

The Sovereign Grace Messenger

A Publication of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

**“The Lord Hath Prepared His Throne In The Heavens;
And His Kingdom Ruleth Over All.”**

Issue 43

Psalm 103:19

Winter/Spring 2016

A former Pop and Rock musician, one who has been on the inside of this popular phenomenon, now saved by God’s marvelous grace and a minister of Jesus Christ, gives an incisive view of music used in church services.

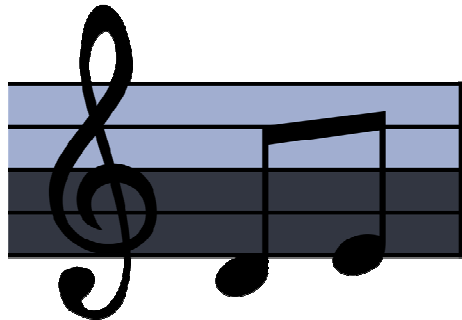
Does Music Really Affect Us?

Jeff Pollard

INTRODUCTION: Shortly before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed this extraordinary prayer for His disciples. He had come into this world as “the word made flesh,” the God-man (Joh 1:14). The Apostle John wrote of Christ, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the *words* of God: for God giveth not the *Spirit* by measure unto him” (Joh 3:34); that is, God the Father gave Christ the Son unlimited spiritual power to proclaim His Word—Spirit and Word unite in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Jesus promised that He would send that same Spirit to His disciples: “He will guide you into all truth” (Joh 16:13). And with Calvary’s cross looming before Him, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17). Christ desired every aspect of His disciples’ lives to be set apart and transformed by Spirit and truth—especially their worship. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him... They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:23-24). And that Spirit-empowered, truth-informed worship includes *music*.

That raises the extremely difficult question, “What kind of music pleases God?” In an attempt to answer that question biblically, I will deliver three messages. This first message, *Does Music Really Affect Us?* is foundational and crucial to the following two messages. My subject is music and worship, and I will stay primarily on that subject. Numerous questions will arise as we consider this

subject. To answer them all will not be possible, for to speak on this controversial subject is to face a thousand qualifications at every point. Now, since Christ prayed that God the Father would sanctify us by His truth, we must begin there.



God commands us to worship Him with music. Of the numerous examples in the Old and New Testaments, consider Psalm 150:1, 3: “Praise ye the LORD...Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.” Consider Paul’s command to the Ephesians, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:19). We could add numerous Old and New Testament exhortations to this. God commands us to worship Him with music, and those who are born of God’s Spirit love to obey Him. And it is exactly at this point that our first challenges arise: (1) The Bible does not specifically define music anywhere in its sacred text. (2) The Bible does not promote or prohibit certain styles of music as such. Does this mean then that all musical styles are appropriate in the worship of God? I

believe that the answer is no. How does one draw that conclusion? That is what these three messages are about. So let us begin: the first question to ask is

WHAT IS OUR AUTHORITY REGARDING MUSIC?

When Christians come to any moral or ethical issue to which the Bible does not speak directly, we must submit ourselves to the biblical doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture. However, we must first understand *what* the SoS means because there are two current views of it.

View 1—an *Encyclopedic* View of Scripture: Some argue this way: “Since the Bible says nothing about styles of music, God must not think the subject is important. We are therefore at liberty to use any style we like.” Those who think in this way sometimes view the Bible as a checklist. If they are doing the things on the list, they believe their lives are in harmony with God’s will. And if music styles are not on the list, then they must not matter. They assume that absence from the list indicates moral neutrality. They will then conclude that music styles are part of their Christian liberty, appealing to Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10. Those who hold this view always want a verse of Scripture that says, “Thou shalt not rock!” or “Thou shalt not hip-hop!” But there is a problem with this view: take, for example, the issue of pornography. The word *pornography* appears nowhere in Scripture. Furthermore, the Bible nowhere explicitly says, “Thou shalt not look at pornography.” But with the careful study of the laws and principles in Scripture, we



Born on July 1, 1951, **Jeff Pollard** moved frequently due to his father's work in the oil business. The family eventually settled down in Lafayette, Louisiana, where Pollard grew up. He loved music and though he couldn't excel in sports, he believed he could excel in music. Buying a guitar and wanting to perform for a crowd, Pollard learned to play a vast array of music genres. Eventually he formed the Jeff Pollard Band, which became known as Louisiana's LeRoux.

