

La Himnodia Latinoamericana

Hace un mes, una amiga aquí en Nashville que fue bibliotecaria en Welch por más de 30 años, puso una sugerencia en su pared de Facebook. Hablando de la bendición que son para los hijos de Dios los himnos y otras canciones cristianas, pidió que todo aquel que quisiera pusiera el nombre de alguna canción favorita y que incluyera porqué le gustaba tanto esa canción. ¡Muchísima gente respondió! Viendo los nombres de aquellos himnos y leyendo los testimonios fue de mucha bendición y edificación espiritual para mí, y según los comentarios que leí, para muchos más.

Ahora, yo quisiera poner algo en español, pidiendo prestado el concepto de mi amiga.

En mi opinión, en ninguna parte del mundo hay mejor himnodia que en América Latina.

Comenzando con los himnos que llegaron a Centro y Sudamérica de América del Norte y de Europa, las iglesias evangélicas han cantado "En La Cruz," "Cuando Allá Se Pase Lista," "Oh Tu Fidelidad," y "Cuán Grande Es Él," y mil himnos más, llenando sus cultos con alabanzas al Todopoderoso. Traducidos del inglés, han enriquecido la vida espiritual y la adoración congregacional del pueblo hispano por más de cien años."

Autores hispanos como el famoso Alfredo Colom de Guatemala escribieron canciones inolvidables para el pueblo latinoamericano. "Manos Cariñosas," "Pero Queda Cristo," conocido popularmente como "Por la Mañana Yo Dirijo mi Alabanza," "Canten con Alegría," y "A La Victoria Jesús Nos Llama." Colom nació en 1904. En su juventud era mujeriego, alcohólico y pecador perdido. Cuando conoció a Cristo, su vida fue transformada.

El himnario "Celebremos Su Gloria" destaca dos famosos músicos, himnólogos de antaño: Alfredo Colom y Roberto

Savage. Savage era norteamericano pero durante muchos años de su ministerio sirvió como misionero en Ecuador en la emisora HCJB, y dio a luz a proyectos musicales que incluían la serie "Adelante Juventud, himnos, coritos y cánticos espirituales que guió al pueblo latinoamericano en sus alabanzas al Señor. Hizo compilaciones de música de varios países y arreglos que eran fáciles de cantar. El impacto que se sentía por los esfuerzos de estos dos siervos es incalculable.

Otros nombres destacados de otra generación: Santiago Stevenson, el trovador panameño (A La Casa de Jairo Iba Jesús), Danny Berrios, Stanislao Marino, y Juan Romero ("Visión Pastoral," o "Eran Cien Ovejas") entre muchos de las décadas de los 70 y 80. Más recientemente, Marcos Witt, Juan Adrián Romero, Marcos Barrientos y Marcos Vidal nos han dado nuevas canciones, muchas, y el pueblo sigue alabando al Señor.

Pero los Latinoamericanos también crearon una multitud de coritos y canciones en español. No he visto ni conocido otro continente u otra cultura que haya producido más música original. Canciones espirituales, salmos abundan. (Piensen en "Si Fui Motivo de Dolor," ""Más Allá del Sol," ""Alabaré,," y salmos como el 145, 3:3-4, 25, 92 ("Bueno es alabarte oh Jehová") La lista es interminable.

Me impresionó mucho cómo la gente respondió al blog de mi amiga en inglés. Me gustaría invitarles a ustedes que respondan a este blog, indicando su canción, o canciones favoritas, y diciendo por qué le gusta esa canción en particular. Estoy seguro que será de mucha bendición.

Termino con una canción – una de mis favoritas. No es necesariamente mi favorita absoluta, pero es linda, y la letra expresa grandes verdades. Muchos de ustedes la conocen – "Día en Día."

*Día en día Cristo está conmigo,
Me consuela en el medio del dolor.*

*Pues confiando en su poder eterno,
No me afano ni me da temor.
Sobrepuja todo entendimiento
La perfecta luz del Salvador.
En su amor tan grande e infinito
Me dará lo que es mejor.*

*Día en día Cristo me acompaña
Y me brinda dulce comunión
Todos mis cuidados él los lleva;
A él le entrego mi alma y corazón.
No hay medida del amor supremo
De mi bondadoso y fiel Pastor
Él me suple lo que necesito
Pues el pan de vida es mi Señor.*

*Oh Señor, ayúdame este día
A vivir de tal manera aquí.
Que tu nombre sea glorificado
Pues anhelo honrarte solo a ti.
Con la diestra de tu gran justicia
Me sustentas en la turbación.
Tus promesas son sostén y guía
Siempre en ellas hay consolación.*

Forgiveness

“Cutting someone a little slack.” “Showing grace.” “Giving a second chance.”

All of these phrases interest me a great deal in terms of relationships.

There is a difference between cutting someone some slack or

covering a multitude of sins, and forgiving wrongs done to us or others. The latter involves a definite transgression, a sin, a crime, even, and most of the time only those who are resting in their forgiveness in spite of the enormity of their sins against a Holy God, can extend forgiveness to others who neither deserve it or in some cases even want it. The former is more of the nature of overlooking, not making a big deal of others faults and frequent mistakes. Both are marks of a Christian who walks in fellowship with God, as is also our subsequent treatment of people we've said we forgive. Hence, the following simple outline for this devotional thought:

- 1. Overlooking faults (I Peter 4:8 – “love covers a multitude of sins.”)**
 - 2. Forgiving (Matthew 18, Luke 17, Colossians 3:12-13)**
 - 3. Treating others as forgiven.**
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Overlooking faults

I personally have come to the conclusion that I want to stop saying “I don't like... (fill in the blank with whatever: genre of music, style of preaching, sports team, etc...). If it's in the realm of preferences, not biblical and moral values, I want to say “I prefer,” or “I like,” and not run down others' opinions. Most things do not rise above the level of simple preference (Think: musical tastes). Some things do, obviously, and must be defended, refuted, fought over, but even there, in the right attitude. Other things are just what one person likes better, and another person likes less.

When Peter reminds us that love covers a multitude of sins, it's as the ESV Study Bible states: “Where love abounds, offenses are frequently overlooked and quickly forgiven.” (1 Peter 4:8)

Going beyond negativity in the area of preferences and offenses, I want to be Christlike in the matter of

forgiveness. I want to overlook minor faults, and gently address major ones after having gotten the beam out of my own eye (Matthew 7). I am convinced that my dealing with myself first, a firm attitude with self, in which my own weaknesses, sins, and hangups get the most attention, will enable me to be more accepting of my brother. I must learn to move past minor differences, letting love triumph over them, and bring us together.

