

Songs Remind Us

A song brings back memories of friends and family, teachers, brethren who helped shape us, places we lived or visited, and times that were happy or sad. Young people wonder why older married couples listen to those old, out-of-date songs and orchestral arrangements. But the memories that old tunes stir within the heart cannot be erased with time. Songs that were sung at a memorial service for a loved one bring tears to the eyes and the feelings of loss and loneliness mixed with joy that the person's reward is now a reality. Songs are memorials that tie us to the past and renew the hope for the future that God promised for the faithful.

The first song in the Bible is in Exodus 15. It is a song of praise and thanks to God for the wonderful deliverance from Egyptian bondage and Pharaoh's chariots. Note the song's introduction. *"The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him. "The LORD is a warrior; The LORD is His name"* (Exodus 15:2-3). We can also say that the self-existent, eternal one is my strength and song; He is my salvation, and He fights for me. These words are from a man that once said of God, *"What is His name? What shall I say to them?"* (Exodus 3:13). Forty years later, on the plains of Moab, Moses declared, *"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might"* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

The Bible's book of songs, known simply as Psalms, contains joyful songs of praise for God's goodness and salvation and sad songs remembering sins committed and thanks for justification. There are some songs of promise looking toward the justifying sacrifice of God's Son. Moses also contributed a song to this collection of Psalms. The last verse of that song is *"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands"* (Psalms 90:17). Today it reminds us that we are His workmanship, molded by the master potter, and educated by the gospel of Christ (Ephesians 2:10).

When we sing the songs, "Hallelujah Praise Jehovah" and "There is a Habitation," they take me back to the teenage years when three of us learned to lead songs and deliver lessons in public. Charlie was only comfortable with those two songs. So when he led the singing, we all knew at least two of the songs he would choose. There was the elder who led "I'm Redeemed" with such joy that he bounced with enthusiasm and happiness. His happiness was contagious and still affects me after several decades. Some songs in our songbook were written by brethren and friends that taught and helped me grow in faith. Singing those bring back memories of the lessons taught and the ways they helped me through the years.

One of the easiest ways to teach the very young is with songs. Putting the books of the Bible to music helps memorization. They may not understand the wisdom of building on the rock rather than the sand, but the seed is planted and will grow into knowledge in time. We have seen evidence that "Jesus Loves Me" will bring comfort from the toddler years throughout life, even to death's door. It is remarkable that as we travel through this life songs like, "Just a Closer Walk With Thee" and "Walking Alone at Eve" bring comfort and have special meaning as we age.

There are songs that many reserve for funerals, which carry a message we need every day. The songs sung at a parent's funeral become hard to sing again, but the words may be what young people need to hear. It may be that there will be no roses in Heaven, but the never-fading thoughts

of the song speak of the never-ending joys of just being in the presence of God. Different memories are refreshed in each of us as we sing "Precious Memories." We can sing about looking forward to an "Empty Mansion," prepared for us in Heaven just as Jesus promised (John 14:2). And we all need a continual reminder that "This World is Not My Home."

The world has songs with words describing the temporary things it has to offer. The music is enticing, and the words are tempting to the ear, but the substance they represent is of short duration. The Bible describes blessings that will last eternally. David responded to God's answer to his prayers with a new song. *"He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD"* (Psalms 40:3). The host of Heaven sang a new song when The Lamb of God ascended to the throne, *"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation"* (Revelation 5:9).

Are you purchased by the blood of the lamb, singing His praises now and later in Heaven?