

Count Your Blessings-November's Hymn of the Month 2021
By Bill Dagle

“When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed”—ever felt that way at the end of the day? Well, I have and next to finding comfort in God’s word, the hymnal can be a great source of encouragement. Maybe, Johnson Oatman understood this more than most; and just maybe, that’s why he started writing hymns. Even though he spent most of his life in the mercantile and insurance businesses, Johnson Oatman Jr. would write over 5,000 hymns.

Born April 21, 1856, near Medford, New Jersey, young Johnson enjoyed standing on the Methodist church pew. He stood there to be near his father who was considered to have one of the best voices in northern New Jersey. Young Johnson wanted to be just like his dad. At the age of 19, Oatman was granted a license to preach in the Methodist Church and soon discovered he had a gift-- not a gift to preach, but a gift to write. So in 1892, he pick up his pen and, in short order, the country was singing *Higher Ground, No Not One, The Last Mile of the Way*, and *Count Your Blessings* which is considered to be his best song.

Every generation has had to deal with suffering and loss. We live in a fallen world under the curse of sin. Our news reports remind us of this everyday. It’s no wonder that discouragement can become the norm. Yet for the Christian, there is a promise of help in Philippians 4:19. No matter how bad it gets, we have a promise for this life and for a life to come.

Johnson Oatman would be given 66 years to play out that promise here on earth. Then, on September 25, 1922, an older Johnson stepped into eternity from Norman, Oklahoma, leaving behind a message of hope in song, fulfilling Ephesians 5:19 & 20. The message is a reminder that no matter how bad it gets, it will be worth it when we reach the other side.

So amid the conflict whether great or small
Do not be discouraged, God is over all
Count your many blessings angels will attend
Help and comfort give you to your journey’s end.

See you, on the other side.