Forgiveness (Matthew 18:18-35, Luke 17:1-4)

I want to forgive from the heart, as I have been so graciously forgiven, undeserving though I am. If Matthew 18 doesn't stop us cold in our tracks as far as forgiveness is concerned, I don't know what will. We who have been forgiven the thousands of talents – an overwhelming debt – by our loving Lord, must forgive wrongs done to us, even as we've been forgiven. Peter thought he was really going the distance when he spoke of forgiving seven times until Jesus said it must be seventy times seven.

Pastor Daryl Grimes writes of his brother who was murdered more than 30 years ago, and of the man who killed him. "Forgiveness is important. I don't know when it happened but there was a time in my life that I had to let go of the bitterness and hatred I had for this man. Hating him will not bring my brother back nor will it do anything but destroy me...Jesus died for him, too."

Consider these examples from Scripture:

- Joseph and his brothers. – "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good..." (Genesis 50)
- Stephen and murderers. "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7:55)
- Jesus and those who crucified Him. "Father, forgive

them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

A couple of examples from modern history, one from 50 years ago, and the other from recent weeks. First, the Vietnamese girl who was burned by napalm. Her remarkable story can be found in *Fire Road: The Napalm Girl's Journey Through the Horrors of War to Faith, Forgiveness & Peace*. For those of us old enough to remember the Vietnam War, we will remember Phan Thi Phuc, running down a street with her body on fire from a napalm bomb.

Against all odds, Kim lived—but her journey toward healing was only beginning. When the napalm bombs dropped, everything Kim knew and relied on exploded along with them: her home, her country's freedom, her childhood innocence and happiness.

The coming years would be marked by excruciating treatments for her burns and unrelenting physical pain throughout her body, which were constant reminders of that terrible day. Kim survived the pain of her body ablaze, but how could she possibly survive the pain of her devastated soul? Kim says she was following the religion she grew up with, but didn't know “the real God.” She says God still knew her, though.

“The real God, He knows my heart. Ten years later I was just seeking the truth and looking for the answer, ‘Why me?’” she says.

“I found a Bible in the library in Saigon. At that time I wanted to die, I was so full of bitterness and anger and hatred,” she says.

But that's when she found Christ. After a lifelong battle with physical and emotional pain, she says, “God gave me peace and joy.”

Fire Road is the true story of how she found the answer in a God who suffered Himself; a Savior who truly understood and cared about the depths of her pain. Fire Road is a story of

horror and hope, a harrowing tale of a life changed in an instant—and the power and resilience that can only be found in the power of God’s mercy and love.

More recently, the story of gymnast Rachel Denhollander, sexually abused by Dr. Larry Nassar, who both challenged him to repent and also forgave the man who abused her. Her words to her abuser:

“In our early hearings, you brought your Bible into the courtroom and you have spoken of praying for forgiveness. And so it is on that basis that I appeal to you. If you have read the Bible you carry, you know the definition of sacrificial love portrayed is of God Himself loving so sacrificially that He gave up everything to pay a penalty for the sin He did not commit. By His grace, I, too, choose to love this way.

You spoke of praying for forgiveness. But, Larry, if you have read the Bible you carry, you know forgiveness does not come from doing good things as if good deeds can erase what you have done. It comes from repentance which requires facing and acknowledging the truth about what you have done in all of its utter depravity and horror without mitigation, without excuse, without acting as if good deeds can erase what you have seen in this courtroom today.

The Bible [speaks of] a final judgment where all of God’s wrath and eternal terror is poured out on men like you. Should you ever reach the point of truly facing what you have done, the guilt will be crushing. And that is what makes the Gospel of Christ so sweet. Because it extends grace and hope and mercy where none should be found. And it will be there for you.

I pray you experience the soul-crushing weight of guilt so you may someday experience true repentance and true

forgiveness from God, which you need far more than forgiveness from me – though I extend that to you as well.”

Treating others as forgiven

I want to treat others as forgiven, not just say the words. How we act toward others speaks volumes. The fruit of the Spirit that includes gentleness, goodness, and meekness are so indicative of our relationship with Christ and whether or not we are led by His Spirit. Truly forgiving will involve a change in our attitude toward others. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3 that we are to “put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also are to forgive.” I think that treating others as forgiven flows from resting and rejoicing in our own forgiveness. The three points are interrelated and joined firmly; if I am able to cut others some slack, to forgive a multitude of sins because I’m loved by God and know that I am, and can, therefore, accept and tolerate differences and even disagreements, I have taken a huge step toward a joyful, balanced life. Going beyond that, if I can truly forgive even major sins against me because He has forgiven me all my sins, I truly live in freedom. Treating others as forgiven then means that I treat others on the basis of forgiveness and acceptance. That’s freedom and release!

So how do we want to live? It really is up to us, to a great extent. We have the Guidebook, the Scriptures. We have the Inner Guide, the Holy Spirit. And we have a Savior who models this for us, and encourages us on to victory.

Memories (Part 2)

As I continue to recall memories, I should point out that these are selective and representative. There are many more, but these stand out to illustrate the faithfulness of God in both good and bad times. (Read Part One [here](#).)

The Sweet Fellowship of College

“Yesterday, Today, Forever” was a medley of songs popular during my college years at the Free Will Baptist Bible College, [1. Welch College now.] that we dorm students would sing during informal gatherings. One evening, around 1970 or 1971, as the students frequently did, we’d gathered in front of the sliding curtain opening into the dining hall (where the student lounge and later “Common Grounds” were) about five minutes to six, and as was often the case, we started to sing:

Yesterday, Today, Forever Jesus is the same.

All may change, but Jesus never, glory to His name!

Glory to His name, glory to His name.

All may change but Jesus never, glory to His name!

Precious name, oh how sweet, hope of earth and joy of Heaven.

Precious name, oh how sweet, hope of earth and joy of Heaven.

Heaven is better than this, praise God what joy and bliss

Walking down streets of purest gold, living in a land where

we'll never grow old.

*Heaven is better than this, praise God what joy and bliss
I like Bible College down here, but Heaven is better than,
Heaven is better than*

Heaven is better than this.

This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through

My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.

The angels beckon me to Heaven's golden shore,

And I can't feel at home in this world any more.

More, more about Jesus, more, more about Jesus

*More of His saving fullness see, more of His love who died for
me.*

It's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer

It's me, it's me oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

*Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from
a world of care*

*And bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes
known.*

*In seasons of distress and grief, my soul has often found
relief*

*And oft escaped the tempter's snare, by thy return, sweet hour
of prayer.*

With a key word, one song would flow into the next:
name...name, Heaven...Heaven,

This...this, more...more, and prayer...prayer. That particular night, though, as we approached the final song, there seemed to be a holy hush, a sense of God's Spirit. The curtain came open well before the end. The dining hall hostess stood there smiling. She didn't hush our singing and call for someone to ask the blessing right away. Instead, she joined us as we finished out the medley with the the beautiful and poignant "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and then we prayed and went into the dining hall to eat. A beautiful moment, a precious memory, which to me highlights the camaraderie, the sweet fellowship, the closeness of our student body during our unforgettable college years.

