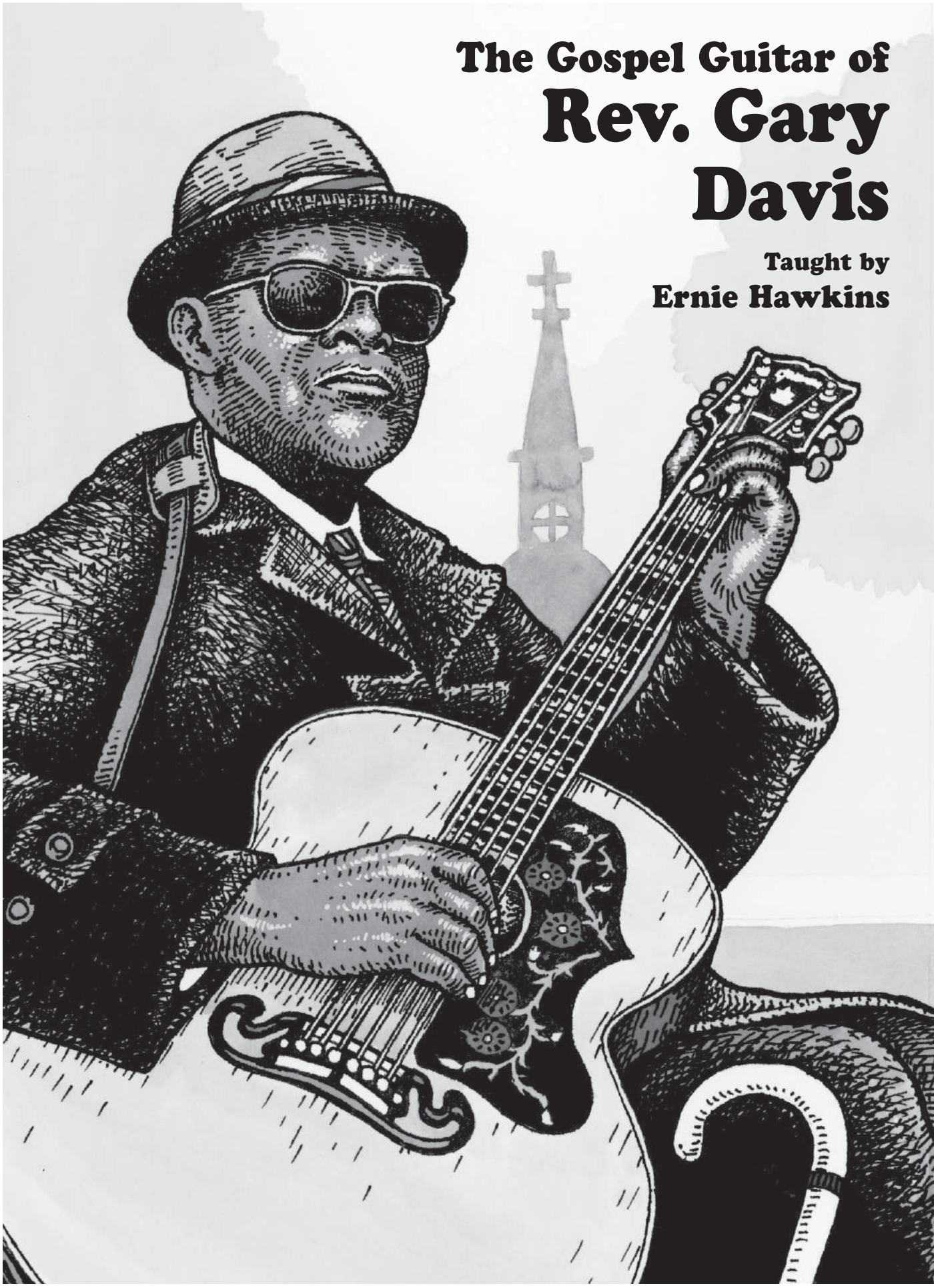
The Gospel Guitar of Rev. Gary Davis

Taught by
Ernie Hawkins



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Explanation of the Tab System

"…Learning from listening is unquestionably the best way, the only way that suits this kind of music. You are setting the notes down for a record of what happened, a record that can be studied, preserved and so on, a necessary and useful companion to the recordings of the actual sounds. I keep thinking of this as I transcribe; if you could do it, it would be good to have a legend across each page reading : 'Listen to the record if you want to learn the song.'"

Hally Wood (taken from the Publisher's Foreword to the *New Lost City Ramblers Songbook*.)

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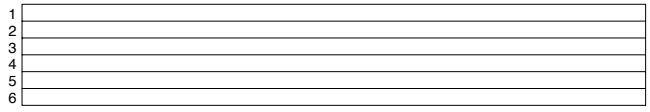
These words are most suitable for introducing the tablature system, for tablature is just a guide and should be used in conjunction with the recordings. Tablature is not like music notation, however the combination of tab and music in an arrangement forms a complete language. Used together with the original recordings they give a total picture of the music.

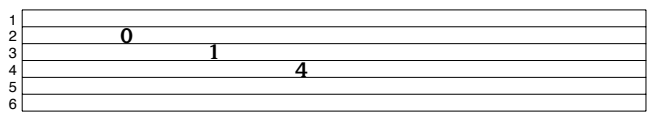
The tab system does not attempt to show rhythms or accents. These can be found on the music or heard in the recordings. Music notation tackles these articulations to a degree, but the overall sensations, the feel and the soul of music cannot be wholly captured on the written page. In the words of the great Sufi Hazrat Inayat Khan: "…The traditional ancient songs of India composed by great Masters have been handed down from father to son. The way music is taught is different from the Western way. It is not always written, but is taught by imitation. The teacher sings and the pupil imitates and the intricacies and subtleties are learned by imitation."

This is the theme I've tried to interpolate into the tablature. Tablature is the roadmap and you are the driver. Now to the tab:

Each space indicates a string. The top space represents the first string, second space the second string, etc. A zero means an open string, a number in the space indicates the fretted position, for instance a 1 in a space indicates the first fret of that string.

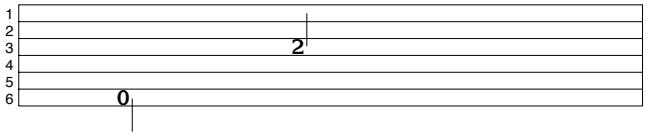


In the diagram below the zero is on the second string and indicates the open second string is played. The 1 is placed on the third string and signifies the first fret of the third string. Likewise, the 4 is in the fourth space and indicates the fourth fret of the fourth string.



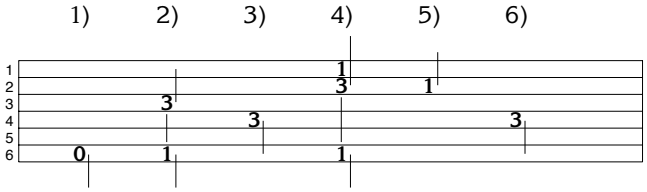
Generally for fingerpicking styles you will be playing the thumb, index and middle fingers of your picking hand. To indicate the picking finger in tab the stems go up and line up down from the numbers.

A. A stem down means that your thumb strikes the note.
B. If a stem is up, your index or middle finger strikes the note. The choice of finger is left up to you, as your fingers will dictate what is most comfortable, especially when playing a song up to tempo!
C. The diagram below shows an open sixth string played with the thumb followed by the second fret of the third string played with the index or middle finger:



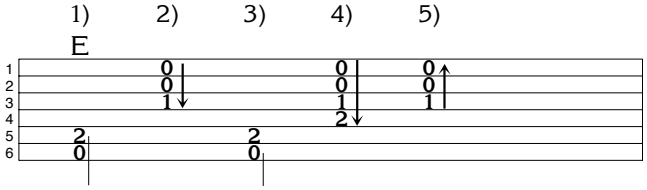
In most cases the thumb will play an alternating bass pattern, usually on the bass strings. The index and middle fingers play melodic notes on the first, second and third strings. Please remember, this is not a rule; there are many exceptions.

In fingerpicking there are two "picking" styles: Regular picking and "pinching" two notes together. A pinch is shown in the tab by a line connecting two notes. A variation of this can also be two treble notes pinched with a bass note. Follow the examples below from left to right:



1) The open sixth string is played with the thumb.
2) The first fret of the sixth string is pinched together with the third fret on the third string. The sixth string is played with the thumb, the third string with the index finger.
3) The thumb strikes the third fret of the fourth string.
4) The first fret/sixth string is played with the thumb; it's pinched with two notes in the treble. The index and middle fingers strike the first fret/first string and the third fret/second string.
5) The next note is the index finger hitting the first fret/second string.
6) Lastly, the bass note is played with the thumb on the third fret/fourth string.

There are certain places in blues and contemporary guitar that call for the use of either strumming techniques or accented bass notes. The tab illustrates these as follows:



1) The thumb hits the open sixth string and the second fret on the fifth string should also sound. For example, play an E chord. Now strike the open string and vary the force of your attack. Try hitting it hard enough so that the fifth string vibrates as well. This technique is very important for developing a full sound and the right alternating bass sound.

2) Next the arrow notation indicates a brush and the arrow head indicates the direction of the brush.

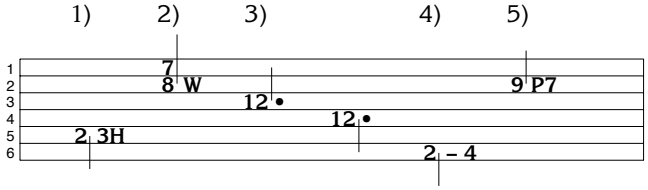
   A. If the arrowhead is pointed down, the hand brushes up towards the sixth string.
   B. If pointed up, the hand brushes down towards the first string.
   C. The number of strings to be played by the brush is shown by the length of the arrows. For example, this arrow shows a brush up toward the sixth string, but indicates to strike only the first, second and third strings.
   D. The brush can be done with your whole hand, index finger or middle and ring finger. Let comfort plus a full and "right" sound guide your choice.

3) The third set of notes again shows the sixth string/open bass note played with the thumb and being struck hard enough to make the fifth string/second fretted position sound.

4) Once more an arrow pointed downward indicates a brush up. This example forms an E chord and the brush up includes the first, second, third and fourth strings.

5) The last set of notes has an arrow pointed upward, indicating a brush downward striking the first, second, and third strings.

Here are several special effects that are also symbolized in tablature:



1) HAMMER-ON: Designated by an "H" which is placed after the stem on the fret to be hammered. In the example above, fret the second fret/fifth string and pick it with your thumb. Then "hammer-on" (hit hard) the third fret/fifth string, i.e. fret the third fret/fifth string. This is an all-in-one, continuous motion which will produce two notes rapidly with one picking finger strike.

2) WHAM: Designated by a "W." In the example the eighth fret/second string is "whammed" and played with the seventh fret/first string. Both notes are played together with your index and middle fingers respectively. The whammed note is "stretched." We do this by literally bending the note up. We can "wham" the note up a half tone, full tone, etc.

3) HARMONICS: Symbolized by a dot (•). To play a harmonic: gently lay your finger directly above the indicated fret (don't press down!) The two notes in the example are both harmonics. The first on the twelfth fret/third string is played with the index/middle finger, while the second note—twelfth fret/fourth string—is played with the thumb.

4) SLIDE: Shown with a dash (–). Play the second fret/sixth string and then slide up to the fourth fret of the sixth string. This is a continuous movement: the string is struck once with your thumb.

5) PULL-OFF: "P" designates a "pull-off." Fret both the seventh and ninth frets on the second string. Play the ninth fret with your index/middle finger and then quickly remove it in the same stroke, leaving the seventh fret/second string. Pull-offs are generally in a downward direction.

6) In certain cases other specific symbols are added to the tab, for instance:
   A. For ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS an "X" is placed after the fretted position.
   B. For SNAPPING a note an indication may be given with a symbol or the written word.

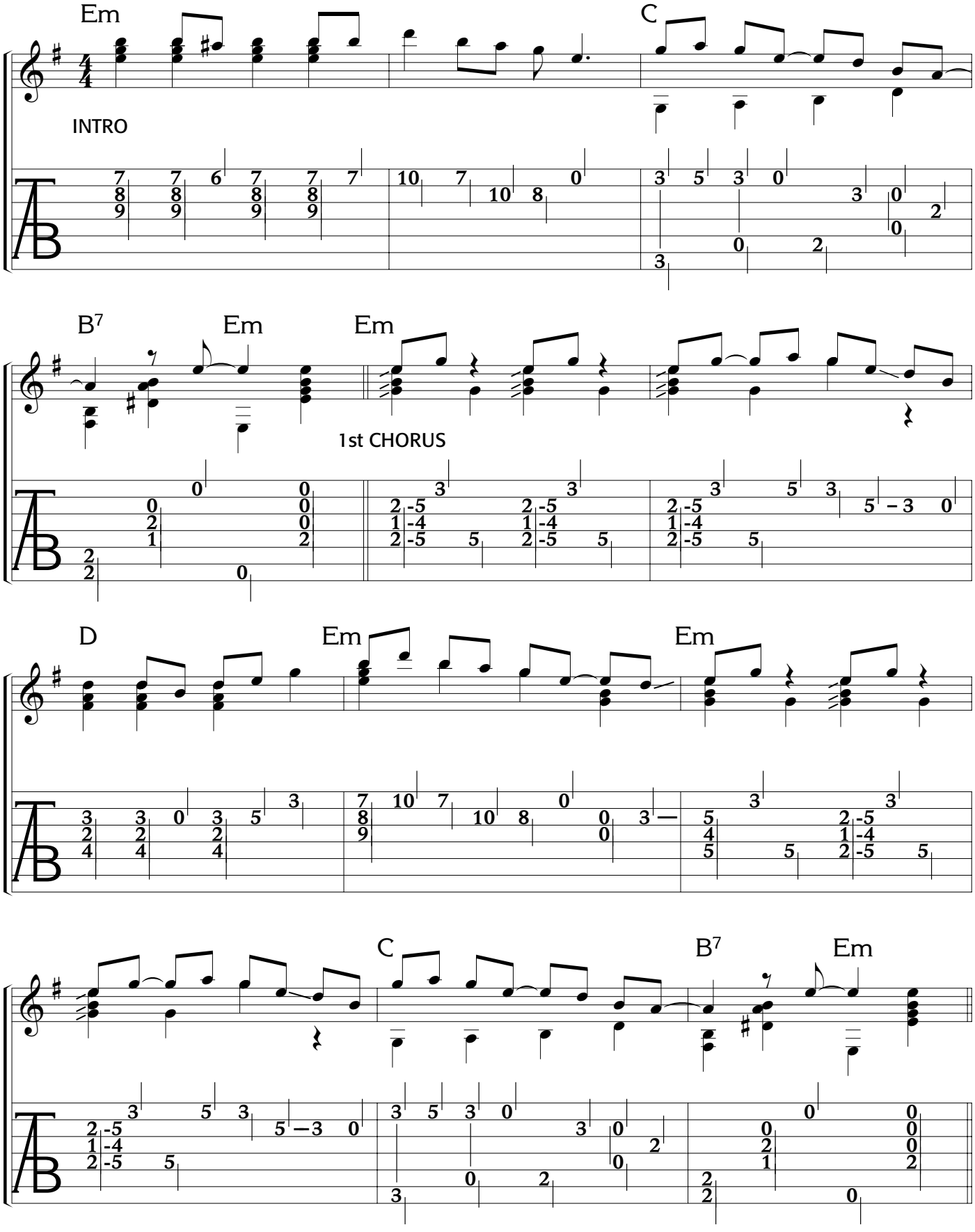
Many times these special techniques are combined, for instance putting a pull-off and a hammer-on together. Coordination of your fretting and picking hands will be complex initially, but the end results are exciting and fun to play.

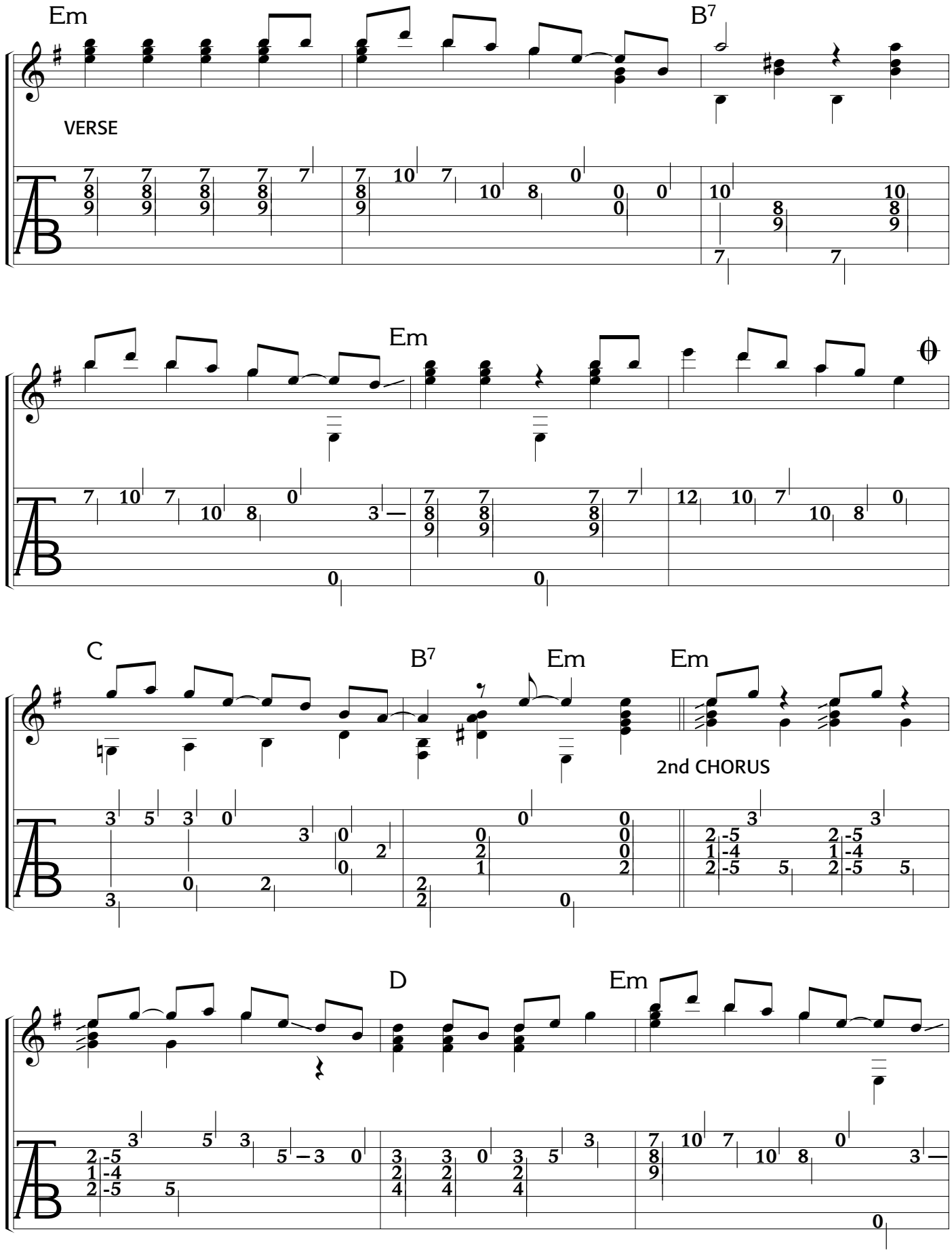
PICKING HAND POSITION FOR FINGERPICKING STYLES: The Classical and Flamenco schools have strict right-hand rules, however for this style of acoustic fingerpicking there are NO RULES, only suggestions. Your right hand position should be dictated by comfort, however in observation of many well-known fingerpickers I found one hand position similarity—they all tend to rest their little finger and/or ring finger on the face of the guitar. This seems to help their balance for accenting notes and control of the guitar. Experiment with this position: it may feel uncomfortable at first. I ask my students to perfect this position and then compare the sound to when their finger(s) were not placed on the face of the guitar. They usually find the sound is greatly improved when some contact is kept with the guitar face.

