

Let Us Sing and Shout!

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When you are down and out, lift up your head and shout... "I'M DOWN AND OUT!" That is a "spoof" of the line of a song that actually says... "Lift up your head and SHOUT it's gonna be a great day!" The reason that joke has been told for years is that people believe it's ridiculous to lift your head and SHOUT that it's gonna be great when everything seems to be lousy. As Christians we can more often relate to the "logic" of the joke than the "command" of the song. Lift up your head and shout? We sometimes feel "ridiculous", or at least uncomfortable, in shouting praise or singing songs in the face of our battles and discouragements. However, the Bible teaches us that there is great value in shouting triumphantly and singing in the face of battle. "Clap your hands all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph. God has ascended with a shout!" "God is enthroned on the praises of His people." "Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright" (Psalms 47:1,5; 22:3; 33:1). Jack Hayford says, "Praise is dynamic not because of the energy of the flesh involved, but because of the fruit it bears. A place is made for the Lord to come, dwell and move among His people in glory and power. There's a direct relationship between this kind of praising and the Lord's being enthroned in any given situation."

Consider the well-noted examples of singing and shouting from scripture: In 2 Chronicles 20 Jehoshaphat was being raided by multitudes of his enemies. He sought the Lord's counsel and God gave him the battle plan... "Sing!" Can you imagine? Sing? God's word, however, was simple and direct; send out your worshippers and have them lift their hands and sing praises. "When they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against their enemies destroying them completely; and when they had finished there were corpses lying on the ground, and no one had escaped" (vs. 22-23). Song here was used as an instrument in victory. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas sang in the midst of the adversary's attempt to force the Gospel out of Philippi. Song in this instance shook the powers of darkness and released Paul, Silas, a family and possibly an entire hemisphere. The enemy's attempt to silence them set the stage for God to do His miracle. We can't say just how much their singing gave them this breakthrough but we also can't say how "little" their song had to do with it. Lastly, in Zechariah 4, Zerubbabel was surveying the rebuilding of the temple. At first things were going well and there was great zeal among the people. But then, opposition brought about an order from the Persian government to halt construction. God told Zerubbabel that it was not by might, power, human manipulation or human intelligence that the battle would be won, but by the Spirit of God. The Lord called Zerubbabel to literally shout "Grace!" to the mountain in his life.

Singing praise songs does not bring victory because you and I understand it. It brings victory because we are submitting to the God who commands it. When we obey Him, we allow Him to do His work in the battles we are facing. Whether we are singing, shouting "Grace!" or both, we are bringing the very power of God to bear upon the obstacles in our lives.

Laurie and I have been practicing shouting "Grace!" every time we drive by our January retreat site on our way to and from the Montgomery area...some weeks up to 6 times. There is no telling just how many victories, breakthroughs and mountain-moving miracles we will all owe to those 2 a.m. moments of majesty when two women of faith turn their heads to the left and at the top of our lungs shout... "GRAAAACCCE!"

Jehoshaphat was a song away from victory. Paul and Silas were a song away from their breakthrough. Zerubbabel was a holy shout of grace away from completing His vision. Beloved... "O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation" (Psalm 95:1).