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Jesus Christ

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Jesus Christ

The Life and Legacy of Tom Walton

John G. Ridley



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A Worshipper of Jesus Christ

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Editing has replaced unique Australian wording with more universal English vocabulary. Editing has also modified older patterns of sentence structure and literary devices to improve readability for today's audience. Preserving the author's original message has been an important objective throughout this process.

The content of this book was written by John Ridley.

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*Dedicated to a new generation of
worshippers of Jesus Christ.*

*A Worshiper of Jesus Christ:
The Life and Legacy
of
Lieutenant Corporal Tom Walton,
Military Medal*

BY JOHN G. RIDLEY, Military Chaplain

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TOM WALTON, HERO

FOREWORD (1947)

“Little is much when God is in it.” The brief life of Tom Walton, only 22 years, might well fade away along with the many thousands who died in the Second World War except for the inner circle of his loved ones.

This would appear to be a tragic loss to the Church, whose glorious history has been enriched by many young lives. Who can estimate the value of youthful saints such as David Brainerd, who died at the age of 29 after only a few years of ministry to the Indians of North America? His diary/journal was the means God used to arouse the zeal of another youth, Henry Martyn, who went to the heathen of the East saying, “Now to burn out for God like Brainerd.” This he did, at the age of 31, leaving a triumphant testimony.

The diary of David Brainerd spurred the great William Carey to launch his work for Christ in India. Carey urged his coworkers to continually think of Brainerd, who wrestled in prayer in the backwoods of America for the souls of the Indians.

Many great men of God have acknowledged their debt to the diary of David Brainerd, and one confessed: “When I feel myself growing cold, I turn to Brainerd and he always warms my heart.”

In due time, a young Scotch minister, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, felt the impact of Brainerd's diary and wrote *Life of David Brainerd*. M'Cheyne lived 29 years, but the legacy of his life was included in Andrew Bonar's *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*. Bonar's book has in turn been a torch to many other lives and ministries.

Another brief but blessed life is that of Captain Hedley Vicars, the Crimean Hero who fell in action at 29 years of age. Miss Marsh gave to the world his letters under the title:

Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars. Through his letters, this man, whose whole Christian life embraced just three years, has continued to witness with power for nearly 100 years.

I believe that the life of Tom Walton, in its closing four years of Christian experience, should be relayed to the Church in the words and thoughts of the youthful soldier-saint himself. Therefore, we are presenting his legacy from his own luminous letters and diary.

May the Lord Jesus grant to each reader a glorious glimpse of God's love and majesty through this young man's testimony.

Our gratitude to Mr. Joseph S. Carroll (Lieutenant, Australian Infantry) and the Winn sisters, all loving friends of Tom Walton, for their gracious assistance in the preparation of this volume.

—JOHN G. RIDLEY

FOREWARD (2017)

Christianity rests on the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For a skeptical world, the testimony of a transformed life is the strongest supporting evidence for the resurrection, as it provides an irrefutable demonstration of the power of the new birth. Such powerful testimony also has a certain unnerving impact in the church. It may unmask our indifference to the possibilities in Christ. Thankfully, it may also inspire true believers to renewed faith and commitment.

The writer of Hebrews understood this dynamic. To rebuke and encourage the wavering Hebrew church, the author reviews the courageous faith of saint after saint from the Old Testament. These were men who recognized the reality of God and determined to diligently seek Him no matter the cost. Their lives clearly called these New Testament Christians to a renewal of their faith and the undergirding of their commitment.

In the Spirit of Hebrews 11, we are grateful to recount the testimony of one transformed life. Tom Walton was the personal friend of Mr. Joseph Carroll, founder of EI School of Biblical Training. Any of you who have read Mr. Carroll's book, *How to Worship Jesus Christ*, will recognize Tom's name. The worship book concludes with an illustration of this young soldier's "lostness" in worship. Tom Walton's life shouts of the transforming grace of God.

Tom's Christian journey did not begin until he was in the Australian army. He died in action a little over four years later. In those few years, with little or no Christian background, with limited daily Christian fellowship, and

while living in the company of unsympathetic soldiers, he quickly matured into a vital force for the kingdom of God. The influence he had on others came from an overflowing heart of gratitude to Jesus Christ, which manifested itself in unswerving devotion to Him and a disciplined determination to seek Him.

How was that expressed amid the rigors and limitations of army life? How could he make so much spiritual progress so quickly in such a hostile environment? Three characteristics stand out.

First, Tom understood that he would have to know God's Word in order to follow Jesus Christ. Tom Walton gave himself to determined, systematic study of the Bible. His studies were not merely to learn truth. Tom sought to know His Lord, which allowed him to be brought into humble and joyous conformity to Christ.

Secondly, he recognized the unspeakable privilege of fellowship with God. From the outset of his journey, regular daily prayer became part of his routine. His prayer times were not the five-minutes-in-the-morning variety. Tom sought the Lord on his own and with other Christian men at every opportunity. His disciplined use of time to ensure he met with Jesus in prayer will challenge every Christian.

Finally, he quickly realized that he had an obligation to those without Christ. He allowed the Lord's hunger for souls to become his own hunger and determined to lay down his life for the lost. Tom had an aggressive ministry of encouragement and challenge to Christian brothers. To those outside the kingdom, he was continually looking for open doors to witness. He took advantage of such openings, but he also worked to create his own opportunities.

EI School of Biblical Training has recently begun a prayer challenge, asking God to move powerfully within the upcoming generation of Christians. It is not a request simply for numbers but for quality of lives. We are asking for believers with the unquenchable faith to boldly display the life of Christ and proclaim the Gospel through increasingly intense opposition. We would encourage you to join this prayer focus on a daily basis.

Once again, we offer the dynamic example of Tom Walton to all believers, but especially to the next generation. We trust Tom's wholehearted seeking of the Lord will expose coolness where necessary and inspire a rich faith in Jesus Christ. May the Lord focus our attention on Jesus as we patiently run our race, no matter which way the course turns. May Tom's bold witness and Christian impact establish within us a fixed determination to pursue Jesus Christ. In short, may Tom's life call us higher.

—Staff of EI School of Biblical Training

MEMOIR
of
TOM WALTON, MM

TOM WALTON, MM, THE HERO OF MALTA

In a letter dated September 15, 1947, received by Chaplain John Ridley from Lieutenant General, Sir William Dobbie, the heroic defender of Malta in World War II, reference is made to Tom Walton as follows:

It was good of you to send me that book about Tom Walton.

Thank you very much. I have been reading it with much pleasure and profit.

He certainly was a remarkable young man, and seemed to learn early the lessons which some of us take so long to learn, if at all.

Perhaps that was why God took him home so early in life.

EPITOME OF TOM WALTON'S LIFE

"...that my whole daily walk is one of continuous pleading."

A NIGHT IN NEW GUINEA

A dark night in the jungle country--Most of the troops of a famous Australian Infantry Forces (AIF) Battalion were asleep in their pits around the hilltop. Things had been quiet for the past two days due to the active work of our bombing Kittyhawks. Silence reigned supreme as the midnight hour slipped past and the minutes mounted up like steps to the dawn of another day.

At 1:30 a.m., two sentries, whose eyes had become accustomed to the deep darkness, noticed moving figures about 100 yards away. Instantly they "let loose" all they had at those shadowy figures crawling so stealthily toward the Australian position. Their rifle fire was the signal for a general alarm. Tired men awoke from dead sleep or dear dreams to the rattle of rude fire that warned and roused them to seize rifle or Tommy Gun and rapidly retaliate against the well-nigh invisible foe. Crouching far down into watery pits, they gave the Japs the full blast of their fire.

The advantage, however, was with the attackers who not only inflicted many wounds but also commenced an encircling movement to surround the Australian position with their superior numbers.

Tom Walton, the nineteen-year-old stretcher-bearer of "C" Company, had a particularly busy time in the first phase of that night attack. With utter disregard for his own personal safety and under intense enemy fire, he tended the wounded with great medical skill. One badly wounded boy, whom Tom had just bandaged and made as comfortable as possible, asked him in earnest tones if he would slip over to his tent and get the photo of his wife and little babe. Tom recalled how this man had been swearing just a few minutes before. He swiftly responded to the request and lifted his heart in prayer to his Heavenly Father to

forgive his comrade and spare his life. As he tucked the precious photo in the wounded man's pocket, he gave him an affectionate pat and whispered tenderly, "The Lord will look after them."