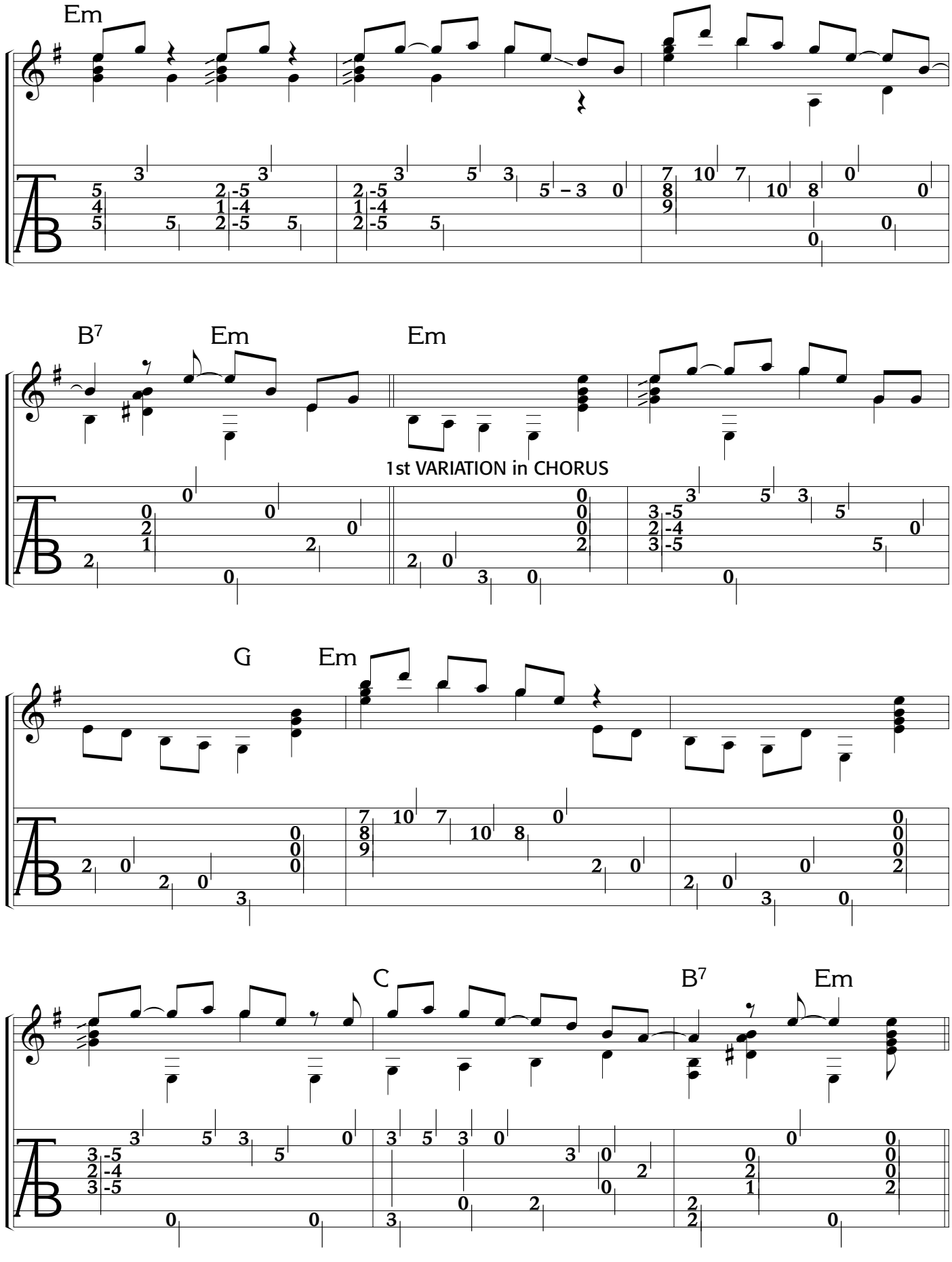
MUSIC NOTATION: We have somewhat adapted the music notation in that this also shows whether the note is picked with your thumb or index/middle fingers. The stems of the music notes correspond to the direction of the tab stems. I hope this will make the music notation clearer to fingerpicking guitarists.

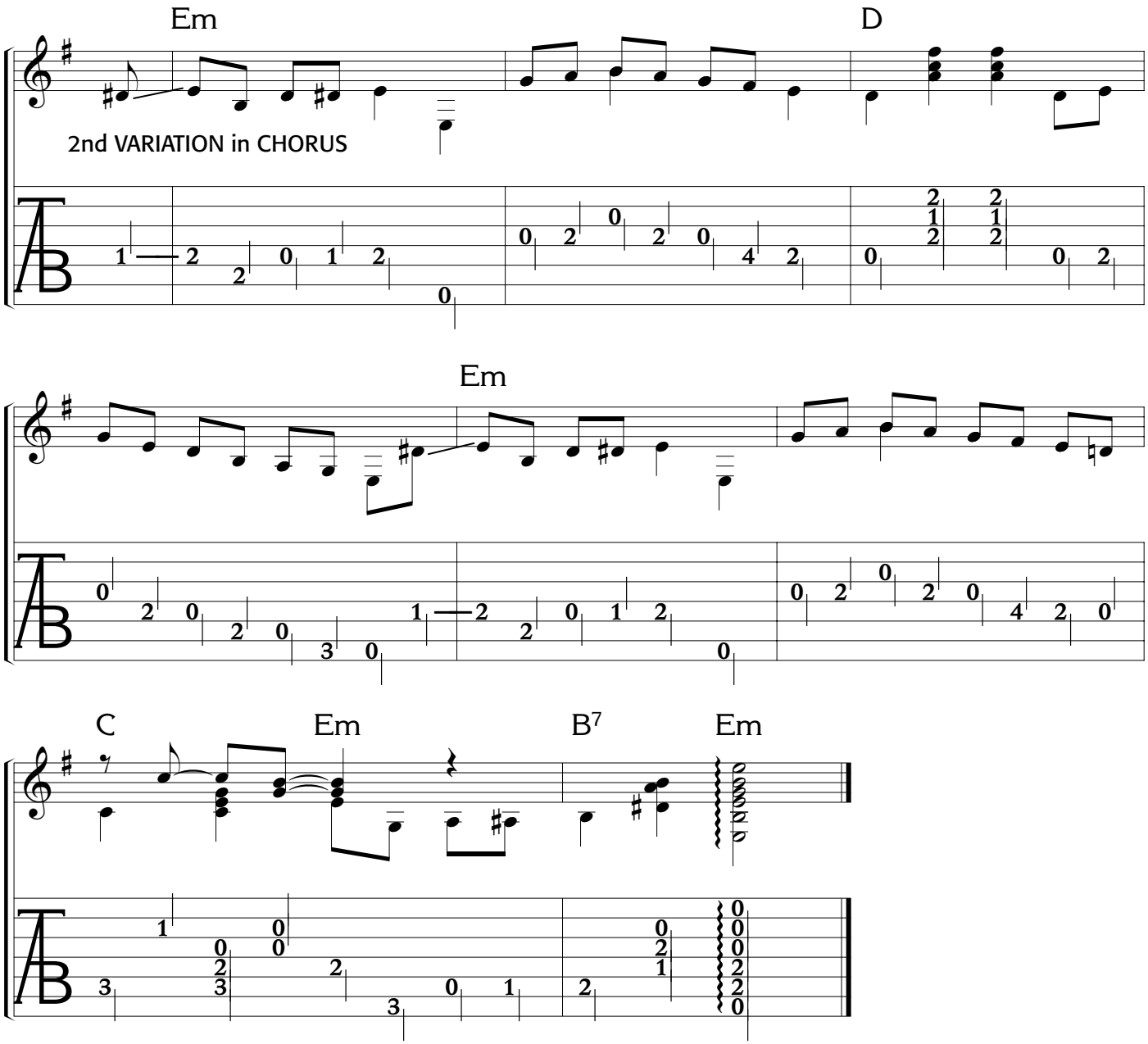
I hope you will feel at home and comfortable with the tablature and musical notations. Remember, these are only road maps indicating where and how you should place your fingers. The playing and musical interpretation is up to you.

Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning




Em
B7
VERSE
Em
C
B7
Em
Em
2nd CHORUS
D
Em


Em
B7
Em
Em
1st VARIATION in CHORUS
G
Em
C
B7
Em



KEEP YOUR LAMP TRIMMED AND BURNING

Brother, don't you get worried *(3x)*
For this old world is almost done

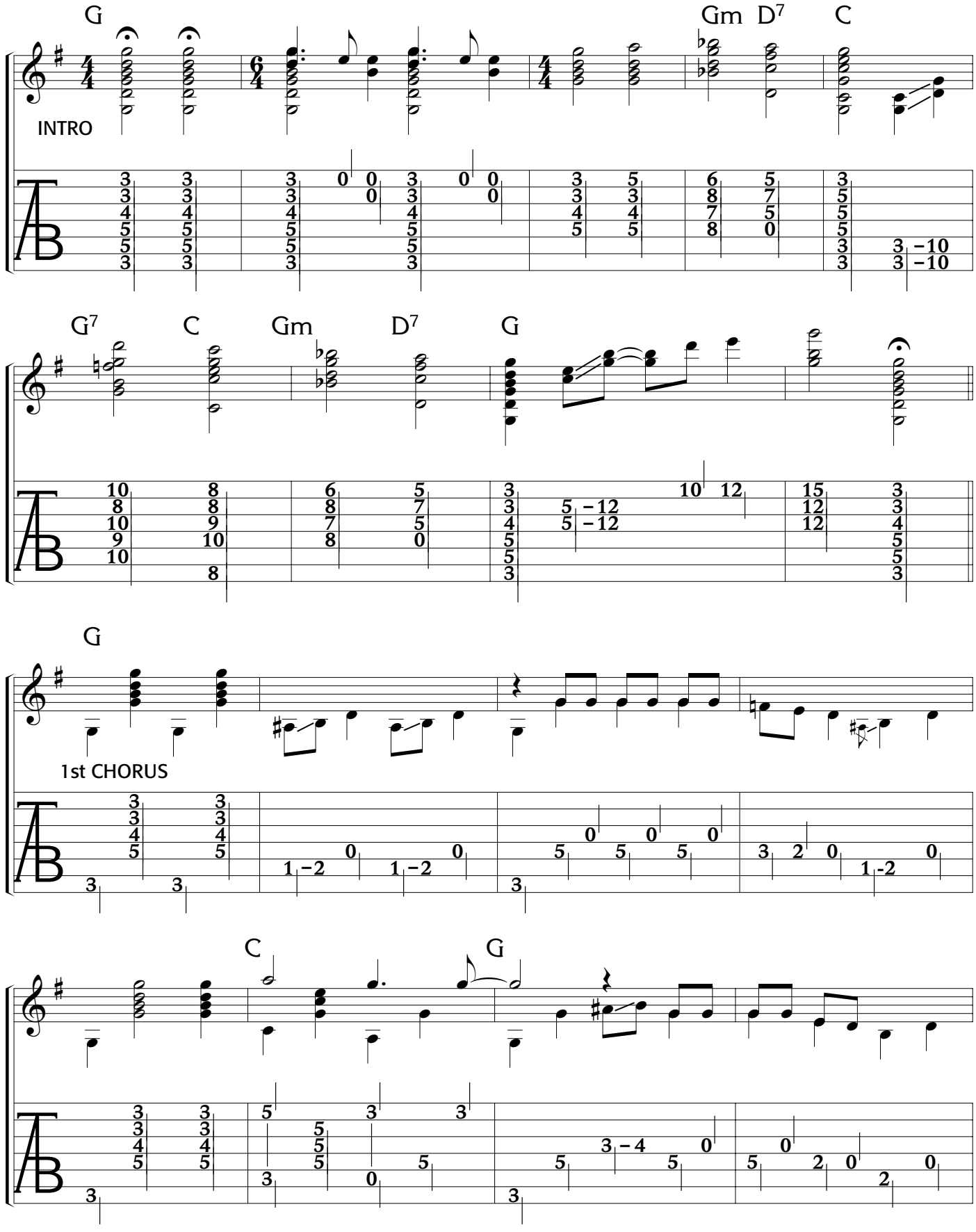
Chorus:
Keep your lamp trimmed and burning *(3x)*
For this old world is almost done

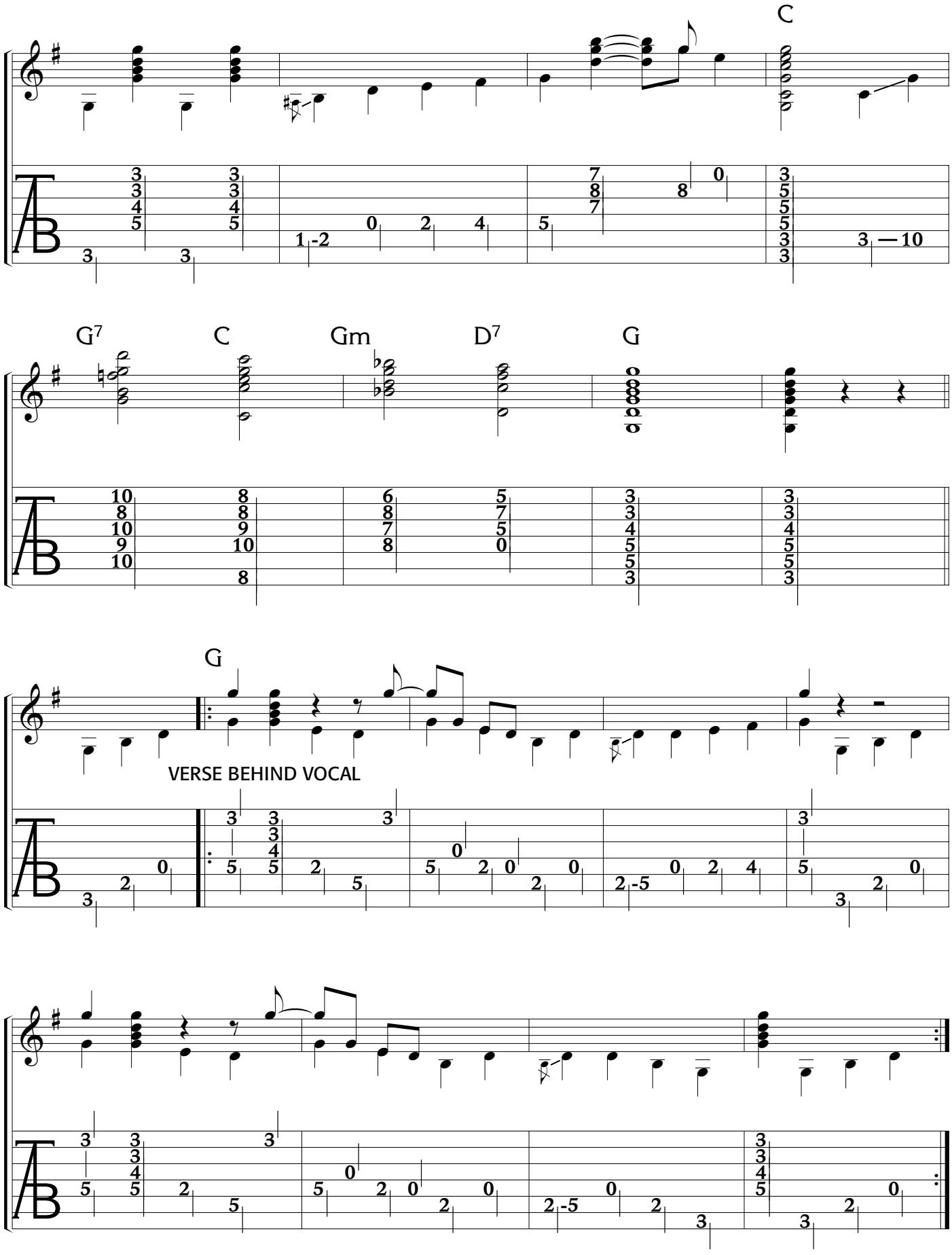
Sister, don't stop praying *(3x)*
For this old world is almost done *(Cho.)*

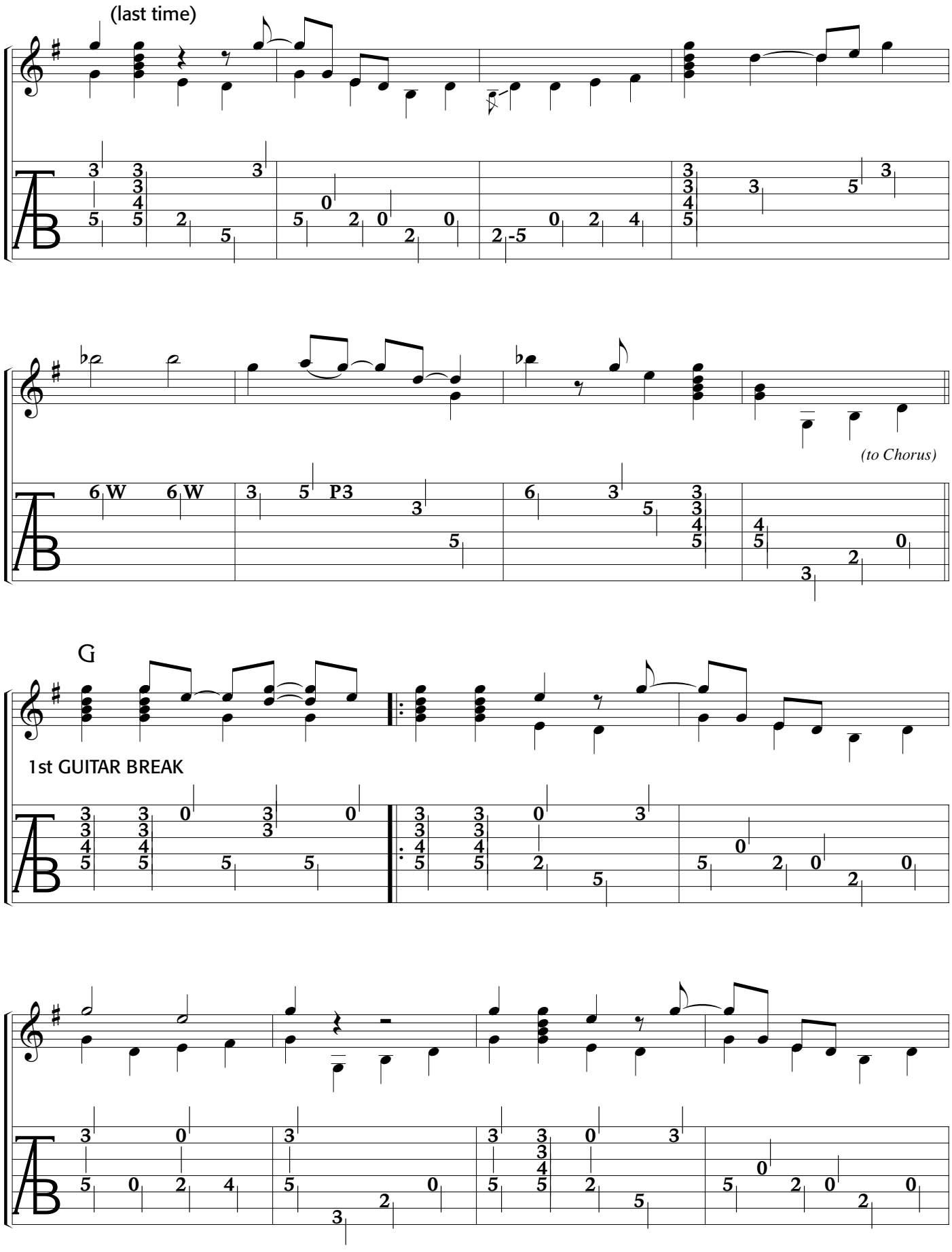
Father, don't you get worried *(3x)*
For this old world is almost done *(Cho.)*

