

Sing!

Joe Slater

God has blessed humankind with the ability to sing. From patriarchal times we read of people singing (Genesis 31:27). The psalmist exhorts, “*Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing*” (Psalm 100:2).

Paul and Silas sat with their feet in stocks in the sweltering, stinking dungeon. So what did they do? They sang! (Acts 16:25). That text indicates at least some of their songs were prayers. Did God hear and answer? You need only read the rest of the chapter to find out!

Some of our songs are also prayers. Many others are designed to teach. Paul wrote that we are to be “*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:19). He made the same point to the Colossians in slightly different words: “*teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (3:16).

Several hundred songs appear in our hymnal. Even at that, we sing certain songs quite often, and there is nothing wrong with that. We must, however, avoid the trap of mouthing the words to a familiar tune while our minds wander elsewhere. We are worshiping!

Here’s a shout-out to our brothers who lead the congregation in song. Let’s appreciate them and make their task as easy as possible by singing right along with them. We are participants, not spectators, in worship!

A few years ago I heard brother Dalton Key make this remark: “The songs I like will tell you who I am.” Think about that!

Ruined By A Lie!

An unidentified driver got a surprise the night they decided to destroy Cody Lutz's giant snowman. Lutz, along with his sister and his fiancée, spent considerable time constructing the nine-foot-tall snowman. Then someone thought it would be fun to mow down the gigantic structure with their vehicle.

The next morning the tire tracks leading up to the Petersburg, KY residence were clear. Also clear was what the driver realized all too late the previous night: the core support for the snowman was a large tree stump (WXIX Cincinnati, Jan. 15, 2019).

There is little doubt that the vandal believed the snowperson was just snow. After all, it looked like snow. They must have thought that it would disintegrate like snow under the more substantial weight of a powerful vehicle. Surely, they believed it was – well – snow! They discovered the truth the hard way.

Sadly, and at a far greater cost, many in the religious world have placed their trust in a grace wrapped in a false gospel. It may look to them like biblical grace. They may have been convinced it was true grace. But someday the truth will be revealed that what they believed to be grace was wrapped in partial truths and full-fledged lies. Pray that it won’t be too late!

--David Bragg (Greensboro, NC) via Bulletin Gold

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The Optimist And The Pessimist

Twixt the optimist and the pessimist

The difference is quite droll;

The optimist sees the doughnut,

But the pessimist sees the hole!

BE OF GOOD CHEER: IT IS I

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

Jesus had strongly urged His disciples to enter into a boat and go to the other side of the lake (v. 22f.). Night fell while Jesus prayed alone on a mountain. The disciples were now in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and the time was between three and six in the morning. They had been rowing all night against the wind.

Finally, Jesus came to them, walking upon the sea (v. 25), miraculously manifesting His power over natural law. Jesus knew their fright. They were afraid because they thought they were seeing a ghost (Luke 24:37), and cried out in fear. Immediately Jesus felt compassion on them and spoke these words, “*Be of Good Cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*” The presence of Jesus surely brought them peace of mind in the midst of a scary night.

Peter’s limited faith in Jesus manifested because he said, “*Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee up on the waters*” (v. 28). The Lord said, “Come.” So Peter stepped over the side of the boat and started walking towards Jesus on the water. But when he took his eyes off Jesus, he immediately began to sink. “*Lord save me,*” Peter cried out. Jesus stretched out His hand bringing him into the safety of the boat. Peter came close enough for Jesus to reach out and save him.

In the midst of stormy trials and sufferings all men should turn their eyes and reach out for the stretched hand of Jesus. It is for lack of faith that Peter failed to continue walking on the water. And thus he deserved the rebuke, “*O ye of little faith.*” Nevertheless, man’s inability to cope with the turmoil of the environment allows God the opportunity to stretch out His helping hand. When Peter turned his eyes to Jesus in his distress, he found help.

--Nehemiah Gootam (Kakinada, India)