

The Grace of Singing

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God's amazing grace should put a song of gratitude and gladness in our hearts!



Ephesians 5:19 is a parallel verse:

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

The instruction given to the first century church concerning sacred music shows that there was obviously music, during the days and culture in which the early church lived, which did not reflect the new nature we receive at salvation. Therefore, there is an emphasis on spiritual songs which are songs that reflect the Spirit's ministry and work of consecration in our lives, songs that reflect the NEW nature (not the old nature).

In other words, we can violate Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 with our musical choices since certain rhythms and styles appeal to the flesh and are created for entertainment – not for a spiritual or teaching purpose. Rock Music violates the music policy of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19, since our music is to consist of spiritual songs (not fleshly songs), which are designed to influence the spiritual part of man's existence – not his fleshly existence.

The whole idea of “speaking to yourselves” and “in your heart” (Eph. 5:19) is conveying the importance of *personal* worship occurring in our hearts. Colossians 3:16 adds that we are also to be “admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This probably has a reference to *corporate* worship since we are to use our singing to minister to others. We receive instruction and encouragement when we sing together as God’s people. Of course, all our worship, whether personal or corporate is to be individually internalized and sincere. It’s to occur “in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16) as we sing together. It is to reach our hearts and not just our heads!

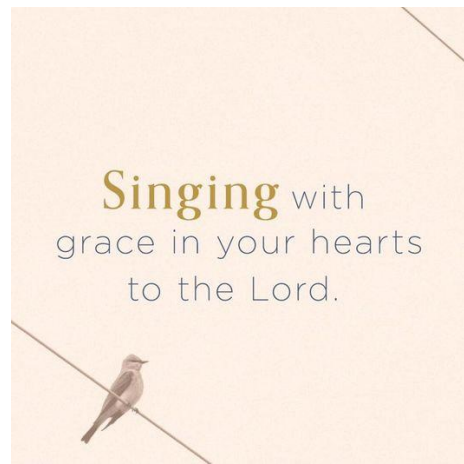
We observe from these verses that music was designed for worship, but it was always intended to have a teaching aspect related to it (“teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs”). Music is a powerful God-given tool that allows God’s Word to be communicated to our hearts, where it can “dwell” (be at home) in our hearts and enable us to live in a spiritual manner.

The word “dwell” reminds us that we must learn to live in the Scriptures so that the Scriptures can live in us! Godly music can have a powerful and sanctifying influence over our lives as it draws our attention to God’s Word. Music is to be very useful in our spiritual education in God’s truth and Word. For instance, some of the choruses we have learned point us back to the Scriptures in our times of difficulty. What we have learned in our songs can be a great help to us in times of need and discouragement. For instance, we should not miss the blessing of learning many of the great hymns, so we can recall them in our hearts and minds and have them redirect us to the great themes and promises of Scripture.

Music, including the great hymns of the faith, should also be used outside of the church in our daily routine of life (Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25). The Scriptural messages of songs should ring in our hearts and minds with the result of pointing us to God’s promises, His love, grace, mercy, strength, blessing, and the wonderful communion and fellowship we can have with the Lord.

Here is the point. Music was never designed for religious, rhythmic entertainment, to feed our fleshly wants and desires. It was specifically created for a teaching purpose. We should not minimize music’s Biblical role in our lives and ministries. Colossians 3:16 informs us that Biblical truth is essential for our everyday sanctified

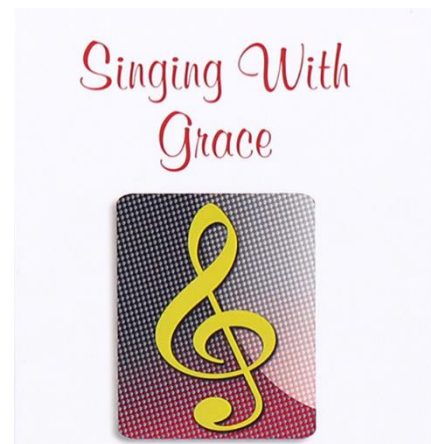
living and worship (John 4:24). Furthermore, this truth can be put to song and become a guide to our lives.



There are great positive benefits that come from a life filled with music, a type of music that causes the Word to richly dwell in the believer's heart and life. Of course, being taught and reminded about Scriptural themes through spiritual, musical expression should result in individual Christians "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." This is where grace comes into the musical picture.

