

December is here! A busy month for most of us. Christmas is soon upon us ... decorations, dinners, and devotionals ... usually about the birth of Jesus the Christ. Today's Devotional focuses on songs in the night ... you know, those songs that hold you steady in troubling moments. He has given a song to you ... perhaps in your darkest night. Thank Him and praise Him as you sing that song over and over.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

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"... in the night His song shall be with me ..." (Psalm 42:8b; NKJV)

I invite you to join me as we take a little trip out west. Today we will travel on a gravel road to about a mile north of the small town of Granger, Washington. Most of the single-family farms along the way are about like ours, 40 acres or so. Let's enter the drive lane leading to the home where a family of five lived. I was the oldest of the two sons and one daughter of Keith and Helene Morris. Ours was a small dairy farm, consisting of significant pasture land, fields of alfalfa hay, several acres of field corn and annually alternating fields of grain such as oats, wheat, or barley. Look around with me. The buildings, other than our house, consist of a milking barn, a horse barn, loafing sheds for cattle, pens with shelters for pigs, and a garage for our car.

The sun has dropped silently behind the great Cascade Mountains to the west. The dark shadows of night have crept over us, wrapping around us in their quiet journey that will give birth to a new day. Our house was anything but modern. My bedroom, shared with my younger brother, has a window on the northwest part of the structure. We have no blinds or curtains to cover what can be seen outside. My bed is at one side of that window. Looking back now, there were so many times that I looked outside that window as the last crimson rays of the sunlight faded. Calm? Peace? Tranquility? No! I lay there frightened ... frightened at what I do not know ... just frightened ... the uncertainty of life, I suppose ... at least until the most wonderful night of my childhood life.

It was Sunday, November 19, 1944. I was 14 years old, and a freshman in high school. That Sunday night our pastor packed his car full of young people, took us to a youth rally in a nearby town. There I responded to the Gospel and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. Now, in 2021, that is just a little over 77 years ago. From that night forward, I had and still have a song in my heart. Nearly everyone who knows me is aware that I am somewhat musical. And on that November night God put a song in my heart ... and it was from that point forward, and still is, "my song in the night."

I have the feeling that you want to know what that song is. Sing through some of the great hymns of the Church ... you, know – the ones you grew up on, found in the hymnals of the church. There they are. All together they are a part of "my song in the night." They are the song of the redeemed. They are tucked into the archives of our memories. We often draw out their message. You know them! They form the heart of the "song in the night" for each of us. Hold them tightly to your heart. Keep remembering some of them, such as "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine." "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!" "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus." "Abide With Me." "Jesus is All the World to Me." "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." "Beneath the Cross of Jesus." "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing." "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus, Our Blessed Redeemer." "I Come to the Garden Alone." "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place." "And Can it Be that I Should Gain an Interest in the Savior's Blood?" And on and on and on – many hundreds, and yes, even thousands of songs gather together to form our "song in the night!"

Let's look into the Word of God and discover what God has said about these kinds of songs. We will soon learn that God loves music. He has given music to His whole universe. He is worshiped through music.

Note the following:

1. The Song is Revealed in the Handiwork of God. In the Book of Job we note this interesting record. In His discussion with Job, God asks: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7; NKJV) Ah! Yes! Before God picked up a lump of earth and fashioned the first human beings, "the morning stars sang together!" Recall also the testimony recorded in the words of Isaiah: "Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted." (Isaiah 49:13; NKJV)

2. The Song is Recorded in the Historic work of God. The long-enslaved people God moved steadily toward the foreboding Red Sea. Behind them the frightening sound of the thundering pounding of the horse hoofs on the desert floor. The Egyptian military chariots were driven by the armor-clad military brandishing their swords. The sunlight was surely clouded by the fiercely stirred dust. At the Red Sea, God's servant Moses obediently "stretched out his hand over the sea," the waters of the Sea parted. The people went through on dry ground. Moses again stretched his hand over the sea. The mighty waters of the Red Sea crashed together, and "covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained." (Exodus 14:28; NKJV) The children of Israel, as we know them, were safely on the other side, and "then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD and spoke, saying: 'I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD is my strength and song. And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him.'" (Exodus 15:1-2a; NKJV)

Centuries later, Artaxerxes 1, Emperor of Persia, allowed the children of Israel to leave the place of their captivity and return to their homeland, understood as the Promised Land. (See Nehemiah 2:1-8) Under the saintly leadership of Nehemiah, the children of Israel began the arduous process of rebuilding the wall around their beloved city of Jerusalem. After facing severe opposition, the Israelites, emboldened, encouraged, and enabled by the mighty presence of God, completed the task of wall-building. To celebrate this event, Nehemiah organized a dedication service. This celebration included "thanksgiving and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps. ... I (Nehemiah) appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. One went to the right hand on the wall ... the other thanksgiving choir went the opposite way. ... For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God." (Nehemiah 12:27; 31; 38; 46) Ah Yes! Choirs, instruments of music ... all to the glory of God as the wall was dedicated.