Brought up a religious boy, his music led him away from Christ. When he was turned to Christ for good, he gave up his band. Believing he should be an exemplary husband and father, he helped his wife raise and educate their two children. He founded New Covenant Ministries, taught Bible studies, pastored at the Providence Baptist Church in Louisiana, and served at a jail ministry. He now serves the Lord at Mt. Zion Bible Church in Florida.

can conclude that looking at pornography is adultery and fornication. [Let me say quickly that many who hold this encyclopedic view believe they are being faithful to the SoS.]—*normative* view.

View 2—an Encompassing View of Scripture: Christ said that we must worship God in Spirit and in truth, and He prayed that God the Father would sanctify us *with* the Scriptures of truth. Paul later wrote to Timothy, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:16-17). Profitable here means “useful, beneficial, advantageous.”¹ This means that the God-breathed Word is useful for teaching, exposing error, for correcting error, and for giving positive instruction to God’s people regarding all the good works He has ordained them to do (Eph 2:10). Among all the good works God calls us to, what is greater than worship? And worship includes music. So for the proper understanding of the *worship* of God and the music we use, we must rely solely upon the *Word* of God. The doctrine of sufficiency is beautifully laid out in the Second London Baptist Confession. The opening sentence of chapter 1 paragraph 1 says, “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.”

Our obedience here would include worship in song. Then paragraph 6 says, “The whole Counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture”—*that* is the SoS—“unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men” (1.6). “All things necessary for his own glory” includes the worship of God in song. So the infallible Scripture then is the sufficient authority for evaluating music.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT MUSIC?

We can only give the briefest survey here. I have already mentioned that the Bible does not define music anywhere in its sacred text. Cantor and Jewish scholar Jonathan Friedmann says, “It seems that the people of the biblical period—the original audience—were so familiar with what they understood music to be, that no details or descriptions were needed.”² An earlier writer Alfred Sendry says much the same, “The biblical authors took it for granted that the people were thoroughly familiar with musical matters, so they considered it unnecessary to indulge in long descriptions and minute details.” Keeping this in mind, the Bible mentions music from Genesis to Revelation, and from its pages we may learn much about it. Genesis 4:21 tells us first of Jubal: “He was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” Organ is an older word for “wind instrument.” So “harp and organ” mean “lyre and pipe” or “a stringed instrument and a wind instrument (we often forget that the original *organs* were wind instruments). Jubal, along with his brothers Jabal and Tubal-Cain, were descendants of Cain, who murdered his brother Abel. The God of all grace was apparently showing us that even though these three brothers were the “seed of the serpent” (Gen 3:15), they still reflected the image of their Creator. Jubal’s appearance as early as Genesis 4 shows that making instruments for making music is ancient. These three professions—music, animal breeding and metalwork—were important cultural and technological developments. Clearly, making music was a part of ancient life for both the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. The ABD says, “Mesopotamia and Egypt have long histories of both popular and religious music, which must have been known to the

