

Harmony in God's House (Part 1)

Text: Ephesians 5:19-21 (Also Col. 3:16)

Introduction:

1. In our last lesson, we considered the command to “be filled with the Spirit”. The Apostle now proceeds to demonstrate the fruit that flows out of a Spirit-filled, Word-filled life. It is so important that we understand what the Spirit of God **actually** produces in the lives of those whom He controls.
2. The Spirit-filled life produces:
 - Harmony in God's House (Eph. 5:19-21)
 - Harmony at My House (Eph. 5:22-6:4)
 - Harmony at the Work House (Eph. 6:5-9)
3. In this message we will consider the harmony produced in God's House (the local church) by the filling of the Spirit. There are three clear fruits of the Spirit's filling in these verses, one in each verse.
 - Singing (Vs. 19)
 - Thanking (Vs. 20)
 - Submitting (Vs. 21)

I. THE SINGING OF THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE (VS. 18-19)

The Christian faith is a singing faith. The filling of the Spirit results in a certain kind of worship music. There are 6 important considerations we need to look at in relation to church music.

A. The Musicians of Spirit-filled Music (Vs. 18; Col. 3:16)

1. Don't forget that the filling of the Spirit follows the previous commands as to how we are to walk in the Christian life. This is significant. The Spirit of God cannot and will not fill the life of a worldly, defiled, compromised believer.
2. Consideration needs to be given to the musicians behind the music we use in church. In light of the context, we could ask the following **seven** pertinent questions:
 - a. Are they people who have a godly reputation for holiness and personal purity? (E.g., Vs. 3-9)
 - b. Are they people who have the discerning, proving mindset that God requires or do they have the “doctrine doesn't matter” philosophy? (Vs. 10)
 - c. Are they people who are walking in strict separation from the world and who take a stand against sin and compromise? (Vs. 11a)
 - d. Are they people who reprove sin and evil? (Vs. 11b-13)
 - e. Are they people who walk in a careful, watchful and sober manner? (Vs. 15-17)
 - f. Are they people who are dominated and saturated by the Word of God? What is their view of Scripture? (Col. 3:16)
 - g. Are they people who are truly Spirit-filled and controlled? (Vs. 18)

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- h. Note: Based on these questions alone, the overwhelming majority of contemporary Christian artists fail the Bible test and should be rejected by the discerning Christian.

B. The Message of Spirit-filled Music (Col. 3:16)

1. Remember the parallel verse in Col. 3:16. The Spirit of God and the Word of God work hand in hand in the inner life of the believer to produce godly worship. Therefore, worship cannot and must not be disconnected from truth in the name of “being filled with the Spirit!”
2. John 4:24 Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in **spirit** and in **truth**.”
3. The Spirit of God is called the “Spirit of truth” three times in John’s Gospel (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The Spirit of God will not produce worship that is contrary to the Word He inspired. Music must conform to the truth of God’s Word both in its lyrics and its music.
4. Good Christian music is to be a vehicle for the truth of God’s Word.
5. Good Christian music is to be doctrinally sound.
6. Good Christian music will have lyrics with substance. This doesn’t mean that a song can’t convey a simple message. There are songs of testimony (Psalm 40:1-4) as well as songs that contain deep doctrinal and theological truths.

C. The Ministry of Spirit-filled Music (Vs. 19a)

Church music is for:

1. The Edification of the Saints – “to yourselves”
 - a. Christian music is for edification not entertainment. Col. 3:16 emphasizes this aspect – “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”. The word ‘admonish’ means to “caution or reprove gently” (Strong’s). Good music contains instruction and correction. “...let **all things** be done unto edifying.” I. Cor. 14:26 This is why I prefer the term “ministry in song” to “special item”.
 - b. Christian music is for edification not evangelism. While God can and no doubt does at times use the truth of His Word communicated in song in the hearts of the lost, the Bible never states that music is a vehicle for the evangelization of the lost. “...it pleased God by the foolishness of **preaching** to save them that believe.” (1 Cor. 1:21)
2. The Exaltation of the Saviour – “to the Lord”
 - a. We could put it another way and say that church worship music is for **Christians** and for **Christ**.
 - b. This means that our music should be Christ-centered and Christ-focused rather than artist centered.

D. The Medium of Spirit-filled Music (Vs. 19b)

There are three musical genres God has ordained for use in His local churches. There is both **scope** and **constraint** in these three categories. Scope in the sense that there is tremendous room for godly creativity in the producing of sacred songs for worship within the boundaries of God’s laws for music. Constraint in that this instruction clearly rules out the soundtrack of this sinful world. It is without dispute

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that these verses teach that worship music is something distinct from this wicked world. Let's consider them each in turn:

1. Scripture Songs – “Psalms” (ψαλμοῖς)
 - a. Originally the word ‘Psalms’ meant ‘plucking’ the string of a bow or the sound of a stringed instrument. The singing of the Psalms was accompanied by stringed instruments. Josephus also uses the word to designate a stringed instrument like a harp. (Harold Hoehner).
 - b. Specifically, this is a reference to the Psalms of the Old Testament which was the hymnbook of Israel. This ancient song book is carried over into the New Testament church for us to use. James 5:13 says, “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him **sing psalms.**”
 - c. Generally, it would apply to any text of Scripture set to music. It is a wonderful thing to be able to sing the Scriptures!
2. Sacred Songs – “Hymns” (ὕμνοις)
 - a. Hymns are poetic material and either recited or sung in praise to God. It specifically is a song of praise. They are “sacred compositions whose primary purpose is to praise” (Linguistic Key).
 - b. Jesus and His disciples “sung an hymn” at the conclusion of the Last Supper (Matt. 26:30; 14:26).
3. Spiritual Songs (ὠδαῖς)
 - a. The word ‘song’ is a more general word and can refer to both secular and sacred songs. Our English word ‘ode’ is derived from the Greek word. This is why the Apostle adds the very important qualifying word ‘spiritual’ so that we are in no doubt as to what sort of songs constitute Spirit-filled worship.
 - b. ‘Spiritual’ music is opposite to that which is ‘carnal’ and fleshly. It is music that ministers to the spirit rather than the fleshly appetites of the body. While godly music can stir the emotions in a balanced and controlled way, it is not experience focused or targeted towards the emotions like contemporary praise. In sacred songs, the truth of God’s Word ministers to the spirit through the mind and the feelings follow.

E. The Melody of Spirit-filled Music (Vs. 19c)

1. The Standard of Melody in godly Music – “singing and making melody”
 - a. The word ‘melody’ literally means ‘psalming’ which in its literal sense has to do with playing of a tune on a stringed instrument. It means “to cause to vibrate by touching, to twang” (Strong) The word ‘melody’ comes from two Greek words, ‘meloidia’ meaning “choral song” derived from ‘melos’, tune, plus ‘aoidein’, “to sing” (Garlock & Woetzel).
 - b. An excellent book entitled *Music in the Balance* by Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel notes, “The part of music to which the spirit responds is the melody. Ephesians 5:18-19 gives us a clear indication the part of music which God wants to be **preeminent** in the music of a Christian. Verse 18 commands us to be “filled with the spirit”. The word ‘filled’ literally means “to be

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- controlled.” The very next verse then states that we should be “making melody” ... Thus, when the King James Version of Scripture follows the command to be filled with the Spirit with the musical form melody, it is accurately teaching that this element of music and God’s control in our lives are closely related.”
- c. This verse very clearly teaches that the kind of music the Holy Spirit’s filling produces is melodious, tuneful music. This is the opposite to rock and roll music which is rhythm dominated with its back beat and sensual dance rhythms.
 - d. The Trinity of Music. Music reflects the character of the Triune God who created it. There are three elements in music: melody, harmony and rhythm.
 1. Melody is the primary tune and ministers to the spirit. The melody is to dominate and control the music.
 2. Harmony is “the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions having a pleasing effect.” (Oxford Dictionary) The harmony is what ministers to the soul.
 3. Rhythm is the pulse of the music and ministers to the body. It is the physical part of music. The analogy between the pulse and the rhythm will help the Christian to be discerning in his choice of music (from Music in the Balance):
 - Too much pulse (or erratic pulse) – the body is sick.
 - Too much rhythm (or erratic rhythm) – the music is sick.
 - No pulse – the body is dead.
 - No rhythm – the music is dead.
 - Pulse under control – the body is well.
 - Rhythm under control – the music is well.
 - “The pulse is there to sustain life. It does not call attention to itself in that role. Rhythm should play the same part in music. It is there to keep the music moving, not to dominate the sound.” (Garlock & Woetzel)
 - Note: In good music, you are generally unaware of the rhythm as it does not draw attention to itself.
 - e. The musical trinity therefore corresponds to the order we see in the Godhead – The Son works in submission to the Father and the Spirit does not draw attention to Himself but glorifies the Son.
 - f. The musical trinity also corresponds to the order in the three parts of man.
 1. The spirit is to be the control center.
 2. The soul (mind, will and emotions) subservient to the rule of the spirit.
 3. The body under the control of the spirit.
 - g. Question: Which part of music dominates in rock and roll? Melody or rhythm? Answer: The rhythm! This is the complete opposite to godly, Spirit-filled music which is melody dominated and controlled. This is why the contemporary Christian music movement is so unscriptural with its use of the world’s fleshly, ungodly style of music.

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- h. Simon Frith in his book, *Sound Effects, Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* states, "The sexuality of music is usually referred to in terms of its rhythm – it is the beat that commands a directly physical response."
 - i. David Tame in his book *The Secret Power of Music* concurs, "When pulsation and syncopation are the rhythmic foundations of the music at a dance hall, the movements of the dancers can invariably be seen to become very **sensual**."
 - j. Chris Stein of the rock band Blondie – "Everyone takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with sex." (*People*, May 21, 1979).
 - k. John Oates of Hall & Oates – "Rock 'n' roll is 99% sex." (*Circus*, Jan. 31, 1976)
 - l. Frank Zappa of Mothers of Invention – "Rock music is sex. The big beat matches the body's rhythms." (*Life*, June 28, 1968)
 - m. Jimi Hendrix – "Perhaps my music is sexy...but what music with a big **beat** isn't?"
 - n. Gene Simmons of Kiss – "That's what rock is all about – sex with a 100-megaton bomb, **THE BEAT!**" (*Entertainment Tonight*, ABC, Dec. 10, 1987)
 - o. Dan Lucarini: "Rock and roll is a musical style that was created for immoral purposes by immoral men, and has always been used by the world to express its immoral attitudes in song." (*Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*, p. 68)
 - p. Gary Gilley: "The new-paradigm church has caught the wave of our times and has created **a church for the entertainment age**. Rather than expose and correct the superficiality and wrong mindedness of a generation addicted to fun, amusement and self, the modern church has all too often chosen to go with the flow and give 'them' what they want...**it is very difficult to distinguish what the modern church is offering from what the secular world is offering.**" (*This little church went to market*, p. 33.)
2. The Source of Melody in godly Music – "in your heart"
- a. The work of the Spirit of God in the heart is what produces godly melody. Beautiful, tuneful, melodious music is the fruit of revival and the genuine work of the Spirit. This is why the greatest hymns of the faith have come out of times of spiritual reformation, revival and refreshing. Harry Ironside writes, "Every believer's heart is like a harp, and as the Spirit of God breathes over the heart-strings, real melody goes up to the ear of God."
 - b. Conversely, dark, rhythmic, beat dominated music is a fruit of man's depraved appetites under the influence and control of Satan.

F. The Motive of Spirit-filled Music (Vs. 19d)

- 1. As mentioned above, music is for the edification of the saints and the exaltation of the Saviour; it is for Christians and for Christ. The Lord Jesus is the focus of Spirit-filled music. We sing to Him and for Him. Our music should be Christ-centered not artist-centered.
- 2. NBC choir motto: "Sing for the audience of One".

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3. Johann Sebastian Bach: "The aim of all music is the glory of God."
4. Illustration: Revival of temple worship under Hezekiah – "And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. **And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also** with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued **until the burnt offering was finished**. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped." (II. Chronicles 29:27-29) The lamb was the focal point of this worship service.
5. The worship of heaven emphasizes Christ, the Lamb of God. Rev 5:11-12 "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."
6. Hodge: "Christ is the special object of Christian worship, to whom the heart when filled with the Spirit instinctively turns."

To be continued in Part 2...

Conclusion:

1. In our last message we emphasized the Lordship of Christ and the fact that the Spirit's filling has to do with Him having total control of our lives. The challenge to consider in light of this message is does Christ have control of our music?
2. What is your attitude to the song service? Are you singing for the edification of the brethren and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ?