**PRISONERS OF HOPE**

In 2003 we set to work on this CD. A number of things were happening at this time that were crushing my spirit. Our church experienced over twenty deaths (members or immediate family of members) in two years. I had contracted a viral infection in my lungs and breathing was difficult and preaching was next to impossible.

Out of this came a collection of songs about the longing for heaven. Eleven of the thirteen songs have reference to the believer’s desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

I recorded this collection over several months in DeLand, Florida and then Ed Billock added his excellent touches and mixed the final product. We tried to expand the vocal and musical sounds on this record and saving a couple of glitches (one minor, one major) came up with an excellent album.

The intent behind this collection was to fill the hearts and minds of God’s people with many differing views of their blessed hope.

FAR AWAY

In May of 2003, in an attempt to help me regain my health, the good people at THE BIBLE Baptist Church sent me, with my wife, for a four day sail in the Caribbean. Sitting on the deck in Nassau, watching the sun set, my heart longed to be free of the responsibilities and troubles that came with my calling.

Off in the distance a calypso band was playing and something in the rhythm of their song merged with the mood of my soul and soon I was scribbling these words on an envelope.

C

Far away from all oppression Far away from brazen skies

F C F G

Far away from knowing the best of men tell the best of lies

C F

Far away from every shepherd Who leads the flock astray

G C

He’s gonna come and take me far away

Far away from senseless gossip

Far away from evil men

Far away from sins I thought were dead, rising up again

Far away from trying to explain

What I should never have had to say

He’s gonna come and take me far away

Far away from angry women

Far away from spineless men

Far away from knowing it’ll fall apart

But never knowing when

Far away from every tender snare

Placed gently in my way

He’s gonna come and take me far away

Far away from rape and plunder

Far away from children’s tears

Far away from going under

The weight of nameless fears

Far away from every penalty

I’ve ever had to pay

He’s gonna come and take me far away

Far away from cast off elders

Far away from wasted youth

Far away from always wondering

Who’s telling me the truth

Far away from all the shallow games

That hollow people play

He’s gonna come and take me far away

Far away from cowardly silence

Far away from egotistical noise

Far away from all the drunken hands

On helpless girls and boys

Far away from every matter

About which I’ve had to pray

He’s gonna come and take me far away

PRAISE THE LAMB

Each December there are parades in our area. Since thousands gather to watch these follies, we attend to work those crowds with gospel tracts. In 2002 we were working one such parade in Orange City, Florida. Having made our way along one side of the parade route doing our job for Jesus I stood at the end of the line of spectators, waiting for the crew working the other side to complete their task. The next day our church would remember the Lord as He had requested and as I stood on that sidewalk thinking of the upcoming communion service these words dawned in my heart.

The music is from a song I wrote way back in 1974 while a junior in high school, for a lesser purpose.

The lyric was originally called *Give Him The Glory* but Lilian said there was a well known song by that name and people would confuse the two. Like we have such an audience.

D

I take this bread to remind me of the death

A

That Jesus accomplished at Calvary.

D

It is broken to remind me

G

Of the body that hung on the tree.

G

He gave me His Spirit to take control.

D

O He ransomed me, heart and soul.

G D

And I’m still a mortal, but eternal life is inside of me.

G D

Praise the Lamb. Praise the Lamb who has rescued me.

G D

Praise the Lamb. Praise the Lamb who has rescued me.

G A D

I’ll do what I can to give Him the glory.

I take this cup to remind me of the precious

Sin-cleansing blood that Jesus shed.

And I lift it to remind me

He triumphantly rose from the dead.

He gave me His Spirit to be my guide;

To ransom me, from selfish pride.

And I’m still amazed that eternal life is inside of me.

Praise the Lamb. Praise the Lamb who has rescued me.

Praise the Lamb. Praise the Lamb who has rescued me.

