

Psalm 71:5-14

For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You. I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day. Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails. For my enemies speak against me; And those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, Saying, "God has forsaken him; Pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him." O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! Let them be confounded and consumed Who are adversaries of my life; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor Who seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.

SONG OF HOPE

When Richard the Lion-hearted lay in prison in a foreign land, his favourite minstrel travelled all over the country looking for his master, and everywhere he sang the king's favourite song, knowing that if the king heard it he would respond. At length the minstrel came to the castle where the king was imprisoned, and sang there. The king heard the song, and took up the melody, and the minstrel knew that his master was there. He carried a message in song.

Dr. Joseph Aldrich "Life-Style Evangelism" compares the Christian call to evangelism as a life song of verbal message (gospel) and beautiful music (Godly character): "The Bible blends both together. For example, Peter says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer (words) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope (music) that you have" (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

Hope in the face of struggle, dire straights, or even death, is beautiful music to those without Christ because it demonstrates that life with Christ can face any "seeming unknown" with the certainty of divine care and purpose. It is that "seeming unknown" that brings so much fear into the heart of man.

In an Easter message, Pastor Don McCullough related this story of the fear of the unknown: "An Arab chief tells a story of a spy who was captured and then sentenced to death by a general in the Persian army. This general had the strange custom of giving condemned criminals a choice between the firing squad and the big, black door. As the moment for execution drew near, the spy was brought to the Persian general, who asked the question, "What will it be: the firing squad or the big, black door?"

The spy hesitated for a long time. It was a difficult decision. He chose the firing squad. Moments later shots rang out confirming his execution. The general turned to his aide and said, "They always prefer the known way to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet, we gave him a choice."

The aide said, "What lies beyond the big door?"

"Freedom," replied the general. "I've known only a few brave enough to take it."

Peter's "music" of hope defines the life of a Christian in the context of great persecution and hardship. Paul gives similar testimony to the "song making" work of the Lord in a believer's life: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body... inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 16-17 NIV).

Christian friend, how hopeful is your life-song?

What is my response:
