

#6 of 12 - 5 & 10 on the 15th

*(a monthly series on impactful Christians who poured out (5) their lives in Christ's strength and power
(10) sent out around the 15th of each month)*

Bonar – Minister with the Laughing Face

Nehemiah 8:10 – *“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

Intro Refrain - This is the sixth in a monthly series this year entitled *Victorious Christians You Should Know* from Warren Wiersbe's book by this title, introducing you each month to one amazing Christian from the past.

Church history is so important! It's both encouraging and inspiring to hear how Christians have sought the Lord, lived for Him, been sustained by Him to accomplish great things in the Kingdom of God, and then die and pass into eternal life. We are the church in our time! We must both take up the cause of Christ in our day and also live for Jesus with dedication and passion – laying down our lives so that the life of Christ might be lived in us and through us. I hope these short sketches inspire you to read more about each of these Christians and to go out, asking Holy Spirit, to help you live a more earnest and uncompromising Christian life.

Bonar – Minister with the Laughing Face

In an age when stern and unfriendly religion was mistaken for holiness, *Andrew Alexander Bonar* (1810–1892) shone like a lamp of joy. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, into a devout Christian family, Andrew was the youngest of three brothers, including the famed hymnwriter Horatius Bonar (who wrote “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say”). The Bonar home was steeped in God's Word and filled with love, shaping Andrew's heart for ministry early on. His bright spirit and infectious laugh became hallmarks of his life – a man equally serious about God's holiness and overflowing with Christ's joy.

Bonar once wrote in his journal, *“It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.”* His own likeness to Christ was seen not only in his deep theological work but in his glowing demeanor. It was said of him, *“His face was always lit with heaven's own sunshine.”* Known as *“the minister with the laughing face,”* Bonar carried a spiritual cheerfulness that disarmed skeptics and uplifted the weary.

Though he remained rooted in solemn reverence, Bonar knew the Christian life was not one of grim duty but of glorious delight. *“Joy,”* he affirmed, *“is the flag that is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there.”* This joy was deeply rooted in Scripture as Nehemiah 8:10 proclaims, *“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

Andrew married Isabella Dickson in 1848, and together they raised three daughters. Despite facing deep personal sorrows – including the early death of Isabella – Bonar’s faith never dimmed. His resilience through suffering was not stoic but surrendered as he once wrote, *“It is not the happy life but the holy life that is the object of the Lord with His children.”*

Ordained in 1838, Bonar ministered in Collace before accepting the call to Finnieston Free Church, Glasgow, where he served for over 40 years. He played a vital role in the 1843 Disruption of the Church of Scotland and was a close friend and biographer of Robert Murray M’Cheyne (who was the 2nd subject of this series of “Victorious Christians You Should Know”). Their 1839 mission to Palestine, seeking to evangelize Jews, shaped his lifelong passion for Jewish missions and the return of Christ.

As a preacher, Bonar balanced deep theological conviction with a warmth that drew even the skeptical. As a writer, he left behind rich devotional works – his *Memoir of M’Cheyne*, his *Diary and Life*, and Bible commentaries that still stir hearts. His sermons reflected Psalm 34:5: *“Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”*

Andrew Bonar reminds us that holiness and happiness are not enemies but friends. His legacy is one of radiant faith, joyful humility, and unshakable trust in Christ. In a world dark with doubt and despair, Bonar’s laughing face still points us to the God who delights in His children.

“The Christian should be the happiest man in the world, because he has the best of Masters, the best of hopes, and the best of futures.” – Andrew A. Bonar