

A Natural Response of the Heart

Psalm 146:1-2 says, *Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.* I hope you share David's excitement to sing praises to God during worship. Singing is such an important part of what we do collectively in worship that it can set the tone for the entire service. It can be easy for us to take this part of worship for granted. If we are not careful, we can mumble along to the words, never considering the contents of the song. If that is the case, we must take a serious look at our attitude, because the type of singing that God accepts is that which comes from the heart. I have always found it disturbing that some who argue so passionately against instruments of music in worship hardly sing louder than a whisper in the assembly. A look at Psa. 146:2 shows that we should relish the opportunity to praise God. When we consider how the love of God has been shown to each one of us by rescuing us from sin, singing should be a natural response of the heart. Our hearts should perk up with praise! Consider the following verses that talk about our singing:

- **James 5:13b**—*Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.* The good news of the gospel should bring cheer to our hearts. Singing is a way to communicate what is on our heart.
- **Hebrews 13:15**—*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.* What better way to demonstrate our thanks to God than by singing? Is our gratitude to the Creator reflected by the way we sing?
- **Ephesians 5:18-19**—*be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.* These verses tell us our music is to come from our heart. With all of our heart, we should offer praise, glory, and honor to God.

Singing is also important, because with it we teach and admonish each other, Colossians 3:16. This passage teaches us that we can learn from the songs we sing. We teach one another when we sing. For example, while singing *He is Able to Deliver Thee*, *A Shelter in the Time of Storm*, and *Abide With Me*, we are reminded of the great hope and trust we have in God. *Our God: He is Alive*, teaches us about God. We are reminded of our responsibilities to family when we sing *God Give Us Christian Homes*, and songs like *Hallelujah*, *What a Savior* challenge us to think of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

In Colossians 3:16, Paul says singing hymns can *admonish us*. When we admonish one another, we warn each other and help keep each other from wrong doing. For example, when we sing *Is Thy Heart Right With God*, *Sowing the Seed of the Kingdom*, and *Did You Think to Pray*, we are reminding and admonishing each other to do well in our service to God. Singing together should uplift us and give us assurance. When we leave a worship service, we should be uplifted because of what we have offered to God.

But, our singing is not that pretty, someone says. God is concerned with what is on our hearts, not the beauty of the harmony in the songs written by men. I have had the privilege of worshipping with groups large and small, and while it is exciting to assemble with thousands in a lecture hall to spend forty-five minutes of singing to God, some of the most touching and emotional moments have been singing with fellow Christians in Ukraine who are just learning to sing to God. A song service where people are singing simultaneously in English and Russian may not sound that appealing, but the pure joy and love for God in the hearts of our young brothers and sisters literally sends chills down my back. Even though the carnally minded person might laugh and snicker at the sounds emanating out of that room, there is no doubt God was pleased because the singing was from the heart.

You may remember that the excuse for introducing the instrument in churches of Christ was that the singing was so poor that it *would even scare the rats from worship* (L.L. Pinkerton, Midway, KY 1859). You know, adding the instrument most likely did nothing for the singing at Midway. The instrument would have only drowned out those who had a hard time blending in with the harmony and those who were not singing before the instrument was added probably didn't start singing after its introduction either. My experience in places where the instrument is used in worship has been to observe the majority of people **not singing**, but listening or staring at the wall. Most come, not to praise God, but watch others do the praising for them. This is not what God intended. In churches of Christ where the singing is *not that good*, it is usually because some are not singing, and others only sing half heartedly—not putting effort in it. Singing is not for us, it is for God! God wants our praise to be from the heart!

We need to treat this part of our worship seriously. We all would do well to remember that we are praising our Creator when singing, and it is not a time for joke telling, passing notes, or talking. We do a great disservice to

God and to ourselves when we take the song service for granted and never give consideration its essentialness in worship. Remember, God wants you to praise Him from the heart! Will you not do that today?

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