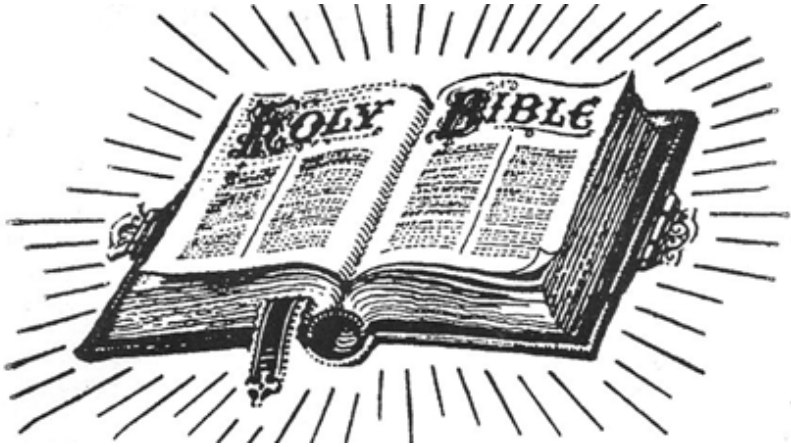


# Bible Lessons



*“Thou art my hiding place;  
thou shalt preserve me from trouble;  
thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.*

*Selah.”*

*Psalm 32:7*

**Volume 52, No 4**  
**October • November • December**  
**2020**

*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 52

October • November • December

No. 4

## Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Oct 4	The Songs of Moses.....	1
11	The Song of Deborah.....	9
18	The Song of Hannah.....	14
25	A Song of David (Psalm 18).....	18
Nov 1	A Song of David (Psalm 57).....	25
8	A Song of Battle.....	30
15	A Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 5).....	36
22	A Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 12).....	41
29	A Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 26).....	46
Dec 6	The Song of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38).....	51
13	The Song of Habakkuk.....	56
20	The Song of Mary.....	61
27	Songs of the Pilgrims.....	66

*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.  
In this issue: Reflections contributed by Bro. Harlan Sorrell,  
Bro. Fari Matthews, Sis. LaDawna Adams, Bro. James Bell,  
Bro. Darrell Johnson, and Sis. Angela Gellenbeck.*

### NOTICE

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## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS 4TH QUARTER 2020

### *SONGS OF THE SAINTS*

Recent trials in my life have brought many scriptures to mind containing inspired songs God has given to the saints in times of trouble, times of extreme need, times of battle, wilderness times, fiery furnace times, and prison times. There were happy occasions, solemn, momentous occasions, and celebratory occasions, where God inspired jubilation and praise or repentance and lamentation.

The times of inspiration certainly did not stop with the Bible stories. Down through the history of Christianity, it has been the songs—the songs!—that have memorialized the saints in their trials and triumphs. In this issue we will highlight a few of them and the stories behind them. It is my fervent prayer that the studies of these songs will prove a great blessing to the people of God in this last quarter of 2020.

To view and/or listen to the entire song (and sheet music, if available) featured in the Reflections section of each lesson, please visit the lesson blog post on [churchofgodtoday.com](http://churchofgodtoday.com).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

**OCTOBER 4, 2020**

### **THE SONGS OF MOSES (Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32)**

#### **The Song of Triumph at the Red Sea**

**Exodus 15:1** Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

**2** The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

**3** The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

**11** Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

**12** Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

**13** Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

**17** Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

**18** The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

### **The Last Song of Moses**

**Deuteronomy 32:1** Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

**2** My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

**3** Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

**4** He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

**6** Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

**9** For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

**10** He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

**11** As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

**12** So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

**29** O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

**39** See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

**40** For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.

**41** If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward

them that hate me.

**43** Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. —**Exodus 15:2** and **Deuteronomy 32:4**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The song of Moses and the children of Israel after the Lord delivered them at the Red Sea is a song of deliverance and a prophecy of God's future plans for His people. Moses' final song contains three main thoughts: the faithfulness of God contrasted with the faithlessness of Israel; the necessary chastisement by God; and God's mercy and compassion upon the humbled condition of His people.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 15:1 "Then sang Moses": "This song is the most ancient we know of. It is a holy song, to the honour of God, to exalt his name, and celebrate his praise, and his only, not in the least to magnify any man. Holiness to the Lord is in every part of it. It may be considered as typical, and prophetic of the final destruction of the enemies of the church" (*Matthew Henry*). "This song is, by some hundred years, the oldest poem in the world" (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*).

Exodus 15:2 "I will prepare him an habitation": possibly, "I will build him a sanctuary," but some commentators connect the verb with a root meaning "beautiful," and translate, "I will glorify him," or "I will declare his beauty and his praise." Whether it alludes to the tabernacle soon to be built or looks farther ahead to the times of the Messiah when His people would be His sanctuary and be filled with His glory and beauty, both meanings would be prophetic of the worship and praise of Jehovah. "My father's God": translated as both "my God is my Father" and "my forefathers' God."

Exodus 15:3 “Man of war”: the hero of the battle; a heavily armed soldier. This term has been used for powerful warships from the 16th to the 19th centuries, which were equipped with as many as 124 cannons. The name is also used for a venomous siphonophore, an animal made up of a colony of organisms working together. The Portuguese man-of-war gets the name from the uppermost of its four polyps, which floats above the water and resembles the ancient warship at full sail. The man-of-war’s second organism consists of long, thin tendrils which dangle below in the water, averaging thirty feet long. These are covered in venom-filled nematocysts, which kill and paralyze fish and other small creatures. These examples illustrate the deep meaning of “man of war.” Our God is almighty, all-powerful, and His weapons are deadly to His enemies!

Exodus 15:12 “The earth swallowed them”: “It is very likely there was also an earthquake on this occasion, and that chasms were made in the bottom of the sea, by which many of them were swallowed up, though multitudes were overwhelmed by the waters, whose dead bodies were afterward thrown ashore. The psalmist strongly intimates that there was an earthquake on this occasion (Psalm 77:18): ‘The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook’” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock” (or, simply, “The Rock!”): origin; fountain source; first cause. Used four times in this song. “No such combination of all the words for uprightness, sincerity, equity, and reliability is to be found elsewhere in all Scripture. This is the character of the Rock. This name of God (*Tzur*) is one of the characteristics of the song. The word occurs first in Exodus 17, where the Rock in Horeb was smitten; ‘and that Rock was Christ.’” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*).

Deuteronomy 32:9 “The Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance”: “The men who welcome the divine love that goes through the whole world...and who therefore lovingly yield to the loving divine will, and take it for their law—these are the men whom He regards as His ‘portion’ and ‘the lot of His inheritance.’ So that ‘God is mine’, and that ‘I am God’s’, are two ends of one truth; ‘I possess Him,’ and ‘I am possessed by Him,’ are but the statement of one fact expressed from two points of view” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*). “What an astonishing saying! As holy souls take God for

their portion, so God takes them for his portion” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Deuteronomy 32:10 “He led him about”: the journey of Israel through the wilderness.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The details surrounding the first song in our lesson are found in Exodus 12, 13, and 14. God gave special preparation instructions to Israel before the tenth and final plague. The ritual of killing a lamb and painting the lintel and doorposts with its blood, cleansing the home of all leaven, and eating unleavened bread with the roast lamb and bitter herbs, was to be perpetuated as an annual feast—its establishment even created a new calendar for the Israelites. The people of God were to be packed and ready to travel as they anticipated the events of that final night.

At midnight the angel of death struck the land of Egypt, and every house which did not have the protection of blood was stricken with death of the firstborn. Even the firstborn of the beasts were killed. Pharaoh ordered Moses and Aaron to take the people of Israel, with their flocks and herds, and get out of Egypt. The Egyptian people urged them on, heaping them with gifts of gold, silver, jewels and clothing. They marched, six hundred thousand men, with women and children, on foot, led by a towering plume of cloud which turned into a glowing flame at night.

God led them around the warlike Philistine country to the wilderness at the bank of the Red Sea, surrounded on each side by mountains. There God warned Moses that Pharaoh would soon pursue after them. Sure enough, the people began to panic as they heard the approaching Egyptians. Moses stretched out his rod over the sea, assuring the people, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord...The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” All that night God sent an east wind that blew the stream into towering walls on either side. The pillar of fire removed and stood between the Egyptians and the Israelite camp, giving light to His people and darkness to their enemies. The Israelites began to move into the dry path God provided through the sea.

As they successfully made it to the other side, the Egyptians moved in to cross as well, and the scripture says that God looked

through His towering, fiery shield at them and troubled their army, causing the wheels to fall off their chariots. They desperately tried to escape, but the Lord closed in the waters around them, and “there remained not so much as one of them.” As Moses and the people viewed the dead Egyptians washing up on the shore, Moses broke out into this triumphant song, ending with the grand finale, “The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.”

The song in Deuteronomy 32 describes first of all the character of God; the doctrine and gospel of His Word is the purest nutritive substance, as compared here to dew that is distilled upon the grass. His perfection, holiness, and deliverance are the theme of this last song, as they were in the first song.

Between verses 5 and 14, Moses tells of God’s tender, loving care over Israel, using the example of an eagle nurturing and training its young. Verses 15-33 describe the character and the iniquity of the people, using a rebellious horse as an illustration. Israel’s great apostasy is set forth in detail as a totally conditional prediction, only fulfilled in those who did not receive the warning. Verse 17 equates the idols they worshipped with demons.

In the 21st verse God foretells that the Gentiles would move Israel to jealousy by accepting Christ and coming into favor with the One the Israelites had rejected; this verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 10:19. In verse 27, He predicts the reaction of Israel’s enemies, who, when they had conquered, would acknowledge that their own might had not overthrown God’s people; God Himself had done it. It may be noted that Titus, upon destroying Jerusalem in its final overthrow, was so amazed at the strength of the city, he “acknowledged that if God had not delivered it into his hands, the Roman armies never could have taken it” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

The end of the song speaks of the mercy God would show His people, the avenging of the enemies who had spoiled his people, and the great mercy He would show the Gentiles through the gospel. Verse 43 is applied in Romans 15:9-10.

God spoke this song through Moses as he and Joshua stood in the door of the tabernacle with the pillar of cloud above them. When Moses was finished with the song, and the Levites had written it in a scroll, he commanded them to keep it with the ark of the covenant as a witness of God’s judgments. Afterward he gave a blessing to the tribes of Israel and then left them, going up onto Mount Pisgah,



where God showed him the grand vistas of Canaan before he died. There in those mountains God buried Moses, His servant, one hundred and twenty years old, a prophet like no one has known, “whom the LORD knew face to face.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Give a short summary of the events preceding the first song in our lesson.
2. What Divine purpose for God’s people was mentioned three times in the song?
3. In Moses’ last song, what title for God is mentioned in verses 4, 15, 18, and 31?
4. What bird is used to illustrate God’s care for his people?
5. What prophecy is made concerning the Gentiles?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Do you notice a theme in the songs of Moses? Besides the common theme of God’s leadership and care for His people, it is God’s holiness and power, as a golden line, that threads its way through both of these songs.

In Revelation 15, the holy saints of God who stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, holding harps and rejoicing with victory over the beast, sing “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

“It is in the moments of highest inspiration, under the fullest manifestation of God's redeeming power, that His servants speak of His Holiness” (*Holy in Christ* by Andrew Murray). How amazing that from beginning to end, God’s plan for mankind is never separated from His holiness and His judgments. As we continue our study, let us look for this same theme being repeated down through the ages in the songs of the saints.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*“Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire;  
Let us Thine influence prove:  
Source of the old prophetic fire,  
Fountain of life and love.*

*“Come, Holy Ghost, for moved by Thee;  
The prophets wrote and spoke;  
Unlock the truth, Thyself the key;  
Unseal the sacred Book.*

*“Expand Thy wings, celestial Dove,  
Brood o’er our nature’s night;  
On our disordered spirits move,  
And let there now be light.*

*“God, through Himself, we then shall know  
If Thou within us shine,  
And sound with all Thy saints below,  
The depths of love divine.”*

“Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire” by Charles Wesley uses two Scripture passages: the very first biblical reference to the Holy Spirit and one of the last. In Genesis 1:2, we find the Spirit involved in creation, hovering over the surface of the waters. The earth has just been described as formless and empty, but the Spirit oversees the ordering of our world. Light shines in the next verse, at God’s command, and the rest of the chapter details the molding of a creation that God pronounced ‘good.’