First Visit to Cuba

It was the summer of 1986. We had just come home from our second term in Panama to begin stateside assignment. Brother Eugene Waddell, who had recently been named as General Director of Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions, called me, and asked me if I would go with him to Cuba to be his interpreter/translator. I felt greatly honored to be asked to go. Over the years, we had met a number of our FWB people from Cuba who migrated to Panama en route to the United States. I'd heard so much about the country and the church there. In addition, visits from the US to Cuba were very infrequent, and no one from the Mission office had gone in nearly thirty years.

It was one of the most unforgettable weeks of my life. We were in Pinar del Río, at the site where the seminary had operated for almost 20 years up until the time of the Cuban revolution. Since that time it had been closed, and the government would not allow the seminary to reopen. Eugene Waddell spoke several times during the youth camp we were attending; the FWB Church in Cuba was still permitted to use the facility for camps and conventions. Never have I seen such

anointing or heard such pertinent messages as those he brought that week. His messages from the book of Daniel, and how God used this young man and his three friends as witnesses in a foreign, hostile culture, tremendously blessed and encouraged our Cuban brothers and sisters, especially the youth.

We laughed, we cried, we worshipped, and we forged friendships that would last for a lifetime and into eternity. There were also strategic discussions and the working out of a viable strategy for the Mission to again become involved in the life of the Cuban church, but in a healthy way that would honor our brothers and not create unhealthy dependency. What has resulted in Cuba these past 30 years owes much to the wisdom God gave to Bro. Waddell and Bro. Gilberto Díaz, who was president of the Cuban Association.

The 1989 US Invasion of Panama

Things had been hot and chaotic in Panama since 1987, when frequent demonstrations started taking place against the dictatorship that had ruled the country since October 1968. Then, in early 1988, the U.S. froze Panamanian assets in an effort to force dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega to step down, and charged him with drug trafficking and other illegal activities. Banks closed, and we had difficulty getting money to even buy groceries. Things calmed down a bit, but then in May, 1989, after Noriega had the presidential election annulled when it was evident that the opposing candidate had one, violence erupted, and images of Guillermo Endara and Guillermo "Billy" Ford beaten and bloodied by Noriega's thugs flashed across the television screen. The tension grew almost daily.

Judy shares the following memory:

Since public transportation was so difficult during this time,

one afternoon, I decided to take our friend Lola to a bus stop closer to her house so she wouldn't have to wait for hours. We were chatting in the car as we arrived to the area called San Miguelito. Suddenly, we were in the middle of a political demonstration. The traffic was totally stopped. I looked around. There was a river of cars in front of us, behind us and on both sides. The angry mob was shouting, "Kill the Gringos, kill the Gringos." There was no escape. The car had tinted windows, thank the Lord, because one protester approached my car and laid his AK-47 right on the hood and continued to shout! Lola was praying like there was no tomorrow and I was saying a few prayers myself. Just as suddenly as we found ourselves in this horribly frightening situation, it seemed like God parted the Red Sea. That river of cars opened up and I didn't wait to see if the traffic light was red or green. I gunned it and we were out of there safe and sound. Only God could do that!

There were a couple of coup attempts to have Noriega step down, which failed and resulted in Noriega's men being killed. October and November slowly went, the tension growing, and no one knowing what might happen. Noriega shook a machete in the face of the United States, and declared Panama to be in a state of war. It was now late December, Christmas season, stores crowded with customers and their Christmas merchandise.

December 20, 12:00 a.m.: My family and I – our three boys were there with us, ages 14, 12, and 8 – will never forget "Operation Just Cause." The bombing, the strong military presence for weeks that followed, the terrible Friday, December 22 following the Wednesday a.m. invasion; a day of looting as people ransacked the stores, including those nearby us, and carried things up the street in front of our house. Everyone was concerned that once the stores were wiped out, looters would start breaking into homes. That night, by common consent, believers set a time to pray and call upon the Lord for His protection. I'll never forget when the prayer

time ended, at that very moment, we heard the first U.S. helicopters passing over the neighborhoods, and heard that a curfew had been instituted! We were able to sleep in peace, in spite of the uncertainty. The next day, we saw the first troops, patrolling the city. Things began to quickly calm down.

Parents' Home-going

These memories, though separated by over 25 years, have special significance: the passing of our parents, their departing this earth on their Heavenly journey. My dad died in 1981, after a year and a half struggle with pancreatic and liver cancer. He was not quite 70, and I was only 31 when he left us. We are thankful he lived longer than the doctors' had predicted, and enjoyed several months relatively pain-free. Judy's mom, Lillian Hovis, left us in 1993, at age 68. She had taken care of Judy's dad, who had lived in declining health for some time, when she was stricken with pancreatic and liver cancer in 1992. In less than a year, she was gone. That left Judy's dad, who lived for almost three years after his wife of 46 years was taken. He passed in 1996, at home. My mom suffered from Alzheimer's for more than 8 years, before the Lord took her home in 2007.

These very selective memories, spread over a period of 30 plus years, show God's love, faithfulness, protection, and comfort. From a precious, unforgettable moment of fellowship and camaraderie, to the Holy Spirit's mighty working among believers in Cuba, to God's hand of protection during a time of uncertainty and danger, to His comfort as we said our earthly goodbyes to those we love, He was there!

Memories (Part 1)

Memories are indicators, reminding us where we've been, what we've experienced, and the faithfulness of God throughout our lives.

Memories are signposts, pointing us backward for remembrance and reflection so that we can then look forward to God in faith and anticipation.

Memories are not in and of themselves infallible or "stand alone." Truth, fact, and reality are all much more important. At the same time, memories are our recollection and impression of those events and realities.

Some memories seem to always be around, just under the surface, easily recalled. Others pop up out the blue, after not having been remembered or thought of for years.

It would be negligent to fail to point out that there are bad memories, awful memories, that constitute nightmares in our lives. These don't bring joy as do good, positive memories, but sometimes we can still learn from them. We can trust the Lord to heal them and to help us learn from them.

Memories can be faulty or false. My memory of Judy's nurse's cap, for example. The first time I went to see her in Missouri in 1970 after we started dating, I arrived at her house, and her dad took me with him to go pick her up. I used to tell people of seeing her come out of the doctor's office where she worked, so pretty with her nurse's cap on. She reminded me that she was not wearing a cap; I was remembering a picture of

her in her nurse's garb on a shelf at home. I had conflated the two things and thus had a faulty memory.