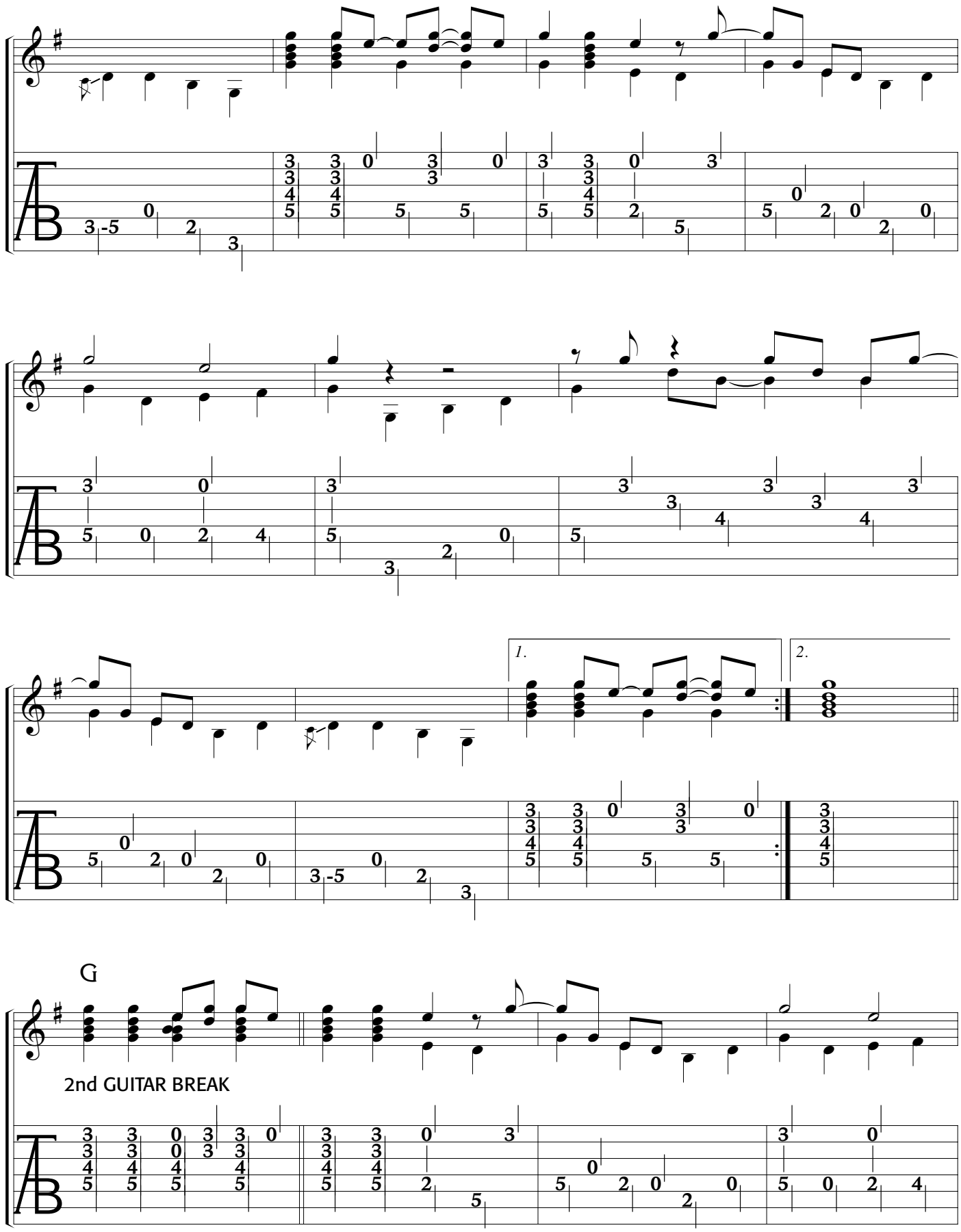
Preacher, don't stop preaching *(3x)*
For this old world is almost done *(Cho.)*

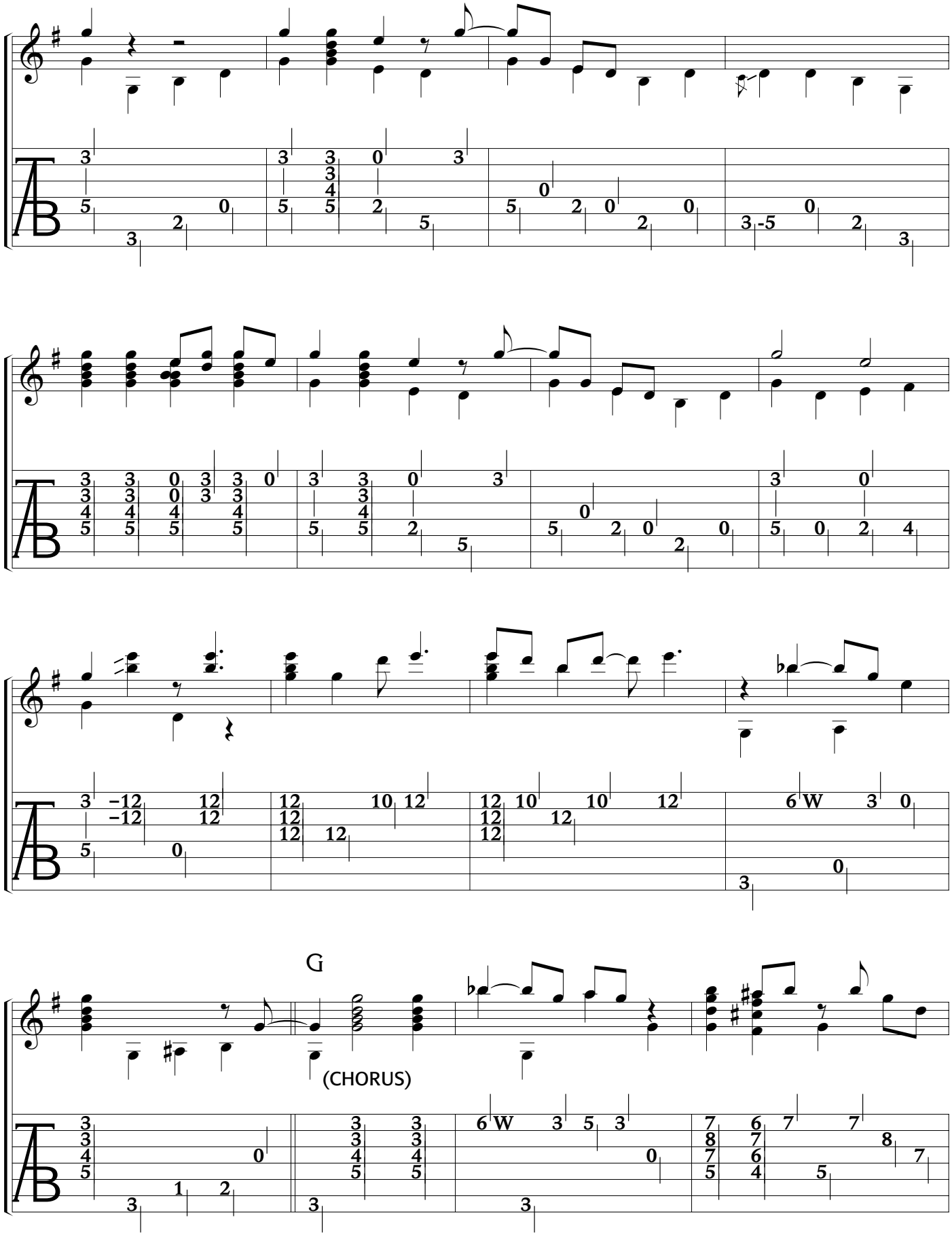
Samson and Delilah

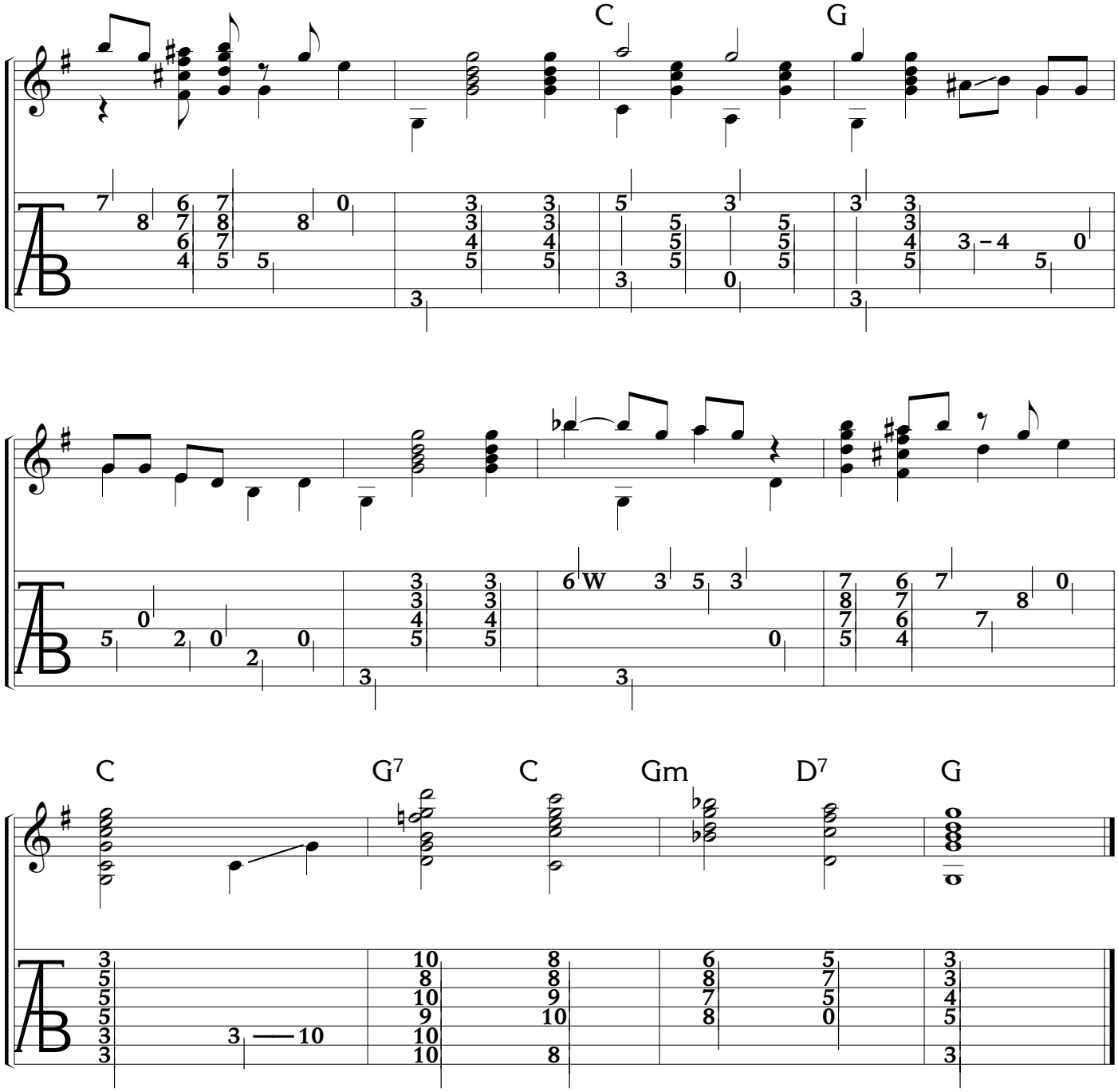



C
G7
C
Gm
D7
G
G
VERSE BEHIND VOCAL


(last time)
(to Chorus)
G
1st GUITAR BREAK


1.
2.
G
2nd GUITAR BREAK


G
(CHORUS)


C
G
C
G7
C
Gm
D7
G

SAMSON AND DELILAH

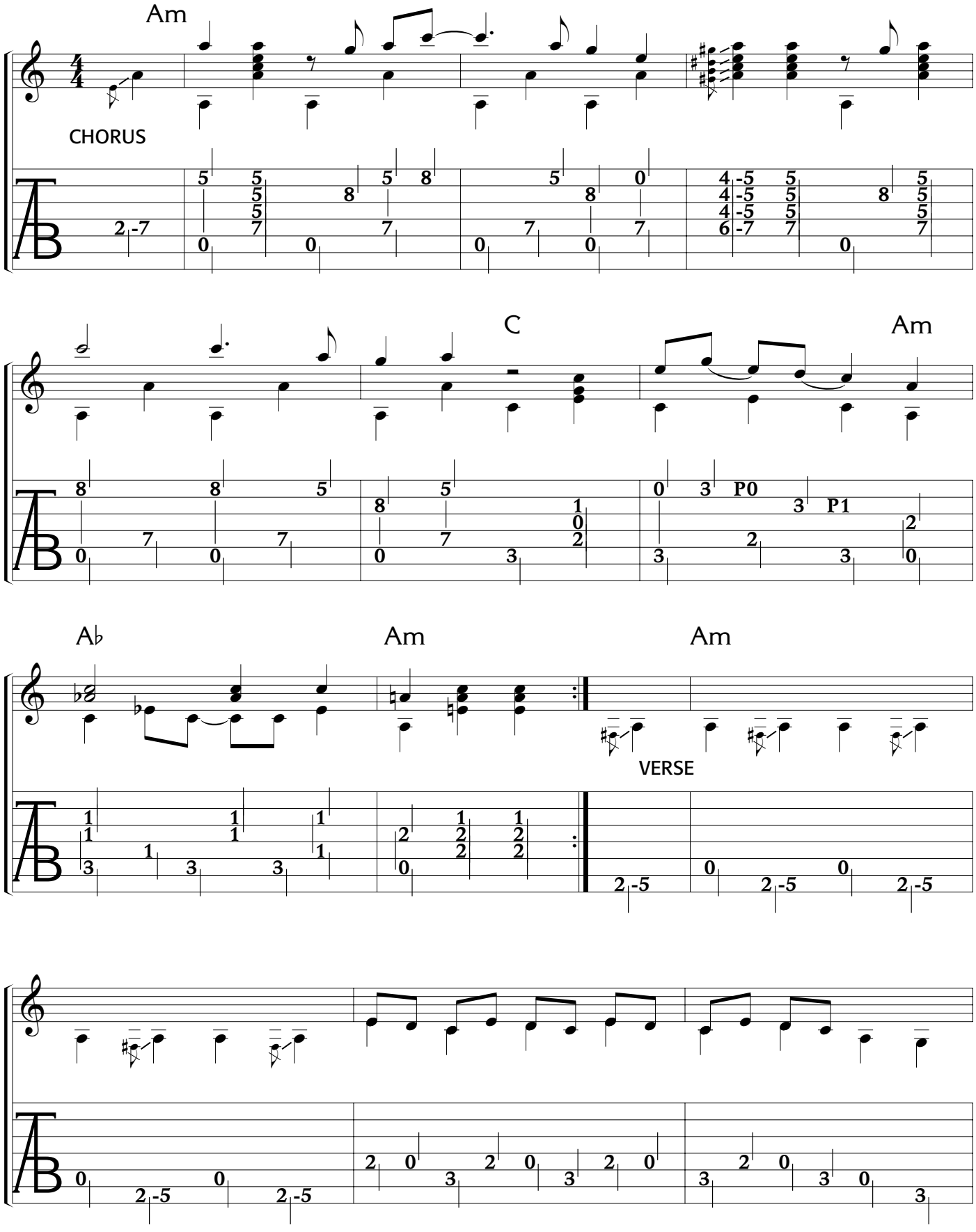
Chorus: If I had my way, If I had my way
If I had my way I'd tear this old building down

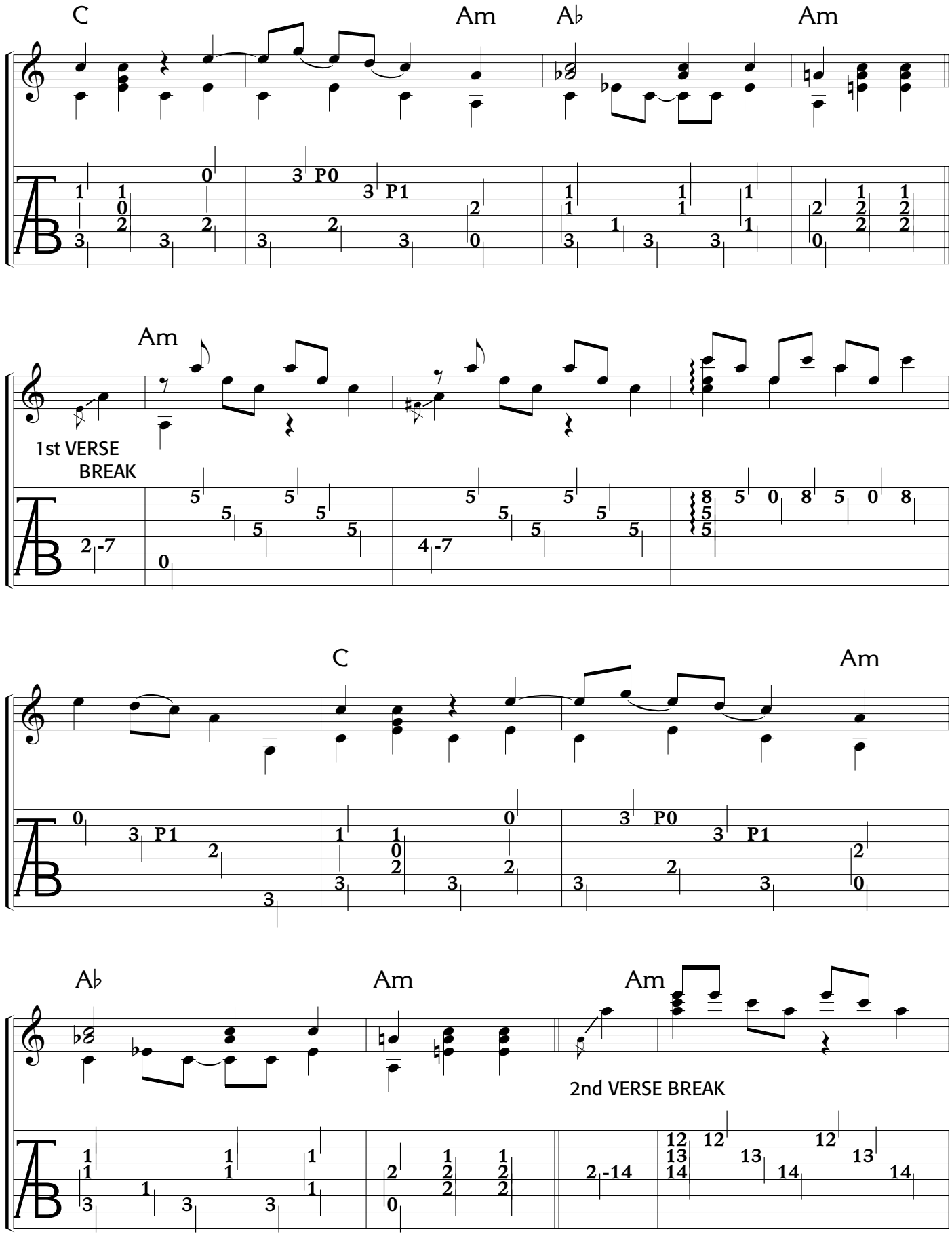
Well Delilah, she was a woman fine and fair
She had good looks, God knows and coal black hair
Delilah, she came to Samson's mind
The first he saw this woman that looked so fine
Delilah, she set down on Samson's knee
Said tell me where your strength lies if you please
She spoke so kind, God knows, she talked so fair
'Til Samson said, Delilah, you can cut off my hair
You can shave my head, clean as my hand
And my strength come as natural as any a man
(Cho.)

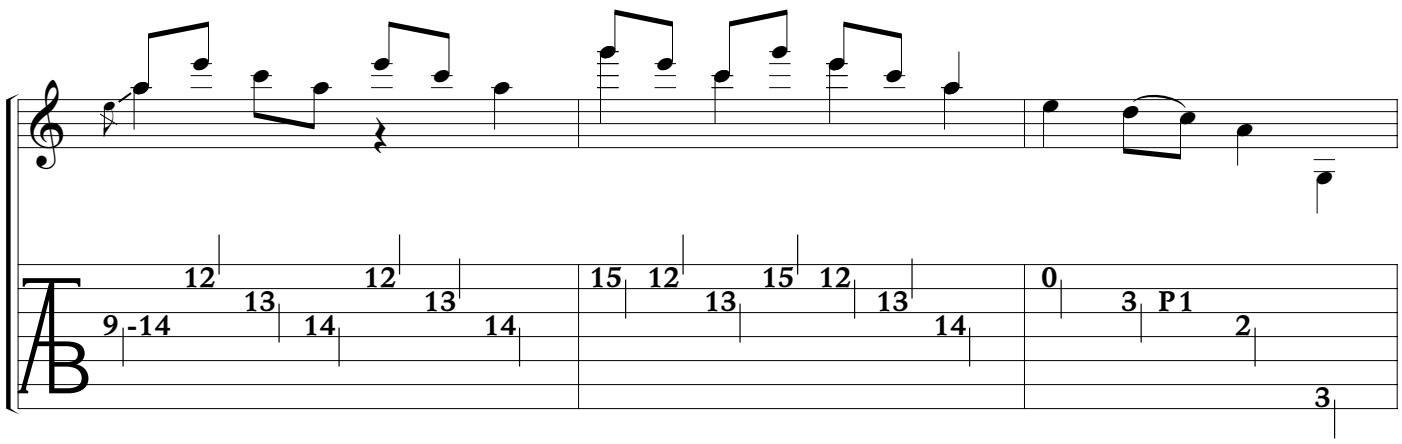
Yeah, you read about old Samson, told from his birth
He was the strongest man that ever had lived on Earth
So one day while Samson was a-walkin' along
He looked on the ground and saw an old jawbone
He stretched out his arm, God knows, it broke like flint
When he got to movin' ten thousand was dead
(Cho.)

