



UNTIL THE SKY SPILLS OVER

This will be my 4th lesson in this series I'm calling "***Song Select***" which is inspired by Paul's words to the churches concerning singing in our assemblies. I remind you that he wrote in **1st Corinthians 14:15**: "**I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.**" And in **Colossians 3:16**, "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.**" So it is clear that the songs we sing are not only to express praise to God, but also to instruct as well as encourage each other.

Today we'll consider the song "***Sky Spills Over***" by Michael W. Smith. Here's the official music video. I chose this song for a couple reasons. One, because, to be honest, the first time I heard it, I didn't understand it. Maybe if I'd listened to it without the official video accompanying it, it would have made more sense, but the images of wild kids being led by a man to kill a boar and then celebrating their victory didn't seem to even remotely fit the lyrics. at least at first. I understand that Michael represents Christ and the kids represent us, and the boar is likely a symbol of Satan, while the sword is the Word of God_ but in my humble opinion, the video still doesn't match the song. So why have we chosen to sing it here? Well, the song has a downright catchy tune_ and more importantly, it really is rich in meaning.

It speaks of a time of desperation, like when a flower is withering and dying from a lack of water in an arid place. Or when a person is totally drained of energy, feeling lifeless and empty. These are certainly Biblical images. Maybe you've felt like a rose in the desert_ or worse, a withering corpse. Maybe you feel like that right now. But the song also speaks of a sincere hope.

Open your Bibles to **1st Kings 18**. It's on page **556** in the pew Bibles. We're going to pick up in verse **41** in a few minutes, but let me give you the backstory first. In order to discipline His people, God had caused a severe draught to come over the land which lasted for three years. Obviously this led to a horrible famine. Any "***rose in the desert***" would've dried up long ago_ and any person left alone that long without water would be nothing but parched bones. Yet, it was just then that the prophet Elijah confronted the wicked king Ahab and all the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, challenging them to a contest to prove whose God was real. If you've never read it, I encourage you to do so. I hate spoiler alerts, but you probably have already guessed that Yaweh, the **LORD** of Heaven and earth wins the contest hands down. And then, Elijah has this to say to Ahab....

⁴¹ "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." ⁴² So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And (the servant) went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said_ (but) seven times Elijah said, "Go back." ⁴⁴ The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'" ⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

So, here we go. ***How long has your draught been?*** How long have you been longing for refreshment, but dying of thirst? Some folks I know have been struggling for months, even years with chronic pain, seasons of sickness, and long periods of disappointment and heartache.

When things don't seem to get better or even go from bad to worse, our souls can slip into deep despair. **Proverbs 17:22** says that though a cheerful heart is good medicine, **“a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”** I also think of the prophet Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones (**Ezekiel 37**). It's a picture of a people without hope. There's hardly a week that goes by that I don't talk with someone who's at the end of their rope...ready to give up on God, and perhaps even contemplating giving up on life itself. They feel like they are **“just dry bones, stripped of sinew and skin”** – and what they need most of all is for **“the wind of God's Spirit to raise them up again.”**

Here's another question. **How long have you been praying** about your draught? Elijah was down on his knees with his face to the ground, praying for rain_ but in essence, he was attempting to **“reach up from the dust and call it down!”** He sent his servant to **“lift his eyes”** and **“look to the horizon.”** For what? Some sign that God was there_ and that He cared.

Now, it's not as if God hadn't already proven Himself to Elijah. He'd done that big time...but nonetheless, prompted by his master, the servant looked for an answer to the prophet's prayer **6** times _ but saw nothing. There was not a hint that anything was changing. But the **7th** time? **A small cloud appeared** in the sky that likely seemed insignificant to everyone else...but it was a confirmation to Elijah that help was on the way. It was a little sign of a very big God

And one last question. **Do you hear that thunder?** Elijah said he heard the sound of a mighty rain. He said that before there was even a clue of rain in the forecast. You probably know that the speed of light is much faster than the speed of sound. We almost always see the darkening sky and even lightening before we hear the thunder. At least that's the way it is in the natural world. But in this case, there wasn't even a cloud in the sky. So how did he hear it? Listen closely....

1st Corinthians 5:7 says we are to **“walk by faith not by sight.”** We are called to believe before we see evidence to do so. In fact, the evidence may never materialize until we start believing that it will. Like Elijah, we need to start moving in faith with that expectation. From the language here, it appears to me that He was **“moved to get moving”** ahead of the downpour before the first drop fell to the ground, accelerating with every step.

We're not the best examples, but when Nina and I felt the calling to go to seminary, we turned in our notices to resign from our jobs before we had any viable support. We made a similar leap when we became convinced we were to be missionaries overseas. In both cases we started moving before we saw any clear way that we could reach our destination. Many years later, we decided to believe in God's ability and willingness to heal our granddaughter. Before we saw any signs of her massive tumor shrinking, we trusted God for her deliverance. It's not that we ignored the situation, but despite what our senses could perceive, we believed that God could and would respond. And He did.

Has that always been our experience? Has He always sent the rain when we were sure we couldn't live without it? No, but I can't honestly say we've always believed and moved in faith as we should. And if the rain didn't come, we learned that our dependence hadn't been placed where it should've been. We found refreshing coming from Him rather than whatever else we expected to sustain us.

At any rate, I encourage you right here and right now to **praise His name until the Sky spills over** – and as Jesus urges us in **Luke 18**, pray and don't give up! Either in the precise answer to your prayer or in a way that you never would have thought to even ask for_ one that will ultimately last for an eternity. For He'll send more than rain from heaven. He will send His Spirit to cover us with His love.