“O, what needless pain we bear.”

January 28th, 2010

His name is Joseph Medlicott Scriven. Born at Banbridge, Co. Down, Ireland on September 10, 1819, Scriven was a poet whose writing became one of the ten best loved hymns of all time. Scriven had written to his mother in 1855 who still lived in Ireland, to comfort her during his absence in Canada. The poem to his mother was entitled "Pray Without Ceasing" and later was put to music by Charles Converse and renamed "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

In 1845, the night before they were to marry, Scriven's fiancee' drowned. This caused Scriven to move to Canada as he was devastated with grief. There in Canada, Scriven fell in love again, only to lose his fiancee' Eliza Roche in death to Pneumonia. For the rest of his live, Scriven dedicated his time to serving others and helping the poor.

Deep depression surrounded Scriven for the rest of his life. But, out of his depression came compassion for those who were also suffering. This is how God uses people. People who out of their deepest pain, give. People who have felt the sting of death, give. People whose hearts are broken to pieces by the adversity of life, give.

Joseph M. Scriven died August 10, 1886, at Port Hope, Canada after drowning in the nearby waters. No one knows if he was driven there in the middle of the night by deep depression or if it was an accident.

The famous singer, Ira Sankey, added to the poem/song the words which included "O, what needless pain we bear."

Out of tragedy, out of deep oppression from the enemy of our soul, out of deep depression of those who cannot forget their own pain, came a song that lifts many from the deep tar pits of self-pity. After hearing the words of this old hymn, they are reminded we carry needless pain. Needless because God is the God of the broken hearted and those who have a contrite spirit. We were not
created to carry such a load. Only God is big enough to carry that load and He will carry it for us.

Will you bear the pain needlessly? You don’t have to. Turn to Jesus and He will lift you up.

"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."