A little later, Tom volunteered to stand by the Vickers gunner whose comrades had been wounded. In the darkness of that grim early hour, with the danger of a dawn before them, Tom and his machine-gun comrade were drawn closely together. Striving to conserve their reduced ammunition and straining their eyes into the gloom around them, they spoke in whispers about their small hope of escape once the dawn revealed their exact position to the encircling Japs. Tom's thoughts in those grim moments were revealed in a personal letter, in which he said:

Oh, how small and petty life was to me that night, hanging on a thread in my Father's hands. What foolishness to live for anything but an absolute surrender to His Will! How short and unimportant our life is!

Seeming to read Tom's thoughts, the machine-gunner suddenly said quietly: "I am a bit of an unbeliever myself, but I know my mother prays for me, so there must be something in it. Could we have a prayer?"

"Yes, we certainly can," responded Tom. In a few short words, he immediately sought to show his comrade the way of salvation through Christ as his personal Savior. After pointing his older comrade to the Cross of Christ as man's only hope of eternal life, Tom lifted up his heart in the gun pit and prayed for deliverance.

Very soon after that prayer, the order was given to retire from their nearly surrounded position. After four and a half hours of heavy Japanese pressure, the Australian detachment drew back just before the enemy had completed their encircling movement. Tom Walton, as stretcher-bearer, saw to it that

the wounded were all evacuated and then assisted a wounded man who was not able to walk by himself. He finally withdrew from the fast-closing trap. For his actions during the retreat, Tom was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field.

At the close of an official account of that action, Tom wrote these words which were later sent over the wireless to the world: "Well, maybe, I am young and only new to this active service, but I still give my Lord Jesus all the thanks for a merciful deliverance."

It was suggested that he change the words "Lord Jesus" to "God," but the young hero insisted, "What I have written, I have written." He then added to a friend, "I just trust I shall have the privilege to sound that blessed Name [Lord Jesus] to many countries, and may it be used to glorify my blest Redeemer." Amid the honors of men, the hero of that night in New Guinea did not forget that he was but a Christian pilgrim whose times were in God's hands.

Six months later, he wrote the following brief words in a letter to Ridley. Tom's humble spirit crowns that gloomy, New Guinea night with a halo of heavenly glory befitting the spirit of a true hero.

My Heavenly Father has seen fit, in His merciful goodness, to bestow upon your son-in-the-faith the decoration of the Military Medal for service in action. I could have cried when the acting Commissioned Officer pinned it on my chest, for it came as a shock. God's faithfulness brought tears to my eyes.

Please join with me in the prayer I uttered as soon as I received it. Among the trees away from the camp, I knelt and vowed to my Father that if any glory for this went to myself instead of my Redeemer, I would expect reprimand and

[discipline]. So [the medal] is entirely consecrated to bring Him glory for He is so worthy. Yet, I feel the need of the prayers of others in this matter, being so conscious of the weakness of my flesh.

I trust [the medal] will bring joy to your dear heart, for had not Jesus transformed my life, this would never have happened or I would have wasted its honor upon myself if it had. I believe my Heavenly Father will use it to speak to [souls]. May it point [each] to Christ. Likewise, may I be found faithful in answering the telegrams, allowing the Holy Spirit to send answers which will speak to their souls of none other but Christ. I will not wear [the medal] at any time when it will not bring glory to Jesus.

Thus, like another soldier-saint and hero, General Gordon, Tom accepted the world's honor as a small thing, of value only as it brought added glory to the Redeemer. Why? He had confessed himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth whose desire was towards a better country, that is, an heavenly country (Heb 11:13,16).

Having heard the call, Tom Walton, the hero, was first and foremost a pilgrim who was ever pressing onward towards his promised land.

*Onward we go, for still we hear them singing,
'Come, weary souls, for Jesus bids you come;'
And, through the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing,
The music of the Gospel leads us home.
Angels of Jesus, angels of light,
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of
the night!*