“Toward the end of the New Testament, 2 Peter 1:19-21 urges readers to pay attention to the word of the prophets, like a lamp shining in a dark place. The prophets, Peter says, were not just making this stuff up. No, they were inspired by God, moved by the Holy Spirit.

“As usual, Charles Wesley has woven solid theology into his hymn. The Spirit brings order out of our chaos. He shines light into our dark places. He often does this through the scriptures. He unlocks the truth spoken by the ancient prophets so it makes sense in modern times.”

—*The Complete Book of Hymns*, by W. J. Petersen and Ardythe Petersen

—Selected by Bro. Harlan Sorrell

OCTOBER 11, 2020

THE SONG OF DEBORAH (Judges 5)

**Judges 5:1** Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

**2** Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

**3** Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.

**4** LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

**5** The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

**9** My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.

**10** Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

**11** They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

**12** Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

**13** Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.

**20** They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

**21** The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

**24** Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

**25** He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

**26** She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the

workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

**27** At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

**MEMORY VERSE:** So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. —**Judges 5:31**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The prophetess Deborah assisted General Barak to prevail against the twenty years' oppression of the Canaanites; after which they sang an epic song of God's victory over the enemy.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Judges 5:2 "The avenging": commonly translated, "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the LORD!" (*New International Version*) or, "When leaders lead in Israel, When the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the LORD!" (*New King James Version*) or even differently, Instead of "avenging" with its usual meaning, the translators put "took the lead." *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* offers this in explanation: "In Hebrew the verb 'took the lead' properly means *to loosen* (Exodus 5:4), especially to let the hair go loose (Leviticus 10:6; Leviticus 13:45) and the noun is used of the long locks of the Nazarites (Numbers 6:5). Wearing the hair long was the mark of a vow not to do certain things until a specified object had been attained; the practice was observed not only by the Nazarites but by warriors bent upon vengeance..."

Judges 5:4 "When thou wentest out of Seir": a reference to Israel's victory over Sihon, king of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan (Deuteronomy 2). "This march seems to have been signalled, and the battles of Israel aided, by the same majestic natural phenomena as those which had helped them to defeat Sisera, as though Jehovah Himself were the leader of their vanguard. Though the earthquakes and rains which made so deep an impression upon them are not

recorded in the Pentateuch, the memory of the circumstances is preserved in these three passages [Judges 5:4; Psalm 68:7-8; Habakkuk 3:3-12]" (*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*).

Judges 5:5 "Even that Sinai": possibly a reference to how Jehovah's presence caused Mount Sinai to move and quake (as in Psalm 68).

Judges 5:11 "They that are delivered from the noise of archers": a reference to the peace and safety after the tumult and chaos of oppression and war; the people could now go unmolested to and from their villages and cities to the gates and wells—the shepherds could water their flocks, the maidens could draw water, the people could settle their disputes with the judges.

Judges 5:12 "Lead thy captivity captive": a triumphant procession in which the war hero would lead the prisoners of war and carts loaded with the spoils of war into the liberated city.

Judges 5:13 "Him that remaineth": a remnant. Barak and just a small portion of the Israelites participated in this war; several other tribes (Dan, Asher, Reuben, Gad or Gilead, etc.) did not assist, as Deborah notes in verses 15-17. "The want of sympathy on the part of the tribes that are reprov'd is a sufficient proof that the enthusiasm for the cause of the Lord had greatly diminished in the nation, and that the internal unity of the congregation was considerably loosened" (*Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*).

Judges 5:24 "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be": a celebration pronounced for her deed of war; not necessarily a Divine approbation for the morality of her deed; but, as Old Testament wars and plunders are allegorical of spiritual conquest in the New Testament, "Jael had a special blessing. Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a low and narrow sphere, if they serve God according to the powers he has given them, shall not lose their reward" (*Matthew Henry*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The book of Judges covers the time from the death of Joshua until the death of Samson, a little over three hundred years. Although some have supposed that Judges is a compilation of the histories of

each different judge, it seems evident that one person, who lived after the period, was the author, probably Samuel. The chronology of the book, being very unclear, has been debated. Adam Clarke writes: "There is, however, one light in which the whole book may be viewed, which renders it invaluable; it is a most remarkable history of the long-suffering of God towards the Israelites, in which we find the most signal instances of his justice and his mercy alternately displayed; the people sinned, and were punished; they repented and found mercy. Something of this kind we meet with in every page. And these things were written for our warning. None should presume, for God is just; none need despair, for God is merciful."

Our lesson focuses on the song with which God inspired the prophetess Deborah, who lived with her husband, Lapidoth, and judged Israel during the time that Jabin, king of Canaan, oppressed the Israelites. Jabin had 900 chariots of iron, and his captain was Sisera. After twenty years of this bondage, Deborah, as the acting head of state both in civil and religious affairs, called Barak to organize an army "toward Mount Tabor." This mountain stands by itself, 1,843 feet above the sea, with a plain area at the top. In the valley below, westward, is the river Kishon. The water that falls on the eastern side of the mountain during the rainy season empties into Kishon, sometimes overflowing its banks. This may be what is meant in Judges 5:21, "The river Kishon swept them away."

Deborah prophesied that the victory over Sisera would be in the "hand of a woman." That woman was Jael, who was married to Heber, a Kenite, a distant relative of Moses' father-in-law. Heber had distanced himself from the Kenites and was camping in the plain near Kedesh. As Barak descended from Tabor with his ten thousand men, the Lord "discomfited Sisera and all his chariots and all his host" so that Sisera fled away on foot and came to the remote tent, seeking refuge. Jael assured him of peace and safety; then proceeded to execute him with a hammer and tent stake as he slept.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What phrase in verses 2 and 9 teaches a valuable lesson?
2. Share a similar thought from Psalm 110, and give its meaning.

3. Share two other Scripture passages which echo verses 4 and 5.
4. What is the theme of the book of Judges?
5. What important concept is pointed out in verse 11 concerning witnessing about the Lord?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

The principles of the battle between good and evil: the triumph God gives to the right, via unexpected natural sources, people and supernatural intervention; the boldness and courage of men and women who willingly “offered themselves” to God; the praise given to God because of the victory He gave—these are lessons we can glean through this painful story. The final verse gives the poem deep meaning. “So”—in this same way; by God’s leading and inspiration; by His choosing of an unlikely vessel; by His sacred judgments—“let all thine enemies perish, O LORD!” We see again the golden thread of deliverance and victory over God’s foes in this song, as well as in the songs of Moses. When we apply Jael’s victory in a spiritual way, we remember the Messiah was promised to “bruise” satan’s head. In Romans 16:20 we read that we will bruise satan under our feet.

We may see God’s mercy and redemption in all of the book of Judges; a book, I might say, that is the ugliest book of the Bible because of its graphic portrayal of the horror and degradation that comes from every man doing what is “right in his own eyes.” We may even obtain a greater understanding of God’s HOLINESS by reading the Bible’s honest portrayal of man at his worst.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### **REFLECTIONS**

The hard shell of an oyster is in stark contrast to the tenderness of its flesh. A grain of sand slips in, irritates the flesh and the creation of beauty begins. Songs are like pearls, very valuable but often produced from a source of pain. Adversities slip past our protective layers and touch the most vulnerable parts of our being and in an attempt to find something to soothe and comfort us....the song begins.

Thomas Dorsey was raised in a Christian home but at an early

age he chose a life of sin. His goal was to make his mark in the world of music and he was quite famous until a nervous breakdown cut his secular career short and sent him home to recover. His mother pleaded with him to turn his life around and use his talents for the Lord instead. Eventually he yielded.

Though he wrote various other gospel songs he is most noted for "Precious Lord Take My Hand." This song was born of adversity. While away at a revival he received a telegram that his wife and child had died during childbirth and that he should come home immediately. The news was so devastating that he could not see a way forward. He was tempted to go back to his old life but had a desire to hold on to God if God would hold on to him. Seeking consolation, he sat at the piano and the Lord gave him this song:

*Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand.  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.*

*Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light;  
Take my hand, precious Lord, and lead me on.*

Through song, God enables us to turn our adversities into pearls of great price that soothe our souls and comfort our hearts. These songs become invaluable not only to us and our generation but also to the generations that follow.

It is in these battles that we compose our songs of victory. They become our perpetual theme songs forged in conflict and designed to be sung before the battle, in the midst of it and afterwards as well.

No battle, no victory. No victory, no song.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**OCTOBER 18, 2020**

### **THE SONG OF HANNAH (I Samuel 2)**

**1 Samuel 2:1** And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

**2** There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

**3** Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come



out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed.

**4** The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

**5** They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

**6** The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

**7** The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

**8** He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

**9** He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed. —**I Samuel 2:10**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A prophetic hymn, Hannah's song praises the might, wisdom and holiness of God, preaches the deliverance of God for the humble, and predicts the future reign and triumph of Christ over all His enemies.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

I Samuel 2:1 "Hannah": grace; favored. "And Hannah prayed": "And Hannah prayed in the spirit of prophecy" (*Chaldee*). "Mine horn": a symbol of strength, power, and dominion, by which Hannah is saying, "I am strong" rather than "I am proud." "The image 'horn' is taken from oxen and those animals whose strength lies in their horns. It is a favourite Hebrew symbol, and one that had become familiar to them from their long experience—dating from far-back patriarchal times—as a shepherd-people" (*Ellicott's Commentary for*

*English Readers*).

I Samuel 2:2 “Rock”: *tsur* (*Hebrew*), meaning, when applied to Jehovah, *fountain, source, spring*.

I Samuel 2:3 “A God of knowledge”: a God of *knowledges*, plural, meaning every kind of knowledge.

I Samuel 2:7 “He bringeth low and lifteth up”: an expression echoed later in Psalm 113:7 and Luke 1:46-55.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Hannah’s story began in the first chapter of I Samuel in a home where polygamy, allowed by the custom of the age, was definitely a cause of great distress and sorrow. Elkanah, Hannah’s husband, was a descendant of Levi (I Chronicles 6:22-28) but was also connected to the Ephraimites and was considered to be a man of wealth and influence. He had two wives; Peninnah, who had several children, and Hannah, who was childless and inconsolable. He tried; obviously, he treated her with much love and wished that it was enough for her. But along with her deep hurt was the provoking that went on constantly from Peninnah.

Hannah took her burden to the one place she knew to find solace—the sanctuary of the Lord. There Eli, the priest and judge, observed the silent moving of her lips and accused her of being drunk. Not put off, Hannah explained humbly and earnestly her request, and Eli, touched, bestowed upon her the blessing she desired from God.

Two things we may note from the scripture: after her burden was brought to the Lord, she “was no more sad.” And, “The Lord remembered her.” Her faith and perseverance was rewarded, and we can be assured that God hears our wordless prayers also.

E. M. Bounds (1835-1913), who wrote nine books on the subject of prayer, wrote, “Samuel was born in answer to the vowful prayer of Hannah, for the solemn covenant which she made with God if He would grant her request must not be left out of the account in investigating this incident of a praying woman and the answer she received. It is suggestive in James 5:15 that “The prayer of faith shall save the sick,” the word translated means a vow. So that prayer in its highest form of faith is that prayer which carries the whole man in its sacrificial offering. Thus devoting the whole man himself, and his all,

to God in a definite, intelligent vow, never to be broken, in a quenchless and impassioned desire for heaven—such an attitude of self-devotement to God mightily helps praying.”

In due time, Hannah bore a son, whom she named Samuel, which means, “asked of God.” Hannah and baby Samuel remained at home until he was weaned; afterward, she brought him back to Eli at Shiloh. “I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD.”

