

## Exalt With Music

### Praise and Worship

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When I was planning out the sermons for this Feast of Tabernacles, I looked over what I already had prepared and I had one slot open—this one for today. I decided to prepare something that was a little bit lighter. I decided that from what I had, there was pretty heavy stuff. We will go into something that I feel is important, but it is not anywhere near the importance of some of the other things that we have been going through in regard to being stabilized—in catching the vision, going on from here, turning our back on the past, and proceeding on to the future.

On the other hand, as I looked at it, this may also be another area that we need to turn around a bit on, not so much in the enthusiasm with which we are doing it, but maybe with the understanding of what we are doing.

**Jeremiah 2:2** Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, “Thus says the Lord. I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”

I picture that as God remembering, with almost what we might call a warm sentimentality, the way that Israel showed its love toward Him. He is referring here to a period of time between the Exodus and the making of the covenant at Mt. Sinai.

If you read through that period of time between Exodus 12 and Exodus 20, you are going to find that there was a bit of complaining as they went along the way. Nothing very serious; there was no rebellions; nobody was revolting; nobody was getting really upset about what was going on. So whenever they got there and made the covenant with Him, as God reflects upon that, He did it with warmth; it was not a bitter remembrance of what was going on. The thing that brought it back with warmth was when He remembered the way, the attitude, with which Israel went into the covenant.

You might recall, Exodus 14:8, which we will not turn to. It says that when Israel went out of Egypt, they went out with a high hand. They went out boldly and confidently, almost defiantly, you might say, because of what God had done, not because of Israelite military might.

They realized at that time that they were being freed, loosened, given liberty; maybe they recognized at the time that it was something that they did not deserve. Nonetheless, it had happened to them, and they were joyous about being able to go out.

They became somewhat fearful at the Red Sea. They did not know which way to turn, but once again, God came to the rescue. He divided them away from their potential captors, opened up the Red Sea, and they went through on dry land. Again, when they got to the other side, they did it with euphoria. They saw all their potential captors drowned in the sea.

Pharaoh's mighty army was gone—disappeared. They went around picking up whatever military equipment and wealth that may have floated up on shore. They exalted in God's triumph in song and dance, as Exodus 15 shows.

The passion of their relationship with God seemed to hit its peak there, and from that point on it was downhill. I want to draw our attention for the length of this sermon (or purpose of this sermon) on the fact that they exalted with music; it was done to intensify the feeling of their relationship; they were doing it in acknowledgment of what they were celebrating.

We will see something in Revelation 2 that I feel is somewhat of a parallel, only this time it is in a spiritual context; this time it involves the Church of God, the Israel of God. It involves that first era of the Church of God.

**Revelation 2:2-3** I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars. And you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Obviously, here is a people that were zealous for what they believed; they undoubtedly did a great deal of sacrificing; they undoubtedly examined the false teachings and found these things wanting; and they did something about it at least.

**Revelation 2:4-5** Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent.

Do you see somewhat of a parallel there? Israel came out of Egypt with a high hand. They exalted with music. It expressed the passion of their feelings for God in rescuing them from their slavery, then rescuing them from what seems like an imminent death. He not only rescued them but put all of their potential captures to death. They were free at last, they thought, and now on to the promise land and everything was going to be good. They sang songs extolling and praising God.

Here, we see the first century church. They started off with a high hand, too. Who could have a higher high than what happened on that Pentecost? We just heard Mr. Preston's, "Speaking in Tongues." On that day maybe a hundred people spoke in tongues, and others heard them in their own language. They were filled with the spirit, and, no doubt, with that went a tremendous feeling of exaltation because of what was happening in their lives. They recognized, at least for a while, that they were part of something that was special, good, and unique in all of the history of mankind. About seventy years later, roughly, they have already left their first love and are urged to repent.

I think that we can draw a conclusion from this. Unless a relationship is worked at, it is going to degenerate. Among the first messages that I gave over the telephone hookup when we came out of Worldwide Church of God was one in which I quoted Evangeline Booth, daughter of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army.

As she was on her deathbed, she complained: "Why does God not keep things straight for more than one generation?" She said that because when her father died, he left the Salvation Army as a growing organization. But after the original founder and all of his ideas, plans, visions, and enthusiasm for doing this charitable work was gone, those who followed him began to change everything. They put in their own ideas about things, bickering because of political situations within the organization began to arise. She was in despair because she saw her father's dream crumbling.

She knew much about the history of the Bible, and how it seems as though organizations, even organizations in which God is a part of, only seem to last about one generation. God is not the problem. The problem is that men somehow or another become distracted by other interests, and they allow themselves to fight for position or whatever it happens to be.

Such forces are also at work in the Church of God. We see in our culture today, what the Bible calls Laodiceanism. Laodiceanism is idolatry and occurs when one becomes only halfheartedly interested in continuing to develop his relationship with God. He allows other interests to impact his life to the extent that his attention is divided.

Anybody who understands ought to be able to see that in a marriage, in a courtship, whatever it might happen to be...if you do not do something to develop the relationship, then it is going to degenerate.

God has shown us a number of things that we must do to build our relationship with Him. Among them is of course that we are commanded to meet on His Sabbath day, and He promises that He will be here with us.

I do not know if you have thought of it much in regards to this. When we come here (church) everybody has responsibilities that they must carry out in order to ensure the success of this commanded assembly. You might think that the major responsibility rests with the minister. I have been trying to impress upon you that the minister is only one part of the whole, one part that God has given gifts to, maybe to add to natural abilities, but He has given those gifts to that person in order to carry out that function. He has given gifts, as we saw in I Corinthians 12, to every part of the body, not just the ministry.

God has given gifts to everybody; everybody has a responsibility to the whole; everybody has a responsibility to the success of these commanded assemblies. If we are doing our part, making some effort to do it, it will ensure, or least make steps toward ensuring, the success of the whole, and therefore on an individual basis the success of our fellowship with Him individually.

The larger the body, the smaller the part of the minister because he becomes less or a smaller and smaller percentage of the whole.

Remember the principles that I gave you in one of these sermons, the principle toward increase—whatever we do, there is a tendency for it to increase beyond what we are doing at the moment. On the other hand, there is another principle—what we sow, we also reap.

Whatever we do, we are sowing something, and there is a tendency toward increasing in that, and the increase is going to be in the same thing that we have done. This is not exact; we are not being scientific here, but we are dealing with a principle that is right.

We will add another principle that you are well aware of—whatever our hands find to do, God says (in Ecclesiastes 9:10) that we are do it with all of our might. The reason for that is twofold. The one is that we only have one go around at things. That is the context there in Ecclesiastes 9. He says that we had better take advantage of the time, because there is no reward in the grave.

Take advantage of doing something to develop our relationship with God. The other one is expounded on a little bit more, later in the same book of Ecclesiastes where He says, “Cast your

bread upon many waters, because you never know which one of these waters, which one of these streams, is going to bring the blessing back to you.” The more you cast out with the more energy that you do it, the further the seeds are going to go out, and the more likely it is going to produce something that is in kind.

We are not going to go through every responsibility involved in Sabbath services, but just a couple that everybody should be doing. You must pray. That is everybody's responsibility to insure the success of services. Remember we are going to do this with all of our might, enthusiastically, and we are going to sow the right things in prayer, are we not? That is the way to do it—positively.

Another would be that we are commanded to be here unless we are sick. You must concentrate while you are listening. It is our responsibility to discipline our minds to make sure that we do not allow it to slip over into things that have no application or reason to be a part of our thinking at this time.

We are to be concerned with what we are hearing; and if we happen to be parents, we are to be aware of what is going on in our family, so that we are not allowing others to be distracted by what our children are doing. It happens, I have seen it happen. I have probably done it myself. I intently concentrate on what is going on, and my wife is getting all red in the face because all these little Ritenbaughs are creating a disturbance and she needs help.

Husbands are oblivious to what is going on, and everybody around him is disturbed because of what his kids are doing. They cannot concentrate because he has forgotten a responsibility.

There is one more thing that is going to take up the bulk of this sermon—we must sing. There is a reason why God has us sing. I know of no religion that does not have music deeply involved in its worship service.

The great, overwhelming majority of those religions are false, but the founder and originator of those religions...he knows something about music. Did we not just read this morning about his pipes and tambourines? This great awesome being is associated with music. He knows what an effect music has on a person; he knows what music motivates people to do, and he knows how people can be manipulated by music. He knows how people can be moved in a certain line of thinking, by music.