Israelites.”³ So, as we survey the Holy Scriptures, we simply find ancient people, including God’s people, making music. The primary focus of music in Scripture is worship—even when pagans worship. So we should not be surprised when we discover people using music to praise God: “With my song will I praise him” (Psa 28:7); to express joy: “With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King” (Psa 98:6); to give thanks: “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High” (Psa 92:1); and to express sorrow: “Mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes,” that is, like a flute playing a funeral song. Moses and the Israelites sang the first song written down in Scripture: “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously” (Exo 15:1). Deborah sang a song of triumph. David was “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2Sa 23:1). Solomon wrote the “Song of songs.” And, of course, the longest book in the Bible is Psalms—the book of songs. The Psalms reveal that virtually every human emotion is captured in words and put to melody. Scripture reveals that music was a vital part of Israel’s life: music appears at family feasts and in occasions of joy, such as the return of the ark: “And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy” (1Ch 15:16). Scripture tells us of professional and non-professional music makers as well as directors. Music could be a means of prophesying, a means of teaching, exhorting, and speaking to one another (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19). Throughout the Bible, we find all kinds of instruments used in worship: stringed instruments, wind instruments, and percussion. David even created musical instruments for praise: “four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith” (1Ch 23:5). While much more could be said, the Bible primarily focuses on music for worship. Therefore, the Word of God makes clear that music can be a part of our daily lives and especially in our corporate worship. Two questions arise from this: (1) What is worship? and (2) What is music? Both of these play a part in our choice of worship music.

³Victor H. Matthews, “Music and Musical Instruments: Music in the Bible,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 930.

¹BDAG, L&N, EDNT

²From personal communication with Dr Friedmann.

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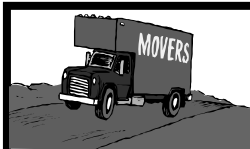
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WHAT IS WORSHIP?

The words most often translated *worship* in the OT and NT mean essentially the same thing: “to bow down; to prostrate oneself.”⁴ This refers to someone’s response to a human or divine being that is in a position of honor or authority. This response arises from an inner attitude of submission and reverence. And this comes the closest to the Old English word *worþ-scip*⁵ or *worship*. This means honoring the worth of another person or object.⁶ All these words point to *human response*. Now, when we study the rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the OT, we naturally associate them with worship. But, these external practices were not the essence of worship. The essence of worship is revealed in the Shema: “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deu 6:5). Again, we see human response—engagement of the mind and engagement of the affections—to the God Who has revealed Himself. Worship and obedience were always to be the heartfelt response of God’s people to the revelation of God’s character, will, and gracious work among them. In the NT, Jesus gave a greater explanation of the essence of worship while talking with a Samaritan woman: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth.” In order for us to do this, we must first be born of God’s Spirit—that is, we must have new hearts, filled with the Holy Spirit—and we must then worship according to the infallible, sufficient Word of God. We may define worship then as “our spiritual response to God, arising from the power of the Holy Spirit, informed by God’s Word.” And that worship includes music. Worship with music is part of God ordained, God commanded, biblical worship. We must then have music that appropriately exalts His holy character. So then

WHAT IS MUSIC?

Music is everywhere in our culture. Yet, for something as fundamental to our lives and essential to our worship, few of us can define it. On one hand, music is as familiar to us as breathing; yet some musicologists argue that it cannot be defined, at least

with any accuracy. Science writer Philip Ball spends two pages of his book *The Music Instinct* explaining the difficulty: “There is no meaningful definition of music that doesn’t exclude some or other aspect of it.”⁷ For virtually every definition that someone offers, objectors (some with PhDs) line up to challenge it. Yet, to have intelligent discussion about its power and effect on us, we must have some fundamental, working definition. I would like to offer a *definition*, some *explanations*, and then some *qualifications*.

Definition: We may define music as “sound ordered in time.” This definition should generally work for musicians, musicologists, and theologians. It appears to be in harmony with the Apostle Paul’s understanding of music. He said in 1 Corinthians 14:7, “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?” By “distinction in the sounds,” Paul means an identifiable pattern of tones, which of course points to melody, rhythm, time, and timbre—sound ordered in time. Those who believe in biblical creation and those who believe in evolution have strong disagreements about music at certain points, especially its origin; but many agree with this minimalist definition.

Explanations:

Sound: By the word *sound*, we mean tones, not random sounds (although, some composers incorporate non-musical and/or random sounds into their compositions). Musicologists generally make a distinction between *notes* and *tones* and between *noise* and *tones*. They often use the word *note* for the black dots we see on a page of sheet music. They use the word *tone* for the actual vibration made by a voice, a musical instrument, or something else. For example, when someone slams a door, we hear noise, but we do not hear tones. If we were to graph the ripple pattern of the door making contact with the doorframe and the wall, the latch springing into the latch plate, and perhaps the sound of squeaking hinges, we would see a very spiky pattern on our graph. When the pressure and vibrations of that sound reaches your ear, the eardrum and brain must process a complicated pattern of ripples that have no relationship to each other. This is *noise*. Musical tones are different from non-musical noises because musical tones make ripple patterns that repeat. The pitch,

loudness, and duration help to distinguish the difference between tones and noise. They also help to express emotion (more of this later). So the sound of music is generally made up of tones working together.

Order: Music has a pattern, a human-generated conscious organization of tones that we can recognize and process. Musical pieces often have variations of patterns within them. Rhythm, melody, and harmony help our brains process and identify the order.

Time: Music has a beginning and an end. We can measure the movement of a musical piece from beginning to end with a watch; and we write music notes in time signatures with time values—full note, half note, quarter note, etc. that move the music along in time. Music then is sound ordered in time. With this in mind, let us make some

Qualifications:

Music is the product of creative intelligence. The origin of music is God Himself. As the sovereign Creator, “God created man in his own image” (Gen 1:27). As the image of God, men and women are able to use their minds to reason and to create. And human minds construct musical instruments and make music. Philip Ball says, “Music is not a natural phenomenon but a human construct. Despite claims to the contrary, no other species is known to create or respond to music as such...”—i.e., some birds may be said to “sing,” in which we find a pattern and order; but this is instinctive, not creative. The wind blowing through the leaves, the babbling brook, and rain falling on a tin roof may be “musical” to us, but they are not music. Ball goes on to say, “We know of societies without writing, and even without visual art—but none, it seems, lack some form of music.”⁸

Music is aesthetic. Beauty is “that quality or combination of qualities which delights the senses or mental faculties.”⁹ Scripture reveals that God is beautiful and the source of beauty. King David’s desire was to live in the temple all the days of his life “to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Psa 27:4). This beauty is the sum of God’s perfections, and this beautiful sum of perfections is His *holiness*. The Bible expresses this in the phrase “the beauty of holiness,” or “the splendor of holiness.” The Puritan Stephen Charnock put it this

⁴HAL; TWOT; BDAG: “to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure.”

⁵OED: OE. *weorðscipe*, later *wurð-*, *wyrð-*, northern *wordscipe*, f. *weorð* worth a. + *-scipe* -ship. The formation is peculiar to English.

⁶ISBE

⁷Philip Ball, *The Music Instinct*, 9-10.

⁸Ball, 2.

⁹SOED

way: “As [God’s holiness] is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead...His holiness is the beauty of them.”¹⁰ This glorious, beautiful, holy God made men and women in His image: human beauty and the human capacity for creating and responding to beauty arises from and reflects its Creator. Music with which to worship this God must reflect His beauty not our lowest passions.

Music is expressive. Because we are created in the image of God and have creative intelligence, one human being can express himself or herself in musical form to another human being that has the same capabilities. Music is a powerful means of expressing feelings and moods. And because music is the product of fallen creative intelligence, it can express fallen emotions and stir up sinful passions. While music itself presents no images, it has the power to arouse the intellect, stimulate the emotions, and touch one’s memories in such a way as it often evokes images in the human mind. For these reasons and more,

Music affects us. Let me begin by making something clear. Music does not *control* us like drugs or alcohol. Philip Ball says, “Music is not a pill that, when swallowed, inevitably produces a prescribed state of mind.” John Makujina calls this “the hypodermic view of music”—it gets under your skin and you fall helplessly under its spell.” Music does not make us “do” things

¹⁰Stephen Charnock, vol. 2, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, Volume 1–5, 193.

against our will, even though some conservatives think of music, especially rock music, this way. David and Saul prove to us that we can resist music’s effect on us: “The evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand.”¹¹ And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it” (1Sa 18:10-11). Saul resisted the music that usually calmed him and tried to murder David.