I’ll do what I can to give Him the glory,

HE’S ALMOST GOT IT READY

This is a quartet song I wrote in August, 1982 while happily singing with Jim and Linda Wilson. The three of us, along with Charlie, made three pretty good albums in the early ‘80s but never did anything with them.

C G C

Jesus said that when He left us He would go to build a place

F C G

Where we shall dwell for ages and we’ll see him face to face

C G C

He said when He was finished He would call us up above

F C G C

And I think that I can almost hear that trumpet of love.

Oh I think that He’s almost got it ready

G C

Oh I think that the work is almost done

C

Very soon the construction will be over

G C

And I’ll sail to my home beyond the sun.

Jesus said that many mansions lie upon the other side

And everyone who loves Him has a place there to abide

He said He’s coming back to take us up to be with Him

And I think that I can almost hear that blast upon the wind.

Oh I think that He’s almost got it ready

Oh I think that the work is almost through

Very soon the construction will be over

And I’ll sail to my home beyond the blue.

Jesus said that we should fear not, said I’m coming back for you

And He cannot break His promise every word He said is true

All the angels will be singing as we leave this world of care

And I think that I can almost hear that shout ring through the air.

Oh I think that He’s almost got it ready

Oh I think that the work is almost done

Very soon the construction will be over

And I’ll sail to my home beyond the sun.

Oh I think that He’s almost got it ready

Oh I think that the work is almost through

Very soon the construction will be over

And I’ll sail to my home beyond the blue.

## WHAT WILL IT BE

The first verse sprang from my reading of the Song of Solomon. That Shulamite looking through the window hoping for the coming of the one she loved set this song in motion. The chorus is drawn from the 4th chapter of Malachi, while the second verse is based upon Ecclesiastes. I wrote this in the summer of 1987.

G C G

Sometimes in the midnight I think that I hear

D C G

His voice in the distance calling me near

C G

I race to the lattice but only darkness I see

C G C G

But I stay through the night Waiting for the light

C D C D G

What will it be beyond the sunrise for me?

C G

What will it be when the Sun of righteousness

D

Rises with healing in His wings for all to see?

C D G

When the light of the world does reign in His glory

C G C D G

What will it be beyond the sunrise for me?

When I take my last journey through the valley of death

In the shadow of blackness I draw my last breath

In the distant tomorrow a glimmer I see

At the and of my travels

When the silver chord unravels

What will it be beyond the sunrise for me?

What will it be when the Sun of righteousness

Rises with healing in His wings for all to see?

When the light of the world does reign in His glory

What will it be beyond the sunrise for me?

## THE CRY FOR PEACE

This song got me some nasty write-ups by angry little men whose so-called ministries consist of tearing down their brethren on obscure web sites. That’s what you have to do if God is not using you. I am not sure why it is wrong for a Christian to sing an anti-war song. I am for peace. Jesus is not coming back to set up a thousand years of war. Praise the Lord! I long for a day when the killing and bloodshed are over and when young men no longer have to die in the place of the old men who sent them into combat. If that makes me a bad man, so be it.

The tune here is my adaptation of an old folk melody which had a revival in the 1970s. The lyric is my adaptation of a poem I found in a book over one hundred years old. The verse was penned in 1891 by Clara Davidson. I amended it in 2004 to make its theme scriptural.

G C G C D

They tell us of wars and rumors of wars and the orders of kings to lowly men

G7 C G D C G

and little they heed of the sorrow decreed by the stroke of the ruler’s pen.

And little they care for child and wife

when both the wife and child do moan

while nations fight for their rulers’ greed

and the fighter dies all alone.

The woman with hair like sunset gold

the woman with hair like midnight coal

each of them does lose the love of her life

the man that is half of her soul.

Aye! you that flatter a rulers’ greed

and you that fawn at his great power

and you that fight when there is no need –

you too shall come to your dark hour.

When in the doom of that dreadful hour

when for your deeds you’re called to pay

then shall cry your cry for peace

as we do cry for peace this day.

And we shall know peace on that day.

