

BFF377 The Power of Song

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I am well. How are you?

Scott: Good.

Steve: It is a beautiful, crisp morning. I've been sitting out on my back deck watching the sun come up and preparing for our podcast. It was beautiful. Idyllic.

Steve: Recently I watched a little clip of Andrew Pudewa talking about the benefits of getting up and getting outside when the sun comes up and how it sets your circadian rhythms, your melatonin levels, and all kind of stuff. Ever since then, I've been trying to get outside. Instead of just sitting inside with light. Andrew said it's so much better to sit outside, even if it's a overcast day.

Scott: I'll trust both of you.

Steve: Today we're going to talk about the power of song, as part of our series on spiritual warfare. One of our weapons is singing. Let's read Psalm 149, then we'll pray. "Praise Jehovah. Sing to Jehovah a new song, His praise in the assembly of the godly. Let Israel be glad in His Maker.

Let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. Let them praise His name with dancing, making melody to Him with tambourine and lyre for Jehovah takes pleasure in His people. He adorns the humble with salvation. Let the godly exalt in glory. Let them sing for joy on their beds.

Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written. This is honor for all His godly ones. Praise Jehovah!"

Notice in the middle, "Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands." I really believe that is a posture, a position, an image of what we're to be. We're singing praises to God. We're worshiping God. We're fighting on His team. We're warriors. Worshiping warriors. That's a wonderful picture.

Let's pray: Father, help us to unpack that today. Help us to understand this image. We need more help with the swinging of the sword. Help us to do that. If we need more help with singing of the songs, help us with that. Help us to be just how You designed us to be, worshiping warriors. In Jesus' name, amen.

Steve: Have you ever heard of George McDonald?

Scott: Yes.

Steve: George McDonald was an author, a Christian, and one of the first to write Christian fiction. In fact, C.S. Lewis said, "I regard George McDonald as my master." Now, there's probably very few people today that have not heard of C.S. Lewis and the Chronicles of Narnia, but perhaps if we didn't have George McDonald and his

Christian fiction, we wouldn't have C.S. Lewis. George McDonald preceded C.S. Lewis, and perhaps gave him the idea of using fiction to illustrate Christian principles. He had a couple of little books, and while I don't think they're in the same league as Narnia, they are still precious and powerful. I liked them. "The Princess and the Goblin" and the "Princess and Curdie."

Curdie was this young fellow who was courageous and valiant. As he was rescuing people and fighting goblins, he learned that goblins could not stand to hear him sing. He would make up songs which became his weapons.

I don't think the devil likes us to be joyfully singing, especially when he's throwing all of his nasty enemies at us left and right in our culture today.

Isaiah 30:29–32 paints another picture of singing and battle. I have to give you a little context on how I experienced this passage. I'm sure I've told you this before, but if not, here you go.

There were three of us who had driven to a conference. We were all working day jobs. I think I was still in school. We were tired but we really wanted to be there. We drove up in my car which took two hours. We only stayed for about two and a half hours for the meeting. Then, we got back in the car and headed back. I hadn't driven very far and was getting weary and said, "I'm really tired. Does anybody else want to take a shot at it?"

One of my buddies said, "Sure." He drove. I moved to shotgun. There was another fellow in the backseat. We just started discussing what we had heard in the meeting and how God had met us. The next thing you know, we were beginning to encourage each other and I started to wake up.

Then, one of us began singing. The fellow that was driving already had memorized lots of hymns. I had my hymn book with me and a flashlight. I was looking at the book with the guy in the backseat looking over my shoulder to read the words.

The three of us sang and sang and sang. That car filled up with God's presence. We would stop sometimes between singing and pray for things, but our prayers almost seemed too small. Our faith was so large, and God was so big. It was glorious.

At one point, my friend that was driving, quoted this scripture. Isaiah 30:29–32, "You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart as when one goes with a pipe to come unto the mountain of Jehovah to the Rock of Israel.

And Jehovah will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and will show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast and tempest and hailstones.

For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be dismayed. With His rod will He smite him, and every stroke of the appointed staff which Jehovah shall lay upon him shall be with the sound of tabrets and harps. And in battles with the brandishing of His arm will He fight with them."

The people have gone up to Jerusalem. They're keeping a feast. They're happy. They're singing. While they're worshipping God, He causes His voice to be heard. He brings His great arm down in the indignation of His anger. He smites the Assyrian, but every stroke of the appointed staff shall be with the sound of tabrets and harps and worshipping.

Here we have these two thoughts going together right here, worship and warfare. Another example in Scripture is found in 2 Chronicles 20:17-22. "You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of Jehovah on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid, and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and Jehovah will be with you.

Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before Jehovah, worshipping Jehovah. And the Levites of the Kohathites and the Korahites stood up to praise Jehovah, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in Jehovah your God, and you will be established. Believe His prophets, and you will succeed.'

And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to Jehovah, and praise Him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, 'Give thanks to Jehovah, for His steadfast love endures forever.'

And when they began to sing and praise, Jehovah set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed." What a picture! The people are worshipping God in the face of three countries. Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir who had come against them. You'd think the last thing they're going to be doing is singing. They're going to be afraid. They're going to be fasting.

God says, "No, you watch. I'll take care of this. You just worship Me." It's a beautiful picture.

All through Revelation, we see warfare. We see judgments, but we also see a lot of singing and praise. In some ways, Revelation 19:1-7, is a consummation. It's probably the greatest thing ahead of us.

"After this," first verse, "I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for His judgments are true and just, for He has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of His servants.'

Once more they cried out, 'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.' And the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures fell down and worshipped God, Who was seated on the throne saying, 'Amen, Hallelujah!'

And from the throne came a voice saying, 'Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him small and great.' Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.'"

Four verses later, "I saw heaven opened, behold a white horse. The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."

They're worshipping God. Judgment is happening. They're joyful. The prostitute who has just killed his servants is being judged and they're singing. It's quite a picture when you back up and look at it, but this is the picture of us. We're worshipping our God Who's in charge and Who's doing what's right, and just, and faithful. This is Who He is. This is our posture.

Are you a Lord of the Rings fan? I've asked this before. I take the question back because you've watched the movies but you haven't read the books, right?

Scott: I read part of the book. I've read "The Hobbit" and I've read part of the book.

Steve: I've got to read this. By the way I had something very different in my mind and notes already prepared for today. In the night, two things came to me. "You shall have a song as in the night," which is from Isaiah 30. The second one was, "They sang as they slew."

I'm going to read from "The Return of the King." This is the Battle of Pelennor Fields. A little context, things were not looking good at the gates of Gondor. All of a sudden, the Riders of Rohan, the Rohirrim show up. They're led by King Theoden.

"Silently the host of Rohan moved forward into the field of Gondor, pouring in slowly but steadily. After a while, the king led his men away somewhat eastward to come between the fires of the siege and the outer fields. Still they were unchallenged, and still Theoden gave no signal.

A smell of burning was in the air and a very shadow of death. The horses were uneasy, but the king sat upon Snowmane motionless, gazing upon the agony of Minas Tirith, the city in Gondor.

As if stricken suddenly by anguish or by dread, he seemed to shrink down, cowed by age. Merry himself, (this was the hobbit by the way, sitting on the back of his horse) "felt as if a great weight of horror and doubt had settled on him. They were too late. Too late was worse than never.

Then suddenly, Merry felt it at last, beyond doubt a change. Wind was in his face, light was glimmering. At the same moment there was a flash, as if lightning had sprung from the earth beneath the city. For a searing second it stood dazzling, far off in black and white, its topmost tower like a glittering needle, and then as the darkness closed again there came rolling over the fields a great boom."

At that sound, the bent shape of the king sprang suddenly erect, tall and proud he seemed again, and rising in his stirrups he cried in a loud voice, more clear than any there had ever heard a mortal man achieve before.

"Arise, arise, riders of Theoden. Fell deeds awake, fire and slaughter, spears shall be shaken, shield be splintered, a sword day, a red day, ere the sun rises. Ride now, ride now, ride to Gondor."

With that he seized a great horn from Githlath, his banner bearer, and he blew such a blast upon it that it burst asunder, and straightway all the horns in the host were lifted up in music, and the blowing of the horns of Rohan in that hour was like a storm upon the plain, and a thunder in the mountains. "Ride now, ride now, ride to Gondor." Suddenly, the king cried to Snowmane and the horse sprang away.

Behind him his banner blew in the wind, white horse upon a field of green, but he outpaced it. After him thundered the knights of his house, but he was ever before them.

"Eomer rode there, the white horsetail on his helm floating in his speed, and the front of the first eored roared like a breaker foaming to the shore, but Theoden could not be overtaken. Fey he seemed, or the battle-fury of this fathers ran like a fire in his veins, and he was borne up on Snowmane like a God of old, even as Orome the Great in the Battle of the Valar when the world was young.

His golden shield was uncovered, and lo! It shone like an image of the Sun, and the grass flamed into green about the white feet of his steed. For morning came, morning and a wind from the sea, and the darkness was removed, and the hosts of Mordor wailed, and terror took them, and they fled and died, and the hoofs of wrath rode over them.

And then all the host of Rohan burst into song, and they sang as they slew, for the joy of battle was on them, and the sound of their singing was that fair and terrible came in even to the City."

