

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

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Recently Taylor Swift announced that she is releasing a new album on October 21st. The album is called “Midnights,” which she describes as a “collection of music written in the middle of the night, a journey through terrors and sweet dreams.”

Her announcement reminded me of passages where God is said to give songs in the night. This thought is also included in one of our old great hymns called “Redeemed” (#544). The song enumerates some of the blessings available to those who have redemption in Christ. The third stanza says, “I know I shall see in his beauty the king in whose law I delight, who lovingly guardeth my footsteps, *And giveth me songs in the night.*” Then the chorus says, “Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever, I am.” The hope of the redeemed is that when Christ comes we shall see Him as He is (1 Jn. 3:1-2). Until then, we look to Him to guard or keep our footsteps (1 Pet. 1:3-5). And as we do, He gives us songs in the night. Today, I want to preach on the topic: “Songs In The Night.”

(1) GOD GIVES SONGS IN THE NIGHT

Two passages within the Psalms teach this thought. Psalm 42:8 says, “Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.” God’s lovingkindness supports us. Because of His lovingkindness in the daytime, we are able to sing at night in the difficult times. We can praise him in the darkest of nights, even in unfavorable circumstances. Psalm 77:6 states, “I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.” He remembers the previous times when he sang in the night even in distress and in remembering, finds hope! F. B. Meyer thought that the “song in the night” was probably the equivalent of glorying in tribulation in the New Testament. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:4, “I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.”

A third passage seems to allude to it as well. We read in Psalm 119:55-56, “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.” Psalm 119 has one major focus: the word of God. It uses various synonyms to describe the Word, but almost every verse is about the Bible. To the psalmist, the Word provides his hope, assurance, comfort and light. He says, thy statutes have been my songs, and I have remembered thy name in the night. The psalmist found himself in a dark place, night surrounds him. Yet God gave the psalmist a song in the night. It is said that during World War I, it became impossible to import beautiful singing canaries from Germany. People still wanted these singing canaries but they could not longer get them from the Harz Mountains in Germany. A dealer in New York decided to start a system of training canaries to sing. He had bird songs put on records, and these proved of value. But one day he made a real discovery which led to success. He found that if he covered the cages with thick cloths, completely shutting out the light, the birds learned their song. It wasn’t until their world became completely dark that the canaries really learned to sing. God sometimes teaches his children to sing in darkness.

Another passage outside the Psalms which teaches that God gives songs in the night is Job 35:10. At this point in the book of Job, Elihu, had taken over the conversation with Job. He realized

the failure of Job's other friends to solve the problem. He thought he had a solution. Yet he failed to explain the cause of Job's sufferings. He did say some good things, and his statement in Job 35:10 is one of them. "But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night" (Job 35:10). Elihu says they are not crying with a faith that has God as His maker, the God who will respond with songs in the night. Out of the night of affliction, God can and will bring a blessing to the sufferers who look to Him for such. Only God is great enough to bring songs of blessing and joy out of such experiences. Brother George Dehoff wrote on this verse: "this is one of the loftiest passages in the Bible. This quest is not for one who ignores human needs, but, even in the midnight of sorrow, is able to put a song into the heart of man. That man should sing praises when in deep sorrow does not explain suffering, but it helps to overcome it."

Where there is no way to lay the burdens down, is there some way to be assured while carrying them? When problems have to be faced, and suffering has to be endured, can we find such meaning to life, and such faith in God, as to be able to adjust to them and to persevere? Can we find some song to sing in the night of despair, pain, bereavement, loneliness, frustration, slander, ridicule, hopelessness, or rejection? Is there some way to be rejoice in the Lord even in such times? Nights like these can get mighty dark. It can seem as though the dawn will never come.

I believe Elihu hit a good note when he said, "God giveth songs in the night." Despite our troubles, God can give songs of peace, contentment, assurance, and faith to help us. He can give us a good conscience, peace of mind, and help us to adjust to whatever life may demand. Here are two passages which are precious to me. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6). "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

While on a short-term missions trip, a man named Jack Hinton was with a leper colony on the island of Tobago. A woman who had been facing away from the pulpit turned around. "It was the most hideous face I had ever seen," Hinton said. "The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone. She lifted a fingerless hand in the air and asked, 'Can we sing 'Count Your Many Blessings?'" Overcome with emotion, Hinton left the service. He was followed by a team member who said, "I guess you'll never be able to sing that song again." "Yes I will," he replied, "but I'll never sing it the same way." God gives songs in the night!

(2) GOD GAVE HABBAKUK A SONG IN THE NIGHT

"A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth" (Heb. 3:1). This chapter is a poem set to music. The word shigionoth refers to a wandering song, to praise with strong emotion. It is the praise that resists the trial, the darkness, and spirit of heaviness. You will also notice the word Selah in verses 3, 9, and 13 which is believed to be a musical pause and reveals that this prayer was designed for public worship. In this prayer/song Habakkuk (1) recalls God's past actions of power, (2) prays for speedily deliverance, and (3) expresses confidence in the unchangeableness of God. It is a rich manifestation of faith.

Please notice the ending in Habakkuk 3:16-18- "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no

herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." It is difficult to rejoice when you are in difficult circumstances. When the prophet had been confronted with the reality of the impending Babylonian invasion, he was sick. He knew the devastation that would soon occur. He knew that would be the end of the crops and the flock and herds. In this midnight hour he would say, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." He would continue to rejoice in the Lord even in times of grief.

Friends, joy is an inward quality of choice. It does not depend upon external circumstances. It is grounded upon our relationship with God. When we are struggling with the justice of God, we cannot divorce ourselves from human emotions, any more than Habakkuk could, but we can determine that those emotions are not going to dominate us. Isn't this what Paul taught from a jail cell in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Life has it ups and downs, but the just live by a faith that will see them through. Habakkuk 2:4 says "but the just shall live by his faith." That is why Habakkuk could conclude his book the way he did. "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places" (Hab. 3:19). Habakkuk emerges at the end of this book victorious, as one whose faith had been tried. Yes, God gave Habbakuk a song in the night.

(3) GOD GAVE JESUS A SONG IN THE NIGHT

Our Lord sang at the last meeting with His disciples before His death. "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Mt. 26:30). We are not told anything concerning the beauty of our Lord's voice, but it must have been a touching joy to have been present on that occasion. The last thing Jesus and his disciples did in the Upper Room was to sing.

Some believe they may have sung the traditional Passover hymn based on Psalms 115-118. These group of Psalms are called the Hallel. Hallel is the Hebrew word for praise. It is the root word for Hallelujah! The "jah" part is the short form of God's name Yahweh. Put together, it means "praise the Lord." The last of these prayers and songs of praise honors the God who has become our salvation. Notice Psalm 118:21-24, "I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This passage refers to a rejected stone that became a cornerstone (v 22). The very stone, the Christ, which the Jews disallowed or rejected as of no useful purpose, has been made the very head of the corner. The "builders" of the Jewish religion, rejected the Christ, the chief cornerstone. Jesus applied this statement to them in the parable of the householder in Matthew 21:33-45. Later, Peter used this same illustration to convict those very Jews. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. *This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.* Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12). Thank God for the cornerstone of the church! They would reject Christ, but the Lord turned it into something marvelous!

What is the day mentioned in Psalm 118:24 when the psalmist says, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it?" While most apply that verse to any day God gives us life, in actuality that is referring to the first day of the week, the Lord's day, the day of Pentecost, when Christ was made the chief cornerstone of the church of Christ. When the Holy Spirit came, so did the power, and so did the church or kingdom. No wonder then that God made

the first day of the week His day, the Lord's day, and we must rejoice and be glad in it! And so I wonder if part of this psalm may have been sung by the Lord and his disciples as they departed for his betrayal in Gethsemane. What it foretold was about to come to pass. Regardless, imagine our Lord singing when the cross was only a few hours away. God gave Him a song in the night, and it may have been a song about Him!

(4) GOD GAVE PAUL AND SILAS A SONG IN THE NIGHT

In Acts 16:22-24, the magistrates at Philippi had stripped Paul and Silas and commanded them to be beaten. Upon being imprisoned, they were put in stocks by the jailer. This prevented them from having any relief that a change of position might have afforded them. They were surely concerned with what would happen to them next. I believe it was of this very experience that Paul wrote in ". . . we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi." (1 Thess. 2:2). Yet Acts 16:25 says, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."

How a man responds to suffering is a real index to one's character and faith in God. What an outstanding example Paul and Silas set before us! God gave them songs in the midnight hour. They prayed unto God and sang the gospel, and men who would not ordinarily listen to a sermon, heard the gospel in song. How much did their example in suffering, their rejoicing even in times of affliction, move the Philippian jailor to obey the gospel of Christ? Did that not play a part in his saying, "Sirs what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Surely it did. As young preachers, what impact can your example have if you can learn to sing at the midnight hour?

Charles Spurgeon said, "Any man can sing in the day. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is the skillful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read." The Lord gave songs in the night to Habakkuk when faced with a devastating enemy invasion, to Jesus just before He went to the cross, and to Paul and Silas in the prison in Philippi. I am grateful that God gives us strength to bear our burdens and a song to sing while doing it.