There are no words to describe this scene! The chapter ends with the words, “And he worshipped the LORD there,” and some commentators believe the first words of chapter two, “And Hannah prayed,” were connected with the preceding chapter and should read, “And Hannah worshipped the LORD there, and prayed...”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Give a brief summary of the events in Hannah’s life.
2. Name the prophetic elements in Hannah’s song.
3. What term describing God was also in Moses’ songs?
4. Which four verses contain the idea of “strength”?
5. Which phrases are also repeated in the Psalms and in Mary’s song in the New Testament?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

One more precious jewel from this story: Hannah was the *very first* prophet/prophetess to mention the name of the Messiah! The last line of her song was, “He shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his anointed.” That word is the Hebrew word for *Messiah*, which in the Greek language is *Christ*! Later prophets and writers—David, Nathan, Ethan, Isaiah, Daniel—and the apostles and inspired writers of the New Testament also used this name.

In this song, we again see the golden thread of the triumph of the Messiah over His enemies, His holiness, and His mercy and deliverance to the humble.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*"Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made;  
Were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, tho' stretched from sky to sky.  
Oh love of God, how rich and pure, how measureless and strong!  
It shall forever more endure, the saints and angel's song."*

Many years ago, these lines were found penciled on the wall of an insane asylum after the patient had been carried to his grave. Frederick Lehman and his daughter Claudia Mays were so touched and inspired by these words that they adapted them to create the song we know today as, "The Love of God."

However, historians have traced this particular stanza back to an eleventh century poem entitled "Akdmut Millan" sung by the synagogue cantor before reading the Ten Commandments. This poem provides such imagery that one can be drawn into the depths of God's enduring love for all mankind.

It is comforting to know that the sustaining power of the love of God can keep us through all circumstances. It testifies that God's love "goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell." This song is not a classic because it is old; it is a classic because it is tried and true.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**OCTOBER 25, 2020**

### **A SONG OF DAVID (Psalm 18)**

*{To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul:  
And he said,}*

**Psalm 18:1** I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

**2** The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

**3** I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

**4** The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

**5** The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

**6** In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

**7** Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

**8** There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

**9** He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.

**10** And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

**11** He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

**12** At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.

**13** The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.

**14** Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

**15** Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

**16** He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

**17** He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

**18** They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

**19** He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

**28** For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

**29** For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I

leaped over a wall.

**30** As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

**31** For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

**32** It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

**33** He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

**34** He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

**35** Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

**46** The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

**47** It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

**48** He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

**49** Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

**50** Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.—**Psalm 18:43**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A song David composed and sang after God had delivered him from Saul and his other enemies; some verses are also prophetic of Christ.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Psalm 18:1 "To the chief musician": the choir leader. "I will love thee": "Nowhere else in Scripture is the form of the word employed

which is here used for 'love.' It has special depth and tenderness" (*MacLaren*).

Psalm 18:2 "Rock": a craggy cliff; stronghold; a simile of protecting care or security. "Fortress": stronghold; castle. "My strength": tsur (*Hebrew*); rock; figurative of God, as support and defense to His people; a proper name of God. II Samuel 22, where this song is also recorded, puts "God of my Rock" and adds, "my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence."

Psalm 18:4-24 "The sorrows of death...": a sure prophetic description of Christ, His sufferings at Gethsemane and Calvary, and His resurrection. "The floods of ungodly men": men of Belial (*Hebrew*), which means without use or profit; abandoned; wicked.

Psalm 18:11 "Dark waters": watery vapors.

Psalm 18:18 "Prevented": came before; confronted.

Psalm 18:31, also 46 "Rock": tsur (*Hebrew*) cliff; fountain source.

Psalm 18:34 "Steel": brass or bronze.

Psalm 18:35 "Gentleness": meekness; mildness; favor; condescension; kindness. "Hath made me great": has multiplied me or increased me.

Psalm 18:43 "Head of the heathen": a prophecy of Christ and His church; of the bringing in of the Gentiles.

Psalm 18:49 "Among the heathen": a prophecy of Christ bringing the gospel to the Gentiles and quoted in Romans 15:9.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The title at the beginning of Psalm 18 suggests that David wrote it after his trials at the hand of King Saul were finished; however, there were also great difficulties during his forty years' reign as king, such as the rebellion of his sons Adonijah and Absalom. The arrangement of the same song in II Samuel 22 causes us to think it was written toward the end of his reign and life. However that may be, as David looked back over his life and experiences, his heart melted in tender affection and grateful praise for the mercies of God to him and the mighty deliverances He had given.

David began loving God as a tender youth, caring for his father's sheep in the fields around Bethlehem. From there he was summoned to a meeting with Samuel, who was looking for a certain son of

Jesse's that God would choose to be king. Samuel had seen all the brothers and asked if there were more. Jesse finally sent for his youngest, as if, "Oh, it couldn't be that one." But that was the one God chose. Samuel anointed him and God's Spirit came upon him.

David was soon summoned by King Saul, who was searching for a musician who could soothe his troubled spirit. He loved David and made him his armor-bearer—but the victory God gave David over Goliath changed that love. The people admired and lifted David up. He became a close friend to Jonathan. He became a mighty warrior. Saul became envious and tried to kill David when he came back to play music for him. The scripture lets us know that Saul's envy was born out of fear, because Saul saw that God was with David. He gave his daughter Michal to be David's wife, hoping she would be a snare for him. Once more David prospered, foiling Saul's evil plan.

David became a fugitive, pursued by Saul and his allies. Twice David was near enough to Saul, in hiding, that he could have ended Saul's life, but he held conscientiously to God's command to not harm the anointed of the Lord. Several times he was spied on and betrayed by Saul's men. He lived in the fortresses of the rocks and hills. He had 400 and then 600 men at his command. Toward the end, he sought refuge among Israel's enemies, the Philistines. This presented at best an awkward situation; at worst, a dilemma that nearly cost him his life. Again, God's mercy delivered him just in time.

As has already been mentioned, much of Psalm 18 and II Samuel 22 is prophetic of the Lord Jesus Christ. When David speaks of his righteousness and cleanness of hands, it is very easy to apply all that to Christ; it is more difficult to think that way of David, who we know was a poor and needy sinner. But one thing we can say about David. Even though at times he sinned grievously, he never departed from his pursuit after God. He craved holiness. He loved God with all his heart. He never resorted to idols. He truly was "after" God's heart.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What verses apply the title "Rock" to God?
2. Share the places that point to Christ.
3. How many times is the word "deliverance" used in the Psalm?



4. Share how God's "gentleness" has made you great.
5. What would you say was the greatest danger from which God delivered David?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Moses' song and David's songs: one theme they repeat is "God is my rock." It is a common symbol of God in Scripture. To God's people He was just as strong and stable as the towering peaks and fortresses around which their journey led. Those rocks portrayed not just strength but places where miraculous water gushed; thus, God the Rock was also the fountain-source upon which their very lives depended.

"For their rock is not as our Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:31). In this comparison, "Our Rock" was the living Creator who could crush their enemies. "Their rock" was a created body like the sun or the moon; or was an inanimate object, like wood or metal, that could be destroyed. Their "rock" could not hear or speak. Their "rock" could not be trusted or loved.

David used the illustration of a rock many times. "My rock and my fortress" (Psalm 71:3). "The rock of my salvation" (Psalm 89:26). "The rock of my refuge" (Psalm 94:22). "The rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

Isaiah proclaimed Him as "the rock of thy strength," and "everlasting strength," which is translated, "the Rock of ages" (Isaiah 17:10; 26:4).

In Daniel 2:45, He is the mountain, which should be translated "Rock," out of which the stone was cut, signifying the divinity of Christ.

He is called "O mighty God," in Habakkuk 1:12, which actually is "Rock" in Hebrew.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus alluded to the thought of a rock when He spoke of houses built on either sand or the rock. He applied the word to Himself in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my church..." The apostle Paul emphatically stated the rock in the wilderness was Christ (I Corinthians 10:4).

Isaiah prophesied of the tried stone, the precious corner stone that would be laid in Zion for a foundation; this was directly applied

to Christ by Paul in Romans 9:33 and by Peter in I Peter 2:6-8.

In Christian history, the "Rock" has been the theme of many powerful songs establishing truth and confronting apostasy; for example, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Martin Luther, and "Rock of Ages" by Augustus Toplady.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*"My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand."*

There are several hymns throughout the history of Christendom that portray Christ as a Rock, but perhaps one of the unlikeliest contributors to this collection of songs would be Edward Mote, the author of the well-known hymn "The Solid Rock" (#51, *ELS*). Edward was born near the end of the 18th century in London, England to very poor, ungodly parents, owners of one of London's public houses. He once stated, "So ignorant was I that I did not know there was a God. My Sundays were spent on the streets in play." He further stated that the school he attended did not even allow a Bible to be seen, much less taught.

During his teen years, Edward was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker, and it was through this cabinetmaker he heard the gospel preached and was genuinely converted to Christ. Settling in a suburb of London, he himself became a successful cabinetmaker and a devoted Christian.

In his later years, he recounted to a local newspaper how his most famous song came to be. One day in 1834, as he was on his way to his shop, he felt inspired to write a hymn on the "gracious experience of a Christian," and had written several stanzas to the song by the end of his workday. Within a few days, he called on a couple with whom he attended services, the wife being very ill. During his visit, when the time for the couple's daily devotions came around, they could not find a hymnbook, so Edward proposed to sing for her the few verses he had in his pocket. The dying sister enjoyed the song so much that she asked for a copy, and Edward, so inspired

by this reception, completed the hymn and had 1,000 copies made for distribution. In 1836, the hymn was published under the title "The Immutable Basis of a Sinner's Hope" in a collection named *Hymns of Praise, A New Selection of Gospel Hymns*.

Later, in his fifties, Edward was called to preach, and served for over twenty years as pastor of the church where he is buried. At 77, as he lay on his deathbed, he exclaimed, "I think I am going to heaven. Yes, I am nearing port. The truths I have preached I am now living upon, and they will do to die upon. Ah! The precious blood, which takes away all our sins. It is this which makes peace with God."

The tune most often associated with "The Solid Rock" was written by the American composer William Batchelder Bradbury, who also wrote the music for several other well-known hymns such as "Just As I Am," "Jesus Loves Me," "He Leadeth Me," and "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

—Bro. Fari Matthews

**NOVEMBER 1, 2020**

**A SONG OF DAVID (Psalm 57)**

*{To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.}*

**1** Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

**2** I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.

**3** He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

**4** My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

**5** Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

**6** They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they

are fallen themselves. Selah.

**7** My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

**8** Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

**9** I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

**10** For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth. —**Psalm 57:11**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** As David hid from King Saul in the cave, he meditated upon the marvelous truth that God was a refuge for him; God's strength preserved him from doing wrong and taking Saul's life, and He found great strength and hope in praising the Lord.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 57:1 "Altaschith": destroy not. Very likely this psalm is the jubilation of David's soul after he had been in the very cave where Saul was resting, and his allies had urged him to take Saul's life. He had been restrained by the inward prompting, "Destroy him not! Do God's anointed no harm!" and now he praised God for keeping him from temptation and titled his song, "Destroy Not."

Psalm 57:2 "God that performeth all things for me": "perfects or finishes concerning me."

Psalm 57:3 "Him that would swallow me up": a greater foe than Saul was before him: his own vengeance and anger. "Selah": a musical rest or pause in a song; also, a notice to pause and think quietly about the words. "God shall send forth his mercy and his truth": God's Word of truth to the forefathers in Israel had been passed down to David and was now mercifully given to him in his moment of temptation. "Touch not mine anointed!"

Psalm 57:4 "Lions": figurative of foes; fierce; devouring; Clarke has "my soul dwells in parched places." "I lie": I have my abode. "Set on fire": his own men were "set on fire" of vengeance to harm Saul;

Saul was “set on fire” to harm him.

Psalm 57:7 “Fixed”: prepared or established; firm determination. The heart, its thoughts, intents, and affections, are steadfastly resolved.

Psalm 57:8 “My glory”: some understand it to mean “tongue”; others understand David means “my soul,” as the noblest powers of his soul; all that was glorious and honorable within him. “I myself will awake early”: I will awaken the dawn.

Psalm 57:9 “I will sing unto thee among the nations”: a prophetic note in the song, to which Paul refers in Romans 15:9 when he speaks about the Gentiles.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

As the title suggests, Psalm 57 was written in praise of the Lord’s deliverance and mercy to David when he was hidden in a cave at Engedi, and Saul was seeking him with an army of three thousand men. The account of this is in I Samuel 24. Engedi “occupies a small area a few hundred feet above the Dead Sea marked by the 650 foot sedimentary terrace. The limestone borders rise so abruptly to a height of 2,000 feet immediately on the West, that the place can be approached only by a rock-cut path. Two streams descend on either side through precipitous rocky gorges from the uninhabitable wilderness separating it from Bethlehem and Hebron. It was in the caves opening out from the sides of these gorges that David took refuge from Saul” (George Wright in Bible Hub’s *Encyclopedia*). Adam Clarke quotes a writer who had been inside a cave in that very area, describing it as a place with dry air, into which the local people, several thousand at once, would go. It is called El Maamah, which means *hiding place*. Narrow passages lead into a large grotto, the top of which rises in several places like domes.

David and his men were already in the cave when Saul entered. A fable was traditionally told by the Jewish rabbis to explain why Saul so confidently entered the cave: a spider had been ordered by God to weave her web over the mouth of it, so when Saul noticed it, he would think no person had been there lately and enter without suspicion. Whether or not that is true, David and his men, hidden in the dark sides and corners of the cavern, observed the king enter and

David's men urged him to take his life. They even came up with something God was supposed to have said to justify the assassination.

No wonder David felt he was among men who were "set on fire." The temptation was so great. He took his sword, but God's word stopped him. Instead of putting it through Saul's heart, he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe and stayed the hands also of the men set on vengeance. After Saul left the cave, David called out to him, showed him the piece of robe, and entreated him to consider the mercy he had shown to him, calling on God to be judge between them.

Saul seemed to humble his heart, calling David his "son" and pronouncing God's reward upon him. But David, wisely discerning he couldn't yet trust him, and knowing Saul was under an evil spirit, remained yet in hiding.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Describe the circumstances around which this song was written.
2. How did God's mercy and truth deliver David?
3. Describe the cave at Engedi.
4. What does "my heart is fixed" mean to you?
5. How may the song title explain what happened in this story?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

My heart is touched by the way this song praises God, not just for keeping David safe when he came into close contact with King Saul, but for the more important deliverance, in which David made a narrow escape from the strong temptation to take things in his own hands. He came so close to ruining God's complete plan for his life! He seemed to get a vision of this when he said, "God performs, or perfects, all things for me." He grasped a concept that seems out of reach from most people—that of the Cause greater than himself. I think Joseph grasped that as well, when he, too, was "set among lions" in Potiphar's house with Potiphar's wife.

David also had an understanding of the depth of wickedness under which Saul was bound. We also must have that wisdom as we

deal with the wicked people in our acquaintance. David didn't put himself into God's place to do away with Saul, but he also kept himself and his family in a place safely away from him.

Oh, to have a heart that is fixed on God and His will for our lives! A vision that elevates the power and mercy of God far above the visible heavens and earth! A resolve that is founded on the ancient, immutable, unchanging commands of Almighty God.

We see in this song a deliverance that runs deeply into the heart and moral fiber of a person. It is God's will that His redemption cleanses and rescues us just that deeply; and as He wills, so shall He do and accomplish in our lives, if we will resolve to let Him.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*"I know on Whom my faith is fixed, I know in Whom I trust;  
I know that Christ abides in me, and all His ways are just.  
I know on whom my faith is fixed, His mercy has set me free;  
I know that He will safely keep, and His love is sweet to me."*

When I was in service one Wednesday night recently, I was noticing the date this song, "I Know" (#106, *ELS*) was written. I had just read about what was going on in the world in 1919. World War I had just ended and the great world-wide Spanish Flu pandemic was going on. This song was written by Bro. Charles Wesley Naylor during this time, when 500 million people (one-third of the world's population) became infected with the Spanish flu, from which approximately 50 million died. 675,000 of those deaths occurred in the United States. What we are going through is nowhere near what our forefathers suffered those two years of 1918-19.

I was blessed to realize that the words of this song still proclaimed an encouraging message—that no matter our circumstances or how bad things are, God and His power are alive and well able to inspire a song to encourage His people. "I know in whom my faith is fixed, I know in whom I trust." To know is to be assured of. *Fixed* means something is settled and secure. This song is very special to us in 2020 as we have faced a new pandemic. God is still aware of everything going on in our day.

Naylor (1874-1950) was a Church of God minister for 13 years before a tent pole fell on his back during an evangelism campaign in Florida, injuring his spine and kidney. A year later he was in a bus accident that made him an invalid for the next four decades. In addition to 134 hymns, Naylor wrote eight books and many articles, pamphlets, and columns in the *Gospel Trumpet*.

—Bro James Bell

**NOVEMBER 8, 2020**

**A SONG OF BATTLE (II Chronicles 20)**

**II Chronicles 20:5** And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,

**6** And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

**7** Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

**8** And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

**9** If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

**10** And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not;

**11** Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

**12** O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

**13** And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones,



their wives, and their children.

**14** Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation;

**15** And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

**16** To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

**17** Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

**18** And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

**19** And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

**20** And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

**21** And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

**22** And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our

salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy raise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever.

—I Chronicles 16:29; 34-36a

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** When a coalition of Moabites and Ammonites and other enemies came against King Jehoshaphat, and he proclaimed a fast to seek the Lord, God answered him with a mighty deliverance as they sang songs of praise and holiness.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 12:21 Chronicles 20:5 “New court”: the “great” or outer court of the temple, which may have been repaired or enlarged either by Jehoshaphat or his father, Asa.

II Chronicles 20:7 “Abraham thy friend”: a title mentioned again in Isaiah 41:8 and James 2:23. Abraham’s burial place in Hebron is known to the Muslims as Al-Khalil, or “Friend of God” (*Arabic*).

II Chronicles 20:9 “If, when evil come upon us...”: a quote from Solomon’s prayer of dedication in II Chronicles 6.

II Chronicles 20:10 “Mount Seir”: Edomites, neighbors to the “other beside the Ammonites” mentioned in II Chronicles 20:1 (the Maonites, who were Arabs and part of the coalition attacking Judah).

II Chronicles 20:14 “Jahaziel”: meaning “God gives visions”; a Levite, a descendant of the sons of Asaph.

II Chronicles 20:19 “Kohathites... Korhites”: a descendant of Levi. (Levi>Kohath>Korah).

II Chronicles 20:21 “In the beauty of holiness”: in holy attire; in holy array; in beautiful vestments; in the beauty of the sanctuary; “The more probable interpretation is that which refers to the state of the heart—the ‘internal’ ornament—with which we should approach God—to a holy and pure state of mind—that beauty or appropriateness of the soul which consists in holiness or purity. Of this the external clothing of the priesthood was itself but an emblem, and this is that which God desires in those who approach Him in an act of worship” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The Ammonites were descendants of Lot, which made them distant relatives to the Israelites. On their journey toward Canaan, God had forbidden Moses to engage the Ammonites in warfare because He had given the land they held to them as a possession (Deuteronomy 2:19). They were worshippers of Molech, and they oppressed the children of Israel during the time of Jephtha, who defeated them in a great slaughter (Judges 11:1-40). Later, they troubled the Israelites, were mentioned in Psalm 83 in a list of God's enemies, and had judgment pronounced upon them by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Zephaniah.

The Moabites, also Lot's descendants, were also a trouble to Israel, beginning with Balak's drive to have Balaam curse them, which turned into a plan to seduce the Israelite men into great idolatry and sin in Israel, upon which God executed judgment. Worshippers of Chemosh and Baal, they joined with the Ammonites and Amalekites in oppressing Israel eighteen years in the time of the Judges. During a brief time of peace, it was a Moabite woman, Ruth, who married into an Israelite family and became the great-grandmother of David. Saul dealt with them, and David, although living peacefully with them for a short time, completely subdued them when he became king. They were again brought under by Joram and Jehoshaphat. Later, they joined with Nebuchadnezzar against the Israelites, bringing on themselves many threatenings from Israel's prophets.

In the time of the battle with Jehoshaphat, the Ammonites and Moabites were joined by a multitude composed of Maonites (Ishmaelites, or Arabians) and others from the Mount Seir area, home of the Edomites, Esau's descendants. These distant-relative tribes were a source of trouble for God's people as well, receiving judgments from God's prophets.

In our story today, the idol-worshipping troublemakers came, bent on revenge, to overcome God's people. The king of Judah, Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, was at this time very zealous to serve the Lord. When he heard about the great multitude coming against him, he immediately "set himself to seek the Lord" and proclaimed a fast for the entire nation. From the cities and countryside the men of Judah came to fast together and seek God. As they stood together at the

temple, Jehoshaphat called on the Lord.

Our memory verse contains the words King David sang when he brought the ark from Obed-edom to the tent he had prepared in Jerusalem. The words sung by Jehoshaphat's singers may have been taken from this psalm.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What prayer did Jehoshaphat cite as he called upon God, and where is it found?
2. Share the verse which shows Jehoshaphat's dependence upon God alone.
3. What was the message God sent through Jahaziel?
4. What part of the message sounds like what Moses told Israel at the Red Sea?
5. What happened when they "began to sing and praise"?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Today's lesson reminds us of an important spiritual principle which God's people have used down through the ages in their spiritual battles: praise is a powerful weapon against the enemy. I remember a time when my husband was very sick and in great pain. The Lord began to impress me, just as in this story, that I needed to start praising the Lord. My husband was crying with pain; I felt like a cruel antagonist rather than his loyal helper! I just couldn't sing praises! Yet the command wouldn't go away. Finally I began to sing, a little feebly at first, then gaining vigor: "What a mighty God we serve!" In just minutes, the Lord gave a mighty relief and my husband was singing, too.

The allied forces in this story are allegorical. Spiritually, they represent the way we are opposed by our own flesh. When we are tempted by our appetites. When the carnal, physical concession seems the only way out. When our human pride or self-esteem tries to slip in disguised as compassion and pity. When our flesh cries out to give up in despair. Christian! Gird on the armor of praise! When your struggle threatens to shatter all your dreams, sing! "When the

clouds above us hover, and the hosts of hell are near, shout His praises, Hallelujah! Christ will make them disappear.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

“We think of Martin Luther as a great reformer, Bible translator, political leader, fiery preacher, and theologian. But he was also a musician, having been born in an area of Germany known for its music. There, in his little Thuringian village, young Martin grew up listening to his mother sing. He joined a boys’ choir that sang at weddings and funerals. He became proficient with the flute (recorder), and his volcanic emotions often erupted in song.

“When the Protestant Reformation began, Luther determined to restore worship to the German Church. He worked with skilled musicians to create new music for Christians, to be sung in the vernacular. He helped revive congregational singing and wrote a number of hymns.

“In the forward of a book, Luther once wrote: ‘Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits .... A person who ... does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God ... does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs.’

“The poet Samuel Coleridge said of Martin Luther, ‘He did as much for the Reformation by his hymns as he did by his translation of the Bible.’

“Luther’s most famous hymn is ‘Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott,’— ‘A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.’ Based on Psalm 46, it reflects Luther’s awareness of our intense struggle with Satan. In difficulty and danger, Luther would often resort to this song, saying to his associate, ‘Come, Philipp, let us sing the 46th Psalm.’ ... Despite his excommunication from the Roman Church, Luther came to know the gracious power of God’s sheltering hand. He faced continual threats to his life and freedom, and times of intense spiritual battle as well. But in the comforting words of Psalm 46, Luther found the inspiration for this hymn.

“This is a difficult hymn to translate because the original German is so vivid. At least 80 English versions are available. The most

popular in America was done [as follows] by Frederic Henry Hodge.