Nevertheless, though music does not control, it *powerfully* influences us. Sound ordered in time is an auditory experience that engages our senses, emotions, and mind. Musical therapist Jean Maas said, “Music is the greatest power I have ever experienced. I doubt if anything else equals its power to act upon the human organism.”¹² Scientific research has proven that music involves movement, vibration, the collision of atoms, pressure upon eardrums, and the release of powerful brain drugs that affect us emotionally. Composing, performing, and listening to music requires the coordination of many different areas of our brain and activates centers all over it. Music stimulates the system of the brain that makes us experience pleasure—that makes us “feel good.” When we listen to music, our brain increases its release of dopamine and endorphins. It stimulates the same parts of

¹¹Ball, 258

¹²Quoted in David Tame, *The Secret Power of Music*, 158

the brain that responds when a gambler wins a bet, a drug addict gets cocaine, or a person reaches the peak of sexual excitement. Edward Podolsky in *Music for Your Health* claimed that his investigations proved that music affects digestion, internal secretions, circulation, and can produce a profound effect on pulse and respiration. He said that music affects the body *directly*, as the effect of sound upon the cells and organs, and *indirectly*, by affecting the emotions, which in turn influence numerous bodily functions. “If a musician is playing his instrument, then he and his instrument can also be said to be ‘playing’ the bodies and minds of the audience.”¹³ Brain specialist Dr. Richard Pellegrino said that music can “trigger endorphin highs...trigger a flood of emotions and images that have the ability to instantaneously produce very powerful changes in emotional states...Take it from a brain guy. In twenty-five years of working with the brain, I still cannot affect a person’s state of mind the way that one simple song can.” Again: we can resist this. The problem is, we usually don’t.

CONCLUSION: God commands us to worship Him with music in the beauty of holiness. The music we use to worship Him must therefore reflect that beauty. Music powerfully affects us, and therefore it affects our worship of the holy God. With that in mind, we will take up the question regarding styles of music in our next message.

¹³Anne Lierse, “The Secret Power of Music Education,” *Leadership in Focus*, Spring, 2012.

Editor’s Note: There are three articles, vitally connected, written by Jeff Pollard on the subject of the relationship of music to worship. The second article, part two, of this Biblically based work follows here.

Can We Use Any Form of Music to Worship God?

**“We must ask,
‘Can music
communicate in a
way that stirs up
sinful passions in
its hearers?’”**

...Can we use any form of music in the formal worship of God? I do not believe that rock and roll, most forms of pop, metal, blues, jazz, or hip-hop—and sub-genres—are appropriate styles for worship music. Building on what we [have] learned, let us think through the following questions:

IS MUSIC A LANGUAGE?

Music is often called a language. This, like everything else about music, has been hotly debated. Musicologist Robert Greenburg says that music is “the ultimate language. A language in which our hardwired predisposition to use successions of sounds to communicate is exaggerated, intensified, and codified into

a sonic experience capable of infinitely more expressive nuance than mere words alone—a sonic experience that can plumb the sublime and in doing so reveal profound truths.”¹ While I have very deep respect for Dr Greenberg, I strongly disagree that music alone can reveal “profound truth.” Truth can only be conveyed by propositions, not feelings. Nevertheless, the point is to say that philosophers, musicologists, and many others believe that music apart from lyrics is a language.

Music and language are similar in some ways. Both language and music are means

¹Robert Greenburg, *How to Listen to and Understand Great Music*.

of human communication. The same part of the brain processes them and for good reason: they are *similar* means of communication—not identical, but similar. (1) Both show rhythm, tempo, and anticipation. (2) Both can be written and read. (3) Both can be generated internally. (4) Both are symbolic ways of communicating. We will talk about music’s symbolism a little later.

Paul saw a similarity between music and language. As we saw in our last session, the Apostle Paul compares language and music in 1 Corinthians 14:6-8. His main theme is this: those who speak in tongues without an interpretation cannot edify God’s people. No one benefits from something that he cannot understand. Paul said, “Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” His point is this: if he came to the Corinthians, babbling in a language they did not understand, it would do them no good. On the other hand, if he came bringing a revelation, prophesy, or teaching in clear language, it would do them spiritual good. Paul then made a comparison between language and music: “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?” God’s people are edified only when they understand what it is being said.

