

Singing Saints

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I was reading about a story of the time when a little boy decided to sing in the emergency room in a hospital. "I wish I could sing; I think I'd feel weller then!" This is what a little seven-year-old lad in Bellevue Hospital said while a surgeon was examining him to find out what injuries he had sustained in a fall into a twelve-foot-deep excavation.

"All right, laddie; you can sing if you will sing something nice," said the kind-hearted Dr. McLean. The little fellow began to sing in a high, clear soprano, "Nearer, My God, to Thee." As the childish notes rang out, nurses, doctors and attendants from various parts of the hospital began to come into the room until there were a hundred people in the room. "Well, I guess you are right, little man," said the doctor as he finished his examination; "I can't find any broken bones."

"I guess it was the singin' that fixed me," replied the boy. "I always sing when I feel bad." You know, the little guy was onto something! If we grown-ups would do as this little boy did, sing when we "feel bad," no matter what our loss or misfortune or trouble might be, we would certainly, in the little boy's words: "feel weller."

Christianity is the only true religion that abounds in song. Atheism is songless; agnosticism has nothing to sing about; the various forms of idolatry are not only out of touch with God but out of tune with God! Christianity came into the world on the wings of song! It's the song of the soul set free! Infidelity never sings. Unbelief has no music, no anthems, no hymns, oratorios, or symphonies. When Robert Ingersoll died, the printed notice of his funeral said, "There will be no singing."

In this study, we want to focus on how God wants His saints to keep a song in their hearts. This is why I've entitled our study as "Singing Saints." God does not want us to be a sinning saint but a singing saint!

"Some through the waters, some through the flood
Some through the fire, but all through the blood
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song
In the night season and all the day long."

Is this true of your life? Have you been living with a song of joy and gladness in your heart? Maybe you have developed a sour note in your heart and life and no longer have a singing heart.

Matthew 26:30 reveals this to us:

“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”

This might seem like an obscure verse but it sends a message to all of us today. The word “hymn” means “to celebrate God in song” and speaks of a musical piece that is about God and directed to Him. The point is this, God wants us to be a singing Christian or to possess a singing heart in life. This context informs us that both Jesus and His disciples sang this hymn together probably addressed to the Father. Can you imagine how wonderful it would have been to sing with Jesus! In this particular instance, Jesus was singing with His disciples. Why? It’s because Jesus had a song in His heart.

Friend, if we want to be more like Jesus, we will sing! We may not always sing out loud (vocally) but we will possess a melody of gladness in our hearts. A Christian who does not possess a song in his heart and life is a Christian that is not living like Jesus. He is a Christian who is out of touch with the God-filled and Spirit-filled life. This particular study will reveal this to us.

God wants us to be a singing Christian.

This is illustrated in two ways:

I. In the frequency of our singing

Christians are to live out their lives with a song of gladness and joy in their hearts over what God did for them and because of their relationship with Him. We are to be singing Christians. The Christian who has lost his song has also lost his joy and fellowship with God. You may not be able to sing well from a vocal perspective but there needs to be a song of joy and gladness in your soul if you want to live a life of joy, happiness, spiritual abundance and fulfillment.

As we think of the frequency of singing, let’s ask this important question: Where are we to sing?

- a. We are to sing during church.

The Psalmist was speaking of singing in the temple with the sacrifices of praise being offered up to God. He wanted to enter God's temple with much thanksgiving because God was so good and faithful to him.

Psalm 100:2

"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing."

Psalm 100:4 explains the nature or type of our singing:

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name."

Our singing should be about thanksgiving and praise to God. Let's make the application to our place of worship today, the local church. Today, when we attend church we are to come with a song in our hearts. We are to attend God's House ready to worship Him by possessing a song that extends worship to God who is our Creator, Blessor, and Sustainer in life.

Johann Sebastian Bach once said:

"All music should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the soul's refreshment; where this is not remembered there is no real music but only a devilish hub-bub."

Many Christians today look at church as something they must do, and after they do it, they simply check it off their weekly list. However, this is not the right attitude to have when we enter church. When we come to church with our hearts in tune with God, we will not view church as merely something we must do, but a worshipful experience that brings us into the presence of God through singing and worship.

Singing in church comes from a melody of gladness that we possess BEFORE we enter church, or in some cases GAIN when we are fellowshiping with other singing saints. The point is that singing is to be part of the worship experience in the local church. Of course, you may not be a very good singer, but you can sing and as the Bible says, "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD" (Ps. 100:1).

For some, this would include singing in tune, for others it might mean to sing out of tune, but that's okay (as long as you are not in the choir!), for when we sing together our hearts are joined in worship to the Lord. The point is this, our hearts should be in tune with God and ready to sing to God as we worship Him for His many blessings.

John B. Gough was once placed in a pew with a man so repulsive that he moved to the farther end of the pew, according to Amos R. Wells. The congregation began to sing Charlotte Elliot's hymn, "Just as I am, Without One Plea." The man joined in the singing so heartily that Mr. Gough moved up nearer, though the man's singing was "positively awful." At the end of one of the stanzas, John noticed that the man had a paralysis problem and it was hard for him to move his vocal chords and sing. The man, in his pitiful condition, tried with his twitching lips to make music of the glorious words. Mr. Gough then thought that never in his life had he heard music so beautiful as the blundering singing of that hymn by the paralyzed man. Folks, we may not be the best singer in the world, but we can still sing from the depths of our hearts.

Many years ago I was at Water Street Rescue Mission. Just before I preached a man said he wanted to sing a song, so the chaplain left him sing. He got up and sang the hymn "Near to the Heart of God." This particular fellow could not sing in tune very well. However, he sang all the verses to the hymn. To this day, every time I hear this song or sing this hymn, my mind goes back to that night and that man who could not sing, but a Christian man who had a song in his heart!

1 Corinthians 14:26

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."

A psalm was a song taken from the Psalter or book of Psalms (the hymnbook of Israel). It refers to the Scriptural singing that occurred during the early church meetings. The early Christians were singing Christians as we will see in this study (Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). This is because they possessed a song in their hearts. They had something to sing about. They had joy and gladness in their hearts. The same should be true for each one of us as Christians. We should come to church in tune and leave church in tune, possessing a song of gladness and joy in our hearts.

In the year 1742 John Wesley gave these five rules on singing in church:

1. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up and you will find a blessing.
2. Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength.
3. Sing modestly. Do not bawl so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation; but strive to unite your voices together so as to make one clear, melodious sound.
4. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung, be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it.
5. Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. In order to do this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound but offered to God continually.

b. We are to sing during the day.

Psalm 59:16

“But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.”

Our singing is to occur in “the morning” as we worship God in the first part of the day and we are also called upon to sing during what is called “the day of my trouble.” This is because throughout the day we face many different trials and circumstances that we must deal with. How do we deal with them? Well, the Bible tells us that singing during our times of trouble and temptation are very important.

We have heard that “prayer changes things” but we can also conclude that “praise changes things.” When we have a singing, joyful, and praising heart, it enables us in many ways to turn away from our troubles and temptations of life, and find our

strength and victory in the Lord. We need to possess a singing heart throughout the day. It will preserve us from the attacks of the enemy.

Psalm 96:2

“Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.”

We need to have a daily song in our hearts and upon our lips! We need to live life on the higher plain of a joyful and fulfilling life that is evidenced by a changed heart and new song. From “day to day” we are to possess a song of deliverance, joy, and worship in our hearts as we live for God and adore Him and His presence in our life. This verse reminds us that Christians are to have a song of joy and gladness in their hearts all day long.

Merrill Dunlop wrote:
“All day long my heart keeps singing
For I know that Christ is mine
I am now a new creation
For I've tasted His salvation
Gone my fears
And gone my doubting
I am saved by grace divine.”

c. We are to sing during the night.

It's wonderful to have a song of gladness in our hearts during the day. But did you know that the Bible also speaks of possessing a song of joy and contentment during the night?

Did you know that God gives us songs in the night? Job 35:10 says: "But none saith, Where is God, my maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

“Songs in the night
The Lord giveth songs in the night.
Sorrows may come, days dark and drear
Still He giveth songs in the night.”

American pastor and author James H. Brookes told of visiting a friend's house and hearing the music of a bird singing. It was not the ordinary sound of chirping;

instead it resembled the strains of a lovely melody. At first Brookes didn't know where it was coming from; but when he glanced around the room, he saw a beautiful bullfinch in a birdcage. The lady of the house explained that it had been taught to sing that way at night. The teacher would repeat the notes time and again until the bird was able to mimic them. But this was possible only because it was dark and the bird's attention would not be diverted.

In a similar way, as Christians we often learn our sweetest songs in the night when there are no distractions in our life and we have a sense of God's wonderful fellowship and faithfulness to us. Sometimes these songs come to us when the trials of life close in around us. This was David's experience. He was cast down and overcome with despair and discouragement and then he remembered God's continuing love for his life and found a song in his heart within the night.

David declared in Psalm 42:8:

"Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

David prayed that God's love and God's song would be with him continually by day and by night. This reminds us that when we are experiencing God's love for us in our daily living, it will produce a song of happiness, joy, and fulfillment. In fact, even during the night, we can awake with a song of joy in our hearts knowing of God's constant love, companionship, and provision for us. Everything might be changing in our lives, but the Lord is still our stability, strength, and song, even in the stillness and silence of the night!

A song of joy and gladness is produced in our hearts, even during the sleepless night, as we experience God's unconditional and unending love for us, as He cares for us, communes with us, and calms our hearts.

A young woman was involved in a car wreck that caused her to be in a coma for a long, long time. The nurses all took very good care of her - bathed her, combed her hair, turned her so she wouldn't get bed sores, etc. She was neat, and her room was spotless. Obviously, she was taken care of in a professional manner by a dedicated staff of caring nurses. There was one nurse there in the ward who did all these tasks plus something else. She sang to her while she was giving her a bath or combing her hair, etc.

One day something wonderful and unexpected happened. The girl came out of her coma. Everyone was jubilant and excited. She was asked by those around her if she remembered anything. Did she remember them combing her hair, bathing her, cleaning her room? Did she remember them talking to her? On and on they asked. She paused and thought for a moment, then said she did not remember any of those things; however, she remembered someone singing. She heard songs in the night!

God loves us and cares for us. He is always concerned about our difficulties that we are experiencing in our lives. No matter how difficult and perplexing our problems are, God gives us the grace and the strength to go through our trials and allows us to rise above our circumstances. God's heart of love is touched by our griefs, our sorrows, our perplexities. As He comes to our aid, He calms our soul, communes with us, and gives us songs in the night!

Psalm 77:6

"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search."

Psalm 149:5

"Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds."

This is something that only Christians can experience. We can be awakened in the night for whatever reason and sense God's presence, faithfulness, companionship, and love for us that results in possessing a song of inner gladness and joy, which is often expressed outwardly or vocally in singing. And yes, the song of joy and blessing can overwhelm us in the evening, as we commune with God in sweet fellowship.

"Is the midnight closing round you?
Are the shadows dark and long?
Ask Him to come close beside you,
And He'll give you a new, sweet song.
He'll give it and sing it with you;
And when weakness lets it down,
He'll take up the broken cadence,
And blend it with His own.

And many a rapturous minstrel
Among those sons of light,
Will say of His sweetest music
"I learned it in the night."
And many a rolling anthem,
That fills the Father's home,
Sobbed out its first rehearsal,
In the shade of a darkened room."

Acts 16:25 reveals this Biblical episode:

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."

God is the only One who can give us a song in the night. Yes, it's a song when the physical darkness surrounds us but by extension and application, it's also a song when the spiritual darkness tries to overwhelm and overtake our lives. Having God's song of joy and peace in the night of affliction and difficulty is something that is supernatural. You cannot explain it but only experience it.

A woman shared this testimony. "I have always thought that there is power in the skilled combination of words and music, but never more than in this long winter's night. When God feels unreachable in the choking darkness, truth put to music cuts through like a shaft of His light, and I feel I can find my way again. So it was on Thursday as I numbly followed my grandmother's casket out of the church, and heard the introductory notes of 'How Great Thou Art' ring out. I couldn't stay lost or numb or forsaken while the truth of God's immensity washed over me in song. Though my hands may be emptied, still He will fill them up with His presence and His love."

Friend, let's not despair when trials and troubles descend upon us. God is with us; God will help us; God will give us a song. Every Christian should live with a song in his heart.

