

What Constitutes Gospel Music, and Gospel preaching?

Does the Bible have anything to say about the nature of Gospel music, and Gospel preaching? The answer is a very definite: Yes! For the preaching and hymnology that brings salvation, and inspires worship, prayer, and communion with God, is a vital part of Christian theology, worship, and evangelism.

The word "Gospel," means, "Good News," or "Good Tidings," and speaks of God's amazing love and mercy towards undeserving and sinful mankind, and His great efforts to save us. Ps.86v5,15. 103:8-11. 145v8,9. Is.55v6,7. Micah.7v18-20. Luke.1v78,79. Rom.10v12. Eph.1v7. 2v1-9. 3v8. We are to bring good news, to announce the glad tidings ("euaggelizo" 2097), of the Gospel ("euaggelion" 2098). The wonderful good news is that God is rich in mercy, and loves us with a great love, and that Jesus has died to save us. Eph.2v4. Our message is Jesus. We read in Acts.5v42., "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." See Acts.10v36. 17v18. While he was with the Corinthians Paul resolved to know nobody among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the truth of his preaching was confirmed by mighty miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the wicked city of Corinth many came to know Jesus as Saviour. 1Cor.2v2-4. Acts.18v10.

Paul said that anyone who preached another Gospel is under the curse of God.

The subject is extremely serious, for we read in Gal.1v8,9., v8 "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. v9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." Many modern sermons, hymns and songs do not reveal or speak about Jesus, and in doing so almost present another Gospel. The failure to impart any revelation of Jesus and God our Father, is deeply disturbing. The lack of any real theological content about the Godhead fills one with alarm. This kind of shallow hymnology does not feed the soul and spirit, and fails to inspire real knowledge, and deep worship of God.

There can be wrong financial motives in composing and singing music, and in preaching.

Too often today, Gospel music is looked upon as a "Music Industry," and people look upon it as a means of financial gain. This motivation is in direct contrast to, and in direct conflict with, the instructions of Jesus in **Mt.10v8.**, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. **Freely you have received, freely give.**"

Many preachers today blatantly deny, and refuse to accept, the totally sacrificial financial nature of our Lord's ministry, they lie when they erroneously say that Jesus was rich, and one fears that this is an excuse for them to seek after riches. This attitude is the very opposite of the heart and character of Jesus revealed by Paul in 2Cor.8v9., "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes **He became poor**, that you through **His poverty** might become rich." "He became poor," is "epptocheusen," the aorist active indicative of the verb "ptocheuo" 4433, to be destitute. "Poverty," is "ptocheia" 4432, destitution, beggary, which is also derived from the verb "ptocheuo" 4433, to be as poor as a beggar.

Jesus experienced real poverty, as did most early Christians. 2Cor.8v2.

The Christians at Smyrna were "poor but rich." Rev.2v9. But great riches had corrupted the wealthy Christians at Laodicea and made them spiritually bankrupt. Rev.3v17,18. Jesus said in Lk.16v13,14., "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. v14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money ("philarguros" 5366, fond of silver (money), greedy and covetous.), also heard ("ekouon" 191. the imperfect active, were listening all the time Jesus was talking) all these things, and they derided Him ("exemukterizon," the imperfect active of "ekmukterizo" 1592, only here and Lk.23v35.. It means to arrogantly turn up the nose at one, to sneer, to deride). We read in Acts.3v6., "Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." (NKJ) Like his Lord, Peter was not in God's service for any monetary gain, nor should we be. We read in James.2v5., "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (NKJ)

The hymnology of young Christians and mature Christians.

God commands us to make a joyful noise to Him to enter His promises, and many songs and choruses do this well. Ps.95 all. We recognise, as do the Scriptures, that baby Christians need a different hymnology to mature Christians, babies need milk, mature Christians need "strong meat. 1Pet.2v1-3. Heb.5v12-14. However, catchy tunes and simple lyrics are not enough to bring Christians to maturity. To do this our hymns and preaching must convey the truths and realities about Christ's person and atonement. The hymns of Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts and other great hymn writers convey this well, and the reason for this is quite clear; they were written in times of deep prayer and revival, and were inspired by the Holy Spirit. We thank God that some modern Hymn writers, like Graham Kendrick, who write inspired lyrics and tunes that convey mature Divine truth and God's blessing to both young and old alike.

The Nature of Hymnology and Gospel Singing in Church Worship.

Ephesians.5v18,19. "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, v19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (NKJ)

"Speaking to one another." This is a Divine command; and God expects us to promote worship and communion with Him, and purity of life by songs of praise. Singing was an important part of early Church worship, and was practiced by the Lord Jesus and His apostles, and by Christians throughout Church history. Mt.26v30. Lk.24v52,53.

"In psalms," "psalmois" 5568, set pieces of music, sacred odes accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a "psalm;" collectively, the book of the Psalms. The Psalms were sung by the Jews at the temple, and by the early Christians, and they have always been part of Church worship. They are valuable for instruction and devotion, the Scottish metrical psalms are a veritable treasure house. The psalms are full of doctrine and teaching as well as worship and praise. See Asaph's remarkable psalms, he led the tabernacle worship. 1Chron.16v5. Psalm 50, and 73 to 83. N.B. 1Cor.14v26. "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."

"And hymns." A "hymn," "humnois" 5215, is properly a song which worships and honours of God, and is directly addressed to God. These hymns can be spontaneously inspired by the Holy Spirit, or they can be from a well-known and well-loved hymnology. See Acts 16:25.

"Spiritual songs," Spiritual is "pneumatikais" 4152; songs is from "odais" 5603, odes or songs relating to spiritual and Divine things, which are quite distinct from songs sung by worldly people for their entertainment, where God is forgotten and excluded. Christian music should be very different from worldly music; worship should edify Christians and be done "decently and in order" 1Cor.14v40., and should not disgust the pure in heart. Things are badly wrong when witchdoctors say they are amazed that Christians use the same drumbeats that they use, to call up demons.

"Singing," is "adontes" 1030. The dominant character of music in the worship of God should be vocal. God inhabits the praises of His people. Ps.22v3. The Bible says that we can praise God with musical instruments, and if instruments are employed in worship, they can play a valuable part in enhancing the vocal music.

"Speaking to yourselves." The result of being filled with the Holy Spirit, is both praise and thanksgiving, and good relationships in home and work. Eph.5v19-21.

"And making melody in your heart to the Lord." Some people are not good at singing and making melody outwardly. But even they, when they are filled with the Spirit, will make acceptable music to God in their hearts.

"Making melody," is "psallontes" 5567, playing and singing, with an instrument. The word, which Paul uses, "psallo" 5567, is frequently used in the sense of touching or playing a lyre, or a harp; and then of making music, but it generally means to sing. It occurs in Rom.15v19., where it speaks of Gentiles singing to God's Name; and 1Cor.14v15., where it speaking of singing in tongues, as well as singing with the understanding; and in James.5v13., where it is translated, "sing psalms;" and here in Eph.5v19., where we are exhorted to sing from our hearts, and praise God from our hearts. The psalms, hymns, and songs are to be sung so that the heart is fully involved, and not so as to be merely musical entertainment, or just a mere external performance, we are singing to, and for, God.

"Giving thanks always." There is no limit on time or place. **"For all things."** There is no limit on circumstances; we can worship God in every circumstance of life. 1Thes.5v16-18. v16 Rejoice always, v17 pray constantly, v18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (RSV) See Rom.8v28.

"To the Lord." Singing is an act of worship and prayer, and should be regarded as being addressed directly to God, it is not a trivial and frivolous act. Those who lead in singing should be godly, spiritual, and devout people who sing from the heart, for they join the angels singing around the throne of God. We profane divine worship if we draw near to God with our lips, while our hearts are far from him. The heart must always go with our music, it must not be just a musical performance Too many soloists and choirs fail to sing from their hearts, when they sing the praises of God.

Colossians.3v16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms (and) hymns (and) spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."

"The word of Christ," is "ho" 3588, "logos" 3056, "tou" 3588, "Christou" 5547. This phrase only occurs here, though "the word of the Lord" occurs in 1Thes.1v8. 4v15. 2Thes.3v1. Elsewhere "the word of God." The phrase "the word of Christ," can be either the subjective genitive (the word delivered by Christ), or the objective genitive (the word about Christ). See 1Jn.2v14. We need to let both dwell in us richly. Paul is praising and uplifting Jesus in this Epistle, and we need to do the same in our singing and preaching. **"Dwell,"** is "enoikeito"

the present active imperative of "enoikeo" 1774, to make one's home, to be at home. **"In you,"** is "en" 1722, "humin" 5213, not, "among you." **"Richly,"** is an adverb "plousios" 4146, abundantly, copiously, richly.

Vincent says it is preferable to connect, "in all wisdom," with "teaching and admonishing," not with the adverb "richly, because the adverb "richly" forms an emphatic qualification of "dwell in," and it terminates the clause; and makes the whole passage more symmetrical. This is also confirmed by Col.1v28., where the phrase "teaching and admonishing in all wisdom," occurs.

"Admonishing," "nouthetountes" 3560, from the verb "noutheteo," 3560, literally, to put in mind (from "nous" 3563, mind), and so, to admonish, to caution or reprove gently, to warn, to exhort, from "nouthetes," admonisher.

Are we "put in mind" and warned about correct theology and practice by our modern psalms, hymns, and songs, and are they filled with good doctrinal teaching, "didaskontes" 1321?. We usually have to go to the great hymns of the Church, and the psalms of David and Asaph for such material.

"Singing with grace," is "en" 1722, "chariti" 5485, "adontes" 103, **it means literally, singing in God's grace,** a phrase also used in 2Cor.1v12. We are to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs enveloped in God's presence and grace. The verb "ado" 103) is also used in Eph.5v19., for the inspired emotional worship of a devout soul.

"In your hearts," is "en" 1722, "tais" 588, "kardiais" 2588, "hymoon" 5216. Without this there is no real worship to Jesus or God the Father. Our singing and preaching must be from our hearts, or we will fail to bless people, or fail to be acceptable to God. Within a year or two of this time Emperor Nero began a murderous persecution of Christians, so open and loud singing could have meant the death of one's family, and all the Christians who took part in the singing. Unbelievers were glad to report any singing Christians to the authorities, and they rejoiced in their execution, and enjoyed looting their property; so singing in the heart was the order of the day.

Singing hymns and sacred songs is often our very best way of praying.

We read in Acts.16v23-25. v23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. **v24** Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. **v25** But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Paul tells us that he was beaten by rods on three different occasions. 2Cor.11v25. However, Luke only records this incident. Paul and Silas, in excruciating pain through painful bruised and bleeding backs, were locked up in the inner prison with their feet securely fastened in wooden stocks. How did they react?

"They were praying and singing hymns to God," is "proseuchomenoi" 4336, "humnoun" 5214, "ton" 3588, "Theon" 2316. Literally, "praying, they sang hymns." "Proseuchomenoi humnoun," is the present participle and imperfect active indicative: **Praying they were singing, or singing they prayed.** Their praying and the praise are not described as distinct acts. Their singing of hymns was their prayer, probably some Psalms, for "humnoun," is the very word that is used to describe the Paschal hymn sung by our Lord and His disciples after their last Passover. Mt.26v30. We know the Jews sang Psalms 113 to 118, at the Passover festival, and every devout Jew would certainly know them by heart. Like Job, Paul and Silas could say, "He giveth songs in the night." Job.35v10. This was powerful evangelism, for the other prisoners heard them singing, and they were obviously amazed how people with bleeding backs, and tortured in the stocks, could make the prison resound with joyful song. The presence of their living God enabled them to joyfully sing, worship and pray even in their great suffering. Christians can have more true joy in tribulation and trials, than a worldly person can find in pleasure, prosperity and ease.

God answered their prayers in song with an earthquake, and released them from their chains. The jailor knew that this was an outstanding miracle, and he and his whole family accepted Jesus as their Saviour. Gospel singing and preaching that is confirmed by the acts and power of God, produces remarkable and lasting results. Rom.15v18-21.

In Mel Tari's, "Like A Mighty Wind," we read how the singing of sacred songs raised a man from the dead.

On pages 76 to 78 of "Like a Mighty Wind," (ISBN 0-89221-123-7) we read of a man, who had been dead for two days, being raised from the dead when Christians sang sacred songs around his corpse. God directed some Christians to stand around the dead body of the man, and sing hymns until he came back to life. The person had been dead for two days, and in the warm and humid atmosphere of Amfoang in Indonesia, the body had begun rapidly to decay, and it smelled so badly that the Christians found it difficult to stand around the body. However, they did as God commanded them, and after singing about six hymns the toes started to move on the dead body. After singing eight hymns, God raised the corpse to life, and the man sat up and was perfectly whole, and gave a forceful and eloquent testimony to his experience on the other side of death. He told of the reality of Heaven and Hell, and told people that only faith in Jesus could save them from going to Hell. Through

his testimony and ministry, more than 21,000 people came to know Jesus as their Saviour in that area. Singing they prayed, and God answered their prayers in the most remarkable way. God will do the same for you. **Singing is often the very best form of praying, and it can bring outstanding and mighty operations of the Holy Spirit, and wave of Divine healing to the body of Christ.**

It is well known that the Welsh revival was birthed and sustained by God-anointed singing. It certainly was not due to the preaching, for preachers usually preached once in about six to nine months. They had the sense to get out of the way and let God the Holy Spirit work. Evan Roberts was hardly ever seen in the pulpit, he was crouched down behind the pulpit and was worshipping God in song with the congregation. The result of this worship in singing was a great revival that brought most of Wales in sincere repentance to God. **There can be no doubt that singing hymns and sacred songs is often our very best way of praying, and it can bring genuine revival.**

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