Memories can have great value, even if we don't remember everything. While it's great to remember one's salvation experience – and many do in great detail – it is even more important to know that today we are relying on Jesus' finished work on the cross, and are believing in and following him. It's not necessary to remember the date and all the circumstances.

God constantly reminded His people of His mighty workings on their behalf in the past and urged them to go back and recall His faithfulness. (Psalm 78 is a lengthy recall of what God had done in the life of Israel, and how the people still didn't obey and follow Him.) Psalm 77:11: "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old." (Psalm 103:2)

So, with those foundational observations, some memories "from my personal storehouse." I've selected them as representative, and for their value as teaching experiences. Over time, I hope to do a couple more of these, that cover the years of my life. I'm convinced that memories can have great value as teachers.

1966 (I think that's the year.) "Who Am I?" Sunday morning service at my home church. I was 16. A group of young women, slightly older than me, was singing one Sunday morning, a beautiful song that was very popular during those years. As they sang "who am I that a King would bleed and die for, who am I that He would pray not my will thine for?," [1. Who Am I: Charles "Rusty Goodman" 1965] tears began to flow, and several of the girls totally lost it. In fact, they couldn't continue. The emotion spread throughout the church, as the Holy Spirit ministered to hearts. I think that some people came to the altar. Our pastor, as this went on for several minutes, realized he couldn't preach the sermon he'd prepared, but deftly and with wisdom, began to exhort and encourage the

people. A tremendous memory indeed, one of many times when “God showed up” and blessed His people.

1968 Testimonies of enrolling college freshmen. Again, at my church. Again, a Sunday morning. This time, our pastor had asked those of us going off to college in a few weeks (it was early August) to briefly share. I – the shy, inhibited one – was first. All I can say is that I poured out my heart, after spending hours going over what I wanted to say, and a Power greater than mine took over, and my testimony (exhortation) touched hearts in a way I couldn’t have imagined. It may have been the first time in my life I had ever thought that God might somehow use me in the ministry as a preacher.

1977 First service in Panama that Judy and I led. John 4 the Samaritan woman and the living water Jesus gives. We had five people present – the Cáceres family, father, mother, and three teenaged daughters. I was nervous. My Spanish was not all that good, since we had just finished one year of language school, and had arrived in Panama only two months earlier. We put the chairs in a circle. Judy played the piano and led the singing. That was the small beginning of a church plant in Bethania, Panama City – quite a memory, indeed!

1982 Phillip’s epiglottitis. I was on a trip to Panama’s interior, about two hours from home. Up in Buenos Aires, there was no electricity and no running water. There was no way to keep in touch with Judy and the three boys. When I got home four days later, there was a sign on the door: “Phillip is in the hospital. Don’t worry – he’s much better. Come as soon as you can.”

I rushed over to Paitilla Hospital to find Phillip in a hospital room under an oxygen tent. Judy explained that after I left on my trip, Phill had started running a high fever, and didn’t seem to be breathing well; in fact, he was wheezing. After an entire morning of this, she grew very concerned and had a neighbor take him to the clinic for a 2:00 p.m.

appointment. (I had the car.) The clinic was full that afternoon, but the receptionist realized Phillip was very sick and moved him to the front. Dr. Vásquez looked at him and said “I don’t want to alarm you, but we need to get him in the hospital. I think he has epiglottitis.”

In a matter of minutes, the doctor had diagnosed our son with something rather rare in Panama – an infection of the epiglottis – which led to its swelling and producing thick saliva. Phillip was slowly smothering to death. The doctor immediately started two antibiotics and ordered an oxygen tent to help Phillip’s breathing. Unknown to Judy at the time, he spent that first night at the hospital, because of his concern, and to be able to monitor Phillip closely.

God was so merciful, and though I came into the picture “after the fact,” my heart is no less grateful to the Lord for sparing our son. Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord our healer.

Memories...we all have them. Let’s benefit from them.

Precious Memories how they linger

How they ever flood my soul.

In the stillness of the midnight

Precious sacred scenes unfold. [2. Precious Memories: J.B.F. Wright, 1925]

Sometimes He Calms the Sea

African-American pastor and songwriter of the past century, Charles Tindley, used a common metaphor of the time to reference the trials, tribulations, dangers, and snares of the

Christian life: "When the storms of life are raging, stand by me...when the world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea, thou who rulest wind and water, stand by me." [1. "Stand By Me" Charles A. Tindley]

Another song writer-poet expressed similar sentiments: "Jesus Savior, pilot me, over life's tempestuous sea, unknown waves before me roll, hiding rocks and treacherous shoal, wondrous sovereign of the sea, Jesus Savior, pilot me." [2. "Jesus, Savior Pilot Me" Edward Hopper]

Songwriter Scott Krippayne, echoed these thoughts in a song he wrote in 1995:

*All who sail the sea of faith
Find out before too long
How quickly blue skies can grow dark
And gentle winds grow strong
Suddenly fear is like white water
Pounding on the soul
Still we sail on knowing
That our Lord is in control
Sometimes He calms the storm
With a whispered peace be still
He can settle any sea
But it doesn't mean He will
Sometimes He holds us close
And lets the wind and waves go wild
Sometimes He calms the storm
And other times He calms His child"* [3. "Sometimes He Calms the Storm" Scott Krippayne]

Traveling by boat or ship, or being out on the ocean, rivers, or lakes was a dangerous thing for many centuries, since ancient times. Storms could arise without notice, and the wind, strong waves, thunder, and lightning menaced travelers, and could capsize a ship and cause many deaths. This has been symbolic of trouble in the Christian life. Storms symbolize

illness and disease, financial disasters, broken relationships, and anything else in life that threatens us, either physically or emotionally. Can God not step in and save the day? Can he not send a miracle our way?

In Mark 4, the disciples on the Sea of Galilee found themselves caught in a sudden storm, helpless and in grave danger, while Jesus was asleep in the boat. They woke him, frightened out of their wits, and He stood, extended His hand, rebuked the wind, and said "peace, be still." Immediately the storm ended. Instantly. There was a "great calm." Jesus then rebuked his followers for their lack of faith. Sure, He can calm storms. He's God.

A few years later, Paul was traveling as a prisoner to Rome, on board a ship in the Mediterranean Sea. Suddenly, a Euroclydon, a powerful, cyclone-type wind arose, and for the next two weeks the ship was tossed and battered until all hope of survival was gone. But suddenly Paul appeared and said to all on board with him: "The God whose I am, and whom I serve, has appeared to me." He gave Paul the peace he needed, and the assurance that all would be well (Acts 27:23). But they had to ride out the storm and suffer shipwreck. Life's like that sometimes.

Yet another song repeats for us the same truth:

Sometimes He calms the storm sometimes He calms me

Sometimes the storm still rages on but I feel the sweetest peace

It's such a joy to know that my Lord knows just what I need

Sometimes He calms the storm sometimes He calms me[4. "He Calms me" sung by the McKameys]

Here are some lessons we can learn.

God is sovereign over every storm life brings our way. He is capable of doing the miraculous; healing, provision, removing obstacles, and certainly doesn't mind His child asking for

those things. He may not do what we wish He would, but He always, always, always, will be with us, and will speak peace to our heart if we call upon Him. “Therefore, we will not fear...” (Psalm 46:2) At the end of the day, He will “get us to the other side.”

Here’s the point. We all face storms. God can miraculously still them, and sometimes will, but often we will have to go through them. However, even in the storm He is with us, can speak peace to our heart. The loss of our beautiful daughter-in-law two years ago – my health challenges the past few years – standing with friends and family during severe trials. I’m so glad He is there. The song by *Casting Crowns*, “Praise You in This Storm,” states it beautifully:

*And I’ll praise you in this storm
And I will lift my hands
That you are who you are
No matter where I am
And every tear I’ve cried
You hold in your hand
You never left my side
And though my heart is torn
I will praise you in this storm*[5. Praise You in This Storm”
Mark Hall and Bernie Herms (Casting Crowns)]

Prayer: Father, even now be with your dear children who are caught in one of life’s raging storms, whatever it might be. Please calm the storm, according to your will, or please calm them, and assure them of your love and presence. In the powerful name of Christ, Amen.

REO Pays Tribute: Marie Lytle

On September 18, 2007 my mother, Marie Eula Buchanan Lytle was called home to Heaven at the age of 87. We had watched Alzheimer ravage her mind and body for eight years, and it was a sweet release to see her go.

Coming up on another Mother's Day, this tribute is in memory of her, and in her honor. I owe much of the man I am today to her influence, teaching, and prayers.

I saw her kneel at the altar of the Swannanoa Free Will Baptist Church in the fall of 1961 during a powerful revival meeting that swept our church, where she wept as she repented and rededicated her life to Christ. From that day forward, she was a changed woman. We were in church every time the door was opened, and we were not permitted to miss. She prayed, she talked about the Lord to us kids, she walked with God. I saw her more than once on her knees in her room praying for her family.

I remember in January 1967 when the first Super Bowl was being played. I begged to stay home and watch it that Sunday evening, but she was adamant in her refusal. Never mind that it was the biggest game in history in the mind of a 16 year old boy. We were going to church. You didn't miss church for anything.

Much of Mother's life and special influence revolves around music. In my mind I can still see her standing at the kitchen sink and singing. You have to understand this; she was not a good singer. She never sang a special in church; didn't even sing in the choir. But her music and her heart, above all, touched the heart of God – and it touch me deeply.

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The first song I can distinctly remember Mother singing was

“You Are My Sunshine,” a very popular tune in the 1950s. The first Christian song I recall was the lovely “How Beautiful Heaven Must Be.” I suppose that was around 1956 or 1957.

*We read of a place that's called Heaven
It's made for the pure and the free
These truths in God's word we are given
How beautiful Heaven must be.*

*How beautiful Heaven must be
Sweet home of the happy and free
Fair haven of rest for the weary
How beautiful Heaven must be*

Mother loved to sing “Is Not This The Land of Beulah?” Number 27 in the old Baptist Hymnal. She would sing it with strong emotion, especially the second verse. It might have been her testimony:

*I can see far down the mountain where I wandered weary years
Often hindered on my journey by the ghosts of doubts and fears
Broken vows and disappointments, thickly sprinkled on my way
But the Spirit led unerring to the land I hold today.*

I have to believe that it was, at least in part, her love for that song that birthed the same love in me; it has been a favorite my whole life, nearly 60 years now. In fact, I don't doubt for a moment that my love for music and song stems from my earliest recollections of how certain songs impacted her.

There was a time when I was about 10, and we had just moved to our new home in Swannanoa. I had been saved that summer in Vacation Bible School, and after we moved – probably around October or November, I crossed the little branch by our house, walked out to the woods, and sat down on a fallen tree. I started singing:

*He never said I'd have silver or gold
Yet He has promised me riches untold
He never suffered a life without care*

Yet He relieves every burden I bear.

Sin stained the cross with the blood of my Lord

Yet He permitted it without a word

Why, tell me why, He redeemed you and me?

Love is why you and I are free.

Life wasn't easy for Mother. She worked very hard at a local factory. My dad did not follow Christ for many years; for ten years he did not darken the door of a church, and was very bitter and angry. My parents argued frequently and there were attitudes and undercurrents in the home I never understood. Yet for the most part, we had a happy childhood.

Mother didn't drive, and so for several years until I got my driver's license, we were dependent on folks in our church for rides to church on Sundays and Wednesdays, revival meetings, and special activities. Several families, including a couple of Mom's best friends, were so good to come and pick us up, and there were four of us! Through the years, we rarely missed a service. Mother was determined that we be at God's house, hearing the Word preached and taught, and singing His praises. She loved the old hymns and she loved gospel music, and as a result, so did I.

My dad came to the Lord in 1971, and for the last decade of his life – he died in 1981 – he, too, was faithful to church.

By then, I had finished Bible College, gotten married, and began preparing for the mission field. Judy and I, along with baby Michael, said goodbye to my parents in Asheville, North Carolina as we boarded a plane to fly to Costa Rica to begin Spanish language school in August 1976. Standing there as the flight was announced, and seeing Mother's tears flow as she kept hugging Michael, Judy, and me is a powerful memory. Also powerful is the memory of my parents and sister coming to Panama to visit us, and our pride and joy in introducing them to the country that had become our home.

After my dad passed away in 1981, Mother lived for 26 more years. Church attendance, ministry (especially to nursery age kids), and caring for family remained her heartbeat. As her mind began to deteriorate in the late 1990s, followed by full-blown Alzheimer's in the early 2000s, life changed for her.

She always enjoyed music, though, up until the final couple of years. My brother would go see her in the nursing home every day, and took a CD of praise and worship music for her to hear. We gave her a Gaither Homecoming CD.

The final two years of her life, Mother was totally unresponsive. She didn't know us, she couldn't speak, and her body was twisted and drawn up as she simply lay there on the nursing home bed. We had prayed many times that the Lord would take her home, yet we didn't know it was imminent on September 15, 2007, the last time we saw her. I was alone with her, speaking softly, and just watching her, when the idea occurred to me that I would sing to her.

Undoubtedly her favorite song, at least for the last 25 years of her life, was Squire Parson's classic "Sweet Beulah Land." Now I'm not a singer at all, and my best singing is done in the shower or in the car with no one else around. But I began to sing:

*I'm kind of homesick for a country
To which I've never been before
No sad goodbyes will there be spoken
And time won't matter any more.*

*Beulah land, I'm longing for you
And some sweet day on thee I'll stand
There my home will be eternal
Beulah land, sweet Beulah land*

Would you believe it? My mother, totally unresponsive for two years, lying in bed like a vegetable, began to respond to the song! While I couldn't understand the words she spoke – it

was more like mumbling – it was evident it had touched her and that she was trying to sing along. That was a precious moment.

Two days later my brother called to say that she was gone.

Happy Mother's Day to my precious mother. Thank you for your godly influence.



Grace and Glory

For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield:

Jehovah will give grace and glory;

No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Psalm 84:11

Psalm 84:11 is one of the most beautiful, majestic Psalms. Here we find these two words together, in juxtaposition that brings hope, blessing and encouragement to followers of Jesus. The Lord will give grace and glory. The context of this most precious Psalm is one of a pilgrim longing for God's house and being on a journey where he is unable to be there. But he finds God's strength sufficient for his pilgrimage (verses 5-7) and so he journeys on toward Jerusalem. The climactic part, verses 10-12, is his testimony that he would rather spend one day in God's courts than thousands elsewhere. Verse 11 is powerful: the LORD God is a sun and shield, and grants "favor and honor," a more modern way to render "grace and glory." Thus we see that there is an immediate application to the present, as he goes on to say "he does not withhold the good from those who live with integrity." (CSB)

Charles Spurgeon states:

Who else could give either grace or glory? But God is full of grace—His very name is Love—it is His Nature to freely dispense of His goodness to others. As it is according to the nature of the sun to shine, so it is according to the Nature of God to give good things to His creatures. In Him all fullness dwells—all grace and all glory are perpetually resident in Jehovah, the Infinite. What a mercy it is that we, poor empty sinners, have to do with a God of such fullness and of such goodness! If He were shorthanded with His love, what would become of us? If He had but little graciousness, if He had but little glory, then we great sinners must certainly perish. But since the Lord is a bottomless well of love and a topless mountain of grace, we may come to Him, and come

freely, without any fear that either His grace or His glory will ever suffer any diminution. Note again that the text says, "Jehovah will give grace and glory." Not only has He these wondrous blessings, but He has them that He may give them freely. If He were to keep them to Himself, He would be none the richer, and when He distributes them, He is none the poorer! The Lord does not sell grace or glory, He does not put them up to auction to those who can give something in return for them. God is a great Giver and a great Forgiver. He gives grace and glory without money, without price and without any merit in the receiver. The Lord gives—there is nothing freer than a gift and there can be nothing freer than that greatest of all the gifts of God, eternal life! That expression, "eternal life," sums up these two things—grace and glory. "The Lord will give grace and glory." It is His glory to give His grace and because of His graciousness, He gives glory! [1. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit #2502]

Yet, "grace and glory," surely suggest our future blessing in eternity as well. "'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home" (John Newton). I thought of some songs that feature the phrase "grace and glory," some of which emphasize the here and now, while others the "sweet by and by."

"Where He Leads Me I Will Follow" – a song of commitment and trust, where the lines of the verses are repeated as "I can hear my Savior calling," "He'll go with me through the garden," "He'll go with me through the judgment," and finally "He will give me grace and glory." The refrain says "Where He leads me I will follow (three times)...He'll go with me, with me, all the way." From His initial call to the grace and glory that await, no doubt a reference to Heaven, He will truly go with me all the way. [2. Where He Leads Me: Ernest W. Blandy, 1890]

A group called "Poet Voices" sang a song about a decade or so ago called "Grace and Glory." Again, borrowing from those

beautiful words it states "His love is full of grace and glory that is why I sing."

Unmerited favor of the Savior falling from His holiness
It is never ending grace extending from His righteousness
To the undeserving, God is serving bountiful supply
His great love's abounding and surrounding us from sky to sky.[3. Phil Cross, Bridge Building Music, BMI, Chris White Music, BMI]

Christian songwriter, poet, and comedian Aaron Wilburn wrote a song some years ago in which "grace and glory," while not the theme or title, still figures prominently in the message. Recently performed by a number of singing groups, it was a favorite of Aaron's mother: "That Sounds Like Home to Me," a song about Heaven, in which the refrain thrills the believer's heart by affirming "the hills will echo with the story as we sing of His grace and glory. Wow! To think that one day we'll extol His grace and glory throughout the ages.[4. C.A. Wilburn and Edwin Crook, Werner Chappel Music, Inc.]

Finally, there comes to my mind a song I heard only a couple of months ago by a trio I enjoy a great deal. Songwriter Sue C. Smith and collaborators beautiful lyrics, and Karen Peck's country soprano delivers yet another song of hope "On the Banks of the Promised Land." My soul is set to soar when I hear the refrain "Hallelujah, what a morning, when I reach for that nail-scarred hand, and I'm led by His grace and His glory, on the banks of the Promised Land." [5. Sue C. Smith, David Moffit, Jason Dyba]

My conclusions: The Psalm would indicate that grace and glory are for both now and for the future. It's grace that saves us now, that guides and guards us in this life, that leads us on this earthly pilgrimage, but it is also grace that leads us home, to again quote John Newton.

To glory – what does that mean? The goal, the end of God's

grace working in us is to transport us to glory, as some of the songs I've quoted suggest. But we might also say that the grace at work in us brings glory to Him who is worthy of it all – grace to glory. And most definitely grace accomplishes glory – His glory and our enjoyment of it and rapture in it – here on earth temporarily and imperfectly, and permanently and perfectly in Heaven.

These past days have been bittersweet. Services at church have been good, and it is thrilling to see our Hispanic group there, growing in the Lord, and becoming more involved. However, news came of the passing of two friends, both named Tim. Tim Hayes was from Illinois, very active in his church, in missions, and with the Master's Men Disaster Relief Team. I have known him since college days. A massive heart attack. Then, Tim Coats, formerly a Home Missionary in South Dakota, and in recent years a bivocational pastor there in Rapid City. He and Kathy were summer missionaries with us in 1982 in Panama when our kids were very small. Faithful men, good friends. They have now gone from grace to glory, praise the Lord.

A Panamanian Perspective on Holy Week

Since I spent nearly 30 years in Panama as a missionary, I have a perspective on Easter that I trust has taught me some valuable lessons.