To illustrate his point, he alludes to music. This tells us something about the way he understood music. We defined music as “sound ordered in time,” and Paul’s thinking here is in harmony with that definition. By “distinction in the sounds,” Paul means an identifiable pattern of tones, which points to melody, rhythm, time, and timbre. An instrumental voice without intervals, without melody, is unrecognizable noise, not music. It is clear that Paul believed that for someone to profit from hearing music, it would have to be “sound ordered in time.” He might not have used that precise terminology, but each point of the definition is here. When a human mind directs tones, orders melody, and defines time, another human mind can process this and receive meaning—good or bad. Paul went on to say, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” In this analogy, Paul illustrates his point with a trumpet or bugle sounding a military signal. The word *uncertain* means

“indistinct, unrecognizable.” Certain identifiable blasts of the trumpet mean “prepare for battle,” “attack,” or “retreat.” This is an understandable, ordered code that speaks—the mind understands the signal and the soldier prepares for battle. A random, garbled noise rather than clear notes will not alert the soldiers to prepare for battle. The point of all this is that Scripture affirms a similarity between music and language. Human voices or musical instruments in the hands of a human being can and do produce sounds ordered in time that communicate meaning.

Music is not propositional language. While we refer to music as a language, we do not mean that it communicates in the way words do. Verbal communication involves propositions, truth statements that can be evaluated. A musical piece without lyrics cannot give us the content of the Lord’s Prayer, although it might capture and convey something of majesty, serenity, beauty, and humility of that occasion. Likewise, music cannot communicate something like, “I would like to buy a new iPad with retina display.” Furthermore, we know that language is not merely a collection of syllables, randomly joined together; even so, music is not merely a collection of sounds randomly joined together. Music is the expression of a human heart as it organizes tones, rhythm, and the rest. Music expresses emotion and hearers respond to it. Monroe Stearns said, “If the existence of music in the world needs any justification, then that justification is the fact that music expresses what words cannot communicate: the essences of the universal emotions of mankind.”²

HOW DOES MUSIC COMMUNICATE EMOTIONS TO US?

Music is a language of symbols that represents feelings and moods by reproducing them in sound. What do we mean by symbols? A symbol is something that represents something else. The eagle is the symbol of the United States. A sheriff’s badge is a symbol of authority. When we speak of music as symbol, we mean music represents feelings and moods. When we listen to music, our brain makes connections between the sounds and the emotions that those sounds represent. How does music represent an emotion like *sadness*? We have all been sad, and we have watched others when they are sad.

They usually move slowly and speak softly. Music can represent sadness with slow rhythm and soft tones. It is the same thing with anger. Angry people can be loud, intense, hasty, and explosive. Music can represent anger with loud, abrasive, harsh tones, abrupt or sudden rhythm. Music can represent happiness with a fast and lively pace with increased volume. Most people can recognize these qualities of sadness, anger, or happiness in music. So when we say music is symbolic, we mean that it represents emotions and moods by reproducing them with sounds. In fact, it might be more helpful to say that music *mimics* emotion. We know that music can—not always—but can powerfully move our emotions, change our moods, and trigger powerful feelings. If this is the case, and it is,

IS MUSIC NEUTRAL?

I believe that this is the wrong question. One of the most common arguments we hear today when discussing rock, metal, or hip-hop music in worship is this: “Music styles are neutral—they are amoral. The only thing that carries morality is lyrics.” With this view in mind, Christians then use every style of music in worship. The normal reply from those who disagree with this is usually an attempt to prove the morality of music. Perhaps it is better for us not to think of music in terms of being neutral or moral. As we said yesterday, because we are created in the image of God, human beings are moral; but *things* are not moral. Notes are not moral. A drumbeat is not moral. But the human heart is the source of emotional expression, which is moral. And that heart expresses emotions with notes, melodies, and drumbeats that become the extension of it. So “Is music neutral?” does not seem to be the right question. We must ask, “Can music communicate in a way that stirs up sinful passions in its hearers?” The answer is yes. We are moral beings that communicate emotions and moods by the symbols of music. That is a moral experience. In light of this,

HOW ARE FORM AND CONTENT RELATED?

