

Women We Should Know: Betsey Stockton

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 September 2021

Preacher: Jon Hinkson

[0:00] Wonderful. Thank you. Father, we thank you that you are a fountain of blessing to us, your people, that you have given us this wonderful promise of the Spirit who bubbles up as streams of living water within us, making existence life itself in knowing you. Thank you too, Lord, that your Holy Spirit has manifested himself in the wonderful and beautiful lives of so many of your people. And we are going to consider one this morning together. So continue to work that good work of your recreation in our lives, that they may be adorned increasingly with the fruits of your Spirit, that they might resemble your Son, Father, in whom is your delight, that we might have lives that are deeply glorifying to you and wonderfully fulfilling to us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. If you could hand these in when you're done, we'll use them again in the future.

Well, we're continuing our series on women you should know, but just might possibly not, ones that are a little bit less known. And we are considering this morning Betsy Stockton, we might say indentured servant who sat with queens. Indentured servant who sat with queens.

There she is. Betsy Stockton never knew the exact details of her birth. Wherever her year of birth appears in any of the literature or records, there's always a question mark after it. The identity of her father is unknown, as is her mother. She is listed in a census that we have of a mulatto. So most likely, judging from the common experience, her mother was an enslaved woman and her father, her mother's owner. One wonders if her mother, her birth mother, was ever given the joy of naming her daughter. As Betsy, her name, B-E-T-S-E-Y, distinctively, as Betsy, was a favorite name among the white woman of the Stockton clan, in whose Princeton home, baby Betsy saw the light of day and her birth mother's face.

While just a little girl, mother and daughter were separated. And Betsy was placed in the Philadelphia home of Robert Stockton's daughter, Elizabeth. There is Elizabeth. Elizabeth and her husband, Ashbell Green. Ashbell Green, here is Elizabeth's husband, Ashbell Green was pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. And one might have thought this a relatively hopeful situation for Betsy. Indeed, later, Betsy would refer to the Ashbell Greens as a, quote, affectionate, indulgent household, even being spoiled. And describe her wards as, quote, reform-minded people who supported the abolition of slavery. And it was true that Ashbell Green was for abolition, indeed played a leading role in drafting the church's position on slavery for the Presbyterian

General Assembly that met in 1818, which stated forthrightly, and this would have been in Ashbell Green's prose, okay, we consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is manifestly the duty of all Christians to correct the errors of former times, former times, and as speedily as possible to efface this blot on our holy religion and to obtain the complete abolition of slavery throughout Christendom, and if possible, throughout the entire world. Sounds wonderful in principle.

[5:18] And although Green wrote that Betsy Stockton, quote, was never intended to be held as a slave, that was indeed her status, even if her condition held affectionate features.

Betsy writes of her master providing an education through tutoring and the use of his enormous private library. So she did have many wonderful, wonderful opportunities. Thus, if this is a warm glow, surely it is still a dark landscape.

Sadly, we have, in several intervals of Betsy's life, very little to go on. We can construct an external biography as to the outward shape, but her interior life is often hidden from us by the absence of written remains, as is so typical of many indentured servants.

Telling her story is, as one has put it, often feels like trying to read a book with pages torn out. Just get frustrated at what's missing.

Or maybe singing, it's like singing a hymn when you forget some of the words, as I often do and increasingly these days. But, for all the gaps, we're going to go ahead and try, because despite all these tantalizing gaps, it really is a wonderful story and well worth telling.

[6:53] When, in 1812, Ashbell Green, again, he had been president of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, in 1812, Ashbell Green was summoned from his Philadelphia pastorate to assume the presidency of Princeton College.

There it is. Isn't that a mighty handsome college there? Not much has changed since. It's still equally bucolic, but that's an aside.

I'm getting hisses. I'm no. And, indeed, the town of Princeton then and the college became the setting for the next season of Betsy's life, and significantly in several ways.

The new president's arrival came at a time of crisis. I knew before I left my pastoral charge that the college was in a most deplorable state, he writes.

I went with a resolution to reform it, or fall under the attempt. And by reform, he meant reshape the college into what its pious founders intended it to be, as he writes.

[8:07] Well, that would prove a challenging ambition for the degeneracy of the times, would prove tenacious. To give a sense of the depths of the nadir to which the college had fallen from its founding hopes of being a nursery of piety, let me give a few incidents from the beleaguered president's diaries that he records here in his memoirs.

In one act of notable, flagitious impiety, I love that term. What a great term. Flagitious impiety. Mind-boggling against an instinct for what is appropriate.

Flagitious. We are told of one student who, under cover of darkness, forced his way through a window in the college prayer hall, and then cut through the leaves of the college Bible to form a cavity in which he inserted a pack of playing cards.

That when they opened the Bible to read scripture, a pack of playing cards fell out. Then there was the big cracker incident.

The big cracker consisted of a hollow log with two pounds of gunpowder confined in the cavity. This infernal machine, as the president called it, this infernal machine, was set off at the entrance of Nassau Hall.

[9:43] This was the, that's that very lovely building right there. On the Sabbath, which betrayed religion as the true target of this explosion.

Well, the discharge cracked walls and broke windows throughout the whole building, hurling a fragment of the log through the door of the, the, the prayer, prayer hall.

So, even the president himself came under assault by a liquor animated student rowdy, who aimed a blow at his head with an and iron.

Well, such was the bleak and lawless backdrop of a spiritual awakening, which would stir, stir the Princeton campus. Of the 105 students in the college at the time, a mere 12 even professed any religion at all.

But the small cohort of disciples, along with the president, had been praying daily for a descent of God's quickening spirit. And when Ashbell Green had come into office, he had instituted, as part of the college curriculum, and thus required of all students, a weekly Bible recitation.

[11:06] That is, every student had to read, reflect upon, and present a synopsis of the content, systematically through every book of the Bible.

And it seems that many a student, though they treated it merely as, this discipline is merely an academic exercise, they began in doing so to experience, as they read the Bible, you can read in some of their journals, that the Bible began to read them.

And the Holy Spirit, the great matchmaker, was wedding their hearts to the Savior. In this manner, writes the president, the divine influence seemed to descend like a silent dew from heaven.

I mean, this is one of these really interesting things when you study revivals in this period. Some of them come through the remarkable and dramatic use of means, preaching, revival preaching, but some of them seem to be all out of connection with many means, or certainly not dramatic means that we would often associate with it.

Just the simple, basic exercise of some of the simple disciplines of reading the Bible. And great spiritual things happen. Well, Betsy too, Betsy Stockton, in her campus home, the campus home of the president, she lived in the president, Ashbell Green's home, had been also engaged in this discipline.

[12:46] She picked up the same discipline of reading her Bible systematically. And she heard each day in their family altar, because the servants would have, she was always a part of the family altar with his children.

The fervent prayers of the president himself, and indeed for her soul, and the souls of his children. And she too, by the same spirit, had in the joyful words of Green, quote, met with a saving change of heart, in that very same awakening.

The minutes of Princeton's first Presbyterian church record that on September 20th, quote, quote, Betsy Stockton, a colored woman living in the family of Reverend Dr. Green, applied for admission to the Lord's table.

Well, the elders were satisfied as to the evidence of her experimental acquaintance with religion. You remember from last time we explained that experimental, we would say experiential.

This was deeply, a deep reality in her experience. They called it experimental in those days. So upon, there, in the judgment of charity, a credible evidence of experimental religion, she was then baptized, baptized, and received into full communion.

[14:10] Well, right at this time, the Greens freed Betsy from any obligation to remain in their household. So as an indentured servant, basically, you were required to stay as a servant in a household for an express amount of time, and then you would be released or given your freedom.

And, and this they did. I should say, this would have been well in advance of the practice at the time in New Jersey. So this was incredibly progressive, even for ministers of the gospel in that day, to just, to, to release her.

So she's released, and needs no longer remain in their household as a servant. But, she actually requested, and was given permission to stay on as a paid domestic helper.

That way, she was able to continue to have access to what was surely one of the most ample and edifying libraries in the entire country in that day.

And in that library, she continued to be tutored by the president himself, and especially by his son, James, who took a diligent and affectionate interest in Betsy's education.

[15:26] Uh, Betsy was very keen to learn, and also attended, uh, a local Sabbath school. Uh, and again, remember, Sabbath school is a school that, that isn't simply devoted to religious instruction.

It's devoted to reading, writing, arithmetic, pretty much all instruction, but just meets on a Sabbath day, which would be the only day available for people that, that, that work, children that would work to be able to attend.

It's called Sabbath school. And Osborne, uh, a Princeton seminary student who taught, uh, the Sabbath school classes was greatly impressed by Betsy's scholarship.

And when she surprisingly asked him for an academic reference, uh, he happily obliged, writing, quote, she has a larger acquaintance with sacred history and the Mosaic institution than almost any ordinary person, old or young I have ever known.

Later, he specified what he meant by ordinary person is anyone who is not a minister of the gospel or on a present ordination track. That's, that's a remarkable comment, commendation there.

[16:39] More, more knowledge of the Bible and the Mosaic institutions than anyone he knew. Um, Osborne went on, I recollect a multitude of instances where for my own information, I have questioned her about some fact in biblical history or some minute point of Jewish antiquities and have immediately received a correct answer.

Obviously showing the effects of Ashbell Green's ample library in which she spent much time. Um, um, neither was Betsy keeping all this education to herself for she started her own class in town to instruct, instruct black children in the community.

Now, perhaps you are wondering for what purpose was Betsy seeking academic recommendations? What's going on here?

Well, it seems that in her newfound faith and newly acquired freedom, she was eager to exercise both in no ordinary way.

It seems there was blossoming in her heart, a desire to go to Africa as a missionary to carry the saving message of Christ to those who would never hear it at all, unless someone would be willing to bring it to them.

[18:03] Now, overseas missions was just in its first infancy in America. The first to leave for foreign shores were two couples who sailed from Boston to Burma in 1812, uh, among whom, well, Adam Ironman and Judson were one, the subject of an earlier lecture that, that we've given here.

Uh, they sailed to Burma in 1812, uh, and there were as yet no opportunities to go to Africa with the nascent American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Okay. Uh, uh, but there was one in the making to go to the remote sandwich islands. The sandwich islands is what we now call Hawaii.

Uh, Captain Cook actually named it the sandwich islands after the Earl of Sandwich, uh, after whom the sandwich was named, uh, because he was such an inveterate gambler that he never even wanted a break in his gambling, uh, uh, to eat meals.

So his servants would bring him a little slice of beef between two slices of bread. So, uh, that is the, uh, but, but that's extra. That is not part of the notes. Um, uh, uh, back to Hawaii.

[19:19] Okay. Uh, why Hawaii? Uh, you may wonder why Hawaii? Well, that's a story that is quite extraordinary. And one that takes us back here to New Haven and Yale.

Uh, it turns out, uh, it turns out that a Hawaiian boy named Obukaya, there he is, uh, Obukaya, who had lost his parents in the internecine tribal wars back in the Hawaiian islands, and, and, and, and fleeing that violence, had seen a ship passing by, swam out, and, and stowed away in this passing ship, and eventually shows up at a port, New Haven, and he, and, and, uh, there, there he shows up, Obukaya, in an ill-fitting sailor suit, found himself wandering on the Yale campus, and was taken in by students, who, thinking him a curiosity, brought him to Yale president Timothy Dwight, uh, who received him in his, oh, oh, did I forget Timothy Dwight?

He's, he's, he's, he's somewhere. You see him all around, I mean, I'm, I'm, I'm sure you all have pictures of him in your home, uh, uh, but, uh, uh, there, uh, there, President Dwight, with President Dwight, Obukaya, learned to read and write English, along with a daily dose of gospel.

Uh, I heard of God as often as I lived with this family, uh, writes Obukaya. Well, before long, he had put his trust in Christ, he had put his trust in Christ, and burned with a desire to return to his island people, to bring them the good news of Jesus.

And it was Obukaya's Yale students, uh, uh, companions, who conceived of a vision of starting a foreign mission school to equip Obukaya, Obukaya him, and some others like him.

[21:38] There were a couple of other, um, uh, Hawaiian boys, uh, to carry the gospel back to their people. Uh, so this, found this, these are some of the names, and then they have their Hawaiian names, and you, you, you'll see their names.

This is from the original little entry book at, uh, at the, the college that was founded, the foreign mission school. And Yale senior Edwin Dwight, a relative of President Dwight, uh, who would, he was the student that first found Obukaya wandering on the campus quad.

He became the first principal of this new mission school established in Cornwall, Connecticut, uh, in 1817. Uh, here's the, there's the, uh, there, there was, uh, it's burned down, so we can't see it anymore.

Alas, uh, uh, uh, uh, sadly, oh, it's so heart-wrenching. Obukaya gets through his training and is about to go, but he never made it back to his people with the gospel, for he died of typhus, uh, just, uh, just about a year later.

Uh, but, but, the torch that he had hoped to carry that had slipped from his dying hand was taken up by the Yale students who held him so dearly, held him so dear.

[23:00] Uh, so, um, there we go. Um, uh, the, uh, the, uh, first installment of two missionary couples set sail for Obukaya's island home on October 23rd, 1819.

So there's Hiram Bingham, who, again, pretty famous name at Yale, you know, the Bingham, um, and, uh, yeah, and there's Sybil.

This is, that's a good one. Uh, that's actually painted by Morse, is in Morse College, who was also a really, a really good artist. Um, so, uh, love that frill.

But here's another picture of them that I really like. Isn't that, it's a sweet picture. There they are on the field. Um, the old, uh, daguer, uh, thing there. So, uh, yeah, so, so they were the, they were the first, uh, Hiram and Sybil Bingham.

Uh, and then the other couple that went with them, um, uh, Yalies, uh, also, um, that's, uh, Lucy and, um, and, uh, Thurston.

[24:08] Uh, well, no, no, no, Thurston's their last name. It's, uh, uh, Asa. Yeah. Asa and Lucy Thurston. So, uh, there they go. Look at those wonderful gloves there.

Pretty, pretty neat. As we'll see in a moment, those clothes that they left for didn't end up matching the climate. Very well where they were going to show up, but we'll get to that in a moment.

Uh, so there they go. That's the first installment to the sandwich islands and God blessed their endeavors opening doors. So many doors, in fact, that they called for reinforcements.

We need more missionaries to come. And it was this opportunity to bring the gospel to foreign lands that had prompted Betsy, who heard about this, to suddenly seek out references from her teachers.

Uh, and, uh, so we've mentioned Osborne's reference. You heard a little bit of that. Her Sabbath school teachers glowing reference. Well, her other reference came from Ashbell Green.

[25 : 08] I mean, no shabby reference that the president of Princeton college, uh, and his commendation was without reserve. Quote, few of her age and sex have read more books on religion than she.

And he, he, he, he's the president of a universe of a college, you know, so he's around college students. Um, neither can they give a better account of them.

So she had, she had, she had assimilated this stuff. Wonderful. Uh, well, as it turned out, uh, there was another, uh, there he is.

there was, uh, uh, uh, uh, another missionary candidate from Princeton, uh, Charles Stewart. So there's Charles Stewart. And, uh, he had also been awakened in that same awakening where, uh, Betsy, uh, had been revived, uh, or had closed with Christ.

And, uh, uh, with his new bride, he also hoped to answer the call to the Hawaiian missions. Uh, there he is again with his bride, uh, Harriet was her name.

[26 : 22] That's Harriet. So Charles and Harriet Stewart. Um, both the Stewart's and Betsy, uh, would have to pay a substantial share of their own expenses to get to the mission field.

And one might've thought this a daunting obstacle from, uh, only recently freed indentured servant. Uh, but she had been saving up her wages paid to her in the president's household.

And president green supplied all the shortfall to get her to the field. Uh, Betsy was to be specially attached to the Stewart family.

Now expecting, uh, she would be ideal help with the baby, but, but president green insisted that she was quote, well qualified for higher employment in a mission than domestic drudgery.

Uh, not that some domestic drudgery would not be the lot of all missionaries that show up on the field, but green was keen that Betsy's role not be restricted to such.

[27 : 35] The contract, uh, signed with the board of foreign missions indicates Betsy's work as quote, the great enterprise of endeavoring to ameliorate the condition of the heathen generally, and especially to bring them to a saving knowledge of the truth that as it is in Jesus.

Then there's a strange clause appearing in the contract that Betsy quote, is to be regarded and treated neither as an equal, nor as a servant, but as an humble Christian friend.

What did this mean? Did Betsy wonder or have anxiety as to how this would play out among her missionary colleagues? Not as an equal, but not as a servant?

Well, she would soon have the opportunity to discover what relations would be like. As November 19th, 1822, Betsy Stockton boarded the whaling ship, Thames, docked in New Haven Harbor.

She would be the very first American single female missionary to land on foreign shores.

[28:59] Isn't that extraordinary? The very first single American missionary to land on foreign shores. I'm very careful with that language. Technically, not the first to leave for foreign shores, but to land on foreign shores.

As it turned out, there was a widow, Mrs. Charlotte White, who just a couple of years earlier, had headed out to Burma with the Baptists as a widow, but she ran into another missionary single man on the boat.

And they, yeah, they were, by the time they arrived, they were married. So, so Betsy Stockton is the first single female woman missionary from America to arrive on foreign shores as a missionary.

So, just to be precise there in case you hear something different. I'm not confused. So, yeah. Well, as the long voyage to the South Seas commenced, so did Betsy's journal.

It's wonderful. She has a journal for this time. And it commences with this sentence. Here begins the history of things known only to those who have bid the American shores a long adieu.

[30:16] So, here, there, there are a bunch of missionaries parting and leaving from New Haven, New Haven Harbor.

So, well, yes, things that begin known only to those who leave for foreign shores. One thing that quickly began and known only to those who leave American shores upon the open seas is stomach distress.

For the next entry, the very first day on board reads in her diary, the weather became stormy and the seasickness commenced.

Only to be followed the next day with this entry. It blew very hard in the day and in the night increased to a gale. sea sickness increased with it.

I myself very sick. When the first Sabbath on board rolled around, all the missionaries were far too sick to hold service.

[31:19] And I can't help but wonder if Betsy's entry, my soul longed for the courts of the Lord, didn't in part reflect a longing for terra firma. Apparently, the weather, the weather, they were on a whaling ship.

It's a period whaling ship, not the Thames, but one very much like it. And apparently, the weather, the weather, the weather really pitched and swayed, making meal, taking meals on board, a remarkable feat.

Our table, she writes, our table makes a curious appearance. It is spread over with frames.

Every plate, dish, and cup sets in a frame and is so fastened. And even thus, we cannot get a meal without holding on with one hand, I guess to the table, so you can stay in your chair, holding on with one hand and attempting to eat with the other.

So it must have been pretty remarkable. There was another observation Betsy made while at table, perhaps attentive to how the phrase from her contract, treated neither as an equal nor as a servant, would play out.

[32:38] They ate at two tables. She writes, there are 11 persons at each table. At the first, the captain and one of the mates, with nine of the missionaries.

At the second, two mates, three of the missionaries, and four Hawaiian natives, and myself. The provisions of both tables are alike.

In the division of the missionary stores, I always have my share, so that I have indeed a double portion of the good things of this life.

For Mr. and Mrs. Stewart give me always a share of theirs. The last apple and orange were cut in three pieces and divided between us.

This observation and experience turns out to have been very meaningful to Betsy, who notes, this impression of dividing the last orange and apple, this impression that such little things make on my mind will never be erased.

[33:50] Well, by the end of the voyage, Betsy would refer to the stewards as my best friends. Good for them.

Not only was there a united front with food for the missionaries, but also when it came to gospelizing the unsaved sailors who surrounded them by praying and preaching for their conversion.

We all retire for 15 minutes every evening, directly after public prayers, to pray for them. Again, all of these are from Betsy's journal here.

I say retire. That is, we go to different parts of the ship. Some of us into the riggings, some out into the boats, and others on the spars.

The spirit of the Lord has, I trust, been striving with some of the sailors. Though many are yet, I fear, in the gall of bitterness. Some, however, are rejoicing in the Lord.

[34:53] How would your heart rejoice with us? Could you see these hardy sons of the ocean, who would scorn to complain of any earthly hardships, bowing with the spirit of children at the cross of Christ?

Much of her diary, it seems, is actually addressed to Ashbell Green, almost like a personal letter. And he would later, he would be the one that would later collect this and print it in the little missionary journal that the Presbyterians would send out.

Well, much of the Sabbath preaching on board was aimed at reclaiming these hardy sons of the ocean. From such texts as Genesis 19, 17, escape for your lives.

Well, there was certainly no escaping from the sermons, confined on boat as they were. Five-month voyage, too. Not a few, it seems, were, in fact, reclaimed.

And many others were, at least, if not reclaimed, at least reformed. As Betsy notes later in the voyage, when the boats were launched in pursuit of a whale.

[36:04] So remember, the missionaries are on a whaling ship. It's not as if you could just, they have all these, like, passenger ships that are, like, going to the Sandwich Islands. You just take whatever ship was going there, and it was probably going to be a whaling ship.

So they go after whales, too. Pretty dangerous, pretty dangerous to do. So, Betsy writes, four months ago, these boats, as they're lowering the little ships to go after the whales, four months ago, these boats would not have been lowered without having our ears assailed with oaths.

Swearing, in other words. Yet, not a profane word is now heard. Remarkable reformation. Then she writes, I imagine, with a smile, clearly, Satan is very much out of humor.

With the progress that the spirit is making with the sailors. Well, if Satan was out of humor, Betsy was not. Sometimes the sun was so hot overhead, she thought herself hallucinating.

The weather is so warm, she writes, that the tar is dripping from the rigging and the water from my face.

[37:18] The ship almost in a calm, and we under a vertical sun. They're right at the equator, too. I am ready to think that I have seen something new under the sun, if nobody else has.

Hallucinating. But this fiery globe would work more than heat stroke for Betsy. She writes of witnessing, quote, one of the most sublime scenes that ever the eyes of mortals beheld.

No language could paint it. It was the setting of the sun. The scene kept changing from beautiful to more beautiful, and yet more beautiful still, until I could think of nothing but the bright worlds above to which the saints are hastening.

As soon as it was over and the sun had disappeared, we were assembled on the quarter deck for prayers. Here my soul found free access to the throne of grace and rose with delight in the contemplation of that God who is the author of all our joys and of all our good.

Moving from nature to the spiritual realities that they suggest is a common feature of Betsy's journals and very typical of the spirituality of this period.

- [38 : 42] Once their vessel was in a complete calm, but unknown to Betsy, was being insensibly drawn by a current toward a craggy rock upon which assuredly they would have met a watery end.

Witless of the danger, she felt no distress at all. But it was a false ease, she realized subsequently. This she saw as emblematic.

She writes in her diary, Can there be anything more like a sleeping Christian or an unawakened sinner as this? In some of Betsy's words, we find a window upon her younger days in the green household, which we had lacked and which seems hearteningly to witness a real friendship and fond remembrances of home, she calls it.

To Green, as she writes, of being a little homesick. Oh, thought I, if I could but spend one Sabbath evening in your study, how my heart would rejoice.

Yet she draws back from indulging in such thoughts. But I must not look forward to that Sabbath which will never end, there to see face to face what we now see dimly through a glass, and to meet you with my other friends whom I have left behind.

- [40 : 16] But her fond memories and affectionate ties keep surfacing. Tis true, the endearments of home cannot be forgotten.

My mind often returns to your family altar. There, I have often left my burden, and I cannot forget that consecrated spot. Two things put wind in her sails amid such doldrums, emotional doldrums, praying friends at home and present friends on board.

It is a source of consolation to me, she writes, to be able to think that you with many others in my native land pray for me. Were it not for that, I should almost despair.

Good reminder for us to pray for our missionaries. And later, she writes to Ashbell Green, when you think of me as a stranger in a strange land, think of me still as one who has kind friends.

The sustaining bond of friendship were especially felt toward the stewards for whom Betsy was part of the family. The ties were only deepened with the birth at sea of their son, his name memorializing the circumstance of his birth.

- [41 : 35] Little Charles Seaforth was his name, who Betsy considered my charge. The little fellow beguiled many of my lonely hours.

The first moment I saw this little innocent, I felt emotions I was unacquainted with before. This, no doubt, arose from my deep attachments to his parents.

Betsy and Stuart's lives would be affectionately entwined, not only on the mission field, in which they were about to arrive, but for their entire lives.

Their final arrival on that field, there they are, you can see that boat, you can't quite see it, but there's the American flag that's on that ship.

Their final arrival upon that field, five months, after five months on the open ocean, has some typical marks of cross-cultural encounter.

- [42 : 38] It seems the Hawaiian greeting party were more scantily clad than the newcomers. And this sorely tested their missionary mettle.

As Betsy describes, two or three canoes loaded with natives came to the ship. Their appearance was that of half man, half beast.

naked, except a narrow strip of tapa round their loins. Apparently, the shock was just too great.

If you're wondering what a tapa is, apparently, yes. It's that little, little tiny, little strip there, but nothing, nothing at all else.

So, as Betsy continues, when they first came on board, the sight chilled our very hearts.

[43 : 40] The ladies immediately retired to the cabin and there burst into uncontrollable tears. And some of the gentlemen turned pale. My own soul sickened within me and every nerve trembled.

Are these, thought I, the beings with whom I must spend the remainder of my life? But she rallied and shifted her focus from thongs to theology.

They are men and have souls was the reply my conscience made prompted by the spirit. So, good. Gifts were exchanged and perhaps it was no coincidence that upon receiving coconuts and fish from the locals, the missionaries gave them pants and shirts in return.

Divergent amounts of apparel was not the only cross-cultural incident, as Betsy tells. I brought my little boy on deck who was two weeks old.

Some of them, the native, the Hawaiians, the locals, some of them took him in their arms and in ecstasy exclaimed, Araha Miatai, forgive me for those of you who speak Hawaiian, I don't know how to pronounce it.

[45 : 01] It means very great love to you, very great love to you and kissed him the baby, a little seaworth. She continues, that last expression of affection, Betsy primly inserts, we could have dispensed with very well but we have to become all things to all men that we might gain some.

What a great application of that mighty Pauline principle. For the sake of the gospel, we will let them kiss our babies. Flexible missionaries indeed.

Betsy's time in Hawaii would prove quite short but no time was wasted. She announced to the locals that she would start a school.

They in turn requested enthusiastically that instruction begin the very next day and it did. She was ready to go. By all accounts, she was a very skilled, that's not Betsy, I'll explain this in a moment.

By all accounts, she was a skilled and well loved teacher. she was also well loved by the king of Hawaii's favorite queen.

[46 : 24] There she is with a servant there. He had four queens, four wives but his favorite queen, she, who of all the foreign guests, the missionaries that were there, would invariably select Betsy to sit with her on the royal sofa in state functions.

It's wonderful. They had a real connection. And when the king's son, there he is, and when the king's son's education was considered, it was Betsy who was selected to provide the responsibility.

So it would seem a one-time indentured servant had become the companion to queens and the tutor to heirs of parent.

Isn't that wonderful? It would appear the fulfillment of the proverb, do you see one skillful in their work? They shall stand before royalty. Proverbs 22, 29.

But these gifts were not exhausted on royalty. She was keen to establish, very keen to establish a school also for the commoners and did so.

[47 : 56] As she wrote to Ashbell Green, I have now a fine school for the lower class of people, the first, I believe, that has ever been established. She's certainly right about that.

The school started with 30 and grew, meeting every afternoon with Betsy instructing in the native tongue in which she had managed by then to become quite proficient.

She certainly was busy with all of her teaching, alongside the much care that she provided for Harriet Stewart, who seemed to constantly struggle with her health.

perhaps it was the press of duties that caused Betsy to abandon her journal, which sadly ends at this time.

Her final entry records how she was longing for some letter from home, and hopeful as one ship was expected from Boston and another from New York.

[48 : 58] So her last entry of her diary, I often visited the beach to watch for sails. Then poignantly notes, the vessel arrived at last, but brought me no letters.

perhaps there is encouragement here for our communication with our missionaries abroad, for like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country, it says in Proverbs.

Betsy's sojourn upon her Hawaiian mission field would prove short, lasting only two and a half years, for Harriet Stewart had become so ill they feared she would be lost if they did not return.

And Betsy, so much a part of the family, would not leave Harriet's side, nor the now two young children who knew her as their second mother.

It would take the Stewart's and Betsy gruelingly nearly a year to sail back to America. Harriet, it seems, would never fully recover her broken health and die just four years after their return.

[50 : 10] during this time with Father Charles, often away for long stretches as Navy chaplain, couldn't hold down the missionary so he became a Navy chaplain.

Odd job to pick up when your wife is very ill, but he was away a lot. But Betsy would for seasons drop her new venture in Philadelphia to come and take care of the children in upstate New York.

Now three children and waning Harriet. Well, that new venture of Betsy's was an extraordinary one and surely no less challenging.

A prominent Philadelphia printer, publisher, and philanthropist Matthew Carey trembled for the future of his city. There he is. Go through our streets, lanes, and alleys, and view the appearance and manners of children, dirty, ragged, quarreling, often cursing and swearing, and sowing the seeds of vice and crimes which are likely to consign them when the fruits of that education have arrived at maturity to houses of refuge, penitentiaries, and jails.

Well, to counter this grim specter, a colored infant school was to be established for children two to five years old.

[51 : 42] But who could plausibly captain such a vessel? But Carey thought he had his man, and she was a woman. Fame as a missionary educator marked out Betsy as the ideal to direct such an outreach.

And her services were sought with a salary of \$200 per year. I think that was reasonably high in my translations. \$200 a year.

Betsy accepted the challenge. On the first day of May, 1828, 46 little urchins were present. But by the end of the month, another 29, that makes 75, were added.

And it kept growing at reports of Betsy's surprising success. Oh, here's a, this is not Betsy's infant school, but this is a period infant school.

No surprise that success was surprising. I mean, what hopes could a teacher have with 115 infants in the classroom?

[52 : 59] 115 between ages 2 and 5. I mean, I keep trying to picture the classroom. Am I missing something? Or could Betsy Stockton have been one of the most talented teachers ever?

Ever? I mean, this seems extraordinary to me. I do children's church, and I love it, but there are not 115 there between 2 and 5.

That would be very challenging. Well, okay, I guess she did have, she did have one classroom assistant. Okay, so maybe that's it.

Maybe that's it. No, gee, no. An oversight committee visited and wrote up a report. It was not to be expected that in the short space of one month, any material change could be affected in the manners and habits of the children, ignorant and uneducated.

But they found the infants, quote, more cleanly in their persons, more regular in their attendance, and more attentive to the exercises. And they found their teacher, quote, active, energetic, and intelligent.

[54:18] Reflecting upon, quote, her capability and the trying nature of her duties, the committee recommended an immediate raise in her salary by 25% to \$250 a year.

Indeed, indeed, I say. Betsy's reputation as a teacher grew during her tenure at the Gatskill Street Infant School, beyond the bounds of Philadelphia.

And in April 1829, it seemed she was headhunted. A Methodist missionary, William Case, there he is, sought to establish similar infant schools among the Native Americans in the wilds of Canada, and sought Betsy's expertise in this venture.

mother. Once again, we wish we had more access to her mind in this matter. Was it the missionary motive that allured her?

She leaves us no record at all of her thoughts, but in any case, she quitted the classroom in Philadelphia, perhaps a leave of absence, and headed to the shores of Grape Island on the Canadian side of Lake Ontario.

[55:37] I mean, this is the wilds with Native American boys, and establishes an infant school among the natives. And it seems to have gone really, really well.

But then, equally unknown is why she returned. For within six months, she was back at the Gaskell School carrying on where she left off.

Maybe it was just a leave of absence that they gave her. We don't know. The school and its infant students continued to flourish back in Philadelphia when she was back, and one might easily have imagined Betsy making it the site of her continued labors.

It was an extraordinary impact. But, as had been the case in the Hawaii mission, her adopted kin and the fate of Harriet intervened.

Harriet finally and sadly slipped away September 6th, 1830, leaving three children motherless. Well, not entirely, for within the month, Betsy resigned her post at Gaskell to take her adopted children under wing.

[56:51] Children across Philadelphia wept at the loss, but the Stewart children wept for joy at the comforting sight of Aunt B, as they called her, arriving, Aunt Betsy.

Betsy gathered the children and bundled them off to Princeton. And this is right at the same year, that's a print taken at the very same year that she returned there.

So, and why not? Is that not a lovely, lovely, excuse me, okay? My wife is kicking me under the table. Okay. She returned to her original home.

Ashbell Green was no longer there, but his son James, who had been her tutor in youth, you recall, was. And their fast friendship added special sweetness to that season of life for Betsy.

The Stewart children would remain in her care five years until Charles, their father, remarried and came down to collect them and move them back up to New York. And then, for the first time in her life, Betsy lived alone.

[58:05] A sorrowful episode stains this period. Her home church, the First Presbyterian, remember the one in which she had been baptized and become a member, First Presbyterian of Princeton, sadly became the painful site of a deep failure of Christian love.

Their there it is. While the church accepted black members, and you remember Betsy Stockton was one of them, coloreds, as they call them, were relegated to a segregated seating up in the balcony.

They all had to sit alone apart from the whites. Then in 1835, the church burned down. during the reconstruction, the whites and the blacks found temporary refuge in different buildings.

So the whites went to the chapel at the seminary there, Princeton Seminary, and there blacks were not allowed. So the blacks just had another little spot that the coloreds would.

But then once the new construction of their church was complete, the white members declared the new sanctuary a whites only, denying their black sisters and brothers in Christ access to their church.

[59:37] Here was their interim pastor, and he writes, this is James W.

James Waddle Alexander of Princeton Seminary fame, great theologian and pastor. He writes, I think blacks are very unwise in insisting on such a privilege now.

Well, denied that privilege of being in their own church, of returning to their church home. A majority of the black members formed their own congregation, which in 1840 became the first Presbyterian church of color of Princeton, later called the Witherspoon Street Church.

There it is, or was. It's still there today, it doesn't look like that anymore. Betsy's name topped the list of founding members of the Witherspoon Street Church, and she quickly brought her vision and gifts to bear, making the new church a haven in Princeton for religious and general instruction.

In fact, Reverend Professor Alexander, who had made that comment that best stay separate, who himself had helped to thrust the black members out, paid them a visit, and lamented, quote, yesterday, I examined Betsy Stockton's school.

[61:16] I wish I knew of a white school where religion was so faithfully inculcated. he wished, I guess he was blind to the simple and scriptural solution, stop the racial separation, and together enjoy the diversity of gifts and their blessing.

Father, forgive us our trespasses. Betsy also exercised her teaching gifts outside the church, establishing in 1837, the sole public, or what they called common school for black children, and pouring into it the energies of nearly 30 years that would remain to her.

There is the black school. It was hard to get that picture. Either that or the extraordinary circumstance of actually it being photographed while it was being struck by lightning.

One of the two. I don't know. But with enrollments often as high as 70 students, Betsy provided the benefit of an education to generations of black families at Princeton.

Here is a period colored school, not Betsy's, but the same period. From the same period, that's the one picture that I could find.

[62:44] Additionally, she persuaded a student at Princeton Seminary, Louis Mudge, to open a night school for young black men and women who were employed during the day and so unable to attend common school.

There are stories of Betsy and Mudge staying late and enthusiastically reading Caesar's Gallic Wars to each other in Latin.

Betsy was really a good Latinist, as are some in this room, I see. By this time, she was known by nearly all in town as Aunt Betsy and came to be admired as one of Princeton's most beloved figures.

Unassuming, gentle in spirit, yet indomitable, she exercised a steady, salty influence, particularly among the young.

It would seem the missionary impulse never left her. There was a plan in the making for her to actually accompany a missionary couple to the island of Carisco, that's just off the west coast of Africa, right around Equatorial Guinea or so.

[64 : 05] Perhaps one could imagine in fulfillment of her earliest missionary dream to get to Africa as a missionary. But it did not finally materialize. Although, one of her first women teachers of her Sabbath school, Cecilia Van Tine, did end up going to Rio de Janeiro as a missionary in 1848, and it's not hard to trace Betsy's influence upon her.

But for Betsy, Princeton would remain the place of her final labors, and in so doing, she became so greatly loved that when she came to die, October 24, 1865, she was much missed and much mourned.

The president of Princeton, John McClain, and the senior professor of theology at the seminary, Charles Hodge, he would have been considered to be the greatest American theologian of his day, and wrote the textbook for all theological seminaries, his three volume systematic theology.

Charles Hodge himself, those two, John McClain, president of the university, and Charles Hodge, the chief theologian at the seminary, they conducted her funeral, Betsy Stockton.

Some 30 years after her death, Charles Seaforth Stewart, there he is, remember, he was the baby born on board ship, that missionary voyage, and whom she had cared for as a second mother, he proposed that a plaque be placed in Hawaii at the site of her missionary work.

[65 : 53] The proposal was turned down on grounds that, quote, though she did loyal service, she was but one of many at the time. Well, no doubt this was true.

No doubt there are many who do loyal service, and they have no memorial here below. Perhaps, as with Betsy Stockton, much, even all of their story, is unknown.

Well, if in Betsy's case, such quiet, loyal service is not judged worthy of a plaque, never mind, I have no doubt that she received a better commendation on high than a plaque in Hawaii.

Here is a, can't quite see that, but it says, presented by the scholars of Elizabeth Stockton. all of her black students over the years paid to have that put in in the Witherspoon street church. Yeah.

[67 : 10] Well, perhaps a few concluding reflections are in order. We all have losses in this fallen world. Perhaps for some of us, they are profound.

no doubt many of them are known only to us and to God. It seems Betsy had many losses. Think of being separated from her birth parent just as a small girl, not being able to turn to her own church, no doubt many of which we will never know as there remains very little of her expression, her interior life.

But what we do know is that she seems to not have dwelt upon her losses, but rather took up the blessings that God had given her in her life and built on those.

And she built very diligently. She seems to have been a really good steward of what God had given her and used those blessings, developing them that she might be a blessing to others.

And this, for me, is much of what glows in her life. She didn't become bitter or despondent, but rather gave where she had received and did so bravely and with a remarkable spirit of adventure and sacrifice.

[68 : 49] sacrifice. We have stated that if the affection and care Betsy knew cast a warm glow upon her indentured servitude, surely it is still a dark landscape.

Slaves among Christians? neither can we but be horror-stricken and heart-sick at the thought of a white's only sign hanging on a church door.

That such is utterly incompatible with the gospel of Christ was somehow not seen by the most theologically educated people in the country.

I'm struck by the need for all of us to pray as David did. Cleanse me from my hidden faults. We all have blind spots, grievous failures in loving God and neighbor, brother and sister.

far from exposing them, our Christian culture often obscures these sins from our sight. We need the spirit to expose them with that instrument sharper than any two-edged sword, able to divide between the bone and marrow, the soul and spirit.

[70:24] We must all ask individually and collectively as to how that holy agent and instrument is performing its sacred searching work within and among us.

There is no other way to be in the world and yet not of it. Thank you. I think we have a couple minutes perhaps for questions or comments.

questions. Yeah. Thank you for the wonderful story. I was wondering, did it surprise you that a teacher of such academic caliber would spend so much time on toddlers and children as compared to university students?

Was it a personal choice or were there limitations based on race and sex? Yeah, well, in many ways, her teaching career spanned the whole spectrum.

So she seemed eager to put herself in where an opportunity opened up and where there was a gap, she would try to fill that gap. So, yes, she did work with infants in the infant school from ages two to five.

[71:55] She did that up in Canada also. But she also started common schools for all age groups and Sabbath schools and the very elderly were able to come to her schools too.

So it wasn't as if she confined her teaching activities to just one particular segment. royalty too.

She had remarkable adaptability. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm struck by the fact that I've never heard of her faithful Christian moments.

And it's reminded of the first where God used to be changed strongly. How many faithful Christians were out there? We'll never hear about the middle of the day until the day comes where Christ will give us our combination.

So it's just an example of God, you know, making people for himself that we'll learn about until the day comes.

[73:06] Yeah. Isn't that wonderful? I know of so many missionary stories where that's something that they often struggle with. One time there was a missionary that was coming back.

I can't get into the whole story, but it turns out that he was on the same boat after a whole life long time on the mission field. He was on the same boat that Teddy Roosevelt was coming back on after his little hunting spree in Africa.

And everybody bands and everything is there to meet him and cheer and all. And the missionary just had a moment standing on the dock with nobody to meet him coming back. Had a moment of self-pity.

You know, gosh, I'm coming home. There's nobody here that sees at all. And he said, the Holy Spirit told me so distinctly, I heard his voice, oh, you're not home yet.

So yes, there will be that day when we will have that combination and it will certainly be worth everything. And I love that bit that says, you know, do not say, oh, Jacob or Israel, your way is hidden from the Lord.

[74:11] that's a great comfort for so many reasons. For so many reasons. Yes. And so many, you'll see if you go, a lot of missionaries I can think of. So one that went to Burma, his record is on high.

His record is on, her record is on high. That's all they have. We don't know. We don't know. That's right. Yeah. We should stop. Oh, sorry.

Thank you, team. Next week, you have the joy. I am doing a wedding. We're out of town. But Tom Schmidt will be looking at women from the early church. So it should be exciting.

Yeah. And we'll reconvene after that. Thank you.