

Tuesday's Touch ...#35

...from Pastor Ed ...September 22, 2009

♪ Music Lessons ♪

♪ Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth... when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? **Job 38:4&7** ♪ Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD... **Exodus 15:1** ♪ Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy. **1 Chron 15:16** ♪ Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. **Psalms 33:2** ♪ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. **Matt 26:30** ♪ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: **Acts 16:25** ♪ I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. **1 Cor 14:15** ♪ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. **Colos 3:22** ♪ Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. **Heb 2:12** ♪ And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy... **Rev 5:9**

Music, from the beginning of creation, has been the voice of the soul and, according to the scriptures, will be in glory. Both angels and the people of God have always extolled the glories of divine majesty with songs of praise. The gift of music has enabled us to reach beyond mere words to communicate the inexpressible language of the heart. In so doing we are enjoined by the inspired psalmists to use every instrument known to man to glorify God (Psalm 150). Unfortunately, however, every generation of the church has struggled with the issue of music in one aspect or another. I am greatly grieved to see another increasing wave of conflict over music arising among Christians today.

Luther, Watts, and Wesley are included in nearly every conservative hymnal of the church today and yet each, in his own time (with multitudes of others), was accused by segments of the church of being overly modern, fleshly, or worldly. Each one implemented something beyond the accepted tradition of the time and drew the ire of staunch traditionalists. We somehow seem to miss the point that, because we were created in God's image, there is an irrepressible impetus to creativity in the heart of man. From clothing, to houses, to cars, to music, nothing remains the same from generation to generation. We *must* be creating and innovating something new. But with this comes the uneasiness of change or the insecurity of straying from the "old and familiar." All too quickly we tend to turn our uneasiness into a "spiritual issue."

It would do us well to remember that *any* medium of communication can be used for good or evil. But we do not say it is sinful to speak German or Russian or Chinese or English just because these languages (and all others) have been used at times to promote evil. In fact, the more languages one can speak, the greater esteem we place on him (or her). Music is a medium of communication with many languages. The church today should consider herself blessed to have such a rich and varied heritage of musical expression to implement in our worship of the awesome, eternal God. Every Christian should be striving to expand his ability to appreciate and appropriate a broader range of musical expression.

But, from the beginning, every generation has been greatly alarmed at the music of its children. Perhaps it is time to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers” (Malachi 4:6). As the younger generation finds its own expressions of musical praise, let it also respect the songs of the saints that have lasted hundreds of years. Let us learn with equal enthusiasm to engage the songs of our children *and* the songs of our fathers as we pour forth from our hearts adoration, praise, and worship to the ONE who alone is worthy. It is my absolute conviction that it is a matter of spiritual maturity that we stop these silly music wars. In the unity of the Spirit let us, if necessary, “endure with much longsuffering” those particular types of music that we have not yet learned (or been willing) to appreciate. At the very least, we must stop dividing the church of Christ and grieving His Spirit by turning personal likes and dislikes into moral battle grounds (complete with chapter and verse). Of course, that would leave some of us without our best sermons or our favorite moral cause. Forgive me, but that which divides the body unnecessarily IS SIN!

Let me make it clear- I am talking about genre, not message. Parents *must* be concerned about the messages upon which their children are feeding. The church must certainly be cautious about communicating false doctrine through its worship music. But let us not confuse the issue with blanket statements demonizing certain styles of music. I have literally heard Christians condemn everything from *classical* to *rap*, from *traditional hymns* to *country and western*, and, of course, the ever infamous *rock & roll*. I have seen earnest seekers driven from the throne of grace by vicious attacks upon their music from the pulpit, totally obscuring the Gospel of Christ. By God’s grace, let us grow up and put away childish arguments. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord in its own musical language, utilizing every instrument that ever was, or ever will be invented. Let all “blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, *be* unto Him who sits upon the throne,” and to Him alone. □

You know, I really used to love this world,
Pleasure, power, and possessions were the only thing.
Live for today and party till it hurt;
Crank up the music and get lost in all the songs we’d sing.
Then, when You pleased, You opened up my eyes,
You gave me Life and put into my heart a brand new Song.
But when I tried to sing it to the church,
They said the music was the devil’s and I was doing wrong.
O Lord, you shed your blood to set me free.
Why are they trying to hang these chains of guilt on me?
e.j.ross iii, 1980

*Our Glorious Father, who rejoices over your children with singing (Zeph 3:17);
May we sing unto Thee the unfettered songs of redeemed hearts.*

*Longing to hear the angelic strains above,
Amen*

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