

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Thomas Chisholm, Lyrics; Williams Runyan, Music; 1923

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" was written by Thomas Obadiah Chisholm. He was a teacher at 16, a newspaper editor at 21, and at 27, he became an



ordained Methodist minister. He practiced until his frail health confined to bed, unable to work. During these times, he began to write poetry, and wrote well over 1200 poems during his lifetime. Thomas found great comfort in the Scriptures, and in the fact that God was faithful to be his strength in time of illness and weakness, and to provide his needs. Lamentations 3:22-23 was one of his favorite scriptures: *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness."*

Thomas often shared many of his poems in letters he wrote to one of his good friends, William Runyan, a relatively unknown musician. Runyan attended seminary with Thomas, but was now working at Hope Publishing Company. One of Chisholm's poems he shared was based on his favorite scripture from the book of Lamentations. Runyan was so moved by that particular poem that he composed a musical score to accompany it. It was published in 1913 as, "*Great Is Thy Faithfulness*".



The hymn got very little recognition until it was discovered by Dr. William Houghton, a professor at the Moody Bible Institute. He requested it be sung so often at chapel services that it soon became the unofficial theme song of the college. It's popularity increased exponentially in the 1940's when George Beverly Shea, who had been a student at the Moody Bible Institute, started singing it regularly as part of the Billy Graham evangelistic crusades.

~ Tull