*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*

*“A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe—  
His craft and pow’r are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

*“Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He –  
Lord Sabaoth is His name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

—Adapted from “Then Sings My Soul,” by Robert J. Morgan and “The Complete Book of Hymns,” by W. J. Petersen and Ardythe Petersen  
—Selected by Bro. Harlan Sorrell

**NOVEMBER 15, 2020**

**A SONG OF ISAIAH (Isaiah 5)**

**Isaiah 5:1** Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

**2** And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

**3** And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

**4** What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

**5** And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break

down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

**6** And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

**7** For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

**16** But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

**MEMORY VERSE:** In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. —**Isaiah 27:2-3; 6**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A song sang to Jehovah of His love and care for His people, which included a lament that His own people, to whom He had given so much, would return to Him so little; a judgment against their wickedness, and a promise that His judgments would produce the fruits of righteousness.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Isaiah 5:1 “My wellbeloved...my beloved”: Jehovah. “His vineyard”: Israel (Psalm 80:14). “Very fruitful hill”: peak; literally, horn of oil; horn being a biblical symbol of fertility. The word *horn* was also used for describing height by the Arabs and the Germans (Matterhorn, Aarhorn, etc.)

Isaiah 5:2 “Fenced...gathered out the stones”: dug it over, gathered the stones, and built a protective wall with it. When someone wanted to “mar” a land, they would tear down the wall and scatter the stones around in it. “Choice vine”: literally, the vine of Sorek, which means the richest variety, of deep red color; the same word as “choice vine” in Genesis 49:11 and “noble vine” in Jeremiah 2:21. “Tower”: a watchtower which was built in vineyards and orchards so the keeper could watch for thieves or marauders. “Built a winepress”: dug a winepress, which had an upper vat, where the grapes were pressed, and a lower trough or hollow excavated in the rock; this was for the purpose of keeping the wine cool and safe from

winds. “He looked”: to look eagerly and wait patiently. “Wild grapes”: not the domestic or cultivated kind.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Isaiah may very well have been trained as a psalmist. This poignant but elegant ode inspired by God’s love and care for His people was a beginning of his compositions. Chapters 12, 25, and 26 also contain songs, and chapter 27 seems to add a verse or two to the song in chapter five; we have included those verses in our lesson. *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* says this of Isaiah’s song: “One of the finest exhibitions of rhetorical skill and power which the book contains. The prophet appears in the guise of a minstrel before an assemblage of his countrymen, and proceeds to recite the unfortunate experience of a “friend” of his with his vineyard. The simple story, told in light popular verse, disarms the suspicions of the crowd, and the singer, having secured their sympathy, demands a verdict on the course which a man might be expected to pursue with so refractory a vineyard as this.” In a similar manner, Jesus told a parable of a vineyard to the Jews in His day, inviting their judgment on the wicked husbandmen, by which they actually incriminated themselves before they perceived where Jesus was heading with the story (Matthew 21:33-46).

The picture of a well-cared-for vineyard so aptly describes God’s dealings with Israel. The metaphor was also used in Psalm 80 and in the Song of Solomon. Jesus repeatedly mentioned vineyards and fruit in His parables. Grapes, wine, and wine presses were also very common metaphors in Scripture, representing the blood that Jesus shed for the redemption of mankind and the vengeance of God toward man’s sin (Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 14:14-20).

More can be explained about Sorek, the word used to describe the particular species of grapevine in the passage. “Sorek was a valley lying between Ascalon and Gaza...Both Ascalon and Gaza were anciently famous for wine...The upper part of the valley of Sorek, and that of Eshcol, where the spies gathered the single cluster of grapes, which they were obliged to bear between two upon a staff, being both near to Hebron were in the same neighborhood...all this part of the country abounded with rich vineyards” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



## DISCUSSION:

1. To whom and about whom is Isaiah singing his song?
2. Name other places in Scripture which use the vine/vineyard metaphor for God's people.
3. Share your thoughts about the pathetic question in verse 4: "What could have been done more for my vineyard?"
4. Share the words in the memory verse which describe God's tender care over his people.
5. What promises does God give of redemption and victory?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our verses today show us so many ways that God cares for us—His people and His vineyard. Consider the fence or wall: His laws, instructions, testimonies, judgments, counsels, commandments and precepts. Other places speak of His salvation being placed as walls and bulwarks or that He is a wall of fire about His people.

This speaks also of a hedge, which surely means His protection. Nothing can pass through this hedge but what He specifically allows, and if it comes, even a purpose meant to harm is turned into that which blesses us.

He prunes and cultivates and waters us—night and day and every moment! Is that not the finest of nurturing care? We really have no lack, and there is no reason not to bear Him the finest fruit!

He provides a watch tower within us. I believe this points first to every man's conscience, but especially to the ever-vigilant Holy Spirit who guards and guides us, warns us, and brings things to our remembrance.

And it says He looks. He watches. He waits for us. Patiently and cheerfully, with hope and expectation, He anticipates our harvest and rich fruit. He provides a winepress from which He extracts the very choicest wine to bring comfort and blessing from our lives to the lives of others. It is equipped with an underground storage vat to cool and safely store His rich treasures. The good fruits He gathers from our lives only ripen with age. He always saves the best wine until last. And the very best is reserved for when we sit down with Him and feast for eternity.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

What makes a song so powerful? Simple words, a simple melody, yet their union creates a distinct language all its own—a language of the soul. This unique combination of words and music is a vital part of the worship experience here on earth as well as in heaven.

This language is understood not only with the mind but with the spirit as well. It has the capacity to penetrate to the core of our being and relay a message in a much more meaningful way. It speaks to our emotions. It changes our mood.

It is universal. Everyone with an ear to hear can relate to and be moved by a song. It is eternal. The creation of God and the collaboration of saints and angels joining in never-ending worship.

When sung with the spirit and with the understanding it has the power to rout the enemy. It is a vital part of the Christian arsenal. A compilation of God's promises and declarations fused with our experiences and observations, then set to music—how powerful!

One such song that has blessed saints for many years, “*Press On, My Soul, To Glory*”, was penned by a pioneer minister of the Church of God in California, Sis Naomi Eddens. She was a woman of faith and fight, who stood firm in the midst of adversity and encouraged others to do so as well. Her family tells the story of how she endured affliction and many trials that were peculiar to women ministers of her day. She had a resolve to be faithful to God as well as to care for her husband and children. Her song was born out of the trials and challenges of balancing family life and the weight of ministry as a woman. While going through a particularly difficult trial, the Lord gave her a song that continues to inspire decades beyond her earthly journey.

*When I'm passing through the furnace, He won't forsake me there;  
He has promised to protect me, and my burdens He will bear.*

*Chorus:*

*Press on, my soul, to Glory, my journey won't be long.  
Through trials and tribulations is the way He calls us home*

*Then why should I be fearful while the raging storm winds blow?*

*If I trust in God Almighty, then the powers of hell must go.*

*Press on, my soul, to glory, my courage is renewed.  
The devil stands defeated, and I'm feasting on heavenly food.*  
—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**NOVEMBER 22, 2020**

### **A SONG OF ISAIAH (Isaiah 12)**

**Isaiah 12:1** And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

**2** Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

**3** Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

**4** And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

**5** Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. —**Isaiah 12:6**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A song of praise, applicable to the victory God gave His people at that time over the invasion of Sennacherib, but pointing forward to the time of the Messiah, when He would redeem His people and the Gentiles from their sins and bring them together into one united, holy church of God.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Isaiah 12:1 “In that day”: the gospel day; the day of the Messiah.

Isaiah 12:2 “The LORD Jehovah”: In this place and in Isaiah 26:4, the repetition of the name seems to be used to denote “emphasis”—or perhaps to indicate that Yahweh is the same always—an

unchangeable God" (*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*). "My strength": "strength in various applications (force, security, majesty, praise)—boldness, loud, might, power, strength, strong" (*Strong's Concordance*). The same expression as in Moses' song in Exodus 15:2.

Isaiah 12:3 "With joy shall ye draw water": a phrase chanted by the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles, when it was customary for the priests to draw water out of the spring of Siloam with golden pitchers and pour it out with wine on the west side of the altar as a libation. On the last day of that feast, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Jesus applied the entire meaning of the feast, which celebrated the Rock supplying water in the desert, to Himself, who was the giver of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 12:4 "Call upon his name": some translations have "Proclaim his name." "Make mention": record; cause it to be remembered. "Among the people": among the peoples (plural).

Isaiah 12:5 "For he hath done excellent things": an echo from Moses' song, "He hath triumphed gloriously." "He has wrought a stupendous work" (Bishop Lowth, quoted in *Benson's Commentary*). "This is known": let it be known; publish it!

Isaiah 12:6 "Thou inhabitant of Zion": "The word translated "inhabitant" is feminine, and designates the entire community or Church that dwells on the holy hill" (*Pulpit Commentary*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The 10th chapter of Isaiah describes God's judgments against Assyria, foretelling the invasion of Sennacherib and the destruction of his army. He compares the Assyrian host to a great forest, which is cut down, as was also described in Ezekiel 31. In contrast, Isaiah 11 describes a slender branch, a twig, growing out of ancient roots, a direct prophecy of Jesus Christ and what He would accomplish in His kingdom. Isaiah, as did other prophets, took occasion of the great temporal deliverance Jehovah gave His people over the Assyrians, to extoll the spiritual deliverance the Messiah would bring; he does the same thing later in his prophecies of the deliverance of Judah from its Babylonian captivity.

Assyria, an ancient powerful nation, had its beginnings from Assur, the second son of Shem, who settled in the fertile region east

of the Tigris River. The ancient kingdom included Babylonia and Mesopotamia and extended to the Euphrates River; its capital was Nineveh. The Assyrians came against Israel in the period of the Judges. King Menahem of Israel and later King Hoshea were invaded by Assyrian kings “until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets” (II Kings 17:23). Thus, God used Assyria as His rod, an instrument to accomplish His judgments upon apostate Israel, but then comforted Hezekiah, king of Judah and intervened for him against Sennacherib. Sennacherib’s son ravaged Judah in the days of Mannaseh, Hezekiah’s son, but afterward the power and glory of Assyria was diminished, until its monarchy was divided between the Medes and Babylonians, was further destroyed by the Greeks and then by the Romans. That great city, Nineveh, was destroyed, never again to be inhabited.

Isaiah 11 alludes strongly to the deliverance at the Red Sea; the praises in Isaiah 12 very strongly resemble the song in Exodus 15, which Moses sang at that deliverance. The spiritual significance, we know, is the greatest, as it applies to the “new Exodus,” salvation and deliverance from sin.

“The religious literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians culminated in a great series of hymns to the gods. These have come down to us from almost all periods of the religious history of the people...The greatest number of those that have come down to us are dedicated to Shamash, the Sun-god, but many of the finest, as we have already seen, were composed in honor of Sin, the Moon-god” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). An example of one of these hymns was also given in this resource. I couldn’t help but contrast the empty incantations and appeals to what they called powerful deities—but who had no power to deliver from the strong demons which afflicted them—with the jubilant praise of God’s people in Isaiah 12. No wonder we can cry out and shout, “Great is the Holy One in the midst of thee!”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What “day” is referred to in Isaiah 12:1?
2. Against what is the anger of the Lord directed? What appeases that anger?

3. What verse uses the same expression as Moses' song in Exodus 15?
4. Verse 3 points forward to what event in the days of the Messiah, and how did Jesus apply it?
5. Describe some of the "excellent things" God has done in salvation.

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

The religion of Jehovah has always been a religion of joy. But again, it is the deliverance which brings the great joy to His people. In this song, we see the golden thread of victory over God's enemies and the deliverance of His holiness in the hearts and lives of God's children.

This song is a missionary song, an evangelistic song; a natural response to what God has accomplished in our lives: "I must tell it!" Verses 4, 5, and 6 tell us to praise Him and call upon His name, proclaim His name, put on record what He has done, let it be known, publish it, and cry out and shout about it!

