

LESSON XXXVIII—MUSIC IN THE WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION: Music has its place and purpose in the worship of the church. This place and purpose has been created by divine authority. In that place and purpose we must recognize the importance of: (1) the kind of music authorized; (2) the purpose music shall serve; and (3) the manner in which it shall be rendered.

I. The Kind of Music Specified:

1. New Testament Scriptures authorize singing only.
 - Matt. 26:30 - "When they had sung a hymn they went out."
 - Acts 16:25 - "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God."
 - Rom. 15:9 - "As it is written, therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles and sing unto thy name."
 - I Cor. 14:15 - "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."
 - Eph. 5:19 - "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts unto God."
 - Col. 3:16 - "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."
 - Jas. 5:13 - "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise."
2. The command to sing is specific and excludes all other kinds of music.
 - a. God commanded Noah to build the ark of gopher wood — by specifying "Gopher" God eliminated all other kinds of wood (Gen. 6:14).
 - b. God's command to Aaron to offer two he goats and a ram in atonement sacrifices excluded every other animal (Lev. 16).
 - c. God's command to sing excludes any other kind of music. There are only two kinds — vocal and instrumental. God has specified vocal.
 - d. When something more is done than "sing," God has been disobeyed (II Jn. 9:11; I Cor. 4:6).
3. New Testament Scriptures are all sufficient on this point as on all others pertaining to Christian worship and service (II Pet. 1:2-3; Rom. 1:17; I Cor. 9:21; Matt. 17:5-6; Acts 3:22-23).

II. The Purpose of Singing:

1. Praise and thanksgiving unto God (Heb. 13:15; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; Jas. 5:13).

2. Teaching and admonishing one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Music in Christian worship is to instruct, communicate ideas from one to another, and admonish those engaged in it to right living in addition to being a medium of praise, thanksgiving and supplication to God.

III. Manner of Rendition:

1. "Unto God" — directed as praise unto God and not for simple entertainment.

Whenever music in Christian worship degenerates into an effort to entertain, it becomes a stench in the nostrils of God. We must remember that we are singing to please God — not the multitude (Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

a. When any act of worship is not directed to God it misses its mark and is therefore vain.

b. How utterly abominable then the attempt to attract the world by the music of the Church. Let us be primarily concerned with causing God to listen.

2. "In Spirit" (I Cor. 14:15; Jas. 5:13).

a. "With the heart" (Eph. 5:19). "With grace in your hearts" (Col. 3:16).

b. From this we learn that our hearts must accompany our singing and be thoroughly in accord with the sentiment of the song being sung. In other words, it must be done in all sincerity.

3. "With the understanding" — (I Cor. 14:15).

a. One can hardly sing sincerely what one does not understand. We need to study the sentiment of our songs, expressed in the words, and be sure that it is scriptural and that we understand its meaning in order to be able to make that meaning the sentiment of our hearts.

4. So as to be understood.

a. "Speaking one to another" (Eph. 5:19). "Teaching and admonishing" (Col. 3:16).

b. This divine purpose for singing is entirely lost unless the words are scriptural in sentiment and pronounced plainly enough to be understood by the audience. The teaching to be done in singing must be by the words of the song since the tune or melody cannot teach anyone anything.

5. The kind of songs to be used.

a. "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

b. "Psalms and hymns" appear to have been used interchangeably and not only convey the character in general of the songs to be sung but specify in particular that such compositions are to be "spiritual." Such could scarcely be descriptive of the "Star Spangled Banner Yankee

Doodle," or "I Washed My Hands This Morning." Neither could any of the light, trivial, jiggy tunes used today be classified as "Spiritual."

Questions For Discussion

1. How many kinds of music are there?
2. Read and note carefully the quotations on the music as used in the New Testament.
3. Is the teaching of the New Testament complete on this matter?
4. Specify the purpose of singing.
5. Is the mission of singing to entertain? Singing is to please whom?
6. Is singing that is acceptably done directed primarily to the listener?
7. What is the idea expressed in, "With the Spirit and Understanding?"
8. What kinds of songs are to be used in the worship?
9. What is wrong with using semi-spiritual songs?
10. Has God specified the kind of music we are to use or has it been left up to our judgment?