I started to cry in the middle of reading that. I could hardly keep my words going. It looked like all hope was lost that morning. Gandalf was confronted by these, you might say, principalities and powers of the devil. It was right down to the wire. All of a sudden, the cavalry showed up. They began to sing. They blew their trumpets. They went roaring across that field. It turned the tide.

I don't know how you can respond to that. I'm not even going to ask you. I'm going to read two more scriptures. Then we'll wrap it up.

"Shout joyfully to God, all the earth. Sing the glory of His name. Make His praise glorious. Say to God, 'How awesome are your works! Because of the greatness of Your power, Your enemies will submit themselves to You. All the earth will worship You and will sing praises to You. They will sing praises to Your name.'" That's Psalm 66:1-4.

Psalm 68. "Princes shall come from Egypt. Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God. O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God. Sing praises to Jehovah, to Him who

rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens. Behold, he sends out His voice, His mighty voice. Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel and whose power is in the skies. Awesome is God from His sanctuary, the God of Israel. He is the one who gives power and strength to His people. Blessed be God."

When I'm thinking about singing as a weapon, as a tool, as part of our spiritual armor, it's because I'm ascribing power to God. I'm acknowledging that He is king.

Regardless of anything I see with my eyes, I'm keeping my eyes on the king. I'm worshiping Him. It's the ultimate act of faith, especially when things are tough, especially when you don't feel like singing.

Sometimes the best thing to do is just start singing. Don't just listen to people singing. Sing yourself. It puts you in the battle in a different way. If you don't know any songs, sing the doxology. Keep singing it. If you don't know any prayers, pray the Lord's prayer.

When you are proclaiming truth, when you are proclaiming Scripture, and when you are singing the truth, something happens. I believe that the devil, like Princess and Curdie, I think he hates our worshiping Jesus so we continue to worship.

Scripture teaches that we overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony. This is the word of our testimony. When you sing truth and you proclaim truth, it does something to your spirit. It does something to the forces of the enemy. The power of anointed singing.

Scott: It makes such a difference. You're right, when you don't feel like it especially, it can really make a difference in your own spirit when you choose to, as an act of faith, to sing to God.

Steve: Yeah.

Scott: I was actually wondering if there's any moment in scripture where it talks about Jesus singing. I did remember of one, not with Jesus, but where Paul and Silas are in prison and they are singing hymns.

There's an earthquake that shakes the jail and breaks open the gates. The prison cells and their chains fall off and the jailer's going to kill himself, but then they tell him not to.

Steve: Perfect. That's it.

Scott: That's a hymn, Act 16.

Steve: Did you think that you and I would be naturally wanting to sing hymns in prison?

Scott: Yeah, I don't think so.

Steve: They did. As they sang, earthquake. You asked the question, so I'm going to tell you the answer.

Matthew 26. He took a cup when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, drink all of it, so he has the Lord's Supper with him. Then he says, 26-30, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." There you go.

They had the Lord's Supper together, and then they sang a hymn, and then they walked out to the Mount of Olives where Jesus was betrayed.

Scott: Very cool.

Steve: Yeah. It would be cool to hear him sing, wouldn't it?

Scott: Yeah.

Steve: Yeah, right at the close of his life. That's a good verse there in Acts. I used to think about that when I was memorizing hymns. The Holy Spirit was making me know we needed to memorize hymns as a family, and I used to think, "Boy, if I'm ever in prison with Paul and Silas, I don't have much to offer," but now, if you're in prison with me, I have lots of hymns. We don't have to sing "Amazing Grace" over and over.

Scott: Yeah. That would be me.

Steve: A few Christmas hymns. Right?

Scott: Yeah.

Steve: Singing and worshipping stirs our spirit. I really believe it has an impact on the climate, the spiritual atmosphere of your home, the spiritual atmosphere of your own soul, to sing God's praises, and to sing powerful stuff.

I like songs that are in a major key and upbeat. I don't enjoy hymns written with minor keys. To me, that just sounds like whining in song. I like major keys, move it forward. Amen.

Father, thank you for giving us this gift of song. You're the one that told us to rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. I think we can pray while we rejoice as we're singing hymns, so thank you for the gift of song.

Thank you for these scriptures that have encouraged us and these images in our mind, but I pray that you'll put a song in our heart. Put a song in our heart today. Put a song in there that will not be put out and will give us confidence and faith even when things go dark. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: By the way, I've mentioned it before. Joni Eareckson Tada, that's how she starts her days. When she's tempted to give it up, she sings a hymn. It gives her strength. There's a lot more we could probably do with that, but that's probably good. Have a great day.

Scott: That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com.