Who is Zion? The beloved bride of the Lamb, the new Jerusalem, the habitation of God. Ephesians 2 and Hebrews 12 both let us know that we have been redeemed, brought together, and made into His habitation (Zion) through the indwelling of His Spirit. Ephesians 5 tells us that the bride of Christ is His church; those people who have been purchased and redeemed by His own blood. That's you and me!

So this song, written by Isaiah so many years ago, is about us in 2020. That's enough to shout about!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### **REFLECTIONS**

Many Christians are quite familiar with the writings of Frances Jane van Alstyne, more commonly known as Fanny J. Crosby, who during her lifetime wrote the texts to over 8,000 hymns and gospel songs. So prolific was her writing, in fact, she used nearly 200 separate pseudonyms to address the concerns of publishers of her day that their hymnals not appear to contain so many contributions from one person. Blind nearly from birth, she lived her almost 95 years with joy, and the imagery expressed in her poetry rivals that of

any others blessed with full sight.

A number of Fanny's hymns, such as "Safe In the Arms of Jesus," "Blessed Assurance," "Pass Me Not," and "Rescue the Perishing," written in collaboration with noted hymn composers of the day, including William J. Kirkpatrick and William Howard Doane, quickly became favorites during her lifetime. They were often sung during the gospel crusades of the late 19th century, particularly those used by her good friend Ira Sankey during his travels with the American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody.

"To God Be the Glory," written in the early 1870's in collaboration with Doane, took a more circuitous route to familiarity. Originally, it did not catch on in America, but was taken to England by Moody and Sankey and used extensively in their revivals there, eventually being published in a number of hymnals overseas. Over 75 years later, in the early 1950's, evangelist Billy Graham and his song leader, Cliff Barrows, added the hymn to their London Crusade songbook, and the hymn was so well received that they began to include it in their crusades back in the United States. What was once a nearly forgotten hymn became a classic and is well-known today.

The hymn is somewhat unique among late 19th century hymns in that, instead of primarily focusing on personal testimony or Christian experience, it expresses and encourages congregational praise to God for His greatness, His wonderful plan of salvation, and the realization of eternal life for every believer. As we enter this season of thanksgiving, may we truly shout the praises of Jehovah for all that He has done for His Church!

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,*

*Let the earth hear His voice!*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,*

*Let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,*

*And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

—Bro. Fari Matthews

NOVEMBER 29, 2020

A SONG OF ISAIAH (Isaiah 26)

**Isaiah 26:1** In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

**2** Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

**3** Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

**4** Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

**5** For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.

**6** The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.

**7** The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

**8** Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

**9** With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

**10** Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

**11** LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

**12** LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

**MEMORY VERSE:** O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. —**Isaiah 26:13**



**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A song encouraging confidence, trust and waiting upon God.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 26:1 “In that day”: the gospel day; the times of the Messiah, when He should establish His church, the New Jerusalem. “Salvation”: deliverance; prosperity; victory. “Walls and bulwarks”: the walls and ramparts, or trenches, around a city, which point to the protection and stability of the city of God, the New Jerusalem. “The prophet could not have had reference in these prophecies to the walls of literal Jerusalem. But since, in the New Testament spiritual Jerusalem, salvation from sin is obtained and men within her walls are kept pure in God’s sight, her walls must be the very fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies” (W. G. Schell in *Biblical Trace of the Church*).

Isaiah 26:2 “Gates”: entrances; doors. “This signifies the abundant entrance into the church of God. As the city is a spiritual city, the walls are spiritual walls and the gates spiritual gates, and they signify that men from every condition in life can be redeemed and enter directly into the spiritual house of God in the new Jerusalem. These gates, we are told, shall not be shut at all by day, and we are told that there shall be no night in this city” (W. G. Schell in *Biblical Trace of the Church*). “The righteous nation that keepeth the truth”: “The converted Gentiles shall have the gates opened—a full entrance into all the glories and privileges of the Gospel; being fellow heirs with the converted Jews” (*Clarke’s Commentary*). “A people, made up of all kindreds and nations and tongues, which should henceforth be ‘the people of God.’ They are ‘righteous,’ as washed clean from all taint of sin in the blood of the Lamb. They ‘keep the truth,’ or ‘keep faithfulness,’ as under all circumstances clinging loyally to God” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Isaiah 26:3 “Keep”: guard, as with a garrison. “Perfect peace”: “Peace, peace;’ the repetition of the word denoting, as is usual in Hebrew, emphasis, and here evidently meaning undisturbed, perfect peace” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*). “Whose mind”: “The Hebrew does not probably mean ‘mind,’ but ‘a thing formed’ (Ephesians 2:10), so constantly ‘supported’; or else ‘formed and supported’ (by Thee) Thou shalt preserve (it, namely, the righteous nation) in

perpetual peace" (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*). "A steadfast disposition thou guardest in constant peace, for it is trustful towards thee" (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*). "Is stayed": to prop; to lean; bear up; sustain.

Isaiah 26:4 "Everlasting strength": tsur olamim (*Hebrew*) "The rock of ages." The eternal fountain, source, or spring.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

This song and the one in the previous chapter are inspired praises, not only for God's judgments on Israel's literal enemies, but prophetic utterances looking forward into the kingdom of the Messiah. I found the various commentaries agreeing pretty well on that point, but most of them applied the prophecies to a future age.

We have been blessed by an inspired ministry who have taught the fulfillment of these prophecies as being in the kingdom we have now, in the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, Zion, the church of God. Jesus built it; the light of it shone brightly in the morning age; papal apostasy darkened it; the cloudy day of Protestantism brought mingled light; and the evening time brought a fullness of light. The commentators agreed that God's church would be triumphant—at the end of time. We are blessed to know assuredly that His church is triumphant now.

The lofty city laid low by the poor and needy may be applied then, to the jubilant throng rejoicing over fallen, literal Babylon or a "mystical" Babylon, "representative of the stronghold of the foes of God's people in all ages," as say the commentators; they are right, but they all stop short of a definite vision of God's church, here and now. Thank the Lord, His people do triumph over Babylon, false religion, and stand on the sea of glass, His truth, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Again, the theme of God's eternal judgments, His truth, the Everlasting Rock, shines brightly in Isaiah's song. It is God's truth, preached and lived in the earth, that will cause its inhabitants to learn righteousness. A warning is given amidst the praise, that favor shown to the wicked will not result in them learning righteousness. Let us value God's judgments and learn how to administer them "rightly" as we deal with the world around us.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. Of what “day” does Isaiah speak?
2. Share other scriptures which speak of Zion’s gates and walls.
3. Share the meanings of “keep” and “stayed” in verse three.
4. Share your thoughts about “the lofty city.”
5. What will cause the earth to “learn righteousness,” and what will cause the wicked to not learn righteousness?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

This song was a great blessing and comfort to our family in a recent affliction. As we gathered for family worship, the positive declaration, “We have a strong city” made us rejoice as we thought of God’s church, the people whom He has redeemed, of which we are a part. It is such a precious family! The prayer support of God’s people in times of trouble is indeed like an armed fortress and refuge; like a strong battalion of armed soldiers, poised to do battle.

“Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks”—this inspired our faith as we considered the deliverance that surrounded us, through which no foe could touch us. God’s Word and promises were a hedge and shield for us.

“Thou wilt keep him.” We had a strong sense of being *kept*—secure, contented, even serene—amid constant danger.

“In the LORD Jehovah is everlasting strength.” As far back as we could go down the paths of memory, we knew saints who had trusted in God and He had not failed them; in our own lives, we could recall time after time God had delivered us. We knew we were being sheltered in something *everlasting*.

“The foot shall tread them down...even...the poor...and needy.” Whatever foe presented itself—pain, fear, doubt, worry, even death itself—whatever lifted itself up against us and against our Lord, even our poor, weak, weary foot could trample it. With God, you just can’t lose! When you don’t even have the strength, He just fights for you. This is what this song meant to us. Praise His wonderful name!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to Thee;  
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love  
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee;  
Take my voice, and let me sing aways, only for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee;  
Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.*

Born in 1836, Frances Ridley Havergal began reading and memorizing the Bible at the age of four and eventually memorized the Psalms, Isaiah and most of the New Testament. She was a well educated and beautiful young woman. She was also a talented singer and pianist and was in demand as a concert soloist. However, she maintained a simple faith and confidence in her Lord and never wrote a line of song or poetry without praying over it.

In February 1874, Frances went to visit a household of about ten people. Some were unsaved and others were professing Christians, though not joyful Christians. She had such a burden for the people and prayed, "Lord, give me all in this house!" And the Lord did. Before she left, everyone in the household had received a blessing. The last night of her visit found her too joyful to sleep so she spent the night in praise and renewed consecration. As she was communing with the Lord, little couplets kept ringing in her heart till the final stanza, "Ever, only, ALL for Thee"! This was the night that she wrote the hymn, "Take My Life and Let It Be."

About four years later, she felt a call to act on the verse of the hymn she had written, "Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold." At this time, she owned about fifty pieces of jewelry, as well as a fine jewelry cabinet. She decided to send it all to the Christian Missionary House so that they could dispose of it. Her report was, "I don't think I ever packed a box with such pleasure."

She was of poor health and as years went by, her health became broken. They say she wore herself out ministering to others. While many tried to sympathize for her in her last days of suffering, she would whisper, "Never mind! It's home the faster! God's will is delicious; He makes no mistakes." Her life personified the beautiful hymn she wrote "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to

Thee. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in endless praise."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**DECEMBER 6, 2020**

**THE SONG OF HEZEKIAH (Isaiah 38)**

**Isaiah 38:9** The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

**10** I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

**11** I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

**12** Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

**13** I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

**14** Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

**15** What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

**16** O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

**17** Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

**18** For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

**19** The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD. —**Isaiah 38:20**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Hezekiah was sick and the Lord had told Isaiah, “He shall die,” but when he cried unto the Lord, his prayer was heard and God granted fifteen years to his life. This song of praise is what he wrote in testimony.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 38:10 “In the cutting off of my days”: The *Latin Vulgate* has, “In the midst of my days,” the *Septuagint*, “In the height of my days” and the Greek interpreters, “In the silence of my days.” “Hezekiah’s days were cut off by the sentence of God” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*). “Gates of the grave”: gates of Sheol (*Hebrew*) or Hades (*Greek*). The word picture is of a great city with gates, a symbol of its power. H. M. Riggle, in *Beyond the Tomb*, gives a clue for interpreting the word “grave” in this place. “[Sheol and hades] are generic terms with more than one meaning, sometimes applying to the grave, sometimes to the world of departed spirits, and again to the state of the lost eternally...The signification in any text must be determined by the sense in which the word is used and by the context.” The two following verses give us the context, that he is speaking of the literal grave in which the body lies, where there is no more human interaction; where in body he goes no more to worship at the temple.

Isaiah 38:12 “Shepherd’s tent”: a type of the body, the dwelling-place of the soul, a transitory home. “From day even unto night”: he expected to die within the space of a day. “As a lion”: a phrase comparing his great pain to a lion violently crushing the bones.

Isaiah 38:14 “Crane...swallow...dove”: his cries of pain.

Isaiah 38:15 “I shall go softly”: humbly, submissively, with a solemn, calm pace. “In the bitterness”: because of the remembrance of the bitter sorrow of my sickness; or because of my deliverance from the bitterness of soul.

Isaiah 38:17 “For peace I had great bitterness”: some translators have, “My great bitterness was unto peace, or turned into prosperity.”

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The account of King Hezekiah's sickness and healing is also recorded in II Kings 20 and briefly in II Chronicles 32:24. Commentators disagree about the chronology; some say Hezekiah's sickness in Isaiah 38 occurred thirteen or fourteen years before the events in Isaiah 36 and 37, and the destruction of the Assyrian forces occurred in the closing years of Hezekiah's life. Others say his sickness came soon after the army of Sennacherib had been defeated.

What was Hezekiah's sickness? Verse 21 calls it a boil. Some say it was the boil associated with the plague, a disease causing death within three or four days. The prophet Isaiah was sent by God to tell the 39-year-old king to set his house "in order" or give commands to his household, because he was going to die. This seemed to be a "conditional prophecy" which was contingent on repentance and prayer, like the one Jonah gave Nineveh: "In forty days...."

When Hezekiah heard the sentence, he turned his face toward the wall and wept. He beseeched God to remember how he had walked in truth and with a perfect heart, and had done what was good in God's sight. In his thanksgiving song, however, he mentions that God had been merciful to cast all his sins behind His back, so he must have come to a deeper awareness, in the suffering, of his true sinfulness before God.

Isaiah had not yet left the building when God turned him around with a second message granting healing and life to Hezekiah. Isaiah put a fig poultice on Hezekiah's boil, probably as an aid to draw out the poison, and issued a sign, at Hezekiah's request, that God would indeed raise him up so he would be able to worship in God's house in three days. Which would be more of a sign, he asked Hezekiah; to see the shadow on the sundial go in reverse, or jump forward ten degrees? Hezekiah wished to see it go backward, and Isaiah cried unto the Lord. As they watched, the shadow edged backward ten degrees.

There is more to the story, even after Hezekiah's song of praise. He had foreign visitors, to whom he showed the wealth of his kingdom. II Chronicles 32:25 says that "he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him." This displeased the Lord, who pronounced judgment upon his pride. Hezekiah humbled his

heart, and the penalty was delayed. He went on to build and prosper until his death. During this space of time, he had a son, Manasseh, who became the next king, at age thirteen, upon his father's death.

Manasseh was a wicked king who made God's people do "worse than the heathen." He was carried away prisoner by the Assyrians, but in his affliction he sought God and humbled himself greatly, leaving us a record both of the sure judgments and sure mercies of the great God of heaven.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. What was Hezekiah's affliction, its likely cause, and Isaiah's home remedy?
2. What did Hezekiah plead before the Lord, and how did his song of praise slightly change from that plea?
3. Explain Hezekiah's view of death. Was it entirely accurate, or did it portray the dim understanding of the times? How does it differ from, say, Paul's view in the New Testament?
4. Hezekiah promised to "go softly." What does this mean, and how well did he carry it out?
5. What admonition does Hezekiah leave for fathers?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Hezekiah's chief lament seemed to center around his idea that in death he would be cut off from seeing the Lord. The strong allusion here is that *gathering to worship in God's house, offering the sacrifices and singing the songs of praise* were his life. "By these things men live" and "the life of my spirit." I think I see a key to the great mercy God had upon Hezekiah. Looking farther, we note in II Chronicles 29:3 that in the first year of his reign, when he was twenty-five, he had the temple doors opened and repaired. He organized and commissioned the Levites to carry out their service. They scrubbed the house of the Lord from top to bottom. Verse 20 says Hezekiah "rose early" to begin the day with offerings. For hours, while the sacrifices were being burnt, the Levite choir and orchestra played and sang praises "with gladness."



Hezekiah's next move was to plan the Passover, which had not been commemorated for years. He sent posts throughout all Israel and Judah, inviting all to come. Many people laughed him to scorn, but those who did come received forgiveness for their sins, and healing, and such joy as had not been experienced since the days of Solomon. The very best part, however, was the fact that their prayer came up into the ears of the God in heaven. This is what Hezekiah loved.

Hezekiah closes his song of praise with a vow to sing to His God all the days of his life. How much Hezekiah understood about the hereafter, we don't really know. But God understood his heart—it was a heart turned toward God's house. When he was chastened and judged, he humbled himself. Whatever it took to be able to worship and exalt his God, that's what he was willing to do.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

### *One Thing Have I Desired*

*One thing have I desired, and for this I will seek after.  
In the house of the Lord I'll spend all my days.  
For in times of great trouble, He'll hide me in His pavilion,  
With my sacrifice of joy I shall sing His praise.*

Bro. Leslie Busbee (1938-2016) was known by many people as a man who loved God's Word, loved God's people, loved little children, and loved communion with God. He was also known for his many poems. Composing poetry since he was a small child, he wrote volumes of verse through the years of his life, including a lengthy poem he recited to his wife at their wedding and special birthday poems for friends and family every year.

Like King Hezekiah in our lesson, Bro. Leslie, my dear father, loved the presence of God, whether in the congregation of God's people or in his private prayer time. He often compiled the scriptures he loved and put them to music, as he did with Psalms 23, 27, and 34 in this song.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DECEMBER 13, 2020

### THE SONG OF HABAKKUK (Habakkuk 3)

**Habakkuk 3:1** A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

**2** O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

**3** God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

**4** And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

**5** Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

**6** He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

**7** I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

**8** Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?

**9** Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

**10** The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.

**11** The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

**12** Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.

**13** Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

**14** Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing

was as to devour the poor secretly.

**15** Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

**16** 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.

**17** 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:

**18** Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

**MEMORY VERSE:** 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. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

—Habakkuk 3:19

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The prophet looked into the past at God's mighty deliverances and drew courage for the present woes and future battles, ending his prayer with a song of praise.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Habakkuk 3:1 "A prayer": an act or exercise of devotion, praise or thanksgiving. "Upon Shigionoth": plural for Shiggaion, the title of Psalm 7; a "wild, tumultuous and ecstatic poem. The word 'upon' in such superscriptions appears to mean 'after the mode of,' 'to the music of' Shigionoth" (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*). "'Upon Shigionoth' was either the name, title, or first word of some song or songs, according to which this was to be sung; or the name of the tune with which it was to be sung; or of the instrument on which was to be sung: it...may called, an 'erratic' or 'wandering' song, because of the variableness of its metre, and of its tune" (*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*). Shigionoth, translated from a root meaning "to err" was also thought by some to be designating the prayer as a plea for pardon for their ignorance and error.

Habakkuk 3:2 "Make known": literally, Thou wilt make known...Thou wilt remember mercy.

Habakkuk 3:3 "God came from Teman...Paran": the area of Mount Sinai, where God gave the law. This verse and the verses that follow echo Deuteronomy 33:2, Judges 5:4, Psalm 18, and Psalm 68:7 as a description of the fire, glory and power demonstrated in His deliverance and revelation to His people. It uses the events of the past to give a sense of God's very present help, and projects into the future, calling on the mighty God to deliver His people from Babylon as He had delivered them from Egypt, revealed His commandments at Sinai, conquered the Canaanites, and delivered them time and again from their enemies in the time of the judges and the kings.

Habakkuk 3:4 "Horns": rays of light. "The hiding of his power": "The Shechinah, or symbol of the divine presence, had rays of light issuing out on every side, and yet that was but a hiding, or veil, to the Divine Majesty, who covereth himself with light as with a garment, (Psalm 104:2) and who dwelleth in light inaccessible, or of too resplendent brightness to be approached, or gazed at, by mortals" (*Benson Commentary*). This points to the Messiah, as in Hebrews 1:3 and John 1:9.

Habakkuk 3:5 "Burning coals went forth at his feet": devouring fire or lightning, as in Leviticus 9:24, where fire came out from Him and consumed the burnt offering, or when it destroyed the wicked in Numbers 16:35. John saw this in Revelation 1:14-15. Some interpret it to mean "burning fevers" or diseases with which he destroyed the heathen nations; some say it means the burning of Jerusalem by the Romans. The ancient fathers wrote that it was the destruction of the devil and all his principalities by Christ on the cross. "In all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon Christ the Anointed, and brought deliverances to pass by him. All the wonders done for Israel of old, were nothing to that which was done when the Son of God suffered on the cross for the sins of his people. How glorious his resurrection and ascension! And how much more glorious will be his second coming, to put an end to all that opposes him, and all that causes suffering to his people!" (*Matthew Henry Commentary*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Very little can be found about the prophet Habakkuk. Scholars have different opinions about the time he lived and prophesied, although it seems to be narrowed down to around 600 B.C. and during the time of the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Because of his musical note, he may have been a member of the Levitical choir.

Chapters 1 and 2 contain Habakkuk's burden about a coming destruction from the Chaldeans. Again the commentators disagree, some saying it was really the Chaldeans; others maintaining it was the Assyrians Habakkuk was talking about. I found this interesting note from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: "Habakkuk has been called the prophet of faith. He possessed a strong, living faith in Yahweh; but he, like many other pious souls, was troubled and perplexed by the apparent inequalities of life. He found it difficult to reconcile these with his lofty conception of Yahweh. Nevertheless, he does not sulk. Boldly he presents his perplexities to Yahweh, who points the way to a solution, and the prophet comes forth from his trouble with a faith stronger and more intense than ever."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### DISCUSSION:

1. What is a probable meaning of "Shigionoth"?
2. What time/place is the prophet describing when he says, "Teman" or "Mount Paran"?
3. What other places in Scripture are similar to this song?
4. Where does the song seem to change to a more restful, surrendered tone?
5. What does the prophet find God to be to him personally in the time of trouble?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

As I began to research the word meanings in this song, I realized there would be too much for the short article space in this book, so I stopped short after listing just a few. If the reader has time, it is an amazing study.

The song takes in the past deliverances of Jehovah for His people

and constantly points forward to the Messiah and His kingdom. What He has done at the Red Sea, at Sinai, in the conquest of Canaan, to Sennacherib and the Assyrians, to Babylon—to every other enemy you can list, whatever obstacle, mighty force, or crisis, He comes! He comes to devour, uncover, discover, wound, scatter, invade, march through.

But, just as the wild, tumultuous music of the song climaxes, there seems to be a trembling sigh, like the stirring of a gentle breeze in the stillness after a storm. The sun comes out and makes the droplets shine like diamonds on the leaves. A restful, sweet melody of surrender begins. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom...Yet, I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength...”

He comes! He comes and makes my heart rest. He comes and is my strength. He comes and makes me overcome any adversity I may face.

Once again we see the golden line of deliverance. The Rock of our strength. The God of our salvation.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

Verses 17-19 stand out to me as Habakkuk is finishing up his writing. This was in a time of captivity and we see how desolate everything was. No blossoms, no figs, no fruit in the vines, no olives, no oil, no harvest to be had in the field—all hope was lost.

Let’s look at what Adam Clarke had to say: “These two verses give the finest display of resignation and confidence that I have ever met with. He saw that evil was at hand, and unavoidable; he submitted to the dispensation of God, whose Spirit enabled him to paint it in all its calamitous circumstances. He knew that God was merciful and gracious. He trusted to his promise, though all appearances were against its fulfillment; for he knew that the word of Jehovah could not fail, and therefore his confidence was unshaken... ‘To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.’ This line...leads me to suppose that when the prophet had completed his short ode, he folded it up, with the above direction to the master singer, or leader of the choir, to be sung in the temple service.”

*Dear Lord, may we as your people be able to sing this song in our*

*lives. Help us, when all around us is barren, dark, and empty, when there are not a lot of people to support us or encourage us, to say in our hearts, "Praise the Lord!" Help us to see—through dark troubling clouds of circumstances—your great promises and believe in spite of doubts or feelings. Dear Lord, help us to see good when evil is massed against us and have a song in our hearts when we are distressed. Lord, you have given us the feet of the deer to climb the mountains of our life. May we use them to ever go upwards (verse 19), for You are our strength!*

The following song, written by Sis. Lynne Millis of Enid, Oklahoma, was inspired after a fall she had from an icy porch while delivering mail. She turned from the mailbox and fell to the bottom of the stairs, landing on her right knee. The pain was incredible. She was off work for one month when she woke up one day with no pain! God gave her the song—with the tune—and she said, "It has blessed me ever since!"

#### *A Miracle Working God*

*He's a miracle-working God, oh, He's a miracle-working God.  
He's a God who loves, a God who cares,  
A God Who's always, always there;  
He turned the water into wine,  
Restored sight to those who were blind.  
I'm so glad I serve a miracle-working God!*

—Bro. James Bell

**DECEMBER 20, 2020**

#### **THE SONG OF MARY (Luke 1)**

**Luke 1:46** And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

**47** And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

**48** For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

**49** For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

**50** And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

**51** He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

**52** He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

**53** He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

**54** He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

**55** As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

**MEMORY VERSE:** For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. —**Luke 1:37-38a**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Mary, chosen by God to be the mother of His son Jesus, surrendered her life to God’s will and was inspired with a sublime song of praise.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Luke 1:46 “Magnify”: make or declare great; extoll; from megas (*Greek*).

Luke 1:47 “God my Saviour”: Mary’s joy and faith that the Messiah, of whom she was to be the mother, was her personal Savior from sin, just as He had been foretold. This was also her answer to Elizabeth’s exultation that Mary’s coming baby was her “Lord.” Mary’s statement refutes the erroneous Catholic teaching of the Immaculate Conception, or the belief that Mary was born without a sinful nature, since she voiced her faith in her son—God’s son—as her Savior.

Luke 1:48 “Low estate”: very similar to Hannah’s prayer in I Samuel 1:11, and her song of praise in I Samuel 2:1 and 8.

Luke 1:49 “He that is mighty”: Mary’s carefulness to give proper honor and glory to God. “She teacheth those generations, which she had even now said should call her blessed, how to take notice of her...as one highly favoured of the Lord, one for whom God indeed had done great things, but not as one who had merited anything at God’s hand, much less as one to whom we should pay a greater



devotion than to her Son, and speak to her that she should command her Son, according to the blasphemous devotion and idolatry of the papists. Mary is very careful of giving succeeding generations any occasion from her expressions for any such superstitions" (*Matthew Poole's Commentary*).

Luke 1:50 "Fear": godly reverence.

Luke 1:51-53 "He hath put down the mighty": also similar to Hannah's song.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Mary's background was lowly and obscure; she was of Nazareth of Galilee, a city of low estimation by the Jewish leaders. Her betrothed, Joseph, also from Nazareth, was a poor carpenter, but was known as a "just" man. Mary's side of the story is told in Luke chapter 1, while Joseph is introduced in Matthew 1. According to Luke, the angel, Gabriel, was sent to give Mary, a virgin, the message that God had highly favored her. At his first approach, Mary was troubled. Gabriel explained how God had chosen her to bear His son, the Messiah. Mary questioned honestly, "How shall this be?" since she was yet a virgin. Gabriel answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Mary afterward confided her news to Joseph, who was also troubled, until an angel visited him in a dream, giving him assurance and sharing the name of the child, His mission, and the proof of the prophecies that indeed, a virgin would bear the Savior of the world. He told Joseph not to fear to take Mary as his wife.

Mary's elderly cousin, Elizabeth, was chosen to be the mother of John, the forerunner of Jesus. After Gabriel's visit, Mary went to the hill country where Elizabeth and her husband, Zacharias, lived. When Elizabeth heard her greeting, her own child moved—"leaped"—in her womb. She was filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke loudly, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," calling Mary's baby her "Lord" and prophesying assuredly that there would be a performance of those things promised Mary by the Lord. At this, Mary also was filled with song and praise.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. Where were Joseph and Mary from? How would this fit in with Mary's description of herself as being of "low estate" and "low degree"?
2. Referring back to the message from Gabriel, what did he say that gave the idea that her son—and God's son—was her Savior? What similar thing did the angel say to Joseph?
3. When Mary spoke about the Messiah scattering the proud, putting down the mighty, and exalting those of low degree, how was that fulfilled in Jesus' life and ministry?
4. Mary cited the promises God had given to \_\_\_\_\_ of his mercy and redemption.
5. What ancient mother's song of praise resembles Mary's? Share the similarities.

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The inspired prophecies in the songs we have studied in this series have actually all centered on this holy child conceived in Mary's womb—the Son of the Highest; the One who would reign on the throne of David and over the house of Jacob forever—and on His kingdom that would have no end.

The angel Gabriel had announced the good news to Mary; Joseph also was given the knowledge of the coming child, with promises securely anchored in Holy Scripture: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel." Emmanuel! God with us. And to each was given the name they were to call this son: JESUS. Jehovah saves.

From the advent of this Holy Son of God, the Savior, would flow a river of inspired songs and praises like the world had never known! As the religious and secular world observes the season, the one thing that still characterizes the celebration world-wide is the music. The songs that tell about our Lord, His birth, His power, glory and deliverance still ring above the worldly revelry, the antagonism, and the unbelief.

The golden theme is deliverance from sin. The strength and power He gives over the enemy. The glory and honor He gives us, who were without strength, hungry, and pressed down in the low

degree of sin.

“Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother, and in His name all oppression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we; let all within us praise His holy name! Christ is the Lord! For ever, ever praise we, His power and glory evermore proclaim!”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*“The people that in darkness sat A glorious light have seen;  
The light has shined on them who long In shades of death have been.*

*“For unto us a child is born, To us a son is given,  
And on His shoulder ever rests All power on earth and heaven.*

*“His name shall be the Prince of Peace Forevermore adored,  
The Wonderful, the Counselor, The great and mighty Lord.*

*“His righteous government and power Shall over all extend;  
On judgment and on justice based, His reign shall have no end.”*

—John Morison (1750 – 1798)

“The prophecy of Isaiah expounded in this hymn, *“The People That in Darkness Sat,”* is quite astonishing. Isaiah was writing in the southern kingdom of Judah when it was being threatened by the northern kingdom of Israel. God was promising Judah that he would remove the threat and that he would punish the northern kingdom by bringing the mighty Assyrians to defeat them.

“But even in this harsh judgment there was hope. Isaiah 9 opens with a promise to honor the region of Galilee—which was in the northern kingdom! Isaiah’s readers in the south might have expected great promises to Jerusalem and Judah, but Galilee? Yet these are ‘the people that walked in darkness’ (Isaiah 9:2—northerners who would see the light of Christ.)

“Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, conducting most of His public ministry around the Sea of Galilee. He was the Child born to recover David’s kingdom, not physically, but spiritually.”

—The Complete Book of Hymns, by William J. Petersen and Ardythe Petersen

—Selected by Bro. Harlan Sorrell

DECEMBER 27, 2020

SONGS OF THE PILGRIMS

*Songs of Ascent*

**Psalm 122:1** I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

**2** Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

**3** Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:

**4** Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

**5** For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

*Songs in the Wilderness*

**Psalm 23:4** Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

**5** Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

**Song of Solomon 8:5a** Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

**Isaiah 35:1** The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

**6** Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sin: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

**Isaiah 43:19** Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye now know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

*Songs in the Furnace*

**Isaiah 43:1** But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

**2** When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

## Songs in the Prison

**Psalm 119:46** I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

**54** Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

**55** I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

**62** At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

**Psalm 32:7** Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

**MEMORY VERSE:** The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. —**Zephaniah 3:17**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Songs of deliverance have been the comfort and delight of the saints in times of worship, battle, sickness, prison and suffering. Even in the midst of a fiery furnace or a burning desert, the pilgrims' songs have sustained them.

## **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Psalm 122:1 "A song of degrees for David": hymns that "were sung by pilgrim bands on their way to the three great festivals of the Jewish year. The journey to Jerusalem was called a 'going up,' whether the worshipper came from north or south, east or west. All of the songs are suitable for use on such occasions. Hence, the title *Pilgrim Psalms* is preferred by many scholars" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). "Song of steps, a title given to each of these fifteen psalms, 120-134 inclusive. The probable origin of this name is the circumstance that these psalms came to be sung by the people on the ascents or goings up to Jerusalem to attend the three great festivals (Deuteronomy 16:16). They were well fitted for being sung by the way from their peculiar form, and from the sentiments they express. 'They are characterized by brevity, by a key-word, by epanaphora [i.e. repetition], and by their epigrammatic style...More

than half of them are cheerful, and all of them hopeful.’ They are sometimes called ‘Pilgrim Songs.’ Four of them were written by David, one (127) by Solomon, and the rest are anonymous” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*).

Psalm 122:3 “Compact together”: or, as suggested by one translation, “Jerusalem, the (one) built like a city, union is in it together.” The ancient Jewish historian, Josephus, described the literal Jerusalem as “one and entire.”

Psalm 23:4 “Shadow of death”: deep shadow; death-like shadow; figurative of deep gloom, distress, or extreme danger; a dark dungeon; the pathless desert; the grave.

Psalm 119:54 “House of my pilgrimage”: this present world, where I am a pilgrim and a stranger; or wherever I am forced to wander during my lifetime; in exile or banishment from my friends.

Zephaniah 3:17 “He will rest in his love”: or, “He will be silent in His love;” a picture of a deep love that knows no utterance, juxtaposed with a love that breaks out into exuberant singing.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND, DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS**

There are still more “song” examples in scripture we would like to briefly cover. The first refers to the songs which were sung by the Israelites as they went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feasts which were held three times each year. I would like to share a personal intrigue. When the Queen of Sheba came to investigate what was so great about King Solomon (I Kings 10; II Chronicles 9), it was said that when she had seen all of his wisdom, and all he had built, the meat of his table, the ministry of his servants, cupbearers and attendants, and what they wore, “and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.” In II Chronicles 5 and 7 we take note that as the Levite choir, in white robes, and the 120 priests with trumpets, sounded as one, the glory of the Lord filled the house. Assuming they assembled and sang in this glorious way while the queen visited, could that have been what carried her away? The majestic steps, the abundance of offerings and sacrifices—yes, that was impressive, but the songs—! “I was glad when they said unto me...” There was never worship like this in all the world; a glory so great the ministers could not bear to stand.

The earthly pilgrimage of God’s people took them many times

through the deserts; through the wilderness places, the dark gloomy places. David's shepherd-song has carried many a pilgrim through with the comforting words, "Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Other scriptures are noted which refer to the valley, desert, or wilderness way. It is in the wilderness where we learn to lean on the Beloved! The presence of Christ in our desert makes it blossom; His Spirit comes to us like flowing streams in the dryness.

Indulge me in another intrigue: the pilgrims in the fiery furnace. The *Septuagint* and several other texts include this description in the 24th verse of Daniel 3: "Then Nebuchadnezzar heard them singing praise, and was astonished." An Apocryphal work, called "*The Song of the Three Children*," suggests the words they may have sung: "Oh all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him forever." While these ideas are not included in the King James Version, I don't believe it does injustice to the scripture to apply them to this story. I have included verses from Isaiah that could also have been the songs of deliverance the three captives sang while walking in the fire with the Son of God.

Have you ever thought of what Jesus and His disciples sang before they went out of the upper room into the Garden? Some have suggested the 113th-118th Psalms. Known as the *Hallel*, these Psalms were typically sung at the Passover commemoration. Could it have been, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." Surely, Jesus drank the full cup of salvation, and His death was very costly, very precious in God's sight, enough to pay the price of salvation for all the world!

One more. What did Paul and Silas sing in the prison at Philippi? "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). I offer verses from Psalm 119 and Psalm 32 as a suggestion. Perhaps you can think of others.

I hope your soul has been blessed by this series of study. I know I have been richly blessed; amazed at times to the point of gasping with wonder and delight. Praise the LORD for His wonderful gift of *song!*

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

Soon after I was saved at age eleven, the Lord began to inspire me with songs. The very first one was written after a friend got saved and I observed the change in his life. After I married and was called into the ministry, the Lord would inspire songs, usually corresponding with a particular trial we were going through.

During the time my father, Bro. Leslie Busbee, was going through the long valley of sickness and death, trying to sort through the range of my emotions was overwhelming for me. Then I heard a dear sister in the Lord testify of how she took her heavy burdens and sorrows to the Lord. "Lord," she cried, "I just lay these at your feet." That simple phrase gave me encouragement and soon my longings and griefs were expressed in words:

*"Lord, I lay my burdens at Your feet.  
Every care and trouble that I meet.  
In the past I tried to be so strong  
When the day was hard and when the night was long;  
But I heard You say, 'Come unto Me.  
From your heavy load you can be free.  
I will comfort you and give you rest so sweet,  
When you lay your burdens at My feet.'*

*Lord I give my life to You each day!  
Take my cares, I cast them all away;  
Carry me in Your everlasting arms so sweet,  
Lord, I lay my burdens at Your feet."*

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck