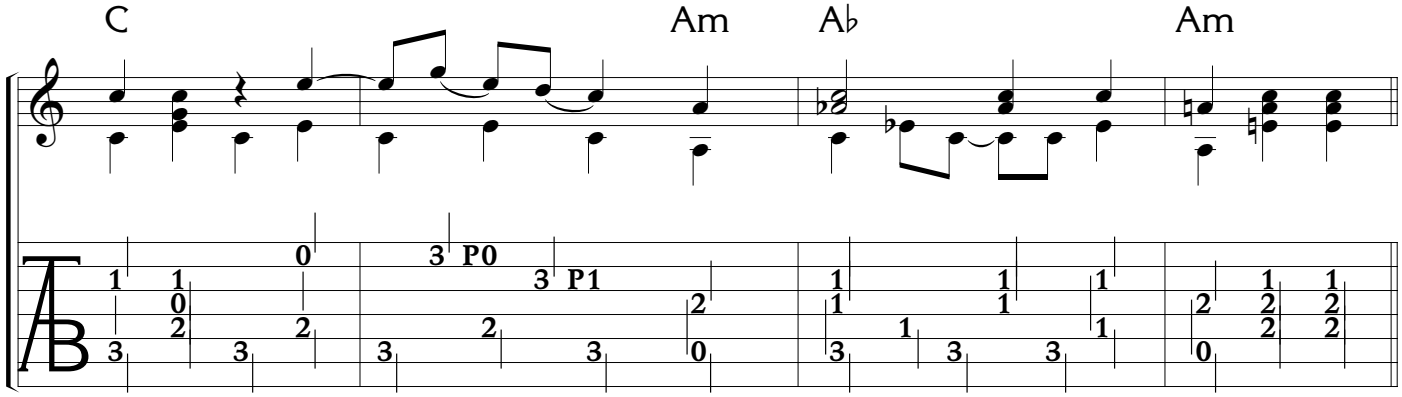
Now Samson and the lion, started to attack
Samson he jumped up on the lion's back
So you read about this lion
had killed a man with his paws
But Samson got his hand in the lion's jaws
He ripped that beast until he killed him dead
And the bees made honey in the lion's head
(Cho.)

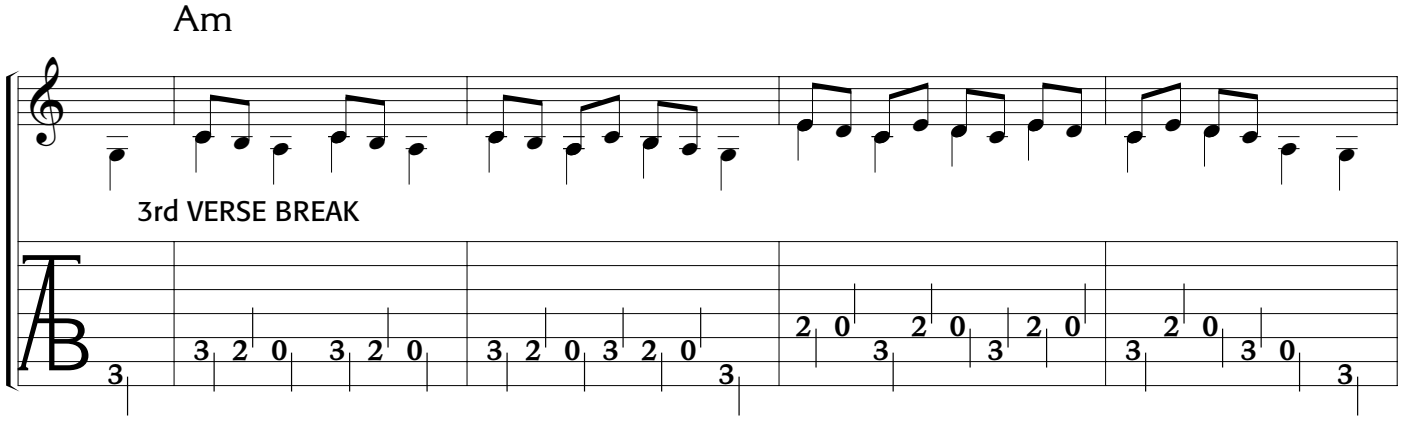
Children of Zion

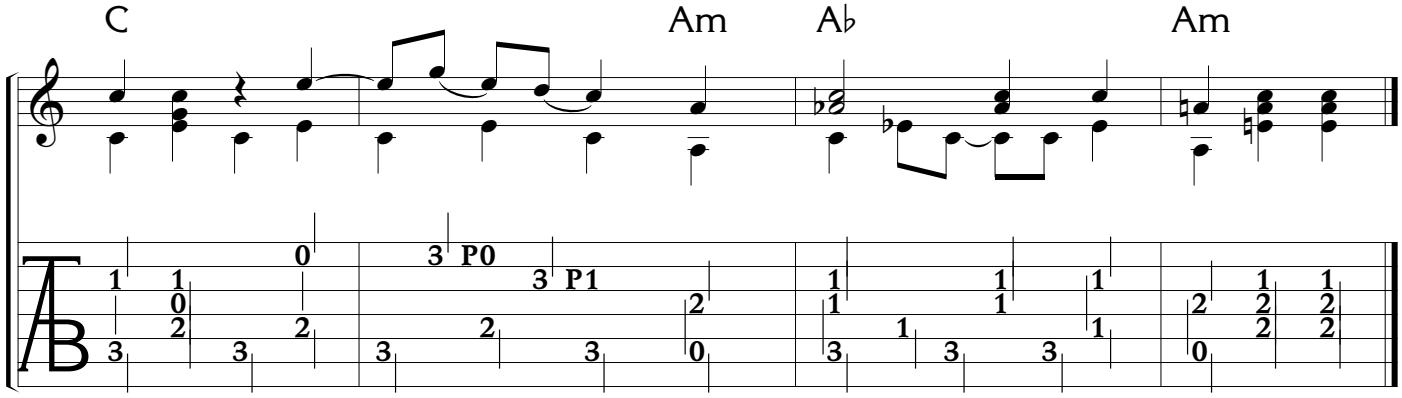



C
Am
A♭
Am
Am
1st VERSE
BREAK
C
Am
A♭
Am
Am
2nd VERSE BREAK




C
Am
A♭
Am


Am
3rd VERSE BREAK


C
Am
A♭
Am

CHILDREN OF ZION

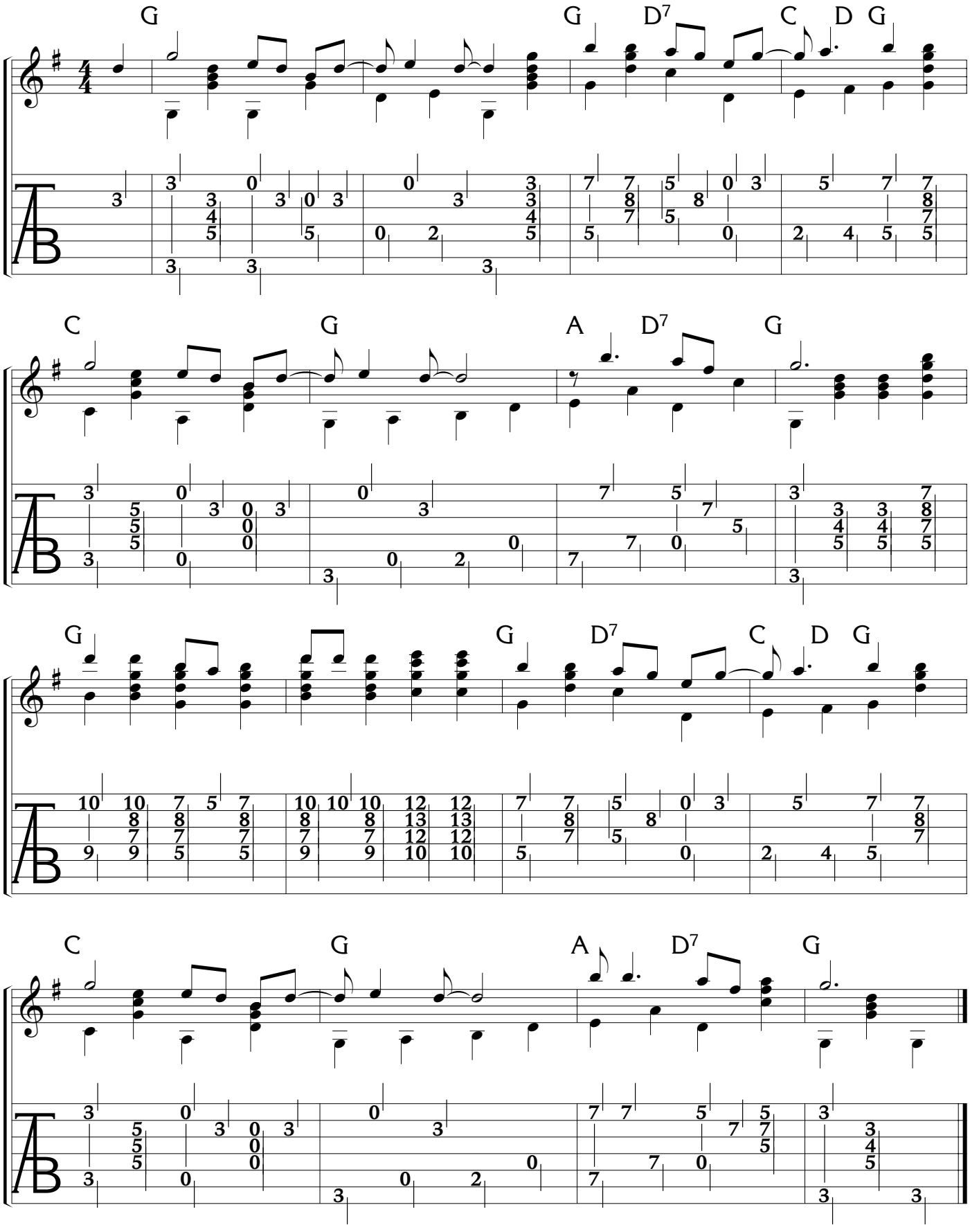
I wonder where my old mother, amen
Wonder where my old mother, amen
I wonder where my old father, amen
Wonder where my old father, amen

Chorus:
I rapped and I rapped in the mercy of the door
'Til my head got wet with the midnight dew
Feel like children of Zion
I feel like children of Zion, amen
Lord, I feel like children of Zion, amen

I wonder where my little baby, amen *(2x)*
Just flying around somewhere in Glory, amen *(2x)*
(Cho.)

I wonder where my old deacon, amen *(2x)*
Just flying around somewhere in Glory, amen *(2x)*
(Cho.)

Oh Glory, How Happy I Am



OH GLORY, HOW HAPPY I AM

Oh, when I went out in the world of sin
I had no one to be my friend
Jesus came and He took me in, Glory hallelu
Then taking my feet out of the miry clay
He placed them up on the rock to stay
Now I thank God that I can stay, Glory hallelu

Chorus:
Oh glory, how happy I am *(2x)*
My soul is washed in the blood of the lamb
Glory hallelu

When I was in darkness I could not see
Jesus came and He rescued me
He cleans me and gives me the victory, Glory hallelu
One day as Jesus was passing by
He set my sinful soul on fire
He made me laugh and He made me cry, Glory hallelu
(Cho.)

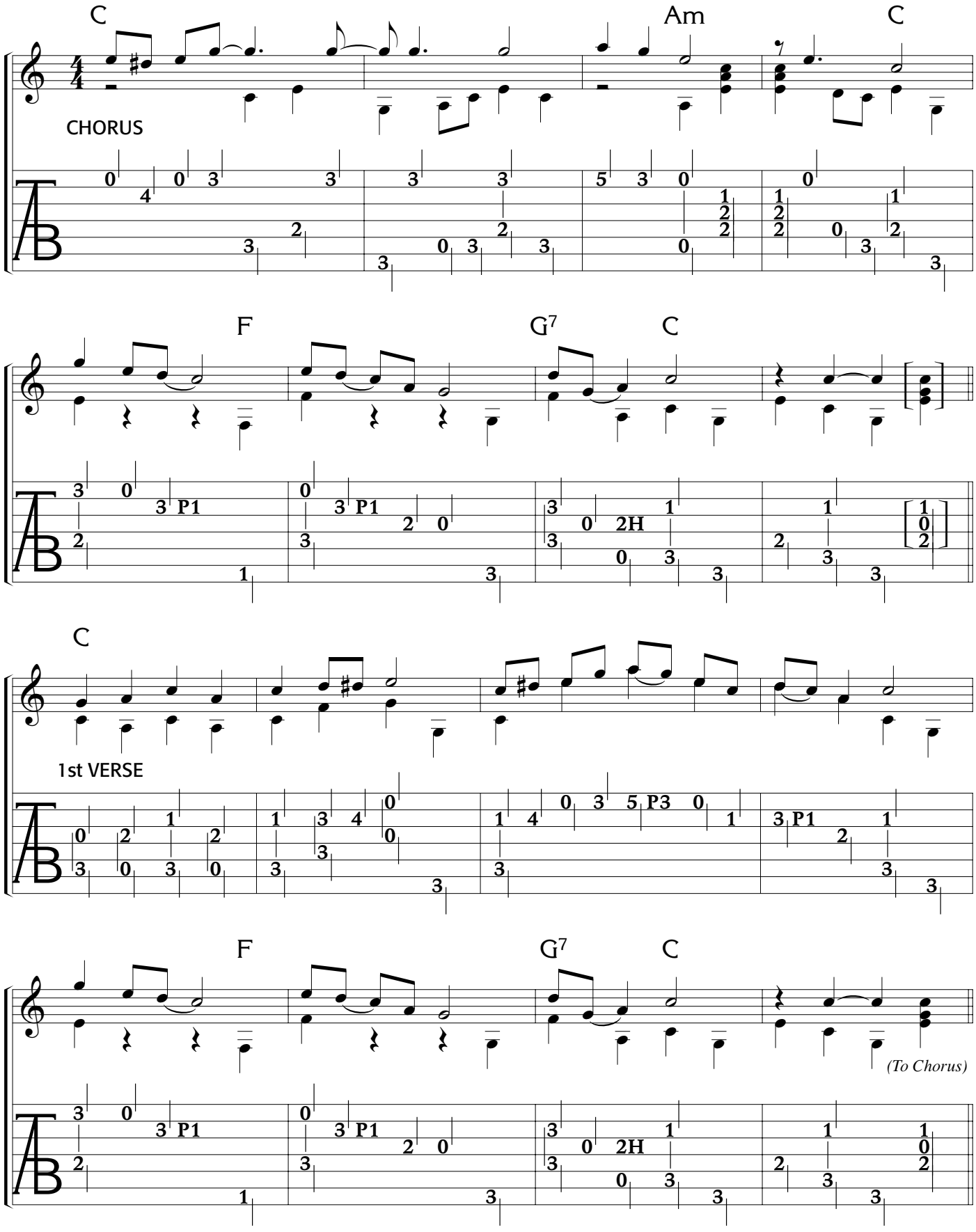
When I could not understand
Then Jesus gave me a lending hand
He led me away to the promised land, Glory hallelu
He gave me a horn and He told me to blow
Go in peace and sin no more
I'm on my way to the early bright shore, Glory hallelu
(Cho.)

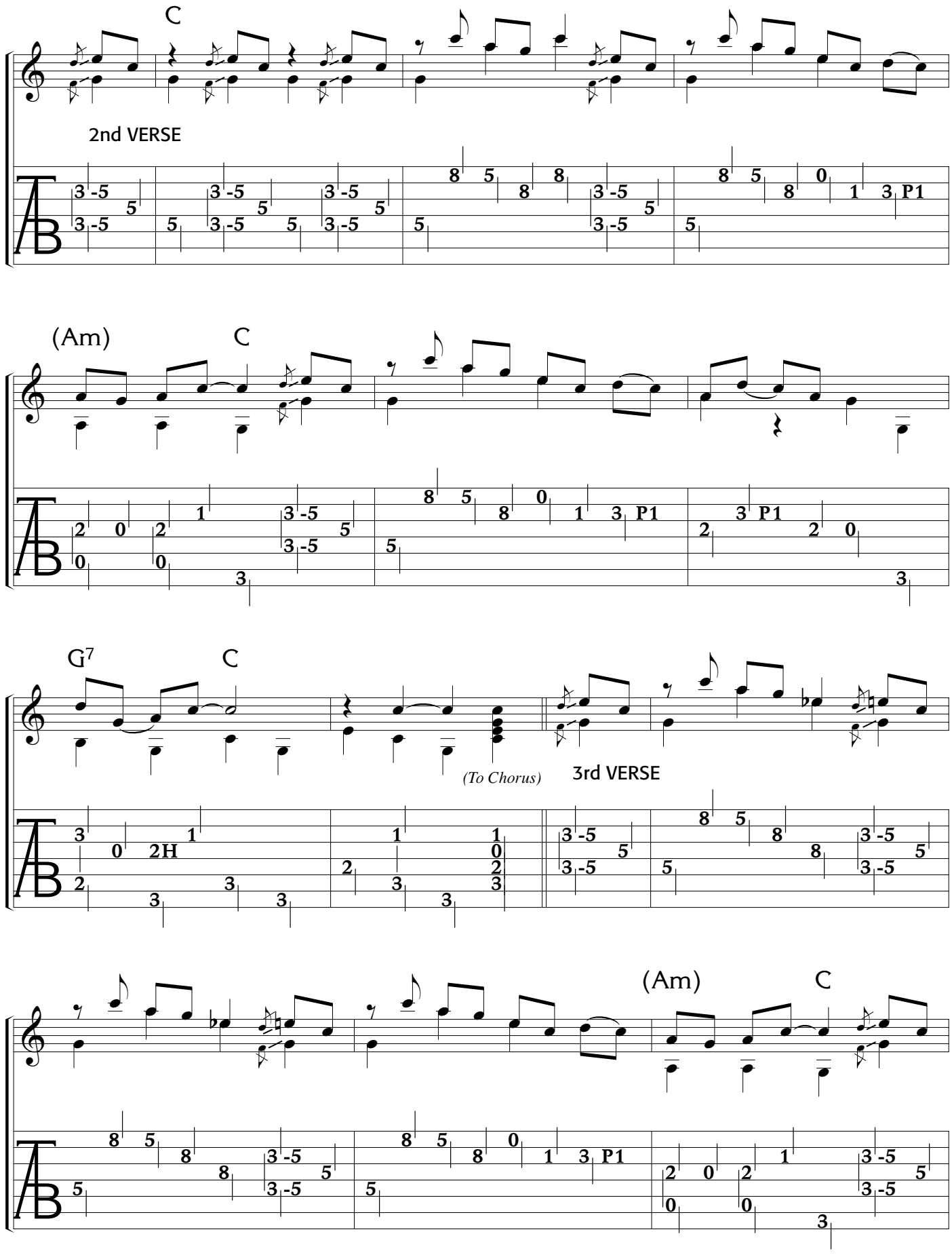
I know something that is mighty swell
The sweet little story I love to tell
Jesus saved my soul from Hell, Glory hallelu
Stand back, Satan, get out of my way
I don't want to hear not a word you say
I'm on my way to the kingdom land, Glory hallelu
(Cho.)

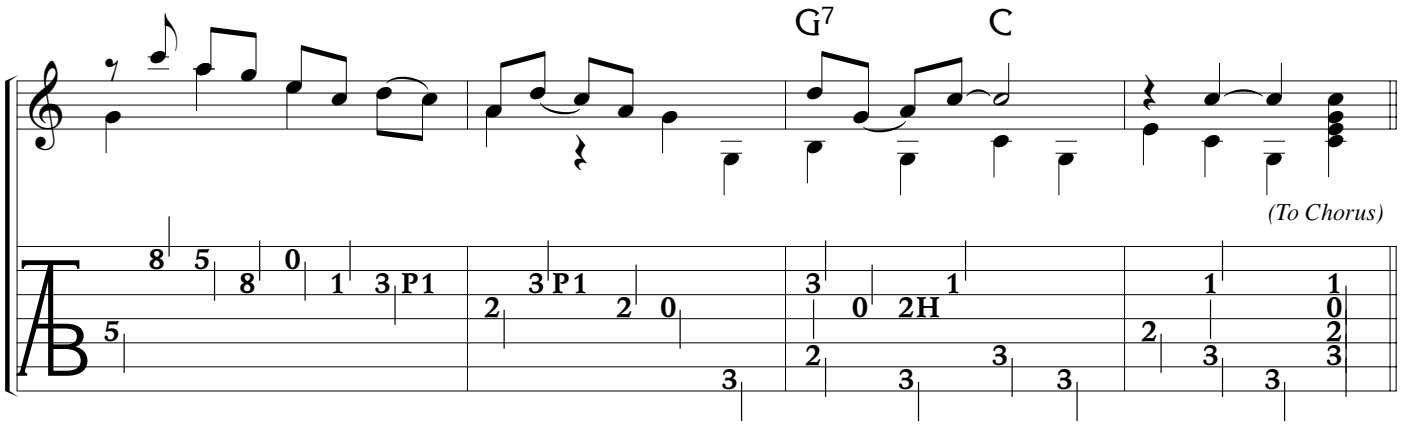
When I had no home to claim
I began to call on Jesus' name
He saved me from all sin and shame, Glory hallelu
I am fire baptized and Holy Ghost filled
I'm out here to do my master's will
I must keep going, I can't be still, Glory hallelu
(Cho.)

Thank God, I got over at last
Thank God, I got over at last
My feet are planted in a narrow path, Glory hallelu

I Belong to the Band




C
2nd VERSE
(Am)
C
G7
C
(To Chorus)
3rd VERSE
(Am)
C



I BELONG TO THE BAND

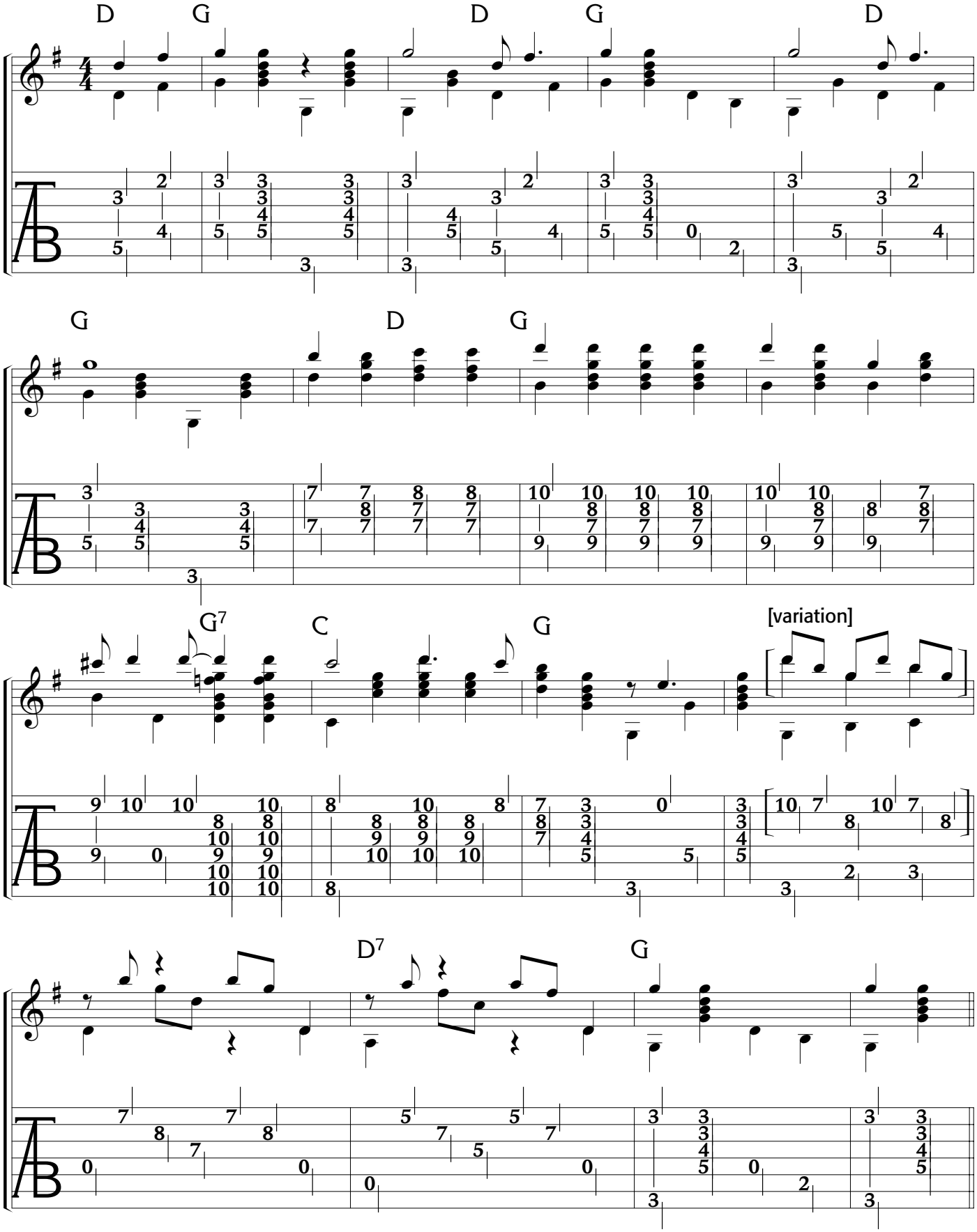
Chorus:
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
I belong to the band, Hallelu
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
I belong to the band, Hallelu

What kind of band you talking about?
Talking about that union band
I belong to the band, Hallelu *(Cho.)*

One of these mornings and it won't be long
You're going to call me and I'll be gone
I belong to the band, Hallelu *(Cho.)*

One of these days about twelve o'clock
This old world's going to reel and rock
I belong to the band, Hallelu *(Cho.)*

I'm Goin' to Sit on the Banks of the River



I'M GOIN' TO SIT ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER

I'm goin' to ride through the streets of the city
Where my Lord has gone on before
Chorus:
I'm goin' to sit down on the banks of the river
I won't be back no more

All my cryin' will be over
I won't have to cry no more *(Cho.)*

Goin' to have a good time when we get there,
Goin' to sit down by my Savior's side *(Cho.)*

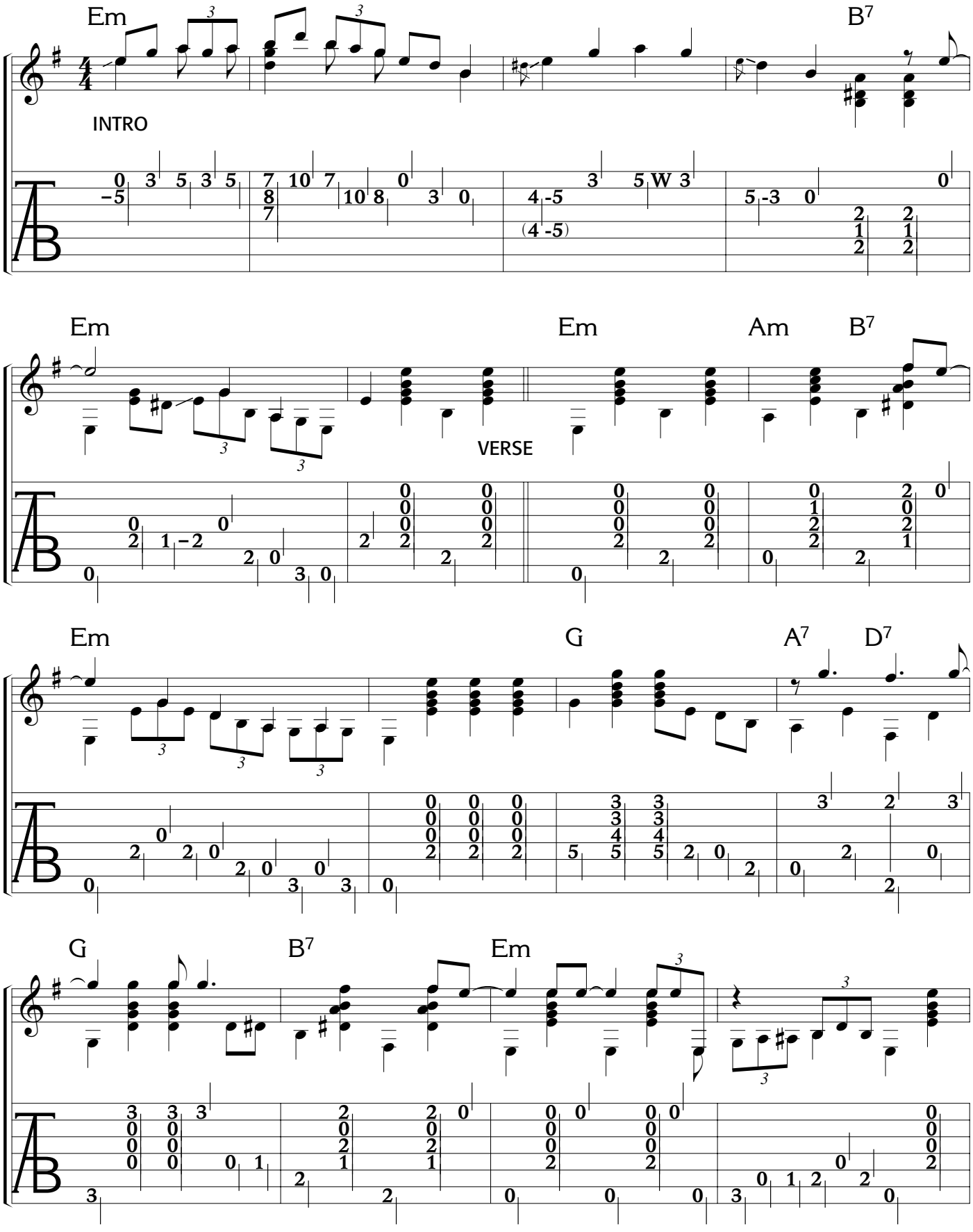
I can shout, sing, and give God's praises
Sayin', Glory be to His Name *(Cho.)*

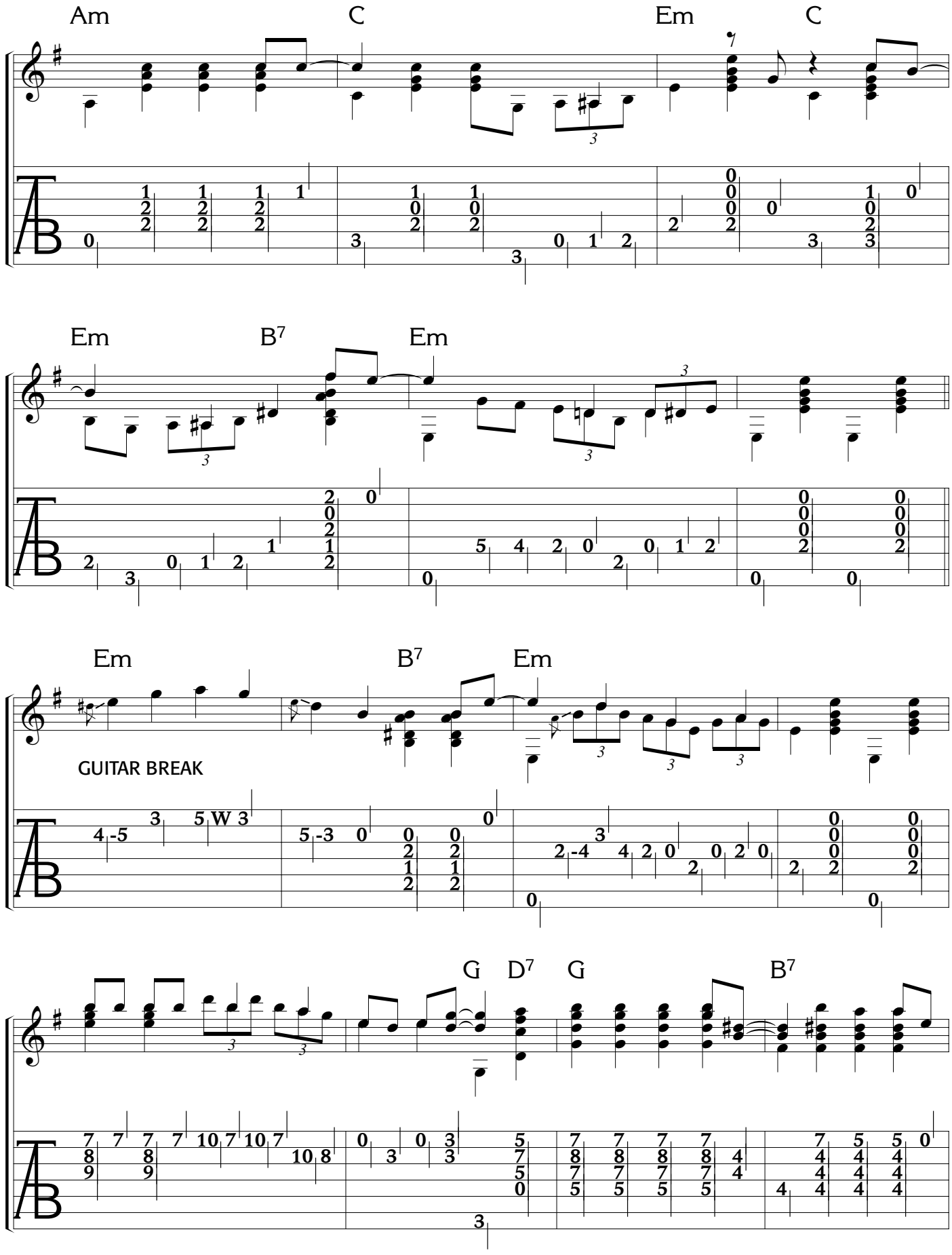
I'll be where no hearse wheel will be rollin'
Where I won't have to die no more *(Cho.)*

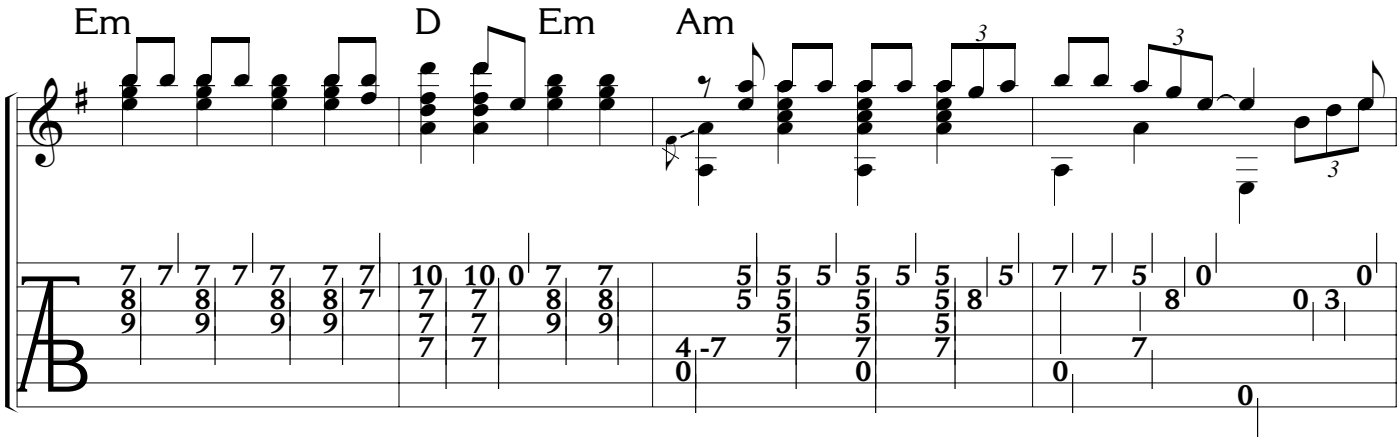
I'll be where I can be free from trouble
And I won't be in trouble no more *(Cho.)*

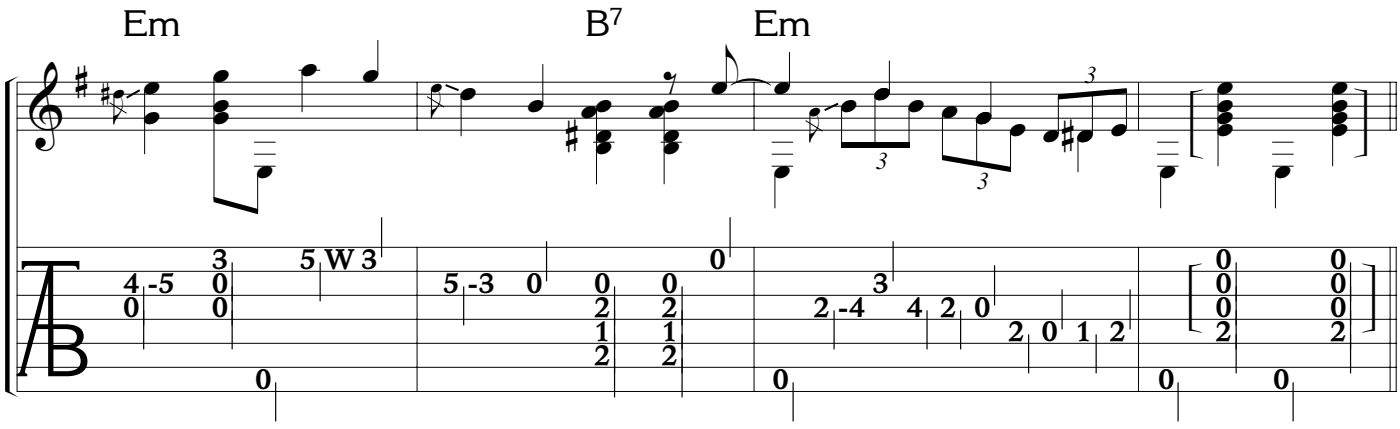
I'll be where I won't have to be looked over
When I get on the other side *(Cho.)*

Death Don't Have No Mercy




Am
C
Em
C
Em
B7
Em
Em
B7
Em
GUITAR BREAK
G
D7
G
B7


Em
D
Em
Am


Em
B7
Em

DEATH DON'T HAVE NO MERCY

Death don't have no mercy in this land
Death don't have no mercy in this land
It come to your house and it won't stay long
You look in the bed and somebody be gone
Death don't have no mercy in this land

Well, death will go in any family in this land *(2x)*
Well, it come to your house and it won't stay long
Well, you look in the bed and one of your family be gone
Well, death will go in any family in this land

Well, he never takes a vacation in this land
Well, death never takes a vacation in this land
Well, he come to your house and he won't stay long
You look in the bed and your mother will be gone
Death never takes a vacation in this land

Well, he'll leave you standing and crying in this land *(2x)*
It come to your house and won't stay long
You look in the bed and somebody be gone
Well, he'll leave you standing and crying in this land

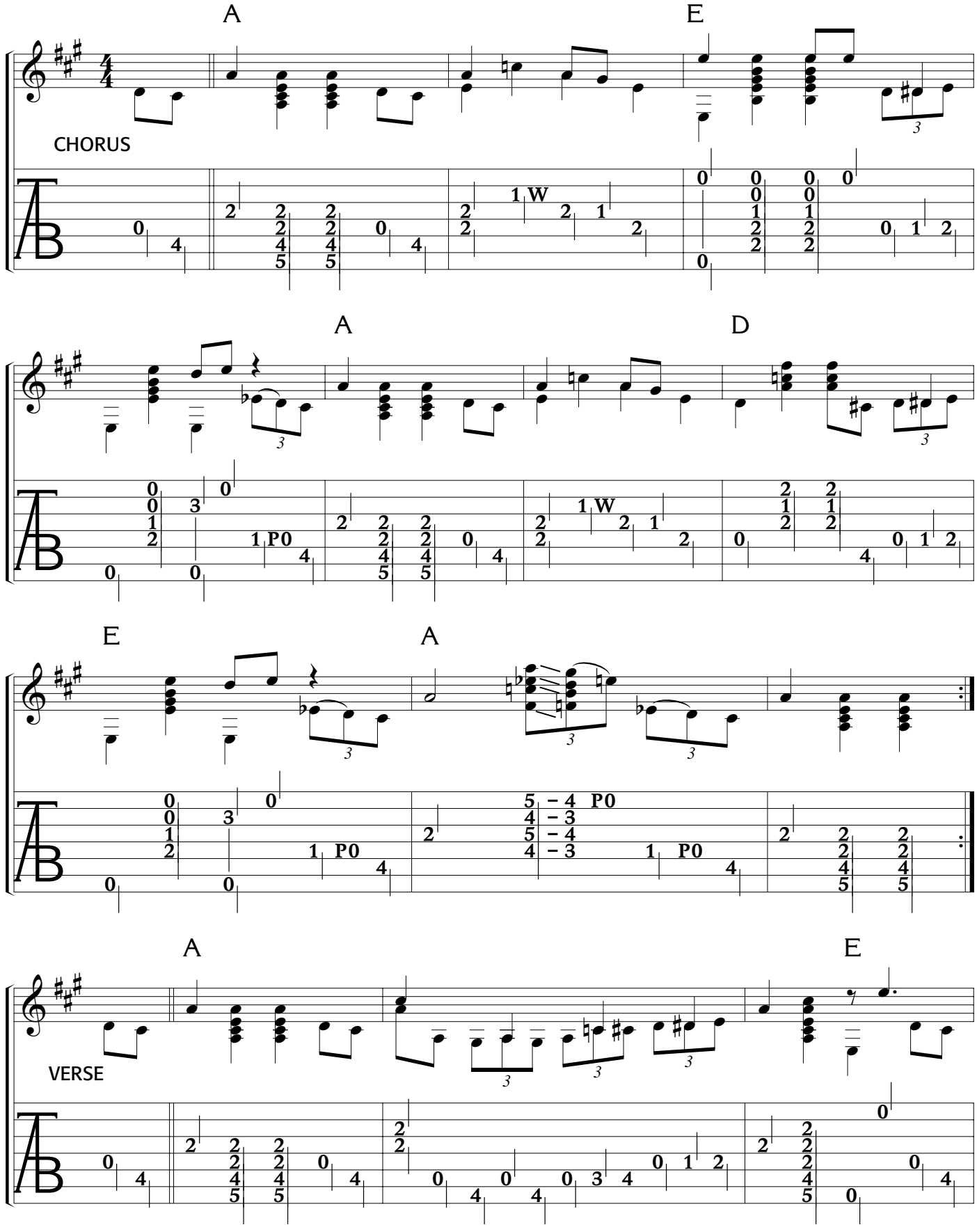
Oh, death always in a hurry in this land *(2x)*
Well, he come to your house and he won't stay long
You look in the bed and your mother will be gone
Oh, death always in a hurry in this land

