and *writing*, can help people like you and me to **RECEIVE** that love, just as quickly—even this very moment—and no matter what or how large an “audience” is around!

No one needs to delay. Delay takes us away from God, away from His help and away from heaven. God will give the power to obey Him, one step at a time. Trust Him and step out.

At **St. Paul’s Cathedral** is a large painting of Christ knocking on the door. The painting was inspired by Jesus’ words in Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.” Jesus is seen there, not forcing entry, but knocking at our door, promising His friendship, and awaiting an open door and for us to invite Him in.

One old hymn-song asks

1) *Who at my door is standing,
Patiently drawing near,
Entrance within demanding?
Whose is the voice I hear?*

(Chorus:)
*Sweetly the tones are falling;
“Open the door for Me!
If you will heed My calling,
I will abide with thee.”*

(continued on right)



We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.



(continued from left)

2) *Lonely without He’s staying;
Lonely within am I;
While I am still delaying,
Will He not pass me by?*

Another similar song says

*He stood at my heart’s door
‘mid sunshine and rain,
and patiently waited
an entrance to gain;
what shame that so long
He entreated in vain,
for He is so precious to me!*

Rev. Stott (see page 1) kept Jesus outside the door, at first. He “tried to pacify Christ by praying through the key-hole or occasionally pushing pennies under the door,” as he said it! Yet, Jesus remained outside, until Stott opened his heart to Him.

Long before “The Shepherd and Sheep” story of Jesus (Lk. 15), Psalm 23 had said “*The Lord is my Shepherd.*” That short Psalm draws to an end, saying, “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*” That “gentle” word, “**follow,**” might well be translated “*pursue...vigorously,*” or “*hunt,*” or “*dog my steps.*” God is patient. He has a plan and purpose for each of us. His love never gives up. If one goes to hell, it will be in spite of the efforts of His “**hounding**” love.

A person may kick against God’s efforts to rescue them; Jesus said this to the man who became St. Paul (Acts 9:1-5; 26:14). Many, like this

“Saul of Tarsus” are blinded by training, culture, prejudice...yes, and sin in the heart. What perfect, fertile soil for pride, fear and resistance to grow! Due to this, many people ignore, resist or mock the loving pursuit of God.

God has a record of each time He has tried to soften a person’s heart and appeal to their mind to yield to Him. Some such instances, though gone in a moment, are undeniable and convincing. It is God’s voice, not man’s. His love pursues continually.

God’s love liberates us from sin, and also from passed-down traditions that give us no true knowledge of God and no true fellowship with God. Jesus said “*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...So, if the Son makes you free, you are free, indeed!*” (Jn. 8: 32, 36).

The Lord Jesus stands at our door and knocks for entry, as was seen in Rev. 3:20. Song of Sol. 5:2 has a similar picture. The true lover was outside the door. The lady was asleep, but awoke to hear him calling her by loving names; moving the door handle and asking for entrance. Love arose in her heart, but she rationalised...“built her case”...to avoid doing what she knew to do. Many have done this, but it need not continue.

Jesus said that He IS the Door (Jn. 10:7,9). Yet, He stands AT *our* door, as in Rev. 3:20 and Song of Sol. 5:2. The lady in Song of Sol. 5 finally arose to let her lover in, but he was gone! The story of untold millions ends

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