

Thomas Obediah Chisholm: “Great is Thy Faithfulness”

By Maggie Moller

“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

(Lamentations 3:21-23)

“For great is Your love, reaching to the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.”

(Psalm 57:10)

Thomas Obediah Chisholm was born on July 29, 1866, in Franklin, Kentucky. As a child, he was educated in a small country schoolhouse. At age 16, he got his teaching certificate and became the teacher of the same country school he had attended as a boy. At age 21, he became the associate editor of the weekly newspaper, *The Franklin Favorite*.

His life was forever changed in 1893, when, at a revival meeting under the ministry of Dr. Henry Clay Morrison, he turned his life over to Christ. Dr. Morrison then persuaded Thomas to move to Louisville to become the editor of his periodical, the *Pentecostal Herald*. In 1903, Thomas was ordained as a Methodist minister. He then served for a short time at a church in Scottsville, Kentucky, before moving to Indiana due to his poor health. In 1916, he moved again, this time to Vineland, New Jersey, where he worked as an insurance salesman. He retired in 1953 and moved into the Methodist Home for the Aged in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, living there until his death on February 29, 1960.

Although he suffered from poor health his entire life, Thomas was determined not to focus on his sufferings but rather on the faithfulness of his Lord. He once said in a letter written to a friend, “My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years until now....I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.” What a testimony of remaining focused on God even in the face of great sufferings and hardships!

In his lifetime, Thomas wrote over 1,200 poems, of which 800 were published, and many were set to music. “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” was published in 1923 and remains one of his most well-known hymns. According to Thomas, it was not written for any specific purpose other than to share the Biblical truth of his faithful God and Father. From Thomas’ humble life, we see that God uses believers of all backgrounds and occupations to reveal His Faithfulness in their walks of life. Whether they are preachers and missionaries or newspaper editors and insurance salesmen, God is faithful to them and reveals His great plan through them for their lives.