During those days in Israel's history, and under the leadership of Ezra, the children of Israel gathered together to rebuild the great Temple in Jerusalem. "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: 'For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel.'" (Ezra 3:10, 11; NKJV)

Yes, music ... choirs and others singing and instruments playing, all to the praise and glory of God. That is the beautiful story of how God used music in the days of old. But there is more!

3. The Song is Reality in the Here and Now. We draw from both the Old and the New Testaments. There are more than 1,150 Scripture references to music in the Bible. It is somewhat difficult to select some that fit into a certain category. However, I invite you to look at the following. These speak of songs for the people of God. Read them carefully and let them be the foundation for your worship of God.

"Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion." (Psalm 9:11; NKJV)

"I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD." (Psalm 27 :6b; NKJV)

“Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.” (Psalm 96:1; NKJV)

“Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.” (Psalm 98:1; NKJV)

“The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.” (Psalm 118:14; NKJV)

“Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 42:10; NKJV)

“You have ... clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent.” (Psalm 30:12; NKJV)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16; NKJV)

4. The Song is Ready to Help us. We may have our night fears. Remember Elihu? He was one of Job’s “counselors” who spoke to Job who was facing serious and severe discouragement, disillusionment, and depression: “Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry out for help because of the arm of the might. But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night?’” (Job 35:9, 10; NKJV)

The Sons of Korah, contemporary with King David, were used by the Lord God to bring splendid psalms to us. They wrote: “The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me – a prayer to the God of my life.” (Psalm 42:8; NKJV)

It is somewhat amazing to me to realize that when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, the first announcement that He had come was declared in the night. The words of Scripture translated into English do not include “singing,” or “song.” However, there are so many references to the singing activity of the Angels of God, it seems natural to assume that the announcement of the birth of Jesus may well have been in the form of an Angelic Song. “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:13, 14; NKJV) And now, we move to the song of heaven.

5. The Song is Reserved in Heaven to Praise God Eternally. The eyes of the Prophet of God pierced through the vistas of the future and viewed the revelation from God. He wrote it down: “So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads.” (Isaiah 51:11; NKJV)

What will it sound like in that indescribable home of the redeemed, where God will wipe away all tears, where there will be no death, nor pain, nor tears, where there is no night nor fears, and no parting? John the Beloved Disciple of our Lord heard it and under Divine instruction wrote about it: “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.’” (Revelation 5:9, 10; NKJV) Again in that beautiful place we call “heaven” John heard and wrote: “And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang a new song before the throne.” (Revelation 14:2b, 3a; NKJV)

There it is. Songs in the Night! Some dark shadows of life may hover over you, tauntingly reaching out to you with their unforgiving tentacles of fright. They may bring terrifying moments that overwhelm you. Perhaps it is pain that seems unbearable. Maybe it is the uncertainty of your tomorrows, or news of a terminal illness, or the breaking of a trust that now causes rejection, or loneliness, or losses of all kinds. Your heart breaks, your mind is confused, your will is challenged ... and you feel that you are being held tightly in the frightening fangs of fear. Consider this: Asaph penned some Psalms directed to the Chief

Musician. Here is one of them that is so helpful: "I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, and my spirit makes diligent search." (Psalm 77:6; NKJV)

One of the thousands of songs God has given to the world through the gifted ministry of Bill and Gloria Gaither, is the song The Church Triumphant. The entire song is so encouraging, but I am including only Gloria Gaither's brilliant verbal portraiture of the Church followed by the Chorus of the song. It is so meaningful for our "Here and Now." Read it now and sing the chorus with me.

"God has always had a people. Many a foolish conqueror has made the mistake of thinking that because he'd driven the Church of Jesus Christ out of sight, that he had stilled its voice and snuffed out its life, but God has always had a people. The powerful current of a river is not diminished because it is forced to flow underground. The purest water is the stream that bursts crystal clear into the sunlight after it has forced its way through solid rock. There are charlatans, who like Simon the magician sought to barter on the open market this power which cannot be bought or sold but God has always had a people; men who could not be bought and women who were beyond purchase. God has always had a people. There have been times of affluence and prosperity where the Church's message has been nearly diluted into oblivion by those who sought to make it socially attractive, re-organized and financially profitable. It's been gold plated, draped in purple and encrusted in jewels. It's been misrepresented, ridiculed, lauded and scorned. These followers of Jesus Christ have been, according to the whim of the times, elevated as sacred leaders and martyred as heretics. Yet through it all, there marches on this powerful army. God's chosen people who cannot be bought, flattered, murdered or stilled. On through the ages they march. This church, God's church is ALIVE and WELL." (Gloria Gaither)

CHORUS

Let the Church be the Church, let the people rejoice,
For we've settled the question, we've made our choice;
Let the anthems ring out, songs of victory swell,
For the church triumphant, is alive and well.

(Bill and Gloria Gaither)

Right now! Don't let another moment fade away. "Let the anthems ring out, songs of victory swell." It is your "Song in the Night" founded in the eternal Word of God that will hold you steady in His mercy, grace, and love.