**SAILING WITH YOU**

In December, 2004 my father had surgery from which he could not recover. As his strength failed we both regretted the four decades during which we had no real relationship and rejoiced in the ten years we had spent serving the Lord together.

The third week of the following January I was moderating our church’s annual Bible conference, then driving the thirty miles to the hospital to spend afternoons with him. It was his last week in this old world.

On those trips back and forth between his death bed and the exciting church services I struggled through a thousand emotions. This is the song that came to me as I rode along.

He went to heaven that week. Lilian and Stephanie learned the song in a day and we sang it at his memorial service. We held up the record long enough to include this number, for it surely fit the theme.

C G

They tell us the old boat is broken And none has the skill to repair

C F G C

The damage from many a journey Out on the oceans of care

C G

It’s no longer fit for its service Though it is not what any desires

C F G C

They’re taking it out of commission And the captain is forced to retire

F G C

So we push your boat out into the current

F G

And watch as you drift from the shore

F G C

With tear filled eyes we realize

F G

It will sail this way no more

F G C

We commend your soul into the deep

F G

And thank you for being so true

F G C

As your frail vessel slips out of my sight

F G C

How I wish I was sailing with you.

We passed through many a terrible storm

When it seemed that all would be lost

Then we would enter a haven of rest

That made it all seem worth the cost

So often we feared the stern captain

But he made us into a loyal crew

Though sometimes we questioned his judgment

He steadfastly carried us through.

So we push your boat out into the current

And watch as you drift from the shore

With tear filled eyes we realize

It will sail this way no more

We commend your soul into the deep

And thank you for being so true

As your frail vessel slips out of my sight

How I wish I was sailing with you.

We commend your soul into the deep

And thank you for being so true

As your frail vessel nears heaven’s bright shore

How I wish I was sailing with you.

Dad I wish I was sailing with you.

BE SURE

A good Bible lesson would be to find all the scriptures cited in this lyric. This was written as a very hard, driving, preachy song in December, 1980. It evolved into a children’s song. By the time we recorded it for the *Prisoners* sessions it had drifted to a point somewhere between the two.

I wrestled with including it on this project as it does not fit the theme, but it came out so well that we decided not to hold it over.

It is a real thrill to visit churches and watch children sing this song.

C G C

Guess you thought that nobody was looking at you

F C G C G

When you did what you did guess you thought nobody knew

C G C

You looked every direction to make sure you were alone

F C G C

But Jesus once said, there’s a voice in the stone.

F C

And there’s one thing I want you to be certain about

G C G

I’ll make it quite simple, so’s to leave no doubt

C G C F

Be sure Be sure Be sure Be sure

C G C

Be sure your sin will find you out.

When you curs-ed the king in your chamber that night

You must have felt certain it would not come to light

But Solomon warned you, and warned you right well

That a sweet little song bird was liable to tell.

And there’s one thing I want you to be certain about

I’ll make it quite simple, so’s to leave no doubt

Be sure Be sure Be sure Be sure

Be sure your sin will find you out.

Did you cover up all of the possible ends?

Did you silence with bribery all of your friends?

Did you stop once to realize, in your reveling mirth,

That the eyes of the Lord walk throughout the whole earth?

Oh there’s one thing I want you to be certain about

I’ll make it quite simple, so’s to leave no doubt

Be sure Be sure Be sure Be sure

Be sure your sin will find you out.

What you did in the closet, they’ll shout from the roof

And the book of remembrance will reveal the proof

And the shame and the torment that bring you so low

Only serve to remind you, you reap what you sow.

And there’s one thing I want you to be certain about

I’ll make it quite simple, so’s to leave no doubt

Be sure Be sure Be sure Be sure

Be sure your sin will find you out

BEYOND THE RIVER

I have to be honest with you, I have been singing this song for so long, and its melody sounds so familiar, that I cannot recall writing it. It seems I’ve always known it. It may be a tune I heard as a boy or something I caught once on late-night radio and never forgot.