God was the originator of that; God was the inventor of the most magnificent musical instrument man knows—the human voice. God created it for a reason. It is not just to talk; it is also to sing. That is why it makes such beautiful sounds.

Music both affects and reflects what is going on within individuals and in nations. There was a time when the United States was growing, robust, and expanding. It was conscious of its strengths. The music reflected that, we were a nation of the move; we had overriding national goals that we wanted to accomplish. We wrote a lot of stirring marches at the time. The whole nation was marching to the beat of a music that stirred a person's innards and made him want to get up and get out and to do things. There also came a time of romantic ballads. I do not know of a time when we did not have them; we have always had them.

Somewhere in the 1930s, there was swing music, the big band sound, and the craze for dancing that went on during that period of time. It was a period of relief, of seeking relief, from depression, of *the*

depression that was going on then, and the music was used by people to somehow or another begin to lift people out of that depressed spirit that they were in, because of all the economic troubles within the nation, actually within the world.

At the same time, it began a period in which the United States of America began to intensively woo other nations, as God so apply describes it in the book of Ezekiel. It seems as though we wrote music that reflected what we as a nation were doing through trade programs, give away programs, and so forth.

The war came along and the music shifted again to a more marshal tone, but in the 1950s, rock gradually became the dominate musical style. It is a rhythm that is largely based on a destructive dissonance. So we find a nation of great power, and that music is powerful, it moves people. Have any of you ever attended a rock concert? Or have ever seen films of them going on? People are moved by that music.

It is a destructive rhythm, and it moves people in the wrong direction. It is reflecting an increasingly self-centered, divided, and confused nation, conscious of power, but not of how to use it. When it does use it, it almost invariably uses it in the wrong way.

I believe that God has endowed Israelitish people with very great gifts for music, but unfortunately it is largely being wasted in perverted trash and inane mindless ditties. Please turn to Psalms 66. There are probably any one of a hundred different Psalms, maybe more than that I could have used here, very many of the Psalms have the word sing, in it.

**Psalm 66:1-5** Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth, sing out the honor of His name. Make His praise glorious. Say to God, How awesome are your works, Through the greatness of your power your enemies shall submit themselves to You. All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You, They shall sing praises to Your name. Come and see the works of God. He is awesome in His doings toward the sons of men.

I just quoted that in order to get us started here. Psalms witness to the place of music in the worship of God. The book of Psalms is far and away the largest book in the Bible. It is roughly in the center; in fact Psalms 118:8-9 are the center verses in all of the Bible. It is silently telling you and me that the worship service perhaps should revolve around music, or that music should play a very large role in the worship of God.

In the pages of the book of Psalms, singing is very frequently commanded. It is presented to you and me as not being an option; we must do it. This is very interesting in light of the way I opened this sermon up.

What can we do to develop a relationship with God? When we begin to feed into this the impact that music has on a person's mind, on his feelings, on his psyche, what it's able to do with his emotions...when we begin to feed that into the kind of feelings that we have toward someone we love very much (our mate, our children), we begin to remember all of the things that we experienced with this person that we love very much in which music played a part.

It begins to give us an understanding of why God makes music to be a very large part of the worship of Him. It has something to do with feeling and of being able to express to Him in a way that we are totally inadequate to do on our own.

When someone of talent, someone with musical ability, insight and training, writes the music and puts it to the words of God, we can sing to God what we of ourselves would be unable to express.

The Psalms present us with hymns, laments; there are songs of exalt in praise, songs of both solemn and joyous thanksgiving. There are prayers here, war chants or marches, songs that are called royal songs, there are songs about the Sabbath, songs about the holy days; there are songs of repentance. More than all that, each and every one of them is a teaching vehicle.

There is prophecy in the songs that we sing about; there is ancient history in the songs that we sing about. We sing about our Savior; we sing about our Creator; we sing about His feelings for us. It is almost endless. He intends these to be things that are drilled into our memory as no other part of the Bible is.

I dare say—I have no doubt at all about this—you know more Psalms by heart, by memory, than you do any other part of the Bible. You know why? Because you sing them.

Please turn to Isaiah 35. My Bible has a heading at the beginning of the chapter that says, “The future glory of Zion.”

**Isaiah 35:1-2** The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God.

God is personifying the desert; there is a time coming when if it had feelings, if it could express those feelings, the desert would sing because it is not a desert anymore. Men talk today about the stark beauty of the desert. I do not know how beautiful it is, but it sure is stark. There is coming a time when it will be beautiful.

Please turn to Isaiah 44. Again there is a title to this paragraph. You can see even from the title, that it is millennial. He is saying that Israel is not forgotten.

**Isaiah 44:23** Sing O heavens, for the Lord has done it. Shout, you lower parts of the earth. Break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel.

A theme very similar to the one we just read in Psalm 35. He shows the gladness that there is going to be in the creation because of the works of God, what He is doing among the sons of men.

**Isaiah 55:12** For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace, the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands [probably in rhythm].

**Isaiah 35:10** [talking directly about the children of Israel, as they come out of their captivity] And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

It is obvious that the song that they are singing, whatever it is that they are singing, is an upbeat song. It reflects the spirit, the heart, the mind, the attitude that they are in. They are rejoicing before God. They are beginning their relationship with God just like the others, like the Israel's coming out of Egypt, and just like we showed in Revelation 2. They are coming into the land with a high hand, singing and exalting in their liberty, in their rescue, in their salvation. Will it remain that way? Yes it will.

This verse in I Timothy 3 is interesting because every commentary that I have looked at so far (any commentary of any worth or value, without any contradiction of one another) said that that they believe what we are looking at, here, is the remnant or a piece or possibly the chorus of a first century church hymn.

**I Timothy 3:16** And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

What is the subject material there? You see, a song is a teaching vehicle. God's primary reason for having music. When we are singing, we are not to be just mouthing, but to be thinking about the words, because the words are imparting to us knowledge that is necessary for our life, but it is given within the context of music rather than the spoken word.

What we have, here, is the telling of the story of a great cause. You might say the revolution that we just heard about. Great causes march to music. Do you know why? Because music reaches a depth of feeling that is far beyond the spoken word, so far beyond that there is no comparison.

Words have impact, but when words of understanding and truth are mixed with music, their power to motivate is tremendously intensified. We need to understand that God does not want us merely to lift our voice because it is something that is required of us, but actually to understand that singing hymns during the song service or as part of the choir is an act of devotion. It is not intended by Him merely to be an aesthetic experience.

Hymn singing gives one a sense of belonging. Crusades march to the beat of music, and that music helps to bind them together. God intends the same thing to occur here—that there is a sense of belonging because we are joining together in singing praises to God. And what is it that we belong to? When we understand it is a continuing fellowship, one that we understand is going to continue for all eternity, we might say that a hymn is a mystical poem, full of symbols which gives one a hold on that continuity.

**Ephesians 5:18** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Now how does one get filled with the Spirit? Right in the context it says, "...speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." To me that is so interesting.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle is quoted as saying this, "that Music is the most moral of the arts." Do not jump to a conclusion, there, he did not mean that music was the purest of the arts. He did not mean it in that sense because he understood very well that there is good music and there is bad music,

music that has positive and negative impacts upon people. His fellow philosopher, Plato, wrote a fair amount on what he had discovered by observation about the effects of music on people. What Aristotle meant was that music has the most profound effect on character of all of the arts.

Let us look at that in this context, here in Ephesians 5:18-19. All I am going to do is paraphrase, here. I think that you will recognize it is true. He says, “Do not drink wine, but instead sing.” Why do people drink wine? God is not saying that we must never drink wine. He is talking about drinking wine to dissipation, which means in excess.

People drink wine in order to get the effect that comes from wine. The effect that wine has on a person is that at first in the drinking of wine, there is a stimulating effect; but wine, having an alcohol content, is eventually a downer. It pulls a person toward tranquility, unless the person has too much. Then they go under the table.

God is saying that music is akin to a drug imparting a spirit, mood, or attitude to an occasion. He is saying, in effect, that it is better to have the music than it is to have the wine, assuming of course that the music is good.

Let us make the context more specific, he is saying that hymn singing (spiritual songs) is a positive substitute for alcohol, which always has a kickback that is not so good. With hymn singing, you get the same effect, and there is no kickback.

This does not mean that the next time you go to the San Francisco Bar and Grill, you take your hymnals with you and sing a few songs and forget about the wine; we do not want to take it that far, but at least we get the idea of what God is saying.

This is important to understand, you see, that God agrees with what men have discovered through observation: music has an effect on people. I want to tell you that that effect cannot be stopped. The only thing that you can do is to block the music out of your mind simply by overpowering it or putting your concentration on something else, and even then subliminally it is going to have an effect.

The only real way to get to escape the effect of music is to get away from it. You cannot escape the effect of music any more than you can escape the effect of wine that you drink.

Here is a biblical basis in simple terminology. The simplicity that is in Christ lets us understand that music is going to affect. We know very well that it does.

We also know as we heard this morning: there is no escaping it. You go into a store, and they have music playing that you may be only able to barely hear, but they have studied what motivates people. They understand—the advertisers do, the social psychologists—that music creates images in people’s minds. Even though the person is not really aware, his mind is being manipulated toward purchasing something. It is really slick, and they are manipulating you to try to get you to buy.

Let us look at this a little bit further. God of course wants us to take the positive side of this and make the right kind of use of it.

**I Samuel 16:14-16** But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servant said to him, “surely a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, who are before

you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp and it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.”

**I Samuel 16:23** And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand, then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

Undoubtedly, Saul was in the grips of very great depression; maybe we can interpret the depressing spirit as actually being a demon. It was afflicting him with depression. Somehow, even when the music of a human was played, the distressing spirit, the demon, was also nullified and he quit agitating Saul so that Saul then could get a bit of his composure back once again.

In, “The Morning Bride” by William Congreve, Mr. Congreve gave this statement: “Music has charms to soothe a savage beast, to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak.” We understand that those words are poetically exaggerated in order to make clear a point that he wants us to understand.

Music may appear to be something that is harmless, soft, coming into the body...something that one cannot see, something that until hard rock and metal bands, we could not really feel, yet it seems to be able to bend the most stubborn human will to its will and to make it go along with its mood, its spirit, the spirit of the music, the rhythm, the melody, the harmony, the words.

Here music was used to soothe Saul's agitated state. Ancient Greek philosophers recommended music to soothe the passions, heal mental diseases, and even to check riots. “There is a riot in the square. Get the band out there!” That has been done, even in recent history.

I have read of times when maybe a fight would break out between the Marines and the Navy or something over in a saloon somewhere, and in order to stop the fight they would play the Star Spangled Banner, and everybody would stand at attention. By the time the song was over, usually people had cooled off enough, and that was it.

We saw that in a movie, *Casablanca*. The Germans and the Nazi sympathizers were on one side and the Patriots were on the other side, and they started to get into a fight and they played *La Marseillaise*, and everybody stood at attention and everything calmed down.

We read in our scientific magazines, *Newsweek* and *Time* magazine, *US News and World Report*, and newspapers about the wonderful effects scientist are discovering that music has on people: You can use music to heal people; it calms you down; it cheers you up; it gives you faith; it gives you sense of well-being. And if you just listen to the right kind of music, you are going to be out of the hospital a lot quicker than you normally would have been.

They make it sound like it was an amazing new discovery that they came upon. Here were the Greeks over 4,000 years ago doing the same thing. In I Samuel 16, the ancients in the time of David, 1,000 BC, were already knowledgeable of this. Sometimes we think we are so smart.

I do not know when the first musical instruments were invented. We only have a notation on it, in Genesis 4, about Jubal. Nonetheless, men have understood that music has a powerful impact almost from the beginning of creation.

It causes body movements. You cannot hear a pretty lively tune without some part of your body reacting; usually it will be your foot. You will begin to tap, and you do not even realize that you are doing it. It is an automatic response, because the sound has hit your auditory nerves, and that sound is transported into your brain. It leaves your brain, and the brain sends out signals to other parts of the body, to the hormones. They begin to be injected into the blood stream, and things begin to happen inside your body.

Depending on the spirit of the music, it will either elevate you or it will bring you down, but you cannot stop the response, except to get away from it. There is going to be some sort of response; maybe it will lift you to exaltation. You may hear patriotic music or a hymn that exalts God, and it makes you feel so proud that you have this relationship with Him, so you exalt in the music.

It can fill you with awe to hear a 300 voice choir in beautiful harmony. It can sometimes bring sadness to you. It can give you pain or relief. It can put a lump in your throat, tears in your eyes, tears of joy or tears of sorrow. It is a language that crosses ethnic racial language barriers; it encourages us to anticipate things; it encourages us to remember. They are playing our song.

It is said by the people who research into some of these things that music is the most powerful memory stimulator there is. Nothing causes you remember like music; it immediately puts an image into your mind. Is it happy or is it sad? Who did you experience it with? You can immediately see that person's face, maybe see the entire experience in a flash, in a moment. It passes through your mind, and it brings a feeling with it.

We have to recognize the power of music to do these things. Our God created it to be so. He intended that it be used for good purposes, knowing full well that it could be put to evil purposes as well. Unfortunately, in most cases that is what man has done. He has put it to an evil purpose in order to stimulate people to self-centeredness, to the wrong kind of love (that the Bible calls lust, fornication, adultery), and even to murder.

**Job 38:7** When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

God is reflecting for the benefit of Job on the creation. He gave Job and you and me an insight of the response of the angels to maybe their first view of what God had just made. They all sang together.

Let us think about this. They had that ability to sing before this moment. So we have to understand when we put this all together, with things like what is contained in Ezekiel 28, things about Helel, that before there was an earth, before there was a mankind, there was music.

Revelation 5:9 shows angels continuously singing before God. But Job 38 sets a pattern for you and me, for mankind, that music's overall godly function to intensify positive attitudes regarding God's creative activities.

We might include in those creative activities His acts of salvation as well as His acts of deliverance for His people because that is a part of His creative activities.

**Exodus 15:1** Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying, I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.

**Exodus 15:20-21** Then Miriam the prophetess the sister of Aaron, took the the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea.

This is the first time in the Bible that singing is used apparently in connection with a worship or a religious service. They were exalting in God's victory over the Egyptians. This combined with Job 38 sets the pace, or we might say, it becomes typical of music use throughout the Bible, in relation to worship services. It is used to celebrate God's works; it praises Him. So singing is used to give thanks, to praise, to rejoice right within the worship service itself. It becomes an integral part of it.

I will prove this a little bit later. In the worship service itself, who normally dominates it? The minister does, but there are times of music, both congregational singing and choral singing. It is an active part of the worship service; therefore, music is a form of a ministerial responsibility or a ministerial function. Its function is to set the mood and focus the attitude on God.

Seeing that this is a ministerial function, and it is very important, what are reasons that we have given for why we do not sing?

- 1) We say we cannot sing, when in reality we mean we will not sing. Depending upon the attitude there, that can be rebellion.
- 2) We say that we do not have a good voice, when what we are really saying is that we are too vain to be embarrassed.
- 3) We say that we cannot carry a tune, but God only requires a joyful noise, as melodious as possible for you to make. It is the heart He is interested in.
- 4) We say we cannot read music, when in reality we have never tried. I mean, really made an honest effort. It is not all that hard to at least know the basics.
- 5) We say, "Well I am just not that way," but we have to change.

In the book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, by William Law, who was an 18th century Church of England minister, he says in chapter 15,

You are to consider this singing of a song as a necessary beginning of your devotions, as something that is to awaken all that is good and holy within you. That is, to call your spirit to its proper duty, to set you in your best posture toward heaven, and tune all the powers of your soul to worship and adoration. For there is nothing that so clears a way for your prayers, nothing that so disperses dullness of heart, nothing that so purifies the soul from poor and little passions, nothing that so opens heaven or carries your heart so near it as these songs of praise. They create a sense and delight in God, to awaken holy desires, they teach you how to ask, and they prevail with God to give. They kindle a holy flame, they turn your heart into an altar, your prayers into incense, and carry them as a sweet smelling savor to the throne of grace. A man singing of a song though not in a very musical way, may yet sufficiently answer all the ends of rejoicing in and praising

God. Our Savior and the Apostle, sang a hymn, but it may be reasonably supposed that they rejoiced in God, rather than made fine music.

I mentioned to you that every psalm, every spiritual song, is a teaching vehicle. Paul was concerned, here, in I Corinthians 14, about the conduct of people in services. Apparently there was a lot of confusion within this congregation while the services were going on. He uses various instructions and illustrations to help these people see that they needed to get organized. They needed to understand what they were doing.

**I Corinthians 14:15** What is the result then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, [that is maybe with God's Holy Spirit or maybe he means with all of my heart] and I will also sing with the understanding.

Now we are beginning to add another aspect to this. If music—God's music, the Psalms, the spiritual songs—is going to have its greatest impact, it is going to be something that is done with the mood intended by the composer and the writing of the music, combined with an understanding of what the words mean.

When we are singing the Psalms, there is nothing better that a person could approach God with than His own words. It is interesting to note that in the Psalms, God preserved the words, not the music. He is telling us, there, which is the more important of the two.

At the same time, it also allows for a wide variation of melodic taste from age to age; and at the same time, it keeps the rhythm, the beat, the melody, harmony, structured within the truth of God. There is no better way to get your prayers answered than to tell God His own words back to Him. "This is what you said, God. You are going to do it, are you not?" I do not mean this in a flippant way at all. He will not go back on what He has said.

Now when you add the music to it, you add a dimension that includes not just the bare words, which can be given in a platonic way, coldly, without heart, maybe with some understanding, but when you put the music together with it, it has the right kind of feeling right with it as well. What impact that must have on God; there is nobody in all creation that loves music more than He does. He created it to please Him, and to be a teaching vehicle for you and me. A teaching vehicle, combined with impulses, with feeling that we cannot resist. That is a pretty powerful tool.

Andrew Fletcher said this: "Give me the making of the hymns of the church and I do not care who makes its theology." He of course is not dealing with the truth, but what he is giving voice to is his recognition of the power of music to influence and to motivate because it effects the feelings.

Laws and theology are important, but unless they capture the imagination, it simply is not as effective as it otherwise would be. Music does kindle the imagination, and it stirs us; it motivates us. So God then urges us that we sing with understanding, or it does not mean as much.

We have to learn not to just mouth the words because we have the music memorized as with the hymnal. We need to work at striving to understand the flavor of the author's intent, then we can be motivated with understanding. That is so much more meaningful, so much more helpful to us.

Apparently up until the time of David, the music of Israel was more or less what we would call folk music. What we call today country western; it was music that did not have apparently a great deal of organization to it. David was an artist; he appreciated the good things of life; he recognized the power that was in music, so he used the power of his office as king to organize musicians who would perform at services. I am sure that they performed at other functions, as well, in the way of entertainment in the city of Jerusalem and also at state occasions.

**I Chronicles 25:1-7** Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, [notice this word prophesy] who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the workmen according to their service was [then we have all the names that we will not go through]. All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the authority of the king. So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight.

David's trained choir of two hundred and eighty-eight prophesied with inspiration. Again, to me, this is not a Levitical function in the sense of equating it, let us say, with a deacon, but a ministerial function, equating it with an elder.

In I Chronicles 6:31-32, the record is left there to you and me of the service of song ministering. This trained choir ministered to the congregation; they were performing duties of personal service in terms of music. To do this rightly in their circumstance, one has to be prepared. Music is every bit as effective at ministering to the congregation as the spoken word, but much more difficult because it requires time-consuming training to do it in the way that is being described here in Chronicles.

Just to give you an example, any of you who witnessed the film clip of Rosanne Barr's rendition of the National Anthem at Jack Murphy's stadium in San Diego...I do not think many people appreciated that exhibition of our National Anthem.

I can show you places in here when the choir was singing, that God filled the temple with His presence. It was just like saying that was His cue to come in and enter. It is really interesting to see the way that music is used here.

**Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Singing is a teaching experience; it is a method of imparting positive truths. Teaching, here, means to reason earnestly. The only difference is that it is done to the accompaniment of music. Admonish means to charge authoritatively. The only difference is it is done with music, supplying the mood, so we see a variety of hymns in the book. We see a variety of music performed by the choir. You may have thought that they were up there just to entertain you. Please do not think that any more. They are up there to set the mood for the congregation to receive the sermon. They are up there to instruct you with the power of music accompanying them.

What they have to sing to you is of very grave importance. Then he says, that we are to let these things dwell in us. He is saying to let it have room, to let it continue in you, to let it remain in you as a rich treasure.

I hope that we have gleaned from this a little bit more understanding of the part that music plays in your devotions to God. It is important; it is a ministerial function. You are singing God's words right back to Him in the form of something that has feeling with it, good feelings, uplifting feelings, inspiring feelings by which God intends that we be instructed.