- Has the world choked out your song?
- Has a particular sin stolen God's joyful song from your heart?
- What has stolen away your melody of gladness?

We need to identify this so we can once again return to possessing a song of inner joy and gladness once again, which is often expressed outwardly and vocally as well.

Psalm 137:1-4

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us (mocked us) *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?”

This is written from the people’s Babylonian bondage. “We hanged our harps upon the willows” indicates that they lost the joy of music in their hearts and lives. There was no use for musical instruments. From the human standpoint, at least, there was nothing to sing about. And without a song to sing, there was no need of musical accompaniment. This is why they hung their harps on the willow tree branches. Hanging up their harps was in essence saying, “We’re hanging it up, we lost our music and melody in our hearts and therefore will not be playing any longer.”

This was a sad point in the lives and history of God’s people. They were weeping instead of singing. However, their weeping was due to their own disobedience and discipline which came from the Lord. Their city, temple, and homes had been destroyed, their people had been deported, and the throne of David had been set aside. But even worse, they had seen the Babylonian soldiers get a twisted satisfaction out of throwing their own Jewish babies against the walls and smashing their heads (Ps. 137:9). It was one way the Babylonians could limit the future generation of their enemies. The people had lost their fellowship with God, they were under the discipline of God, and therefore they lost their singing before God!

In fact, in mockery and sarcasm, the heathen Babylonians wanted Israel to sing about God and Jerusalem, but they refused to do so. The heathen said something like this: “Sing us one of those happy songs you used to sing in your homeland!” But God’s chosen people replied: “How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?” There could be no song in the heathen land, which was the land of God’s chastisement and discipline, but also a land and place that was not conducive for music. This is because the heathen despised and mocked Israel’s worship.

F. B. Meyer wrote:

“The land of the stranger and the song of the Lord can never be found together.”

In other words, when we are living in the wrong place and under God’s chastisement, we will lose our song. The lesson is easy to see. Disobedience steals away our song! Added to this, too much activity, too much work, and too little devotional time with God can rob us of our song. We will find ourselves living in a strange land without fellowshiping with God. Satan wants to steal away our song of joy and gladness from our hearts. Let us never forget this. He is crafty and knows how to get us to hang up our harps and stop singing!

- Have you lost your melody of gladness?
- Do you need a tune up?
- What or who has stolen away your song?
- In what strange land have you been living?
- Do you want your song to return?

“You may have the joy-bells ringing in your heart,
And a peace that from you never will depart;
Walk the straight and narrow way,
Live for Jesus every day,
He will keep the joy-bells ringing in your heart.

Joy-bells ringing in your heart,
Joy-bells ringing in your heart;
Take the Savior here below
With you everywhere you go;
He will keep the joy-bells ringing in your heart.”

God wants us to be a singing Christian! This is illustrated in another way.

II. In the facts related to our singing

Music has a profound impact upon our lives. This is why we need to be listening to the right kind of music.

Albert Einstein confessed:

“If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.”

There was a memorial meeting held for Jerry McAuley at the Water Street Mission, New York City. It was here that McAuley, as a born-again Christian had helped many others accept Christ. General Clinton B. Fisk said that one night, when in a seaman's mission meeting in Liverpool, a sailor with a shining face arose to give a testimony. Many were startled when he began by saying, "I found Christ over there in America."

This man was known as "Swearing Johnny" before his conversion. He said, "When we were paid off, I would take my money to the saloons, and pretty soon I was again drunk. I went out into the street, and the snow was beating against my face. As I passed along the street I heard singing, and stopped to listen. I heard them sing these words: 'I am so glad that Jesus loves me, Jesus loves even me.'

'I'll go in and see about that,' I said to myself. I went in, and there saw that wonderful man, Jerry McAuley, and he led me to Christ. 'Yes,' said his wife, 'and it's been nothing but Jerry McAuley and 'Jesus loves me' ever since Johnny's ship came home.'"

The song which that sinning sailor heard was written by one of America's sweet singers, P. P. Bliss. Often it has made its appeal to the heart of those who have heard the words:

“I am so glad that our Father in heav'n
Tells of His love in the Book He has giv'n;
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.”

This man, “swearing Johnny,” was saved and he had a song in his heart for the deliverance that God gave to him. God can turn the hardened heart of a sinner into a singing saint.

There are several facts about our singing.

- a. Our song is born out of deliverance.

Psalm 40:1-3

“I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

In Psalm 40 we repeatedly see David moving out of the pits and then praising God for His wonderful deliverance. This is apparent throughout the entire Psalm but especially in the first and last part of the Psalm. For this reason, we can call this portion of God’s Word, “From Pits to Praises.” We can’t be sure about the background for writing this Psalm. We know that David wrote it and some place its composition in the days when David was fearful of Saul’s persecution and when he was the object of King Saul’s hate.

1 Samuel 18:28-29

“And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.”

1 Samuel 19:1

“And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.”

It’s also probable that David, in this Psalm, interjects other experiences in his life such as his flight from Absalom and his own sin with Bathsheba. What we know is that David was facing a terrible and fearful time in his life which he compared to a “horrible pit” in verse 2. David was in the pits (difficult experiences of life) and was looking for deliverance from God. Have you been there lately? In the pits of life? In this Psalm we find David being rescued from the pits and praising God. He became a singing saint and his song was sparked by his deliverance.

“God’s help comes, not too soon,
Lest we should not know
The blessedness of trusting in the dark.
And God’s help comes not too late,
Lest we should know the misery of
Trusting in vain.”

The “new song” (Psalm 33:3) of David’s experience does not refer to a new rock and roll song and sound for our times. Many have used this passage to approve their compromised music. They claim that this new song would be similar to so-called Christian hip-hop, soft rock, folk rock, rap, urban, alternative, metal, etc. for our contemporary times and culture. Of course, to come to this conclusion is a total absurdity and distorts the true meaning and understanding of this text. This refers to a total renewal song, a purer and nobler song that would be reflected in both the sounds and words of music. It would be a song that does not reflect the corrupt nature of the culture. The word “new” indicates that this song is something that is fresh and changed in its quality and character. You cannot say this about Christian Rock Music for it sounds like the world and mimics the world’s corrupt culture.

Let’s update this to our times. By virtue of its name, a new song demands freshness and difference in every way, in both the expression of its words and musical sounds. Of course, in David’s day, this “new song” simply described the joy and praise he would vocally bring to God when being delivered from his calamity. It had nothing to do with a new type of rock beats and the loud sounds of Contemporary Christian Music since these were not part of David’s time.

Contemporary Christian Music artists want Psalm 40:3 to read, “many shall hear it” (the new rock sound) but this is not what the text says. The Bible says “many shall see it” which speaks of the transformation in David’s life – a transformation from sorrow to joy, defeat to victory. Of course, this transformation would be reflected in his song which he sang. David was not really talking about a new style of song, but a song that reflected his deliverance from his pit of defeat and sorrow, a song that was filled with joy and gladness. It was a song that was a reflection of a new life, a new start, and a new heart. David experienced all of these things when he was delivered from his pit. This song was not necessarily a newly written song but a renewal song – a song that centered upon the joy and blessing of David’s deliverance.

Have you been living in the pits? Have you been experiencing defeat and despair in your Christian life? If so, you can pass through David’s experience and be delivered from the pits and begin praising God with a new song of deliverance. You can once again become a singing saint!

Dear friend, this is a song of deliverance of the soul set free.

“Tis the song of the soul set free
And its melody is ringing
'Tis the song of the soul set free
Joy and peace to me it's bringing
'Tis the song of the soul set free
And my heart is ever singing
Hallelujah hallelujah
The song of the soul set free.”

This is a song of joy that comes from being set free from the power of defeat, despair and sin and a song that reflects joy and living life to the fullest. It's a song that stems from living a truly satisfied, fulfilling, and liberated life, free from sin's power and bondage.

“There's a new song in my heart
Since the Saviour set me free.
There's a new song in my heart
'Tis a heav'nly harmony.
All my sins are washed away
In the blood of Calvary
O what peace and joy
Nothing can destroy
There's a new song in my heart!”

We need to experience this new song not only in salvation but in those times within our Christian life when we become bogged down in the pits of life, when our life becomes filled with depression and discouragement. God wants to turn defeated saints into singing saints. There is a song of joy, blessing, thanksgiving, and gladness that revolves around God being our deliverer.

“I have tasted of freedom
I can go where He's leading
For shackles can hold me no more
I have learned of life's essence
I stand in His presence
And sing with my heart He is Lord.

There are days filled with sorrow
Plans for tomorrow
But this is the time I must sing.
And I know there's a reason
Why in His own season
He gives me a song I can sing.

So keep silent ye mountains
Ye fields and ye fountains
For this is the time I must sing
It's the time to sing praises
To the rock of the ages
This is the time I must sing!"

If you are living in the pits, you can be delivered from that place and emerge as a singing saint with a new song of joy and deliverance in your heart. Where do you want to live your life? Remember that life is basically a choice. I choose to live in the pits or I choose to live in the praises!

Here is another fact.

b. Our song is based on Scripture.

The Bible teaches that Scripture can and should produce a song in our heart, a song that is generated from studying the Bible and having Scriptural truths and themes within our hearts. Under this point, we are going to focus on how the truth and promises of God's Word produces a singing heart and singing saints!

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."

Someone said:

"Where words fail, music speaks."

There is a lot of truth to this.

Our song is always to be based upon truth and Scripture.

1. The desire to learn truth (“Let the word of Christ dwell in you” - 16a)

We cannot have a Biblical song without knowing that the Bible teaches and says. As Christians, we are to desire to know God’s truth and allow it to produce a song in our hearts.

There are four details given about the Bible.

a. It’s rule

The word “Let” is just a little word but an important one. It’s a word of permission. We must allow God’s Word to rule in our hearts today as we yield to its authority. This means we must allow God’s Word to have its way in our hearts and lives. Have you been allowing God’s Word to take control of your heart and life? In what areas have you been holding back? Don’t try and fool yourself. BE HONEST! Let Him have His way with thee! Stop living in a fool’s paradise!

b. It’s Revealer

Jesus revealed God’s Word to us. The “word of Christ” is referring to all of Scripture - not only to the words Christ spoke on earth to the apostles (John 14:26; 15:7). Certainly the words He shared in the Gospel accounts were part of the “word of Christ.” However, the entire content and revelation of Scripture encompasses all of Christ’s words, since Christ is God and the Bible is called the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). In other words, God gave it to us and since Christ is part of the Godhead (Col. 2:9) He is its divine Author. The “word of Christ” is referring to the word or special revelation He brought into the world for mankind to read and know.

The phrase “word of Christ” (only used here) is synonymous to another commonly used phrase - “the word of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:8; 4:15; 2 Thess. 3:1). This reminds us that Christ, as God, is the Author of this divine book. The Scriptures came from Christ (origin of Bible) but they also always magnify Jesus Christ (purpose of Bible). Perhaps both thoughts are meant by this statement – “word of Christ.”

c. It’s residency

The word “dwell” (Col. 3:16a) literally means “to be at home in.” Let me ask, has God’s Word found a home in your heart? It is one thing for the believer to be in the Word; it is another for the Word to be in the believer! We must allow God’s truth to have free access and reign in all parts of our lives. Truth must translate into our lives! His Word should permeate our whole being so that we make all decisions and plans in light of its teachings. God’s Word dwelling in our hearts, acts as a faithful guide, which leads us through life. It informs us and shows us how to live and walk. By study, meditation, and application of the Word, it becomes a permanent abiding part of one’s life.

Psalm 119:11

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. “

d. It’s results

There are two results from learning truth.

1. We treasure it.

The word “richly” (Col. 3:16b) means that we treasure God’s Word in our hearts. God’s Word must be highly prized and appreciated as a woman’s wedding ring. How much do we appreciate God’s Word today?

Someone paraphrased this portion of the Word like this:

“Let the Word of Christ saturate you and remain in you as a rich treasure.”

Today, there is far more interest shown in movies, musical performances, and various manmade entertainments than in God’s Word. Many Christians cannot honestly say that God’s Word dwells in their hearts richly because they do not take time to read it, study it, meditate in it, and memorize it.

We have our riches but we don’t have God’s Word at the head of the list!

Jesus said in Luke 12:34:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Where is your treasure today? Is it in your bank account or the Bible? Is it in your

material things or Biblical things? When you say, “I don’t feel like going to church today, you are admitting that you don’t treasure God’s Word. When you stop having your devotions regularly, you no longer treasure the Bible.

God’s Word is a treasure to us. When we are yielded to God’s Word it transforms us, informs us, inspires us, guides us, comforts us, motivates us, sustains us, and grows us. It should be our treasure!

“Holy Bible, Book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came;
Mine to teach me what I am.
Mine to chide me when I rove;
Mine to show a Savior’s love;
Mine thou art to guide and guard;
Mine to punish or reward.
Mine to tell of joys to come,
And the rebel sinner’s doom;
Holy Book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine.”

2. We grow by it

The expression “in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16c) reminds us that we grow in wisdom as we allow God’s Word to find a home in our hearts and a treasured place in our lives. This is the result of being filled with the Bible. As we learn and apply God’s Word to our lives we gain wisdom for daily living. Gaining wisdom on how to live is part of the growth process. Having the Word of Christ richly dwell in us produces information regarding how to live. Wisdom has been called the science of learning!

The word “wisdom” is found six times in the book (Col. 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5). Paul uses this word many times to once again counter the anti-biblical wisdom that the Gnostics were promoting. They claimed to get their wisdom from angels, dreams, and visions. But the Christian derives his wisdom from God’s Word. Let us never forget this. Wisdom refers to spiritual insight (spiritual intelligence). We obtain wisdom through studying the Scripture and discovering God’s will for our lives. The wisdom we receive from the Bible tells us how to live right, do right, and

be right. Wisdom refers to what we believe in relationship to Christ, critical doctrines, and Christian living.

Psalm 119:105

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

We need the wisdom (spiritual insight), which is gained through the Bible, so we can live intelligently, discerningly, and triumphantly in this present world.

You won't find spiritual wisdom in the tabloids, TV shows, and CNN! You find it in God's Word! Have you allowed the humanists to tell you how to raise your children? They tell you that you should never spank the child and that you must allow the child to express himself. Man with his humanism and hell-bent philosophies is spiritually ignorant of God's Word! He is a spiritual dunce. Stop listening to man and start listening to God!

The wisdom or spiritual insight we receive from God's Word enables us to make decisions and live in such a way that we are pleasing to God. Wisdom or spiritual intelligence is the beginning of a successful and fruitful Christian life. God puts no premium on ignorance.

As we are devoted students of the Word, we learn its deeper truths through study, meditation, and prayer, and we grow in spiritual wisdom and intelligence.

“The road to wisdom?
Well, it's plain
And simple to express:
Err and err
And err again
But less
And less
And less.”

As we follow the spiritual insight we receive from God's Word, and apply it to our lives, we will stop sinning, falling, and failing in life. We will stop trying to swim against the current, or the way God wants to take our lives.

In Colossians 3:16-17 and Ephesians 5:18-20 we discover that there are some direct

similarities or parallels between being filled with the Word of Christ (God's Word) and being filled (controlled) with the Spirit of God.

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."

Ephesians 5:18-19

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

The results of the Word-filled life (Col. 3:16-17) are the same as the Spirit-filled life. This can only mean one thing; when a person is filled or controlled by God's Word, they will also be filled, or under the influence and control of the Spirit. These two expressions are interchangeable because the Holy Spirit does not work independent of the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to change us for the glory of God. The Word (Bible) in our heart and mind is comparable to a handle by which the Spirit turns the will of a person and changes their lives. You can't separate the working of the two.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said:

"Nothing is more dangerous than to put a wedge between the Word and the Spirit, to emphasize either one at the expense of the other. It is the Spirit and the Word, the Spirit upon the Word, and the Spirit in us as we read the Word."

The Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum. He uses the Word to sanctify our lives (John 15:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit will never lead you contrary to this Book! Don't claim that you are being led by God's Spirit when you are singing rock and roll music in God's House, putting tattoos all over your body, and when you are not willing to forgive your neighbor.

Someone has said:

"The Author of the Book will never lead us contrary to truth of the Book!"

The result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the same as the result of letting the Word of Christ richly dwell in one's heart and life. Word filled and Spirit filled the same spiritual reality viewed from two sides or different angles. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by His Word. To have the Word dwelling richly within our hearts results in being controlled by His Spirit.

In Ephesians 5:18-20, the Holy Spirit provides power and motivation so we can experience the resultant effects (teaching, admonishing, singing, thanking) and in Colossians 3:16-17 the word richly dwelling the believer's heart provides instruction, so we can experience these same effects (teaching, admonishing, singing, thanking). This emphasizes that the filling of the Spirit is not some ecstatic or emotional experience, but a steady life of control that is marked by obedience to the truth of God's Word. When I'm filled or controlled by the Spirit, I'm following truth, I'm not following error, nor am I trying to create some kind of extra-biblical experience of speaking in tongues or rolling over and barking like a dog. This has nothing to do with being filled with the Spirit.

2. The desire to share truth ("teaching and admonishing one another"- 16d)

In this context, both teaching and admonishing other believers is the result of a believer's life overflowing with the Word of Christ. When God's Word is overflowing in our hearts, we will want to share it with fellow believers.

Every Christian has a responsibility to his brothers and sisters in Christ concerning the matter of teaching and admonishing. We are not to live on an island by ourselves. We are to be helpful to one another. The preacher is not to be the only teacher in the church! We can teach and admonish one another, as we meet together, talk together, and study the Bible together over a cup of coffee.

Teaching has to do with doctrine, whereas admonishing has to do with duty. When we teach another person we are giving them both positive and negative instruction from God's Word. When we admonish another person we are giving them positive and negative advice regarding their behavior or conduct. Admonishment can be encouragement or reproof.

We need to have a teachable spirit today. If you are not teachable, then you are not reachable! Your life is not going to amount to a hill of beans unless you have a

teachable and then obedient spirit. If you say, “I don’t want to come to church today, or I don’t really care what the Bible says,” then you are going to have a very bumpy and uncomfortable ride in life. We must be open to the truths and insights that others have received from studying God’s Word and have a teachable spirit. I have learned much from the saints over the years. I’ve been taught, warned, and encouraged as God’s people shared with me truths from the Bible that they have learned. I’ve left homes and hospitals being helped, challenge, and encouraged by other saints.

I remember going into one hospital to share some of God’s Word with a dear old saintly lady. I will never forget what happened. Instead of me doing the preaching, she did the preaching! Some of these dear saints can preach up a storm and call down Heaven’s blessing! She shared with me some wonderful truths from God’s Word and encouraged my heart greatly to remain faithful in the ministry.

It’s thrilling to realize that we can awake in the morning and be blessed with the opportunity to teach and reach someone with the truth. We are to learn together, share together, fellowship together, and stand together in these days of moral confusion, when right is wrong and wrong is right. It’s a tremendous blessing to share truth with others for its truth that corrects us, comforts us, and calls us to a deeper way of life.

Paul goes on to explain this truth.

- a. The content of truth (“in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” – Colossians 3:16e)

You might ask, “I thought the content of truth was found in the Bible?” Yes, truth is found in the Bible. But truth can be put to song! When the Word of God is in our heart we will end up TEACHING it and SINGING about it! This is what is brought out in the next points. We can communicate Bible truth through music! This is talking about putting the Bible into song! When I sing, I am to sing truth! I can actually share truth through song! Here is something to contemplate. You have no more right to sing about error than a preacher has to preach error! Our songs and preaching should reflect truth instead of error. Paul is teaching that we can and do communicate truth through the vehicle of our songs. We can sing truth! We can put God’s Word to song!

This is what we are talking about in Colossian 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 communicating truth through song.

Ephesians 5:18-19 states something similar:

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

The Bible is teaching that we should not be controlled by wine (alcohol) but instead be filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul then goes on to explain one of the signs of the filling or control of the Spirit in the Christian’s life is that of singing (“singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”). Again, this speaks of a song of gladness and joy within our hearts. It’s a heart of joy and praise to God. The Spirit-filled life is a fountain, bubbling over with joy (Acts 13:52). This joy is evidenced by what the Bible terms as a song in the hearts of God’s people, a melody of gladness.

“I have a song that Jesus gave me,
It was sent from heav'n above;
There never was a sweeter melody,
'tis a melody of love.
In my heart there rings a melody,
There rings a melody with heaven's harmony;
In my heart there rings a melody;
There rings a melody of love.”

This particular verse should encourage everyone who finds it difficult to carry a tune that’s suitable for listening ears. You will notice that in this passage you can and should be “speaking to yourselves” musically and “making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Of course, we do this inwardly and this is where a song originates from – the heart. We can possess a melody of gladness in our heart without necessarily having a good voice to project that song from our lips. What is important is that we have a personal and ongoing song in our hearts.

Yes, it’s true that a song can be in our heart without necessarily coming out of our mouth! But Paul seems to be stressing how vocal singing should stem from the realm of our heart. This means our song should be sincere, real, and without

hypocrisy. The point seems to be this. Singing should characterize our personal lives even under the worst of circumstances. Many times this is precisely the time when God gives us a song to sing. It's during the times of our fiery trials.

At this point, we want to look at the Biblical content of our songs as mentioned in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19. Most believe that the three words mentioned here (psalms, hymns, spiritual songs) refer to three general categories of music. This is likely true and these three categories of music are ways to express God's Word in song. In other words, there are three areas of musical communication that are used to express God's Word to others.

1. Psalms

The "psalms" refer to the 150 INSPIRED psalms and songs in the Psalter. Psalms describe those inspired utterances which are found in the book by that name (Book of Psalms) which were sung as part of Israel's worship. These refer to the inspired Old Testament psalms. The word "psalms" implies that believers sang them with musical accompaniment. They sang psalms put to music much as we do today.

The word Psalm literally speaks of "a striking, a twanging." The word was used of striking the chords of a musical instrument. Some people frown upon musical instruments in worship but the word "Psalm" speaks of "a set piece of music" that is accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument.

2. Hymns

The word "hymn" means a religious ode to celebrate God (Mark 14:26). The "hymns" are NONINSPIRED compositions of music addressed directly to God, those pieces of music which ascribe worship and praise directly to God (they are about God) like the modern song "How Great Thou Art." These are songs of praise and thanksgiving to God that were not taken directly from the Book of Psalms. Again, they are not inspired in the same sense as the Psalms. However, it is thought that some portions of the New Testament (Col. 1:15–20 and Phil. 2:6–11) were originally hymns sung in the early church. However, the word "hymns" primarily connotes songs that are based upon Scripture but not always directly and completely taken from the inspired words of Scripture. Hymns are generally understood as songs or odes of worship and praise addressed to God the Father or to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Jesus! the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.”

The word “hymn” applies to all songs that are written which bring praise to God for His greatness, grace, and glory. Of course, the hymns that specifically ascribe praise to God are not the only types of songs that are part of our hymnbook. There is another category of music that reflects the substance of all true and godly music.

3. Spiritual songs

Spiritual songs refer to religious songs describing Christian experience. They too, are not inspired like the Psalms. They probably refer to spiritual themes and expressions related to Christian living which are set to music. The “spiritual songs” can be identified as hymns and songs that revolve around the Christian experience, or other lyrical compositions dealing with various spiritual themes, which were NOT addressed directly to God. They would be songs like “In the Garden” and “Stand Up for Jesus.”

Spiritual songs convey two important matters.

1. They indicate purpose

They are songs that convey the importance of living a spiritual life that is honoring to God. This is their sole purpose. They are actually songs that are opposed or opposite of secular odes or songs which have no spiritual emphasis. These are songs designed to portray what living the spiritual life is all about. They are songs that reflect the spiritual experiences which occur in our Christian lives because we are trusting in God and living according to His plan and virtues. An illustration of this might be found in the words:

“O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.”

Spiritual songs might also include expressing a spiritual or God-honoring testimony when singing such as “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:9–10). Spiritual songs express what Christ has done for us. In short, spiritual songs focus on the spiritual themes and experiences of the Christian life and give testimony of the spiritual blessings God has brought into our lives. They are actually a singing testimony of those who are saved and who are enjoying and longing to live the Christian life.

2. They indicate origin

The third expression of “spiritual songs” not only emphasizes spiritual themes of songs but also points to the Spirit’s underlying activity in all godly music since they are a response to the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18). After all, spiritual themes are generated by the Holy Spirit. All spiritual music which honors God’s nature of holiness, righteousness, and orderliness is generated by the Holy Spirit. Godly music, as revealed in Scripture, is designated as an activity of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Godly music is a response to the presence of the Holy Spirit, His filling ministry, in our lives. All true worship that reflects God’s nature is an activity or work of the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:22-23). We need to talk about this in light of the musical trends of today.

Spiritual songs are songs, which in both words and musical sound, stem from the realm of our spiritual life, which originates from the new nature and Holy Spirit working within the realm of our human spirit. Therefore, these songs will always reflect *newness and difference* from the world’s songs. In fact, the Spirit’s control or filling ministry (Eph. 5:19) will always be evidenced by godly music, which reflects God’s own nature and character (peace, harmony, order, holiness, righteousness) within our “born again” human spirit.

We need to distinguish between spiritual and soulish songs today. Spiritual songs originate from the realm of the human spirit which is where the new nature and the Holy Spirit operate. However, soulish music originates from the realm of soul which is where the sin nature or flesh manifest its ugly head. One thing is certain, when the music sounds like the musical perversion of our culture, then it is soulish and not spiritual. It is carnal and sensual and not spiritual. In our musical time of worship, people should see that God is with us, not that God is really cool or that we are really hip. They are to see that we are different (2 Cor. 5:17).

One man who headed up a mission's agency told me that "we need to be sensitive to the music issue and the ethnic musicology in other parts of the world." This is a fancy way of saying that music does not matter. But it does matter! It is to be spiritual music – music that originates from the Spirit and not the soul of man. This means we need to carefully and prayerfully consider the issue of spiritual music. Both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 speaks about "spiritual songs." These are songs sponsored, directed, and approved by the Holy Spirit. The word "spiritual" (pneumatikos) is built upon the word "spirit" (pneuma). It can refer to both man's human spirit (the spiritual part of a Christian's existence that houses God's life and nature) and to the work of the Holy Spirit. In this case, both are true.

Godly music is generated from the realm or area of the human spirit, which is born again, possessing God's life, and is a response to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit operating in our lives. Spiritual music in Scripture is designated as an activity of the spiritual part of man's existence (regenerated spirit with the new nature) and is the work of the Holy Spirit which manifests God's life within us (Eph. 5:19). The new nature, which resides in the realm of our born again spirit, initially prompts us to do what is right, while the Spirit empowers us to do right, even in the realm of our worship (Ezekiel 36:26-27). God's nature, which exists in the realm of our human spirit, and God's Spirit, work together and help us worship in a manner that is godlike and not according to the flesh. So we can conclude that "spiritual songs" are those songs that originate from the spiritual part of man's existence and are manufactured and directed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

As mentioned above, there is a flip side to spiritual music and spiritual songs. There is also soulish music, which is worldly and carnal music that feeds the soulish part of man's existence (James 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:14), the place where the flesh or old nature continues to operate and control the believer's life (Rom. 7:18). The flesh and evil cravings is the base part of man's existence (sensual nature) that operates within the realm of man's soul (his personal existence – will, emotion, intellect), which is continually trying to be brought back to God through the spiritual part of man's existence. The flesh can only be fleshly (John 3:5-6; 6:63) and this means that it takes the spiritual part of man's existence to make our worship and music acceptable to God.

Someone remarked:

"Tell me what you listen to, and I'll tell you who you are."

In summary, there are spiritual songs and carnal songs, spiritual worship and soulish worship. Spiritual songs stem from the realm of the human spirit that houses God's life and nature. However, soulish songs and worship stems from the corruption of the old nature which still manifests its presence in the soul. Soulish worship is occupied with beautiful buildings and ecclesiastical furniture, with elaborate ceremonies, with priestly garments, and with whatever appeals to the emotions and flesh (rock music, comedy, celebrities, etc.).

Conquering soulish or fleshly music should be the determination of the spiritual believer. Happy is he who can make the clear distinction between soulish and spiritual music. Much music that is written today, if you can call it music, is only designed to touch the physical (soulish) senses but not the spiritual senses of the born again Christian.

Bob Jones Sr. used to say:

"When the music gets to your toe before it gets to your head, it hasn't come from God."

When this takes place the music is grooving you physically instead of moving you spiritually. Peter identifies and connects right worship with "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5) that are sent up to God because they come from the part of man's existence that houses the new nature and which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, spiritual sacrifices are non-carnal and they "are acceptable to God" (1 Pet. 2:5). They do not originate from the soul where the flesh resides; therefore, God accepts them as being holy and worthy of His praise.

An old farmer went to the city one weekend and attended the big city church. He came home and his wife asked him how it was. "Well," said the farmer, "It was good. They did something different, however. They sang praise choruses instead of hymns." "Praise choruses," said his wife, "What are those?" "Oh, they're okay. They're sort of like hymns, only different," said the farmer. "Well, what's the difference?" asked the wife. The farmer said, "Well, it's like this. If I were to say to you, 'Martha, the cows are in the corn,' well that would be a hymn.' 'If on the other hand, I were to say to you, 'Martha, Martha, Martha, Oh Martha, MARTHA, MARTHA, the cows, the big cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the white cows, the black and white cows, the COWS, COWS, COWS, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, . . .' Well, that would be a praise chorus."

Much of what is called “praise and worship music” today is man-centered and fleshly oriented. When a man or woman is shaking their hips back and forth on stage, and trying to pump people up with fleshly rock music, we can conclude that these expressions or actions are no longer a spiritual sacrifice. When the perverted sounds of a rock culture are heard within the musical piece then the music becomes fleshly in its design and purpose.

Some saints pretend to be soldiers in the Lord's army while trying to march to the beat of Lucifer's drums! The church needs to clean up its music today and present to God a form of spiritual worship and songs, worship that originates from the realm of our new life and the Holy Spirit, and music that is designed to reflect righteousness instead of the rebellious sound of a perverted rock culture, which promotes sex, drugs, rebellion, and lies.

We must remember that music is not for sensual pleasure but for spiritual enrichment. This is why they are called “spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16). We are not to appreciate music on the basis of its physical or emotional appeal but on the effects it has on our spiritual lives. If music is going to bring praise to God, it must reflect and represent God – His nature or who He is! God is holy, righteous, pure, and orderly.

1 Corinthians 10:31

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”

The glory of God means that we are seeking to always reflect God’s character in our time of worship. If we are going to glorify God with our music and time of worship, we must listen to music (spiritual music or spiritual songs) that reflect God’s nature – who He is. If we don’t listen to words and sounds that glorify God, then we are glorifying the flesh and man.

What is spiritual music? It’s music that is separated from the worldly and carnal music of our age. You may have your arguments to listen to the sounds of a perverted and rebellious culture, but God’s truth about spiritual songs is indisputable and cannot be overturned. The church on a large scale must return to spiritual songs!

Now let's remember why these three categories of music were mentioned in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Paul uses these three categories of music to emphasize that we should be singing Scripture – Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The spirit-filled Christian puts Scripture to song – “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” which refer to the direct writings of Scripture and spiritual themes that are represented in Scripture. In summary, we should be learning the Scripture and also be singing Scripture. We should allow His Word to so permeate our life so that it comes out in song. Scriptural learning results in Scriptural singing. The truths and themes of Scripture (salvation, grace, mercy, victory, etc.) cannot be contained by the Christian. They are truths and themes that become expressed in songs that originate from the heart of the Bible believing Christian.

b. The way to express truth (“singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”
– Colossians 3:16f)

George Eliot wrote:

“Life seems to go on without effort when I am filled with music.”

The word “singing” reminds us of the importance of being a singing saint – not a sour saint. The way we express truth is with “singing” (vocal singing) which means that we lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for the wonderful things He has done in our lives. Truth is presented before others when we vocally sing about God's grace, love, redemption, and nature. God wants us to be a singing saint expressing God and truth to those around us. A singing saint, who has God's Word in their hearts, will prevent them from becoming a sinning saint!

A singing saint will respond to spiritual music in this way:

“You have to, take a deep breath, and allow the music to flow through you. Revel in it, allow yourself to awe. When you play, allow the music to break your heart with its beauty.”

Notice:

1. The motivation behind our singing– “grace”

All of our songs should ultimately manifest thanks for the grace of God which has been given to us. The message about God's grace motivates us to sing! It provides

the stimulus behind our singing and is often the theme of our songs. I'm singing today out of appreciation and gratitude for God's marvelous grace!

We are to be grateful for grace! I have no other reason and motivation to sing, other than grace! It's grace that saves me, keeps me, and it should be grace that is the central stimulus for all my living, giving, and singing! It's grace that makes the difference in our lives – transforming grace, serving grace, and singing grace! Grace has planned it all and done it all!

Someone wrote:

"If you were music, I would listen to you ceaselessly, and my low spirits would brighten up."

As a Christian, our inner man is renewed as we apply Scriptural music with Scriptural themes to our daily lives.

2. The motive of our songs – "in your hearts"

Ludwig van Beethoven once said:

"I would rather write 10,000 notes than a single letter of the alphabet."

This reminds us of the importance of music and how music gets to our hearts. The "heart" indicates motive. Our songs or singing must express verbally what is already a reality in our hearts. When Paul tells believers to sing in their hearts he does not mean they should not sing with the voice. It's true that we can sing in our hearts but the outward expression is what Paul is driving at here. His concern is that the inner heart agrees with the mouth. What is going on within our hearts should agree with what is coming forth from our mouths.

Amos 5:23 gives us this sad reminder:

"Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

Why did God say this to His people? It's because what was happening on the outside (the playing of their music) was not what was truly happening on the inside (they were not filled with gratitude and thankfulness). They were merely playing music out of habit and not heart! Of course, there is a lesson in all of this for us today.

How often do we come to church and sing the songs of Zion and redemption out of habit and not heart? We ought to be ashamed when singing out of ritual instead of reality. Our singing should not be cold, lifeless, or without meaning. It must come from the heart in response to God's grace. Our motive needs to be right.

3. The ministry of our songs – “to the Lord”

Our songs of ministry or worship are to be directed to the Lord and dedicated to Him. They are not meant to bring the praises of men! Our songs should always be totally committed to God's glory and praise. Our ministry of singing must be directed and done “to the Lord” - not to entertain or to impress men. Let's be honest, much of what passes as modern music is done to entertain sinners in their sins, elicit emotional and fleshly (soulish) responses in Christians, instead of directing “spiritual music and songs” to the Lord – for His glory and honor.

Yes, “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” should be the norm of our Christian experience and life. We should have a song of joy in our hearts that expresses itself with outward praise!

John Philips said it best:

“To look at some Christians, one would think that they had been baptized in lemon juice.”

The hymn writer said, “It is glory just to walk with Him!” And as we walk with the Lord in cleanliness, close fellowship, and are captivated by God's Word, we can honestly say, or should I say, honestly sing these words:

“Always there is music
Always there is singing
Always there is gladness
In my heart since Christ has saved me!”

This is singing with grace in our hearts! This is a singing saint!

- Have you lost your song?
- If you are not singing, why not?
- Are you ready to confess any known sin and get back your song?

- Are you ready to sing your new song, your song of renewal?
- Do you remember that you can have a melody of gladness in your heart even when the trials of life overtake you?

During my days in Christian college, my one group used to sing a song that was entitled "Jesus is My Music." The words still ring within in my heart.

"My life was out of tune and happiness eluded me
 My life was dissonant and missing inner harmony
 But then I met the Savior and received His gift of grace
 And now my heart sings melody
 Jesus is my music, Jesus is my song
 Jesus is my music, I want to sing His praises
 All day long."

If Jesus is our music, we will be a singing saint! His life and ministry within us will cause us to have a song in our hearts. His life will give us meaning, purpose, and a new song!

In the middle of the soloist's number at church, the young grandson Chandler tugged on his grandmother's sleeve and whispered, "She can't sing very well, can she?" Knowing the woman had a deep love for the Lord, I said, "Chandler, she sings from her heart. That's what makes it good." He nodded thoughtfully. The mother then recounts this. Several days later as he and I were singing along with the car radio, Chandler stopped and said, "Nana, you sing from your heart, don't you?"

Somehow, about forty percent of churchgoers seem to have picked up the idea that singing in church is only for professional singers. The truth is that "singing is for all believers." The relevant question is not, "Do you have a voice?" but "Do you have a song?" Is there a song in your heart? God wants us to be a singing saint!

Someone said:

"Without music, life would be a mistake."

This would be especially true in relation to living the Christian life.

Psalm 69:30

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.”

This is a singing saint! In fact, here is the confession of a singing saint:

“If I cannot fly, let me sing.”