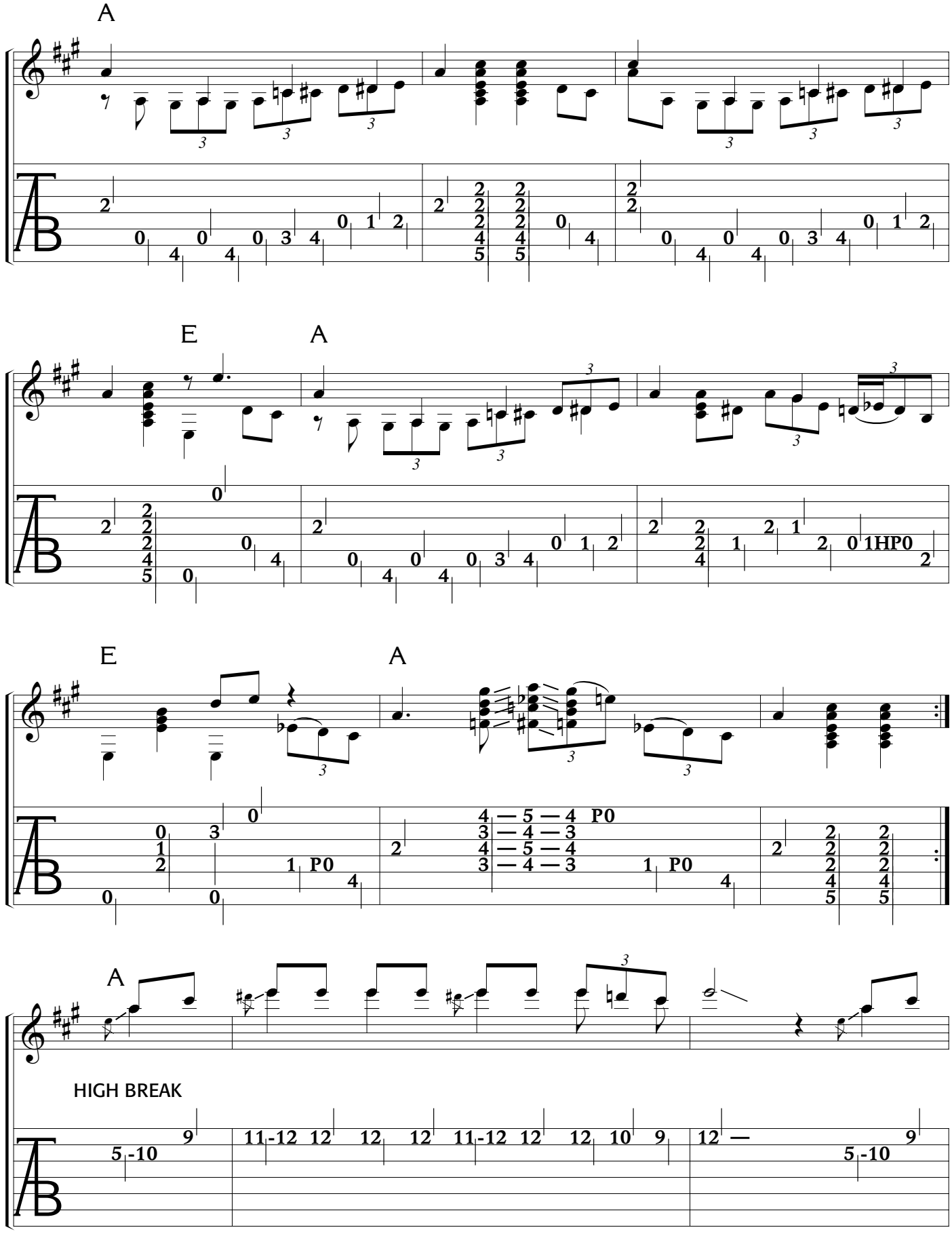
He won't give you time to get ready in this land *(2x)*
It come to your house and won't stay long
You look in the bed and somebody be gone
He won't give you time to get ready in this land

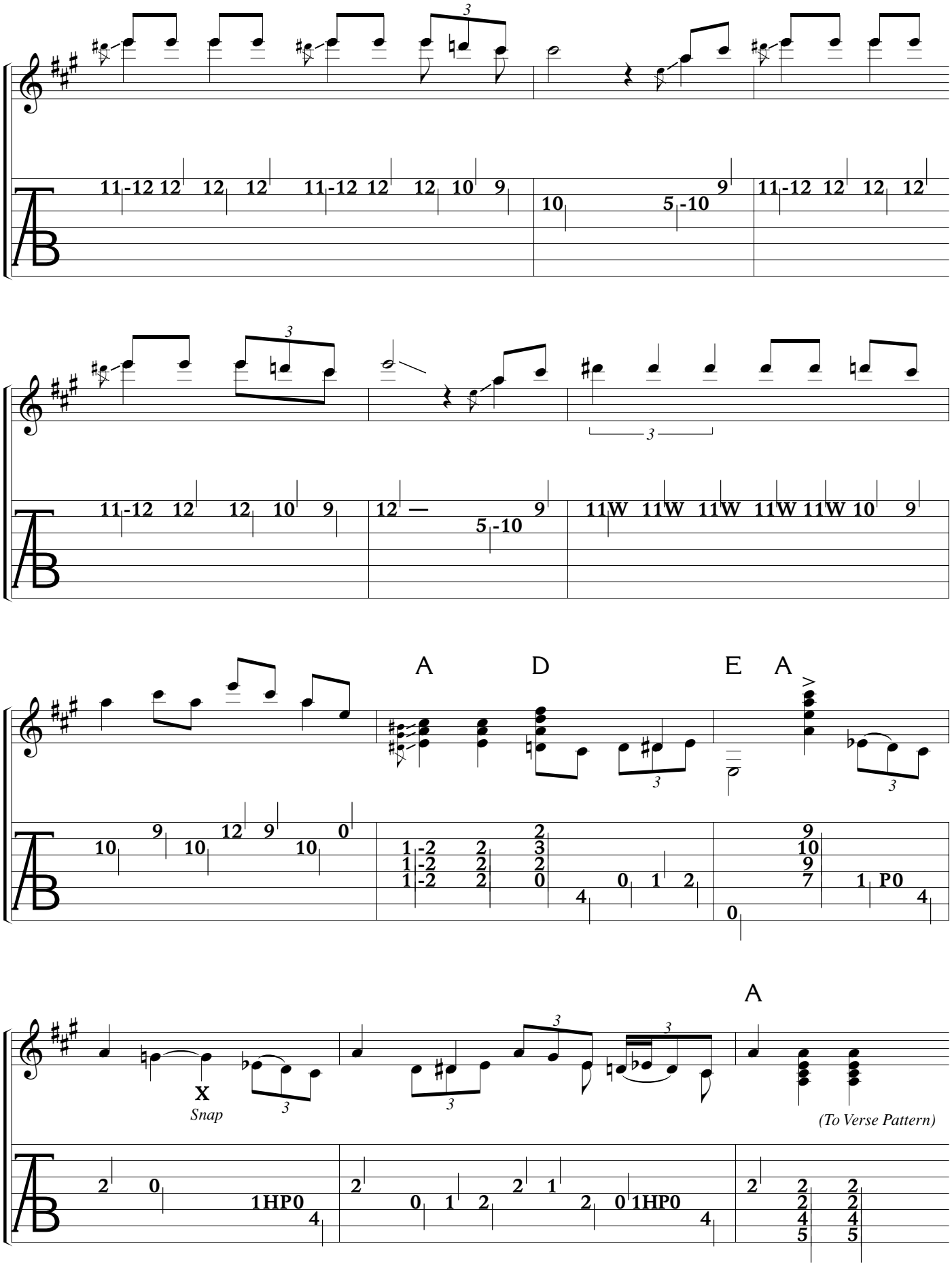
DEATH DON'T HAVE NO MERCY
CHORD CHART

Em	Am B7	Em	Em
G	A7 D7	G	B7
Em	Em	Am	C
Em C	Em B7	Em	Em ‖

Twelve Gates to the City




A
E
A
E
A
A
HIGH BREAK


A
D
E
A
A
X
Snap
(To Verse Pattern)

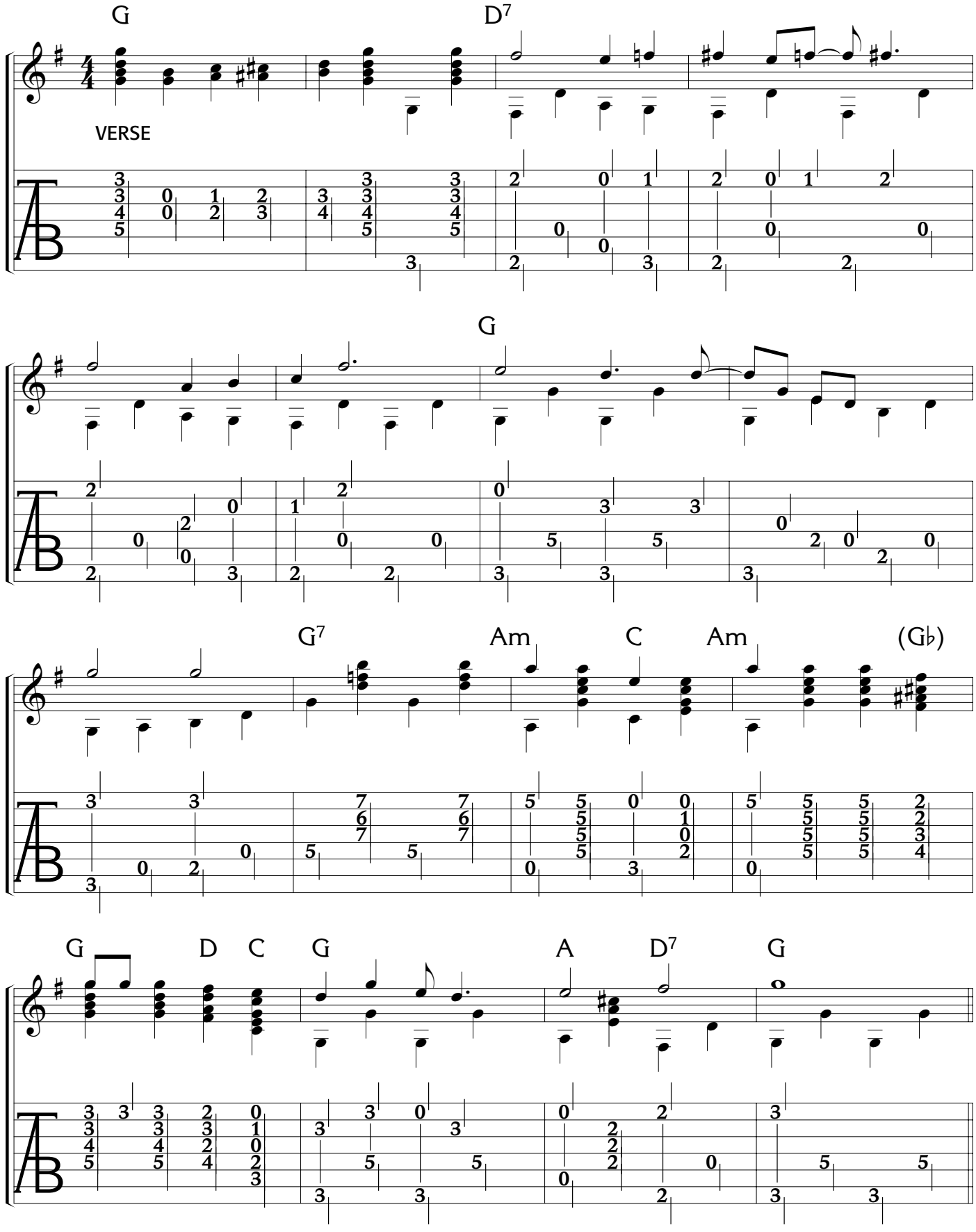
TWELVE GATES TO THE CITY

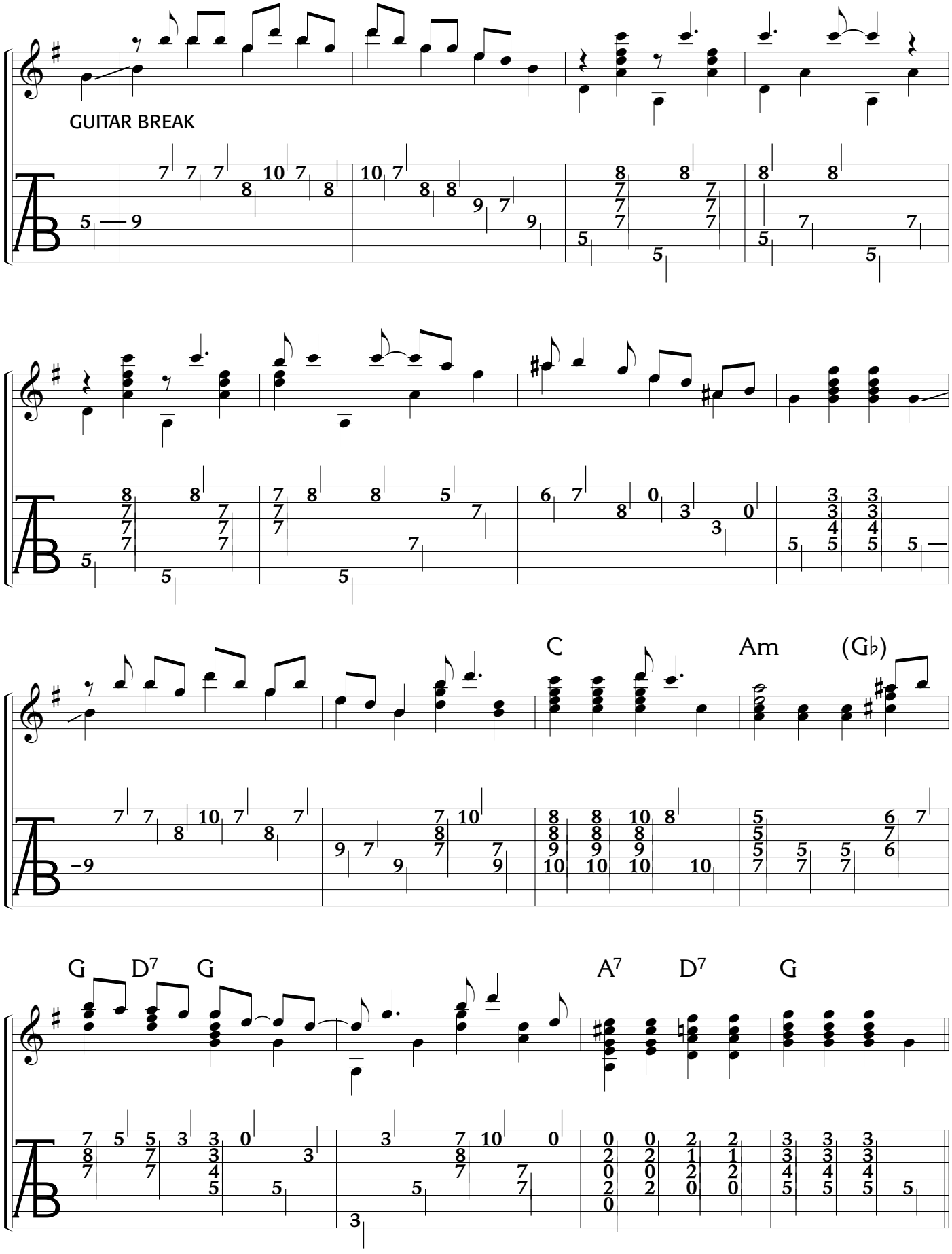
Chorus:
Oh, what a beautiful city
Oh, what a beautiful city
Oh, what a beautiful city
Twelve gates to the city, Hallelujah

There's three gates in the east
There's three gates in the west
There's three gates in the north
There's three gates in the south
That makes twelve gates to the city, Hallelujah
(Cho.)

And if you see my dear old mother
Won't you do this favor for me
Won't you please tell my mother
To meet me in Galilee
Twelve gates to the city, Hallelujah
(Cho.)

Let Us Get Together




GUITAR BREAK
C
Am
(G♭)
G
D7
G
A7
D7
G

LET US GET TOGETHER

Let us get together right down here
Let us get together right down here
Let us get together right down here
Let us get together right down here

Let us walk together right down here *(4x)*

Let us do our living right down here *(4x)*

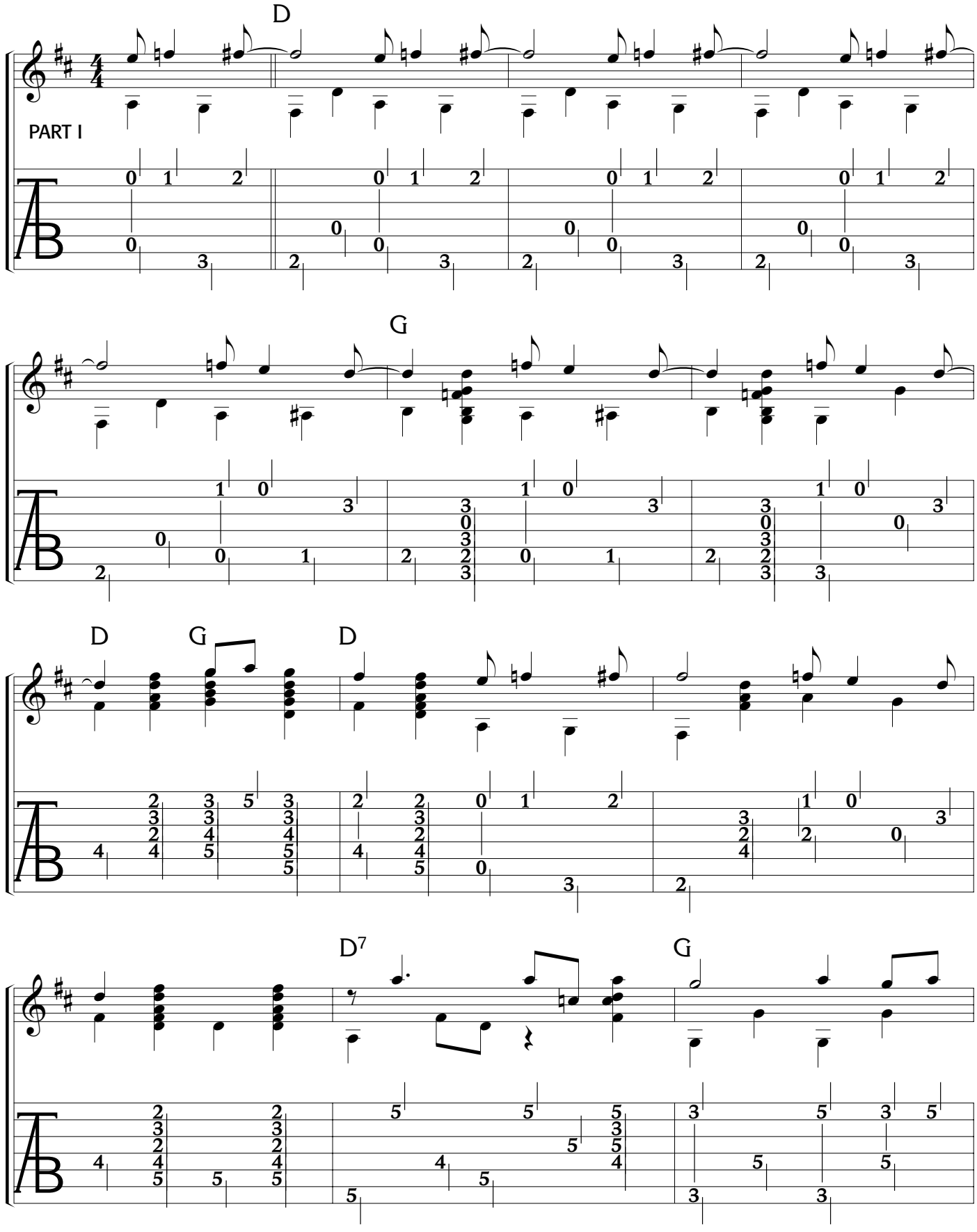
Let us shout together right down here *(4x)*