First off, Holy Week in the early years (1970s-1980s) tended to be influenced by Roman Catholicism, the predominant religion in Panama. The entire week was somewhat subdued, with

less emphasis on the commercial aspects of life. Good Friday was somber and solemn; television and radio stations could only play, funeral-like music, dirges, and the like. Churches had mass to commemorate the passion. There were no sports or entertainment. (After those early years, Good Friday became more "secular," and has remained so. It is possible that some radio stations may have special solemn programming, but not the TV stations, by and large. Some of the older people, staunchly Catholic, complained, but basically the day has become a "holiday," not a "holy day.")

Strangely enough, Easter Sunday was pretty much business as usual. Though it was called "Domingo de Gloria," (Sunday of Glory), there didn't seem to be a lot of celebration of Christ's resurrection, and folks went to the beach, had picnics, visited family, etc., pretty much like any other time when they were off work. But neither the solemnity or the frivolity seemed to touch people very deeply. The solemnity didn't cause people to come to Christ for forgiveness of sin, and receive a Savior who would change their lives. The frivolity wasn't Christian joy, based on the the certainty of the Risen Lord who had conquered death.

What a difference I discovered in the evangelical church! For one thing, many churches had a special Good Friday service which featured the seven last words of Christ he uttered from the cross. I took part in many of those over the years, sometimes preaching just one of the seven words, as in a joint service, and sometimes all seven. It could make for a very long service, but focusing from a theological as well as a practical perspective was helpful and challenging.

We sang songs (in Spanish) like "There is a Fountain," and "Nothing But the Blood." We also sang songs about the passion such as "Oh Qué Amor," (Oh What Love), and "¿Sabes qué Murió Jesús?" (Do you Know that Jesus Died?) this last one sung to the tune of the 1960s pop song "Sealed With a Kiss." Beautiful, melodic songs about our Savior's death on the cross

that really touched my heart, but unknown to English-only speaking people.

Easter Sunday was always a special day in Panama. We'd sing, in Spanish of course, songs like "Low in the Grave He Lay" with volume and emotion, and hear the resurrection message delivered on that day of days.

We introduced to the church in Bethania, where we served for about 15 years, the "Sunrise Service" concept. I think some other churches already were doing it, but it was new to many of the people we'd seen come to Christ, and over time came to be one of the most popular and inspiring things we did each year. An early service, often around 5:30 or 6:00 a.m., followed by a breakfast fellowship meal, and then Sunday School, made for a glorious day in the Lord, and with His people.

I remember our first Easter in Panama, in 1978, when we met at the church on a Sunday night. It would have been March 26. Our main service was held on Sunday night at the beginning of the church plant. We sang. We prayed. I preached. At the end of the service a young man in his early 20s came forward to receive Christ. His words to me were these: "I knew there had to be more in life than what I had found, and tonight I found it in Jesus Christ." Christ arose! He lives! He is risen. He is risen indeed!

REO Pays Tribute: Leeman Underwood

Editor's Note: We believe it is good and right to honor the men and women who have inspired, encouraged, and challenged us

throughout our lives. REO Pays Tribute will be our ongoing attempt to do just that. We hope that our meager words will honor those to whom honor is due.

Leeman Underwood by Steve Lytle

It was probably 1972, the year Judy and I married, when I met Leeman Underwood, but I had heard about him before then. His daughter Gail was his oldest child and she was Judy's cousin and best friend growing up. She was a senior at Free Will Baptist Bible College (Welch) when we were freshmen.

Leeman was born in Flat River (Park Hills), Missouri, but grew up in Fredericktown, Missouri, the son of Vester and Edith Underwood. He came to know Christ as a young man, and grew up in Copper Mines Free Will Baptist Church. Born in 1923, he joined the army and fought in World War II. His sister Lillian, two years younger, finished his 12th grade work in 1942 so that he could graduate from high school with his class.

When he returned from the war, Leeman married Laura Bayless, from Knob Lick, MO. They settled down in Fredericktown, where Leeman was employed in the lead mines and where they had four children: Gail, Greg, Sue, and Pam. He was ordained as a deacon at the Copper Mines Church. He and Judy's mom frequently sang specials at church; he had a beautiful tenor voice, and she sang a strong alto.

When the mines began to close in the late 1950s, Leeman moved his family to East St. Louis, Illinois for a year and worked there. When he heard of jobs in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, he and Laura decided to move the family there, though it was a long way from southeast Missouri. They went to Oak Ridge in 1959, and began working at one of the nuclear energy plants in Oak Ridge, and worked there until his retirement. They moved into their house on Lancaster in 1965, and he has lived there ever

since.

Leeman, Laura, and the children attended the First Free Will Baptist Church in Oak Ridge, where he was elected as a deacon. They faithfully served there for over 50 years.

Leeman loved to travel. They frequently went back "home" to Missouri to visit his old home church, and his family and friends. He always enjoyed returning for his high school reunion. Some of his family went with him in 2016. He was one of two attending from the class of 1942. Even closer to home in Oak Ridge, he goes out on Saturdays with his daughter Sue for long drives to enjoy the beauty of the mountains. Cades Cove is still a favorite destination of his, to see the mountain vistas, and the wildlife there. On more than one occasion, Leeman and Laura would travel to be with Judy and me for special missions services, and were faithful to support and pray for our ministry through the years.

Leeman was an extraordinary ordinary man. Quiet, mild mannered, kind, he loved his Lord and his church. He loved his family; I don't know if I've seen anyone else who loved his kids and grandchildren any more than Leeman did. There were pictures of them all over the house, and it seemed like every time we went to visit, some of the grandkids were always there. They loved hanging out with Grandma and Grandpa.

Judy and I visited the Underwoods numerous times over the years. We stayed in their home frequently when traveling for International Missions to visit churches in Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

The oldest daughter, Gail, married a preacher and became a pastor's wife. She died of cancer in 1995 while just in her forties. We were in Panama and couldn't come back for the funeral. Shortly afterwards, we came home for our stateside assignment and went to see Leeman and Laura. I remember spending time with them, talking about Gail, and watching some

of the early Gaither Homecoming Videos, hearing songs about Heaven and our hope in Christ. We shed quite a few tears on those occasions, but they were tears of hope and joy. Gail's death was very hard on Leeman and Laura, but God gave grace and life went on.

In recent years, time has brought many changes to Leeman and the Underwood family. We were privileged to attend their 50th wedding anniversary in 1996. Aunt Laura passed away in 2011. Leeman still lives in his own house, but his youngest daughter, Pam and her husband Butch, live with him, and provide care and companionship. He has chronic beryllium disease, caused by exposure to beryllium while working as a machinist in the Oak Ridge factory for so many years, and taking the small particles into his lungs. More recently, he began to experience kidney failure, and was actually on dialysis for eight months some years back, but miraculously was able to come off of this treatment for several years. Now it seems to have come back.

On his good days, he sits in the living room watching old westerns on TV and enjoying his company – family, friends, and people from his church.

It is a blessing, and an honor for me to pay tribute to Leeman Underwood. A true man of God, and one of the kindest, most hospitable men I have ever known.

I have said that Leeman was a good singer. Perhaps his best known song was "I Thirst," by Beverly Lowry. I only know he sang it from the heart, as a testimony, and he sang it well.

*One day I came to Him, I was so thirsty
I asked for water, my throat was so dry
He gave me water that I have never dreamed of
But for this water, my Lord had to die*

*He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the rivers
He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the sea*

*"I thirst, " said the King of the Ages
In His great thirst, He brought water to me
Now there's a river that flows as clear as crystal
It comes from God's throne above
And like a river, it wells up inside me
Bringing mercy, and life-giving love*

*He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the rivers
He said, "I thirst, " yet He made the sea
"I thirst," said the King of the Ages
In His great thirst, He brought water to me.[1. I Thirst, by
Bev Lowry, copyright 1993.]*



Leeman Underwood holding his great-granddaughter.

Yesterday

Last night, as we are on the vispera (Spanish for “Eve” or “time before”) of another year, ending 2016 and beginning 2017, I didn’t sleep well and lay awake for long periods of time. My thoughts went to the word “yesterday.”

Let me begin by saying that some of my favorite songs, either musically, lyrically, or thematically revolve around “yesterday.” Looking back, reflecting, and reminiscing is something we do somewhat automatically, I suppose, especially at year’s end, but it’s probably a good thing to do from a biblical standpoint: “number our days to gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12), allow the past (history) to be our teacher (Psalm 78), and remember that “our times are in his hands” (Psalm 31:15).

One of the prettiest songs from the 60s was “Yesterday” by *The Beatles*.

*Yesterday all my troubles seemed so far away.
Now it looks as though they’re here to stay.
Oh, I believe in yesterday.*

*Suddenly I’m not half the man I used to be.
There’s a shadow hanging over me.
Oh, yesterday came suddenly.*

*Why she had to go, I don’t know, she wouldn’t say.
I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday.*

*Yesterday love was such an easy game to play.
Now I need a place to hide away.
Oh, I believe in yesterday.*

*Why she had to go, I don't know, she wouldn't say.
I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday.*

*Yesterday love was such an easy game to play.
Now I need a place to hide away.
Oh, I believe in yesterday.*

Lovely, soft, melancholy – it is a song that almost anyone would like. Thinking back to an earlier, happier time is so typical of we humans.

“Yesterday, When I Was Young” – by Charles Aznavour and Herbert Kretzmer, was released in 1964. The most famous and best-remembered version was by country music singer and Hee Haw host Roy Clark. The song contains a haunting and powerful lyric about someone who has lived life selfishly and now looks back to all he has lost and wasted.

Yesterday when I was young

The taste of life was sweet as rain upon my tongue

I teased at life as if it were a foolish game

The way the evening breeze may tease a candle flame

The thousand dreams I dreamed, the splendid things I planned

I always built, alas, on weak and shifting sand

I lived by night and shunned the naked light of day

And only now I see how the years ran away

Yesterday when I was young

*So many drinking[1. Roy Clark's version substituted "happy"
for drinking.]songs were waiting to be sung*

So many wayward pleasures lay in store for me

And so much pain my dazzled eyes refused to see

I ran so fast that time and youth at last ran out

I never stopped to think what life was all about

And every conversation I can now recall

Concerned itself with me, and nothing else at all

*Yesterday the moon was blue
And every crazy day brought something new to do
I used my magic age as if it were a wand
And never saw the waste and emptiness beyond
The game of love I played with arrogance and pride
And every flame I lit too quickly, quickly died
The friends I made all seemed somehow to drift away
And only I am left on stage to end the play
There are so many songs in me that won't be sung
I feel the bitter taste of tears upon my tongue
The time has come for me to pay for yesterday when I was
young.*

Then there was a song from the 1970s, written by the legendary bass singer for the Cathedrals, George Younce, "Yesterday." I probably first heard it in the late 70s or early 80s, and always felt that it ministered to me:

(Chorus)

*Yesterday things were different
Today they're different again
Jesus will never change
Jesus is always the same*

- 1. The sparrow will find a new dwelling
The eagle will change its nest
But I'm holding on the changeless One
And I'm leaning on His breast*
- 2. The river will change, change its course
The mountains may crumble and fall
Time will leave its mark, they say
Upon us one and all
Repeat Chorus*

The song resonates powerfully in response to the fact that we live in a world of change ("yesterday things were different, today they're different again") by triumphantly affirming that

“Jesus will never, never change, Jesus is always the same.”
It’s wonderful to have that hope (Hebrews 13:8, Malachi 3:6,
James 1:17).

Finally, we go back over 100 years to A.B. Simpson, the
founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. He wrote a
song that isn’t sung much today, except perhaps for the
chorus, but what a truth it expresses!

*O how sweet the glorious message simple faith may claim
Yesterday, today, forever Jesus is the same.
Still He loves to save the sinful, heal the sick and lame
Cheer the mourner, still the tempest, glory to His Name.*

Refrain

*Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same.
All may change, but Jesus never! Glory to His Name!
Glory to His Name! Glory to His Name!
All may change, but Jesus never! Glory to His Name!
He, who was the Friend of sinners, seeks the lost one now
Sinner come, and at His footstool penitently bow
He Who said “I’ll not condemn thee, go and sin no more,”
Speaks to thee that word of pardon as in days of yore.*

Refrain

*Oft on earth He healed the sufferer by His mighty hand
Still our sicknesses and sorrows go at His command
He who gave His healing virtue to a woman’s touch
To the faith that claims His fullness still will give as much.*

Refrain

*As of old He walked to Emmaus, with them to abide
So through all life’s way He walketh ever near our side
Soon again we shall behold Him, Hasten Lord the day
But twill still be this same Jesus as He went away.*

Refrain

Argentinian evangelist Alberto Motessi preached a message in
which he spoke of Christians who focus on a Jesus who lived

and worked in the past (historical). Others focus on a Savior who will live and work in the future (eschatologically). He goes on to say we should fervently believe in a Savior who is alive and working today. That is so true, but our trust in Him today flows from who He is and what He has already done through the cross, the resurrection, His immutable nature, and His faithfulness in our lives.

Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow. Let's live for the One who is eternal, unchangeable, and always faithful.

The days pass so swiftly, the months come and go

The years melt away like new fallen snow.

Spring turns to summer, summer to fall

Autumn brings winter, then death comes to call.

*Only one life, so soon it will pass, only what's done for
Christ will last.*

Only one chance to do his will

So give to Jesus all your days, it's the only life that pays

*When you recall you have but one life.[2. Only one Life by
Lanny Wolfe]*