We recorded this for the *A T R* record but did not like the sound and left it off. We reworked it a bit and gave it what Ed called “a bunch of hillbillies on the front porch” sound.

A D

Sometimes I’m so burdened Sometimes things go wrong

A E

Sometimes I get weary With life’s busy throng

A D

I long for contentment And a satisfied mind

A E A

The way I will follow Green pastures I’ll find

D A

Beyond the river That has no bridge

D A E

Beyond the river That has no bridge

A D

God will not forsake me By grace He will take me

A E A

Beyond the river That has no bridge

The path that I follow Is narrow and steep

It leads down to Jordan Dark river so deep

The old ship of Zion Will soon cross the tide

And I shall be sailing To Canaan’s bright side

**PRINCE OF PEACE**

Here is another song born on the mail route. Came up with this one in October of 1986. This has always been Lilian’s favorite melody. You would not believe all the work she and Stephanie do getting this music worked out for me. I give them the rough idea of what instruments I hear and how they are to be used and they do the rest. Thank the Lord for their talents. Ed does some great vocal work here as well.

C F C F

Jesus would you calm me When the things of earth alarm me

C F G

Would you let me feel your presence in my soul?

C F C F

Jesus would you soothe me When tribulation starts to move me

C F G

Would you let me know that you are in control?

C G F C

Lord you know that I’m a weak I’m a weak and fearful man

C G F G

And sometimes I need a tender touch From your strong right hand.

C G F C

So with a promise from your blessed word Would you bid my trouble cease?

F G F G C

Ah prove to me one more time That you’re the Prince of Peace.

Jesus would you love me

When the sky turns bleak above me

Would you let me know that everything’s alright?

Jesus would you cheer me

When the tears of sorrow near me

Would you give to me a song in the night?

Jesus would you show me

What it takes to make me holy

Would you help me not to falter in my way?

Jesus keep me praising

All your sweet grace so amazing

Would you help me show I’m thankful all the day?

Jesus would you aid me

When some evil has waylaid me

Would you lift me up and let me stand again?

Jesus don’t desert me

When some cutting word has hurt me

Oh remind me that you’ll always be my friend?

JUST ME AND MY BEST FRIEND

This rambling folk song tells the tale of life on the road, hour after hour, city to city, moving on to take the gospel to another congregation or sidewalk gathering. I first wrote this while riding in and out of Franklin, North Carolina during the winter of 1981.

During the *Prisoners* sessions Ed reworked the tempo and turned a mediocre song into a very good one.

Rode out again this morning, staking my soul to the wind.

On the highway, all alone, just me and my best friend.

Been so long since anyone saw Him, but I sure know He’s there.

And when I speak out the word of truth

His power fills the air.

Highlands how I’ve missed you. Good to pass your way again.

Singing through the mountains, just me and my best friend.

And He teaches me with the sunshine and the swaying of the field

and He shows me things men through all the age

have prayed to have revealed.

Filled with joy and gladness rounding still another bend

Feeding on freedom’s beauty, just me and my best friend.

And each village reaches to us with its hands so warm and strong.

And He tells me with a whispering voice

We’ll stay but not too long.

Got no time to look back on things that have met their end

We know this road started but it never stops,

just me and my best friend.

Oh He keeps me looking onward, and He keeps my sights on high.

And the place He’s gonna lead me to I’ll get there by and by.

Rolling, rolling, rolling on. Chasing stars till the sun comes again.

Guided through the nighttime; just me and my best friend.

Wondering how many’s dying just beyond my sight.

Still finding only one to save, makes everything alright.

Wish I could cling to every soul who a smile did lend

To cheer us on our journey, just me and my best friend.

When this pavement turns gold and the last mile has been run

We’ll gather round and talk about our travels with the Son.

**WHEN I HEAR THE PRAISES START**

Of the many songs which ministered grace to my heart as a young Christian, this Keith Green composition was one of my favorites.

My child, my child why are you striving?

You can’t add one thing to what’s been done for you.

I did it all while I was dying.

Rest in my love and peace will come to you.

When I hear the praises start I want to rain upon you

Blessings that will fill your heart Oh I see no stain upon you

Because you are my child, and you know me

To me you’re only holy

Nothing that you’ve done remains Only what you do for me.

My child, my child why are you weeping?

You will not have to wait forever.

That day and that hour is in my keeping.

The day I’ll bring you into heaven.

When I hear the praises start I want to rain upon you

Blessings that will fill your heart Oh I see no stain upon you

Because you are my child, and you know me

To me you’re only holy

Nothing that you’ve done remains Only what you do in me.

Just what you do in me.

My precious bride the day is nearing

When I will take you in my arms and hold you

I know there’s so many things that you’ve been hearing

But you just hold on to what I’ve told you

Cause when I hear the praises start

I want to rain upon you

Blessings that will fill your heart

Oh I see no stain upon you

Because you are my child, and you know me

To me you’re only holy

Nothing that you’ve done remains

Only what you do for me.

Only what you do for me.

Only what you do for me.

Only what you do for me.

**RUNNING OUT OF TIME**

A week before the trip that yielded *Far Away* I was sitting on my front step, too weak to attend to the hundreds of tasks at hand and very depressed over my inability to muster enough strength to be about my Father’s business. I thought of the labor that had brought me to this place of weakness, of the work yet to be finished, and realized for the first time that I might never accomplish all I had hoped to accomplish for the Saviour and His church.

That morning I composed this personal testimony of doubt and certainty, of triumph and defeat, of success mingled with regret.

We did an early version for the *ATR* album with which I was not pleased and this effort justified the wait.

D G D

There’s a siren in the distance It’s someone’s sorest test

D G A

I want to follow and to be of help But I need a little rest

G D G A

Every burden in this city I still want to make it mine

G A G D

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.

Oh I tried to be the leader

Sought to rally all the brave

To stand and wage the war of wars

Against all that would enslave

I’m still hungry for the action

But I can’t march in the front line

I never will stop running But I’m running out of time

Circumstance and obligation

Another call, another page

Ate away the days of fervor

Stole my passion and my rage

That ghost that broke my sleep last night

His face looked just like mine

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.

I was gonna change the world you know

Then my babies came along

I worked my job and earned my pay

While the world kept rolling on

I’ve reached the days of might have been

And my failure haunts my mind

Oh babies I’m still running

I’m just running out of time.

There are millions out there crying

Once I heard every call

In my heart I know they are still there

But now I can’t hear them all

There’s a dragon in the vineyard

Get my sword, that devil’s mine

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.

I still press toward the same mark

How did I get so far behind?

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

This is the alternate lyric.

There’s a siren in the distance Someone’s world has come apart

I want to follow and to be of help But today my heart won’t start

Every burden in this city I can’t help but feel it’s mine

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.

I tried to be the leader Sought to rally to the Light

All who saw the cause was just all who loved the right

I’m still hungry for the action

But I can’t march in the front line

I never will stop running But I’m running out of time

All the pressing obligations Irons all glowing in the fire

Ate away my days of fervor Took my strength not my desire

That ghost that broke my sleep last night

His face looked just like mine

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.

Once I thought that I might change the world

I stood up tall and strong

Seems the world is none the better But I don’t think I was wrong

I’ve reached the days of might have been

And my failure haunts my mind

Oh yes I’m still running I’m just running out of time.

I know I’ve hurt some people and there’s now way they can know

That realizing I have failed them Brings me oh so low

While we both dwell on my weakness I press on they stay behind

I’ve got to keep on running For I’m running out of time.

There’s a shadow on my heart and mind

Since childhood I have known

I am chosen to serve others Though I long to be alone

I’m as frail as any mortal I’m indwelt by the Divine

Don’t know if I’m running to or from

But I’m running out of time.

There is pain in every victory, There is joy in each decline

Oh yes I am still running I’m just running out of time.