

## CHRIST-HONORING MUSIC FOR WORSHIP – LESSON 2

### **III. What is the Christian's Duty Regarding Music?**

The purpose of music is to praise the Lord. Ex. 20.3,4: “no other gods before me.” God alone is to be worshipped and in His appointed way.

“We must commit to “looking unto Jesus” to staying amazed and living full of wonder at His matchless beauty. Only then will we have the joy of being gradually changed into His glory. Only seeing the Lord in his fullness as we worship, only in making musical choices focused on the goal of a balanced presentation of the Godhead, can we hope to see this miraculous work accomplished.” (Dean Kurtz, GOD’S WORD: THE FINAL WORD ON WORSHIP AND MUSIC, p. 236)

The young Christian church continued using OT musical traditions, plus, they sang their own hymns and spiritual songs in addition to the psalms. But of the more than 500 references in the Bible about music, very few are in the NT. In fact, only about ten pertain to life on this earth. Of those, only two have specific instruction on what we are to concerning music, and they both say basically the same thing. They are Eph. 5.19 and Col.3.16. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul tells them to be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in their hearts to the Lord. To the Colossians he writes, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Albert Barnes said, “The prevailing character of music in the worship of God should be vocal. If instruments are engaged, they should be so subordinate that the service may be characterized as singing.”

Music can be a divisive force, but Paul is warning us to not use it to satisfy our personal desires and preferences. Music should be an important factor in fostering unity and edification in the church. If music is to glorify God, (1 Cor. 10.31) it must mirror him and draw attention to him. We should measure our songs by Philippians 4.8. Are they true, noble, just, pure, lovely? Are they of good report and praiseworthy? (Blanchard and Lucarini).

Acts 4.24 (from v. 23-26) “they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said...” from Ps.146. Verses 25-26 are from Ps. 2.1-2. They were probably sung by all. Substantive truths of the Word were sung corporately in the early church. Speaking and singing were vehicles for elements of worship. Acts 4.23: they saw the mighty acts of God in their behalf and they lifted up their voice (as one) accord

as they lifted up these psalms. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and went forth boldly, proclaiming the greatness of God.

### **Three types of music specified in these verses:**

**Psalms:** These are God's words usually from the book of Psalms (and other places in Scripture) put to music. *Psalmos* means striking or twitching with the fingers on musical strings. Singing psalms refers to a sacred song sung to musical accompaniment. Westminster Confession (22.5) "singing of psalms with grace in the heart," quotes Col. 3.16, Eph. 5.19, and Jas. 5.13 as the references.

**Hymns:** *Hymnos* means a song of praise addressed to God. Hymns sometimes refer to psalms sung. But as Paul Jones says, there is no conclusive way to distinguish between poetry and hymnody in the NT, because both contain features of Hebrew poetry. Passages in Philippians and Colossians are hymns of Christ. The doxologies of Rev. 4 and 5 are hymns of Christ. The book of Psalms largely deals with the worship, attributes, and acts of God the Father, rather than the Son. The poetic portions of the gospels and epistles deal with the lordship of Christ and provide hymns specifically to and about Christ. (Jones, pp. 104-5)

Isaac Watts wrote psalm paraphrases and hymns with a specific purpose, to make Christ evident. The word, hymns is mentioned only twice in the NT, in Eph. 5.19 and Col. 3.16. There may be the presence of hymns in other places, such as Col. 1.15-20 and Phil. 2.5-11. But in these places, they are not called hymns.

**Spiritual songs:** *ode* means song and the word spiritual is attached to denote what type of song. They are songs dealing with the believer's spiritual life and are the most personal of the three.

Protestant worship has emphasized these successively in history. Psalms were sung almost exclusively during the time of the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the entrance of hymns into churches through the poetry of Watts, Newton, and the Wesleys. In the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, spiritual songs were written by Ira Sankey, Philip Bliss, Fanny Crosby, and others.

### **Our psalms, hymns and spiritual songs should:**

Teach us.

They should be sound in doctrine and teach the basics in doctrine. They should be easily spoken, with good poetry, to give a good message.

Admonish us.

They should warn of sin and dangers to us. Admonishing means great encouragement, and is the practical side of teaching truth.

Praise and exalt God.

We are singing them to Him. He is the sole sufficiency, Lord and Redeemer. Speak to our hearts.

They should stay with us as they are a pleasure to sing. We should speak to our hearts first, before we speak or sing to others.

Hebrews 12.28-29 gives us unalterable orders concerning worship:

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.”

An argument from the silence of Scripture:

The Bible has nothing to say about using music in services to reach the lost. It is for worship by believers. Naturally, it can be used to reach the lost, but that is not the primary purpose of music in worship.

**Application:**

Music is a powerful tool to allow the Word of God to dwell in the believer.

Teaching and admonishing one another through music must be done very carefully.

Musicians become powerful teachers and intimate counselors. This can be a blessing and a curse.

Singing should be heartfelt and full of grace.

Singing should always be done for the ears of the Lord first and foremost, even while speaking to yourself or others.

(DEAN KURTZ, P.275-6)