

=STORIES BEHIND THE PSALMS=

Lesson 1

Singing the Lord's Song, Psalm 137

STORY BEHIND THE PSALM: The Jews had disobeyed God and had not observed the Sabbath for 490 years. Since they had taken 1/7 of God's time, God cast them into bondage for seventy years and got all the sabbaths at one time. The Jews were a singing people and a harp-playing people. They were known in the surrounding nations as being musically inclined. When they were in Babylon, the Babylonians wanted to hear them play and sing, so they came to them and asked them to sing a song. Read Psalm 137:3. The Jews replied that they were in a strange land and they could not sing. They did not have a song in their hearts, and they had hanged their harps on the willow trees. We see this in Psalm 137:2, 4. The 137th Psalm is a story of this tragic event—the Jews in bondage, the Babylonian people wanting to hear them sing, and their not singing because they are in a strange land. How sad this is! If ever the Jews ought to sing, it is in a strange land. They could sing at home where the heathen could not hear, but now they have an opportunity to witness for the Lord, and they refuse to do so! Now their song is needed; now their song should be sung. Jerusalem had been destroyed. The temple had been destroyed. The walls and gates had been torn down. It has been 4,000 years since Abraham. The Jews are homesick, lonely for the Promised Land, and because of this, they refused to sing.

How tragically true this is today! Christian people sing at church, rejoice at church, testify at church, preach at church, teach at church; yet on the job where they need to sing the song of the Lord, they are strangely silent. May God help us to sing the Lord's song in the strange land.

INTRODUCTION: Song has a powerful influence on people. All of us have thrilled at the "Wedding March," the "Star Spangled Banner," the "Hallelujah Chorus," the "Happy Birthday" song, etc. Happy people are always singing people. The reason the Russians sing in the minor key is because they have that kind of heart—there is no joy in there. The Bible has a great deal to say about singing:

1. "And he hath put a new song in my mouth." Psalm 40:3a.
2. "O sing unto the LORD a new song." Psalm 96:1a.
3. "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God." Psalm 144:9a.
4. "And they sung a new song." Revelation 5:9a.
5. When Moses crossed the Red Sea, he sang a song of victory.
6. David sang at the death of Saul and Jonathan.
7. David sang at the death of Abner.
8. When Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera, they sang.
9. Psalm 45 is a song sung to celebrate a wedding.
10. Song of Solomon is a love song.
11. God gave 150 Psalms to the Jews. These were just songs to be sung as they journeyed.
12. Hannah sang when she heard of Samuel's coming.
13. Hezekiah sang when the house of the Lord was cleansed and temple worship was restored.
14. Mary sang when she heard of the coming of Christ.
15. Joseph sang when he heard of the Christ Child.
16. Simeon sang when he saw Jesus in the temple.

I. WE ARE TO SING IN ADVERSITY. When troubles come, we are to sing. We are not to sing only when the sun shines, but also when it is cloudy; not only when things are going well, but when things are going bad. Paul and Silas sang in Philippi at midnight in jail. Jesus sang in the upper room just before going to His trial and death. Christians should sing in adversity. This is the time we need a song.

II. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD SING AMONG THE HEATHEN. Turn to Psalm 126 and notice verses 1 and 2. You will find here that when the people of God had their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue filled with singing, then the heathen said, "The LORD hath done great things for them." The heathen are watching us. We should sing our song to them.

1. We should sing the Lord's song in school. People at school want to know if what we have is real. Many of the school people will not come to hear the Pastor preach, and they will not listen to him if

he comes to them; but they will observe us in school, and they will see if we are happy in the Lord and singing the Lord's song. Let us sing the Lord's song in a strange land at school.

2. We should sing the Lord's song at work. There are many people at work who will never come inside the doors of the church. They will never hear the Pastor preach nor would they listen to his testimony. We are to sing the Lord's song at work in a strange land.
3. We are to sing the Lord's song at play. It matters not where we are, we are to be faithful to sing the Lord's song always. We are to be happy Christians, dedicated Christians, honest Christians, earnest Christians, sincere Christians, people who bring joy to those around us so that they will want the joy that we know.

III. WE ARE TO SING THE RIGHT KIND OF SONG.

1. The song should have the proper beat. The rock music of today is nothing more than a conspiracy to ruin the morals of America by ruining the music. It is important that we sing the right beat. There is a trend in our day to take Gospel words and place them to the folk beat, which is an abomination to God. The beat should be right.
2. The words should be right. We should not sing songs that have words that are not what they ought to be. We should be very careful to sing only words that are decent and right and that will bring honor to our Saviour.

What kind of songs can a Christian sing? Good Gospel songs that have good musical beat, love songs that have words that are decent and speak of true love, the classics and other songs that are in good taste musically and also have words that are proper are all fine for the Christian.

It is very important here that we stress to our young people the importance of song. Music reveals what a nation really is. Art, literature and music all reveal the condition of a nation. It is vitally important that we have our hearts right so that our music will be right.

IV. SONG IS A WAY TO WITNESS. It is not a substitute for witnessing, but it is a way to witness, as is evidenced by the 126th Psalm. When our mouths are filled with laughter and our tongues with singing, the unsaved will want what we have. The Babylonian people certainly wanted what the Jews had. It seems that they knew they needed it, for they wanted to hear them sing, but the Jews refused to sing.

V. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD USE HIS VOICE TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST. Teachers, stress here the importance of a person using his voice for Christ if he can sing. Stress the importance of learning to sing for Christ. Stress the importance of training one's voice for Christ. Stress the importance of attending the choir, attending the children's choirs, the youth choir, etc. Also stress the importance of refusing to use one's voice for the world.

VI. THERE ARE PLACES TO SING.

1. We are to sing when discouraged and defeated. (Paul and Silas sang in the Philippian jail.)
2. We are to sing at the Lord's Supper. Jesus sang in the upper room.
3. We are to sing as we travel. The Psalms were for this purpose.
4. We are to sing at great victories. Hannah, Hezekiah, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Deborah, Barak, and Moses sang after great victories.
5. We are to sing in the world. We are not to sing worldly songs, but we are to sing a new song. Psalm 144:9, 96:1, 40:3, and Revelation 5:9 all speak of the new song we are to sing. God's people have a new song. We should sing a new song.