**The Spirit & The Understanding, Part 31**

**Reading – 1 Corinthians 14:1-15**

***[Colossians 3:16-17]*** ***Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*** ***And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.***

**Higher Ground # 539**

Johnson Oatman seemed to be having a midlife crisis.

He felt he was locked into his father’s mercantile business in Medford, New Jersey.

It was a good business and he wasn’t unhappy in it, but he was a bit restless.

Oatman wanted to do something that could reach out and touch more people for the Lord.

He found a seminary and preached in churches in central New Jersey, but his commitment to his father’s business kept him from preaching full time.

He was still not content with buying and selling goods to the public.

When he was thirty-six, Oatman apparently found his talent.

He began writing gospel songs.

Within a few years the world was singing his songs, including “Count Your Blessings,” “No, Not One,” and Higher Ground.”

In camp meetings across the country “Higher Ground” became a favorite.

It expresses the desire of most Christians, and it certainly expresses the desire of a restless Johnson Oatman, who was pressing on the upward way.

**I Must Tell Jesus # 564**

Some people seem to have an endless stream of heartaches and painful experiences.

Elisha Hoffman knew one such person in Lebanon, Pennsylvania.

One day he visited her and found her to be extremely discouraged.

When he asked her what was wrong, she unburdened herself to him.

As she finished, she asked,” What shall I do? What shall I do?’

He quoted some verses from Scripture that he called to mind and then said, “You cannot do better than to take all of your sorrows to Jesus. Tell Him because He cares for you.

For a moment the woman said nothing. Then her face lit up, her eyes sparkled, and she responded, “Yes, I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus.”

On his way home Hoffman couldn’t forget the joy on tht woman’s face when shed, “I must tell Jesus.”

As soon as he got home, he wrote the words of this gospel son, “I Must Tell Jesus.”

**I Will Call Upon The Lord # 63**

Michael O’Shields was a traveling Bible teacher in west Texas and Oklahoma.

That is a lot of territory to cover, but the need to make a living and the meager offerings required him to travel a lot.

The Bible studies were conducted in homes, quite often in farmhouses.

The people seemed hungry for good Bible reaching, and Michael was thrilled to be used by the Lord in this way.

He was newly married and he needed to bring home some money for groceries.

He recalls one time driving two hundred miles from Oklahoma to Abilene, Texas, for a Saturday night meeting and returning with an offering of twelve dollars.

However, the long trips gave Michael time to write some songs, which he introduced to those attending the Bible studies.

“I will Call upon the Lord” was one of those songs.

Michael did plenty of calling on the Lord during those days of meager offerings, so it was certainly his heartfelt cry.

This song served another purpose. It begins with the men singing a line, and the women echoing.

Some of the farmers to whom Michael introduced the song didn’t have great voices, but Michael didn’t care.

By having the men begin the song, they were taking leadership in worship.

Soon the song became a favorite and was picked up by many Song publishers.

**I Come To The Garden Alone # 595**

Austin Miles had a job as a pharmacist and a hobby as a photographer, but in his congregation, he was known as the song leader and occasionally a songwriter.

On his first songwriting effort a publisher not only offered him a contract but also offered him a job as an editor.

It all went well for Miles in the music business, until one day his boss told him that he needed a special kind of song for their next hymnal.

It had to be “sympathetic in tone, breathing tenderness in every line; one that would bring hope to the hopeless, rest for the weary, and downy pillows in dying beds.”

It was a tall order, but Austin opened his Bible to his favorite chapter, John 20, and tried to re-create the scene with his photographer’s eye.

He recalled it this way: “I seemed to be standing at the entrance of a garden, looking down a gently winding path, shaded by olive branches. A figure in white, with head bowed, walked slowly into the shadows. It was Jesus going to pray for the last time.

Then the words came to him, and he wrote a quickly as he could the words that we now have as the song ”I Come To The Garden Alone”.

**In The Hour Of Trial # 767**

Life had been difficult for James Montgomery.

His parents died when he was twelve.

He was so depressed that he couldn’t do his schoolwork, so he was asked to leave school.

It sounded like a good opportunity, but when the editor had to flee the country to avoid prosecution, the twenty-three-year-old James became the new editor.

When he commemorated the fall of the Bastille in his editorials, he was fined, imprisoned, and called “a wicked, malicious and seditious person.”

James knew what trouble was like.

However, years later the British government honored him for his advocacy of humanitarian causes, especially the abolition of slavery.

This hymn was written after he read the story of Peter in the Gospels: “Jesus said, I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail”