God Calling Yet

(by Bubba Garner)

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul commanded the churches in Ephesus and Colossae to sing ***“psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”*** (**Ephesians 5:19**; **Colossians 3:16**).  This act of worship was to be both vertical, *“to the Lord,”* and horizontal, *“to one another.”*  Thus, singing in the assembly of the saints does not only express thanksgiving and adoration to God, it is also a way to encourage and uplift the fellow worshipers.

True to the passage, we sing songs that are psalms from the Old Testament put to the music: *Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah* (**Psalm 148**) and *The Lord’s My Shepherd* (**Psalm 23**).  We also sing hymns, which might also be called praise songs: *Worthy Art Thou* and *O Magnify My Master*.  But the majority of our songs fall into the third category: spiritual songs written on a general Biblical theme: *When We All Get to Heaven* and *He’ll Go With Me*.  These mostly have to do with our daily living and the commitment necessary to reach our goal.

I love music.  I love to sing.  But this can make it more difficult to fulfill the passage to sing and make melody in my heart.  The command from God is not given just so that I will be entertained by the chords of the song.  *“Speaking to one another”* takes words.  *“Teaching and admonishing one another”* takes words.  We have to concentrate on the words we’re singing lest we get carried away by the notes.  It is not just how we sound that is important; it is what we say.

Do you have a favorite song?  Or, if you’re like me, do you have several favorites?  While the arrangement of the music has a lot to do with it, what usually makes a hymn have special meaning is the lyrics.  The words speak to us and motivate us.  We recall them in our minds throughout the week while we sing the song, either aloud or to ourselves. My favorite invitation song is *God Calling Yet*.  I understand that these words are not inspired by God.  They were written in 1735 by Gerhard Tersteegen and translated from German to English by Sarah Findlater in 1855.  But they tell the age-old story of a person whose heart is changed by the word of God.  Perhaps this spiritual song is speaking to you.

***“God calling yet; shall I not hear?  Earth’s pleasures shall I still hold dear?  Shall life’s swift passing years all fly, and still my soul in slumber lie?”***  In the Old Testament, God spoke directly to the fathers and the prophets.  He called to them, and they answered Him.  While He does not operate that way today, God is calling yet.  He calls us through the gospel (**2 Thessalonians 2:14**).  He speaks, but many do not heed His voice. Whether through hearts hardened by pride or prejudice, some refuse to answer God’s call.  They are like the wayside soil that Jesus described in the Parable of the Sower; ***“the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart”*** (**Matthew 13:19**).  Yet, with patience and mercy, God continues to call.

***“God calling yet; shall I not rise?  Can I His loving voice despise and basely His kind care repay?  He calls me still – can I delay?”***  There’s a reason James wrote that humility is necessary to ***“receive the word implanted”*** (**James 1:21**).  It takes someone who is *“poor in spirit”* to recognize who and what they are without God.  It takes an honest heart to admit that the path you’ve been pursuing is selfish and contrary to the will of the Lord.  All the while, you hear the voice of Jesus ringing in your ears, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* But there’s one thing still lacking: a decision!  It is one thing to realize where you are and how far you’ve gone from God.  It is another thing to do something about it.  God calls us.  The choice is ours to answer and obey.

***“God calling yet; I cannot stay.  My heart I yield without delay.  Vain world, farewell, from thee I part; the voice of God hath reached my heart.”***  After several attempts to blunt His voice or tune Him out altogether, there comes a time when you can no longer put off what you know is right.  Whether it’s making the decision to repent and be baptized or to return home, the voice of the Father prevails.  Thank God He does not give up on His children!

The heart is the target of the gospel message.  It’s what was pierced on the day of Pentecost at the preaching of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:37**).  No matter how stony or calloused, the gospel is the power of God (**Romans 1:16**) to break through and find its mark.  Make your choice.  And don’t look back. God is calling yet.  Let us admonish one another to heed His pleading voice.

Lost An Axe Head?

(by Carl McMurray)

In **2 Kings 6** there is an interesting account that I have wondered about. It appears that during the days of Elisha the prophet there arose an institution referred to as the *“sons of the prophets”* or *“school of the prophets.”* Without getting bogged down in speculation it appeared at least to be a group of men under the supervision of Elisha.

On the occasion in this text one of the men accidentally flings the head off his axe into the Jordan River, near where he was working. It is easy to see his concern as the axe head flies off into the muddy, perhaps quickly flowing river, when he cries out to Elisha that, *“It was borrowed.”* Elisha promptly performs a miracle and restores the axe head to the worker. My question is “why?” Why use the power of God to defy natural laws for this mundane lost item? Why is this occasion recorded for all time here in God’s word? I believe God’s word has a purpose; my question is, what is the purpose here?

I might have a suggestion. I admit it’s just a surmising and may be absolutely wrong, but it harmonizes with other things I see in the Scriptures. I’m wondering if this account has been preserved for us, in all its commonality and plain everydayness because the message is…God cares. He doesn’t just care about us when we’re on the pew with our head bowed or listening to the preacher. He cares about us every single day. He doesn’t just care when we’re in a Bible study or talking to a friend about the gospel. He cares when we’re working at our desks, or chopping wood with an axe. He cares when we’ve got a geography test the next day or when our job is on the line for downsizing. This appears to coincide with what Jesus was saying in **Matthew 7** about how a loving Father is with His children. When a father is asked for bread, he doesn’t give a stone. When he is asked for fish, he doesn’t give a serpent. A loving father is interested in the interests of his children. Whatever they are caught up in, he also is interested in.

I believe our Heavenly Father is interested in His children like this. He is interested when you are concerned or consumed over the affairs of this life. He loves you when you fall; just as He does when He sees you take your first spiritual steps or sprint toward some spiritual goal post. The occasion of Elisha using the power of God to restore an axe head may just be there to remind us that our Father does not just care when 3,000 ask to be baptized into Christ. He also cares when we lose our axe head and desires for it to be restored. THIS axe head is a reminder of a Father’s love.