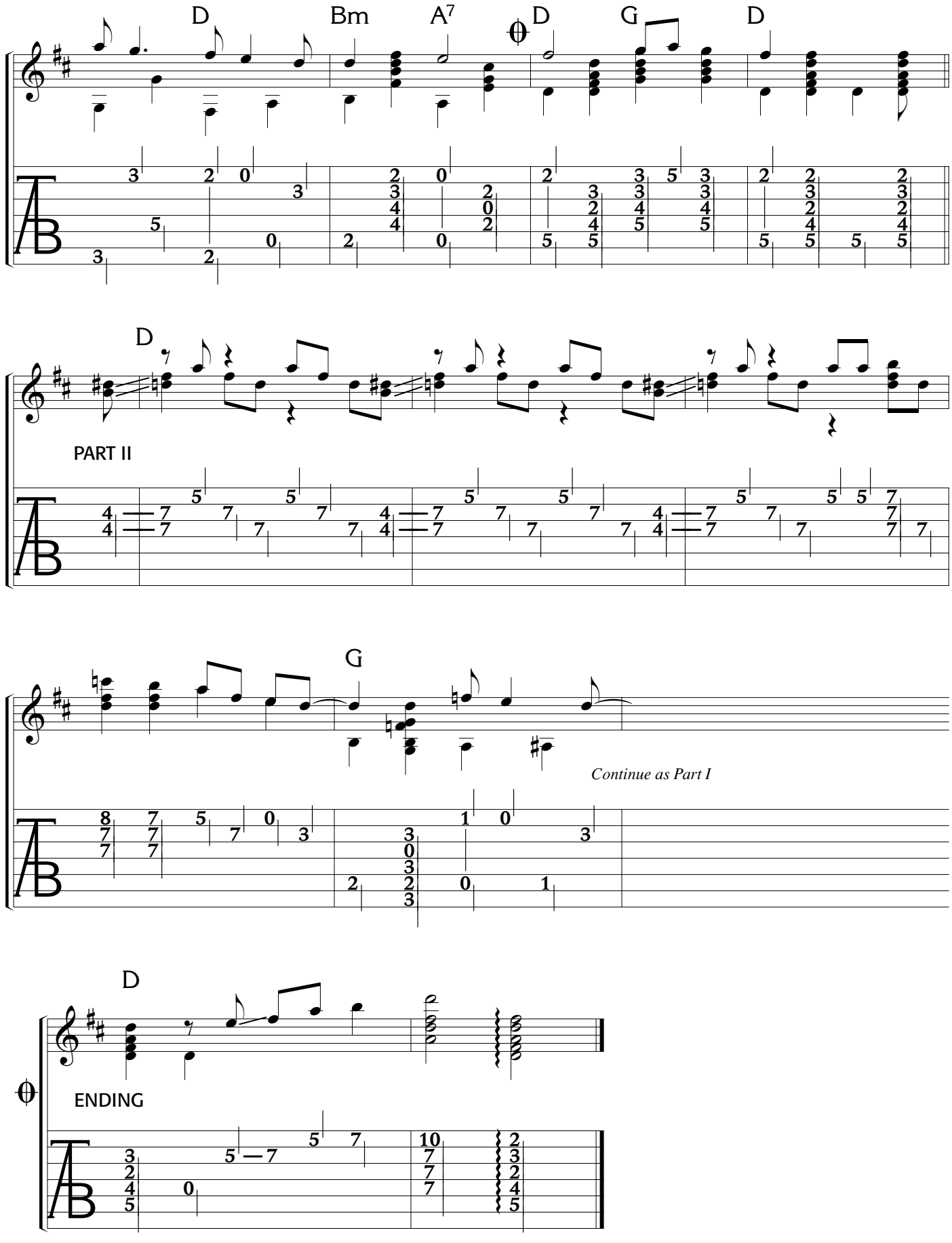
Let us do our dressing right down here *(4x)*

Let us mourn together right down here *(4x)*

Oh, let us join together right down here *(4x)*

Right Now




D
Bm
A7
D
G
D
D
PART II
G
Continue as Part I
D
ENDING

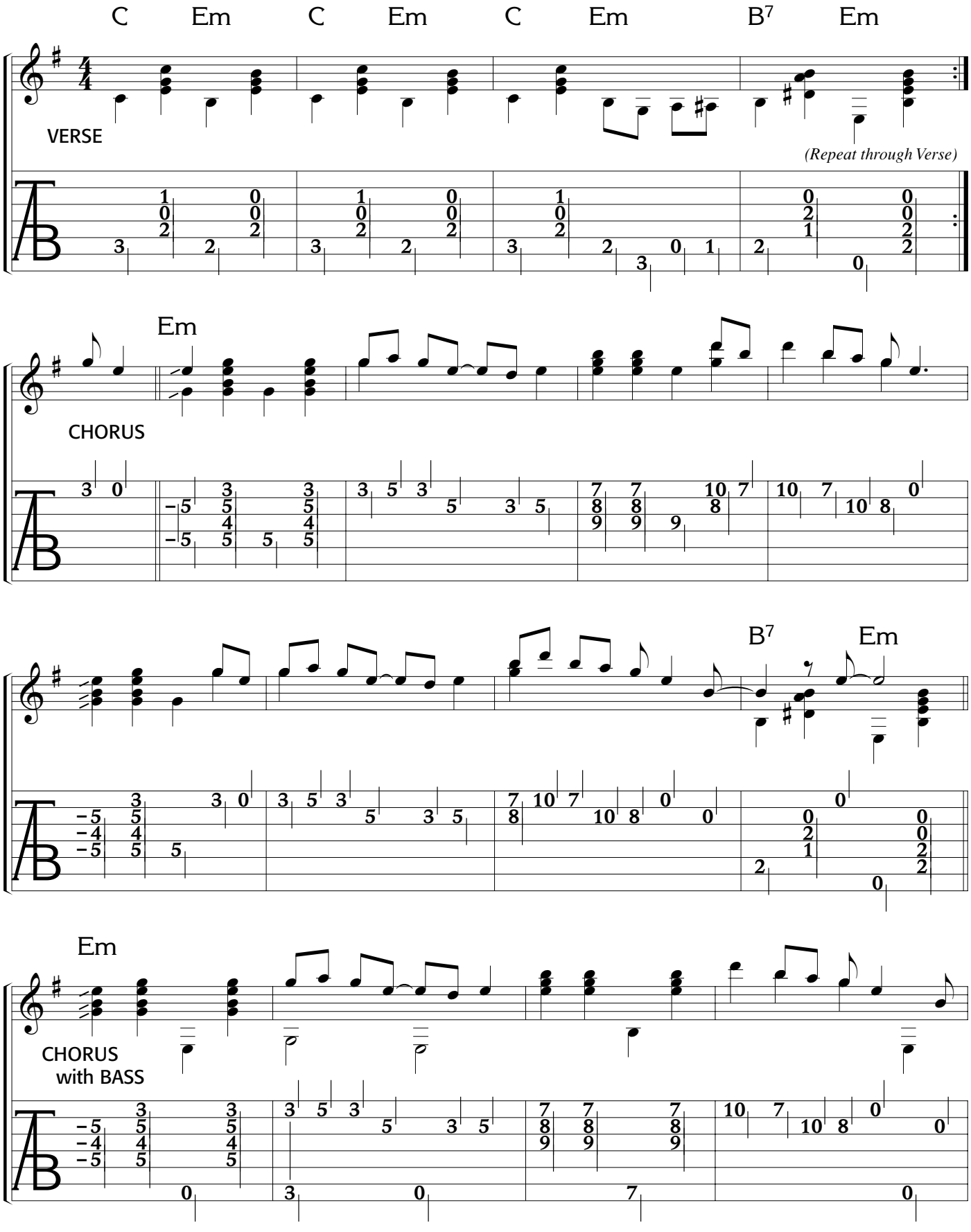
RIGHT NOW

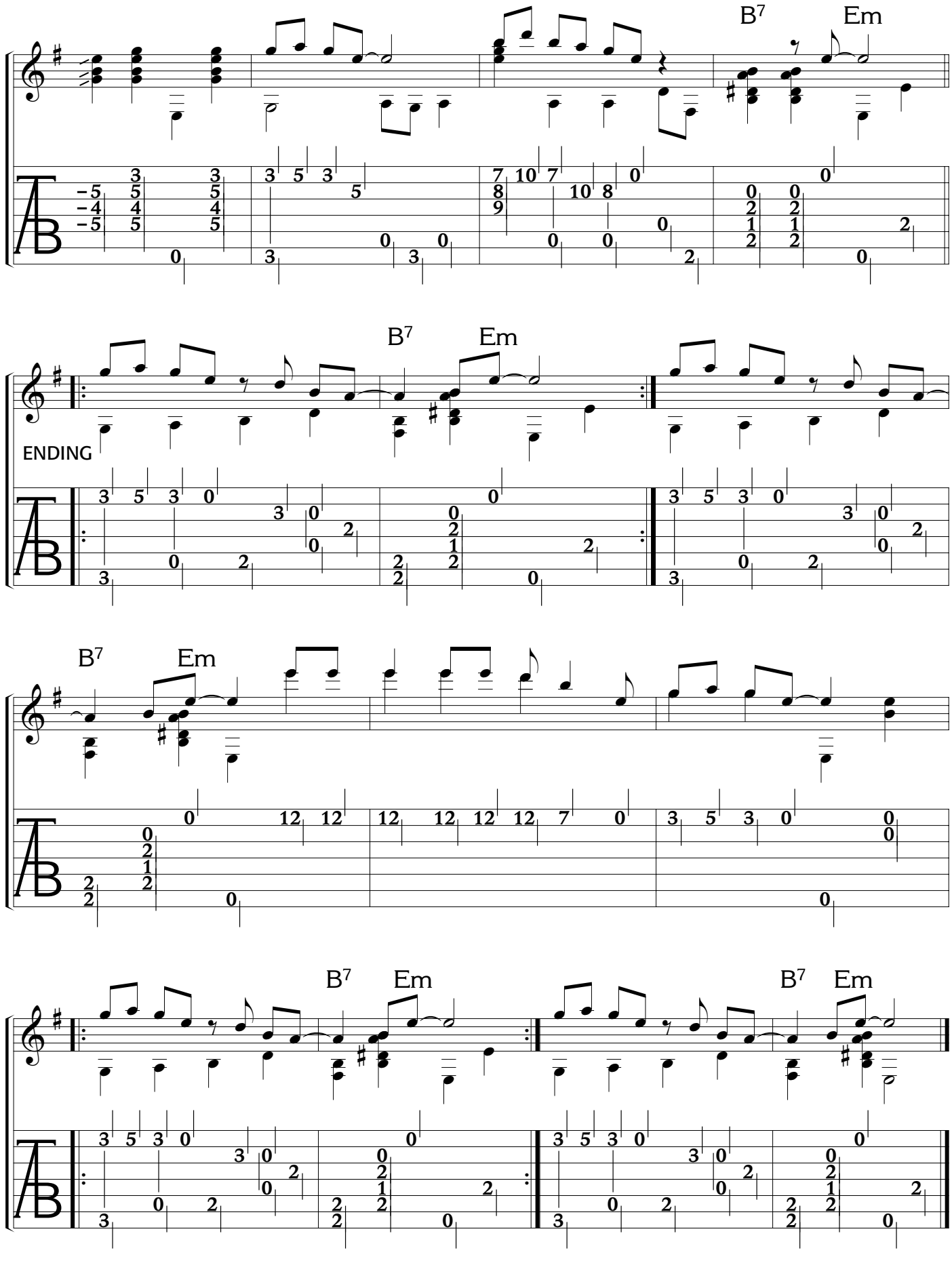
Right now, Right now
Right now, Right now
Let the Savior bless your soul right now
Chorus:
Don't you put off the day till tomorrow
For tomorrow may never be
Let the Savior bless your soul right now

Come up to God, Come up to God
Let the Savior bless your soul right now
(Cho.)

Make up your mind, Make up your mind
Let the Savior bless your soul right now
(Cho.)

I Heard the Angels Sing




B7
Em
B7
Em
ENDING
B7
Em
B7
Em
B7
Em

I HEARD THE ANGELS SINGING

One day as I was walkin' along
I heard the angels singing
I heard a voice and I saw no one
I heard the angels singing
What you reckon he said to me
I heard the angels singing
Said my sins are forgiven and my soul set free
I heard the angels singing

Well, the Holy Ghost on fire fell on me
You ought to have been there when he fell on me

Then I got in the spirit and I began to shout
People come a running, miles around,
people wondering what it was all about

Went down in the valley one day just to pray
Met old Satan down on my way

What you reckon that old rascal said to me
He said I was too old to die and too young to pray

I went on down didn't pay no mind what he said
Made Satan out a liar and I stayed all day

Went down in the valley, fell down on my knees
I said, Lord help me if you please

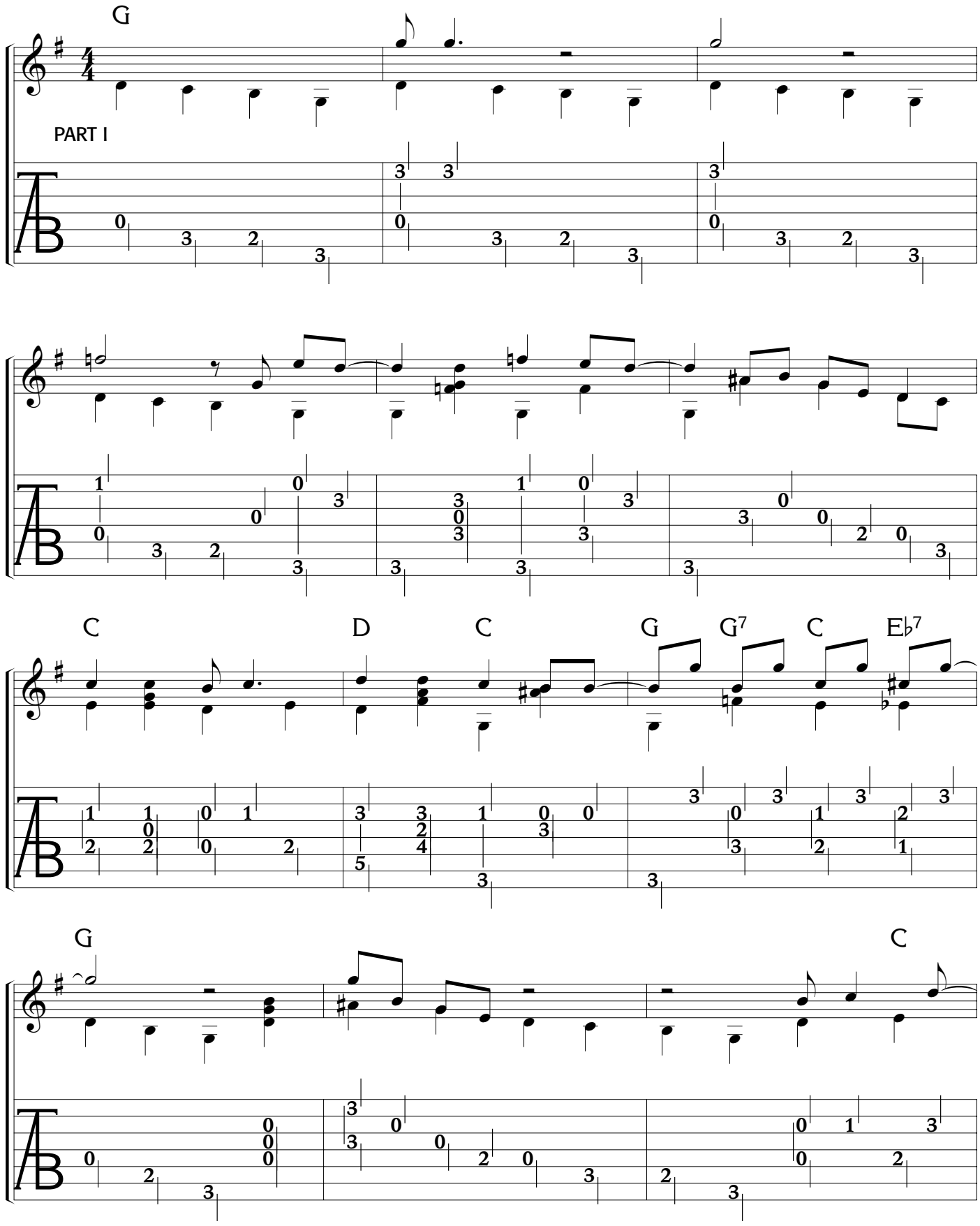
One morning soon
One morning soon
One morning soon
I heard the angels singing

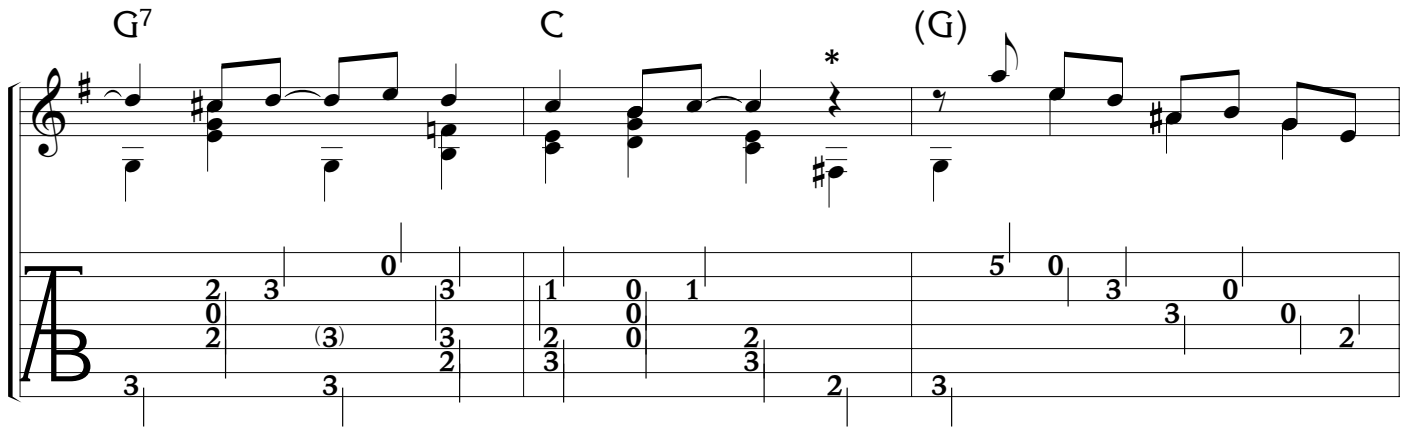
Just awhile before day
Just awhile before day
Just awhile before day
I heard the angels singing

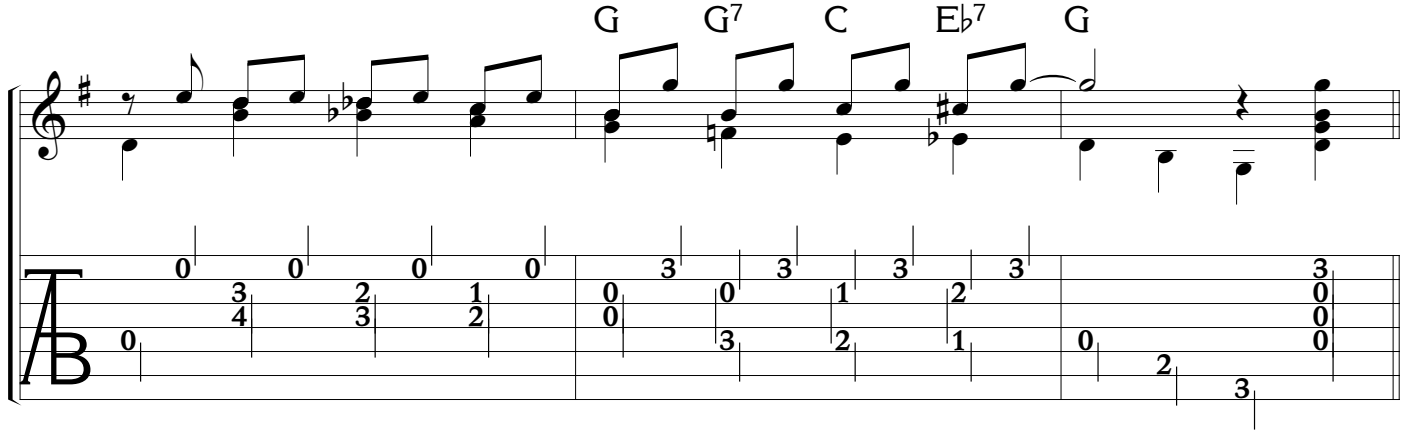
Down by my bedside
Down by my bedside
Down by my bedside
I heard the angels singing

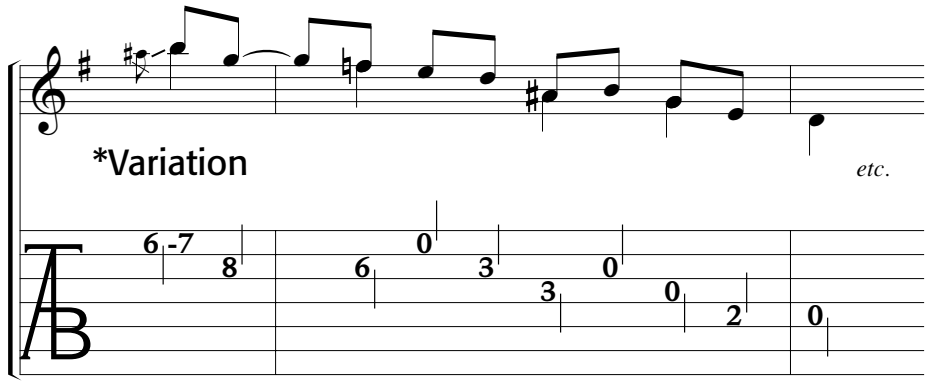
I was down on my knees
I was down on my knees
I was down on my knees
I heard the angels singing

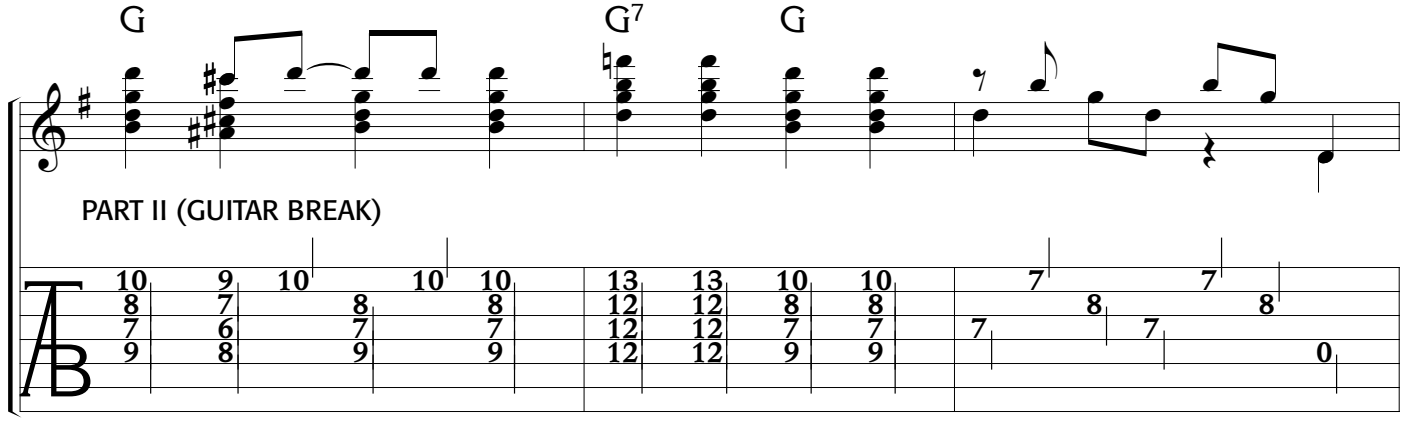
Crucifixion

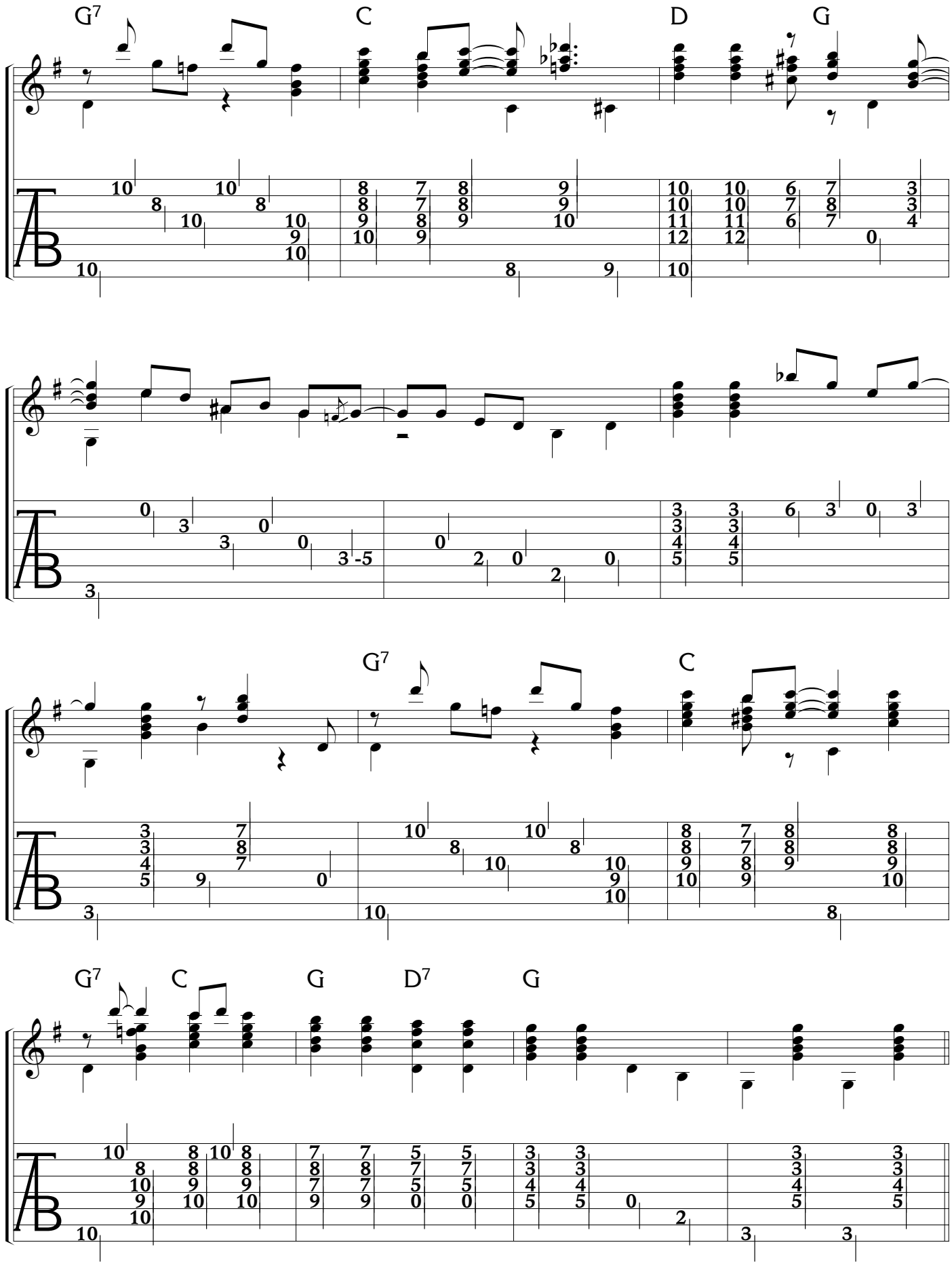



G7
C
(G)
*

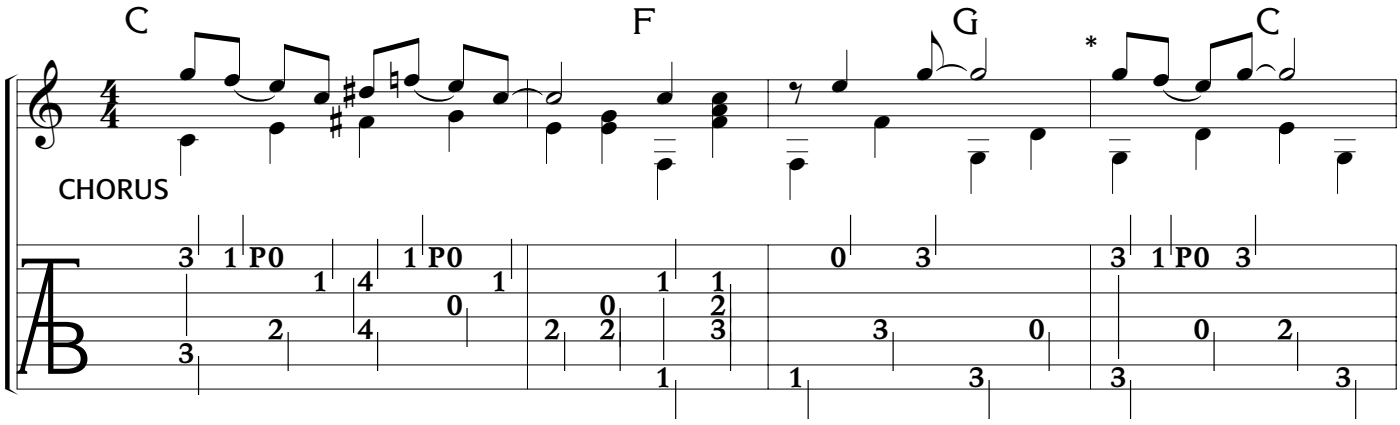

G
G7
C
E♭7
G

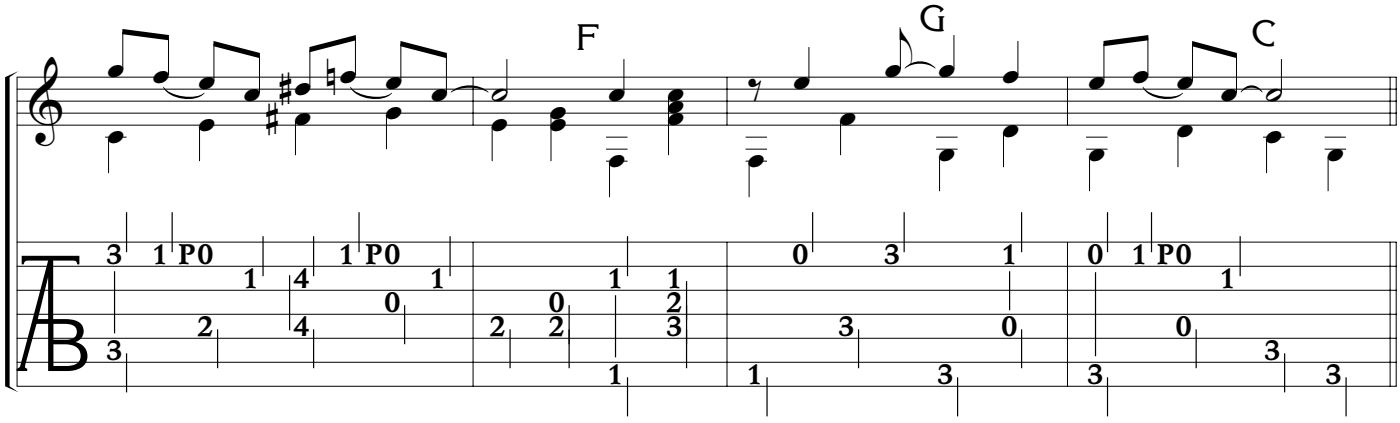

*Variation
etc.


G
G7
G
PART II (GUITAR BREAK)

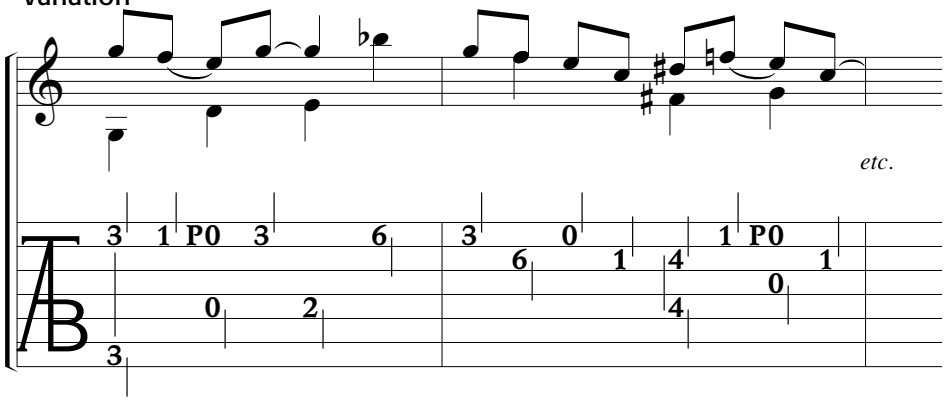

G7
C
D
G
G7
C
G7
C
G
D7
G

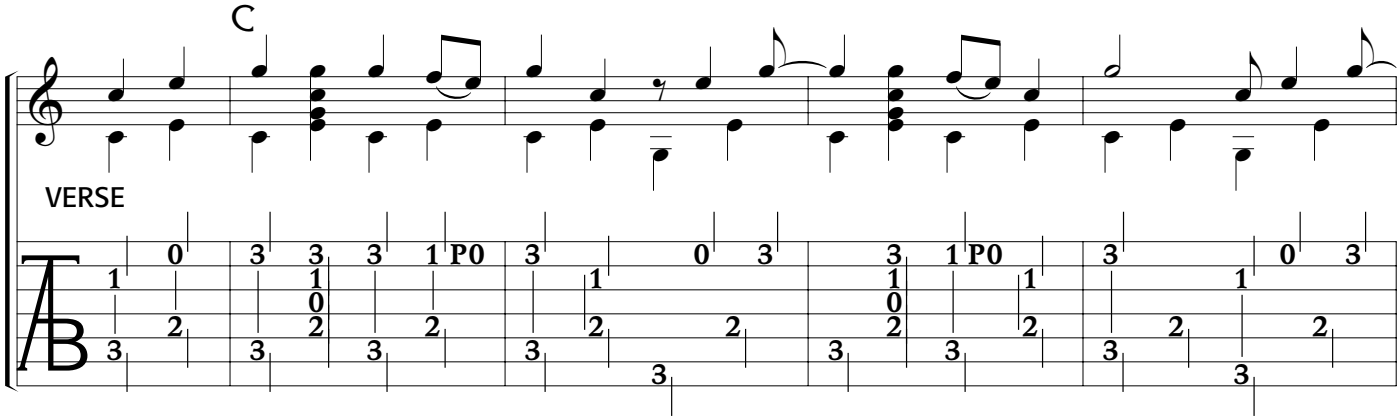
I Am the Light of This World

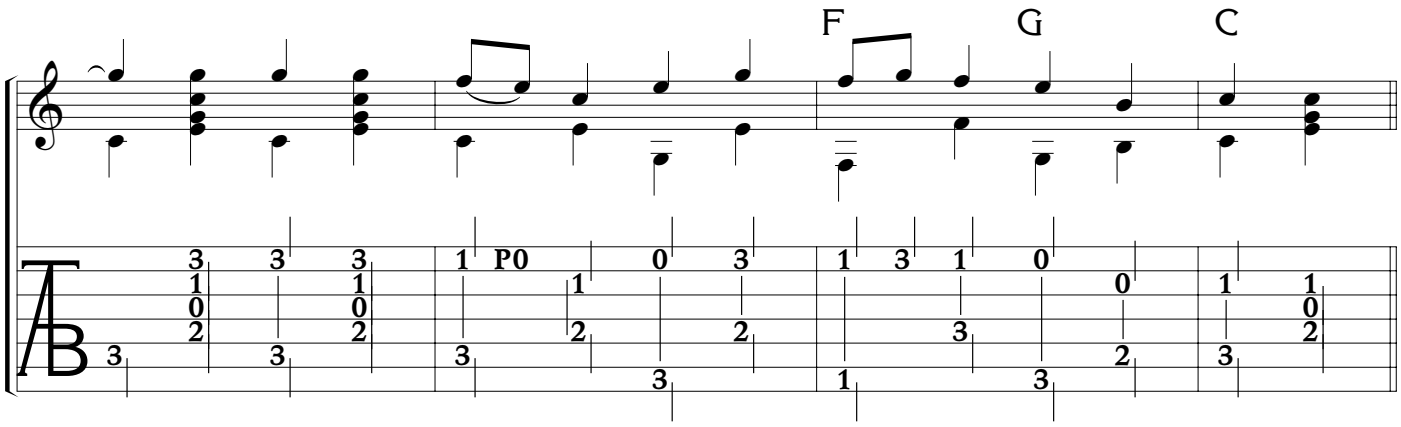




*Variation







I AM THE LIGHT OF THIS WORLD

Chorus:
Just as long as I'm in this world, I am the light
of this world *(4x)*

Oh, you don't believe in Jesus
And not a word is said
When you come down to Lazarus' grave
And raise him from the dead *(Cho.)*

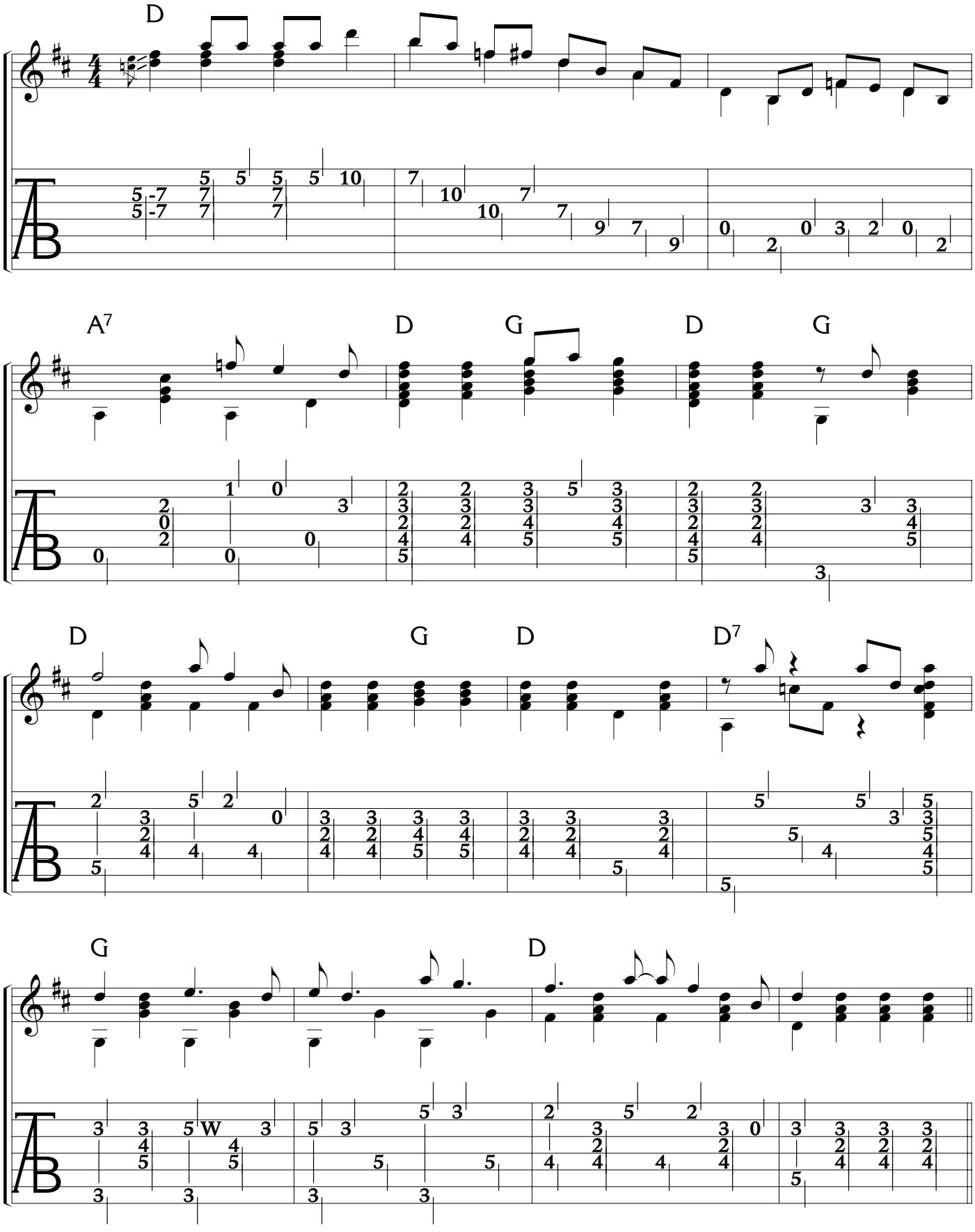
I've got fiery fingers
And I've got fiery hands
And when I get up in heaven
Going to join that fiery band *(Cho.)*

Prayer is the key of heaven
And faith unlocked the door
That's why my God gave me the key
And told me to carry it everywhere I go *(Cho.)*

I know I got religion
I know I ain't ashamed
For the Holy Ghost is my witness
And the angels done signed my name *(Cho.)*

Didn't they take old John the Baptist
And put him in the kettle of oil
My God got in there with him
And they tell me the oil wouldn't boil *(Cho.)*

You've Got to Move



YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE

Chorus:
You've got to move, You've got to move
You've got to move, oh move
When my God, Oh get ready, You've got to move

You may be high, You may be low,
You may be rich, May be poor
Brother when God gets ready, You've got to move

You may run, Can't be caught
You may hide, Can't be found
Brother when my God gets ready, You've got to move
(Cho.)

You may be old, You may be young
You may be weak, May be strong
Brother when God gets ready, You've got to move

You may be blind, Cannot see
You may be deaf, Cannot hear
Brother when God gets ready, You've got to move
(Cho.)

You may be good, You may be bad
You may be evil, You may be cross
Brother when God gets ready, You've got to move

That gambler got to move, That gambler got to move,
Don't you know he got to move, Oh my Lord
Brother when God gets ready, You've got to move