

SINGING IN WORSHIP TO GOD (Colossians 3:15-17)

I. Aesthetics.

- A. Aesthetics is defined as “the study of the mind and emotions in relation to the sense of beauty.”
- B. When applied to singing it deals with those things that are pleasing to the human ear, the beauty of the singing.
 - 1. The beauty of the song plays a part in our Christian happiness according to James (James 5:13).
 - 2. There is a relationship between how we are emotionally and singing, and this is something that we can't forget.
 - 3. Countries have national anthems for a reason.
 - 4. Singing arouses great feelings of loyalty and patriotism when those anthems are sung.
 - 5. Singing ought to have the same effect on Christians as well.
- C. However, there are those that exalt aesthetics above the Lord.
 - 1. The person who sings well and emphasizes the importance of singing “correctly.”
 - a. Simply focusing on singing correctly can lead to vain worship.
 - b. If we are constantly focused on the pitch or whether we are on time we are distracted from the meaning of the song.
 - c. This person's desire that the song service be aesthetically beautiful above all else will cause him to fail to recognize the true beauty of singing is when we do things according to God's will.
 - 2. The one who doesn't sing at all for fear of not singing “correctly.”
 - a. This is the other extreme.
 - b. This person doesn't want to make the song sound bad so they don't sing at all.
 - c. This person has failed to see that singing is from the heart.
 - d. God demands that everyone worship in song - it is to be done “one to another.”
 - 3. The one who doesn't believe aesthetics are important at all.
 - a. There are some who don't believe that aesthetics are important at all.
 - b. You and I know you can't have a song without pitch and without time.
 - c. In order to have proper singing, there must be some measure of aesthetics involved.
- D. Aesthetics do have a proper place in song.
 - 1. It is to be considered when a song is composed or else there could be no song.

2. Aesthetics are to be used to promote unity of thought and worship.
 3. The beauty of a song encourages and hopefully strengthens faith in the ones singing songs to God.
 4. Aesthetics are to be used to bring about loyalty to God, to Jesus and the church.
 5. It is also to be considered in order to focus our emotions correctly.
- E. But in all honesty, I mention this element first because it is truly the least critical of the four.

II. Doctrine.

- A. Since singing is worship to God, singing doctrinally incorrect songs would be blaspheming God.
 1. We wouldn't ever sing a song that glorifies sin.
 2. We wouldn't sing to the devil.
 3. We don't do these things because we know it would be an offensive to God.
 4. If such is the case, and we know it is, then singing a song that teaches doctrinal error would also be offensive to God.
 5. Acts 2:42 - early Christians "continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine": this would include singing.
- B. We need to remember that song books are not inspired so we must be careful about what we sing.
- C. Our text tells us that singing is to be used to teach and admonish.
 1. The only thing we from which we can teach and admonish one another is God's word.
 2. God's word contains sound doctrine so we must sing songs that contain sound doctrine.
- D. Take out a song book and look at some songs with me that contain false teaching.
 1. Notice "I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace" (#291).
 - a. Look at the 2nd stanza.
 - b. We do know how the Spirit moves, convincing men of sin.
 - c. In reality, the song writer tells us how through the rest of the verse.
 - d. The Spirit convinces men of sin by means of the word of God.
 - e. Anything else would be an imposing on man's free will.
 2. The songs "Tell It To Jesus Alone" and "Have A Little Talk With Jesus" both teach us to pray to Jesus.
 - a. Jesus taught us to address the Father when we pray.
 - b. Jesus does know about our prayers because He is the Mediator, but we never see an example of praying to Jesus.
 - c. We shouldn't teach someone to do something that is unscriptural.

3. There used to be three verses of the song “Jesus Is Coming Soon.”
 - a. Now there is just two.
 - b. The original second verse taught Premillennialism.
- E. There is another extreme to which we can go, and that is not allowing song writers poetic license.
 1. There are some brethren who rule out a lot of songs when a good case can be made for their use.
 2. For instance, notice “In The Garden” (#805).
 - a. I know that we cannot have a conversation with God face to face as we daily stroll through a garden.
 - b. However, metaphorically we can and that is what this song is describing.
 - c. How many of us have ever read God’s word and then prayed to God?
 - d. When we did that, we talked with God and He talked to us.
 3. Some have a problem with “Amazing Grace” (#36).
 - a. There is no doubt the author of the song believed in salvation by grace only.
 - b. Just because that is the background of the author does not mean the song can’t be sung by faithful Christians.
 - c. Nowhere in the song is that specifically stated, so we can sing it without even thinking about that doctrine.
 4. A good balance between the two positions is asking ourselves this question: “Is there a way that I can understand this song that harmonizes with the teaching of scripture and think of it that way when I sing the song?”
 - a. If that can’t be done, we don’t need to sing it.
 - b. If it can, sing away.
 5. Finally, we must respect the decisions of the eldership in this regard as well.
 - a. If they believe a song should not be sung and I feel it is ok, I have to remember they are over me in the Lord.
 - b. I, as a song leader, shouldn’t get up and lead that song.

III. Comprehension.

- A. In worship to God, we must sing songs we understand (1 Corinthians 14:15).
 1. If there are songs with difficult phrases, we need to learn what they mean.
 2. For instance, “here I raise my Ebenezer” in “O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing” (#500).
 - a. Ebenezer means stone of help.
 - b. Thankfully, the editors of our song book saw the need to make these type phrases known.

- c. Also, in “Night With Ebon Pinion” (#452) has that phrase defined for us.
 - 3. It would do us no spiritual good to sing songs with words we don’t understand.
 - 4. As parents, we need to take the time to explain such phrases to our children.
- B. Comprehension also has to deal with us thinking about the words we are singing.
 - 1. There shouldn’t be any daydreaming when we are singing.
 - 2. We are involved in teaching and admonishing while we are singing so we need to have our minds engaged in the words that are coming out of our mouths.
- C. How do we focus better on the meaning of songs?
 - 1. We can think about the meaning of each stanza.
 - 2. We can think about how the chorus and the stanza relate to one another.
 - 3. Look at “Let Me Live Close To Thee” (#391).
 - a. While singing this song, we could think of our desire to be close to God by keeping His word in our hearts.
 - b. We could think specifically of Matthew 11:28-30.
 - c. We could think about praising God with our lives (1st stanza).
 - d. We could think about the work we can do for God (2nd stanza).
 - e. We could think about helping our brethren (3rd stanza).
 - f. In all of these things, we think about living closer to God.

IV. Attitude.

- A. Our attitude in worship must be to do only those things that are authorized by God (Colossians 3:17).
 - 1. The Bible is clear on God’s attitude towards those who go beyond that which He has authorized.
 - 2. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2).
 - 3. Uzzah (2 Samuel 16).
 - 4. 2 John 9.
 - 5. You and I must remain within that which God has authorized.
- B. This means that our singing must be just that - singing.
 - 1. God has told us to sing.
 - 2. This excludes playing instruments.
 - 3. This excludes clapping.
 - 4. This excludes humming.
 - 5. This excludes whistling.
- C. There are several passages within the New Testament that authorize us to sing today.
 - 1. Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15;

Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13;
Revelation 5:9; Revelation 14:3; Revelation 15:3.

2. There are zero passages that authorize us to play, him, whistle or clap.
 3. It is not a matter of doing what we want in worship, but what God wants.
- D. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.
- E. Singing is to come from the heart and that is the only instrument that is to be played in worship to God.

From a sermon outline by Kevin Cauley