In a specific way, the songs we sing and listen to should make us mindful of God's grace to us in Christ. In other words, the theme of God's grace should be the centerpiece of our learning and music. All our songs in some way should lead us back to grace - saving grace, sanctifying grace, and serving grace should be the overall theme of our singing and songs. In other words, believers should be singing songs from the depths of their hearts (with real emotion) which manifest thanks for the grace of God that has been given to them (1 Cor. 15:10).

But there is likely a broader understanding of the word grace. Strong defines "grace" in this context as "the divine (God's) influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude." I think this is correct. It is the grace of God working in our hearts that produces thanksgiving (1 Cor. 10:30; 2 Cor. 4:15). Therefore, Paul is thinking of the grace of thanksgiving being worked out in our hearts by God. In fact, "singing with grace in your heart to the Lord" correlates with "making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Paul seems to be linking grace with a spirit of joyfulness and thanksgiving (inner worship) which are the direct result of God moving upon our hearts. Only God can produce a singing heart that is filled with thankfulness and gratitude.



New Testament grace (God's favor and blessing) is sometimes viewed as an expression of the work of God in our hearts and souls. We are saved by grace (Eph.

2:8-9), sing by grace (Col. 3:16), give by grace (2 Cor. 8:1, 6-9), serve by grace (1 Cor. 15:10), and grow in grace (2 Pet. 3:18), which means God is at work in our hearts and lives bringing about His purposes and ultimately conforming us to Christ (Phil. 2:13). In Colossians 3:16, God is seen moving in our hearts to produce singing and thanksgiving for the grace that was showered upon our lives. Our response to God's grace is to sing with a grateful heart that is filled with deep emotion and amazement for what God has done for us. In one sense, all of our music is to be fueled by grace. Grace is the underlying cause for our music. Grace it to be the motivation and drive behind all our singing. Grace gives us a song!

One of the ways we know that God is moving in our hearts and influencing our lives is through our joy-filled and thankful singing – the melody of gladness (Eph. 5:19). God moves in our hearts to produce this spirit of gratitude in all our singing. It's not only WHAT we sing about, but HOW we sing it, with joy and gratefulness that shows the influence of God and His grace working in our hearts (Titus 2:11-12).

Tim Fisher said:

“Those who will not sing in church are showing that they may have nothing to sing about!”

We should have a singing and joyful heart of praise that is always ready to worship God. Singing, music, and praise should be a natural part of our Christian lives. I used to sing these words in a large choral group:

“Always there is singing, always there is a gladness,
In my heart since Christ has saved me.”

Singing with grace in our hearts means that God is at work in our hearts, moving in our innermost being creating thankfulness and joyfulness, which results in singing and praise to God. “Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (with vivid enthusiasm, wonder, and delight) not only means that the message or theme of grace is to be central in our singing but that the Lord is moving in our hearts in such a way that it produces a spirit of gratitude and joy for the grace that God has bestowed upon us. Our singing should reflect thankfulness for grace! When God and grace are at work in our hearts, we will possess a joyful heart of singing and praise. When the world overtakes our heart, we will lose our song of praise to God.

Psalm 137:4

“How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?”

When we are out of fellowship with God or have become carnally minded, we will not possess a singing heart. We will stifle the work of grace in our hearts. We will lose our song of grace and gratitude which God wants to continually produce in our hearts and lives on a daily basis. When Christians live without the song of grace ringing in their hearts, they are living in a strange land, the land of drifting, defilement, and discouragement. We should examine our hearts and make sure that we are clean before the Lord (Ps. 51:10) and allow God to communicate once again the grace of singing, joyfulness, and gratitude.



A Christian man filled with despair and discouragement saw a younger girl walking toward him one day. She was singing the old hymn, “You May Have the Joy-Bells.” As she came closer to him, he noticed that one of her arms was missing. She also was severely scarred on her face. She had been in a horrific care accident as a young child. However, when the Christian man heard her song and saw the joy beaming forth from her face, despite her permanent injuries, he realized how silly he had been in losing his song of joy. He realized once again of the importance of “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). He realized that he had lost his song but wanted to return to a place of gratitude and joyfulness once again.

Psalm 51:12

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.”

Here is a wonderful promise. We will have spiritual songs ringing in our hearts when we walk close to God and allow Him to give us a singing heart of gratitude and joy. The grace of God at work in our hearts will produce the joy bells!

“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.”