When we say “form and content” we mean the style of the music we use to convey the lyrical content of the song. Lyrics communicate *what* we are saying, and the style communicates *how* we are saying it. *How* we say something contributes to our communication and can produce powerful reactions and passions in the hearer. Advocates of rock, pop, and hip-hop

²Jeanette Norden, “Music and the Brain,” *Understanding the Brain*.

worship music say that style does not matter; all that matters is the lyrics. So let us consider this example: on May 19, 1962, at Madison Square Garden, Marilyn Monroe put to rest the idea that form and content do not matter. The occasion was the forty-fifth birthday celebration of then-president John F. Kennedy. Monroe was the reigning sex symbol in our country. She wore a sheer dress, made of flesh-colored fabric that was so tight fitting, she was sewn into it. She then sang the traditional *Happy Birthday to You* to the President of the United States. She panted and she aspirated with a sensuous voice. She was able to take an innocent child's song and turn it into one of the most astonishing displays of seductive flirtation in modern video history. Style matters. In his book, *Running with the Devil*, rock historian Robert Walser says, "Before any lyrics can be comprehended, before harmonic or rhythmic patterns are established, timbre instantly signals genre and affect...But I would argue that musical codes are the *primary* bearers of meaning; lyrics, like costume and performers' physical motions, help direct and inflect the interpretation of the meanings that are most powerfully delivered, those suggested by the music." In 1995, Pixar Animation released *Toy Story*. Probably everyone here has seen it. Can anyone remember the music that played in the background every time the evil next-door neighbor Sid entered a scene? Heavy metal. It perfectly represented evil—and without a single lyric. Because music is a language of emotions, because it represents and conveys feelings and moods, it can communicate and stir up wicked passions. Biblical music must learn to match the lyrical content with its expression of emotion.

IS ALL MUSIC GOOD?

The Christian Rocker's Creed says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all music was created equal—that no instrument or style of music is in itself evil—that the diversity of musical expression which flows forth from man is but one evidence of the boundless creativity of our Heavenly Father." Whether one realizes it or not, this implies a theological and a philosophical statement that contradicts the Bible. To say that God created every style of music is mistaken and confusion. The statement "all music was created equal" and is "but one evidence of the boundless creativity of our Heavenly Father" is problematic. It makes God the Creator of all music styles. A long

time ago, Petra sang, "God gave rock and roll to you/ Put it in the soul of every one/ If you love the sound/ Then don't forget the source." But this is a mistaken assumption that confuses man's ability to create music with the music itself. God has created all people in His image and has given some the ability to create music; but it does not follow that He is pleased with every human expression of music. Music is the product of human imagination and the expression of the human heart. Our sinful nature, our radical depravity, touches everything that we are and corrupts everything that we do. We can illustrate the problem this way: man has the ability to create words, but this does not mean that every word he creates is good. He can create and use words that are foul, filthy, crude, obscene, and vulgar. We cannot say, "God gave rock and roll to you," any more than we can say, "God gave filthy four letter words to you." God has given the ability; we must use it righteously. We can now consider

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ROCK AND ROLL.

As with our Scriptural survey of music, we can only do the very briefest survey of the history of rock and roll. The term Rocking and Rolling originally described a ship, rocking (fore and aft) and rolling (side to side) on the ocean. By the time it was applied to the music that bears its name, it was a euphemism for fornication. Two popular myths obscure the history of rock music. The first myth is that rock began when Elvis Presley suddenly appeared on the scene, obscenely shaking his hips and making the girls swoon. The other myth is that blacks created rock and roll, and whites stole it from them and commercialized it. Both myths have enough truth in them to satisfy those who do not look past the surface. However, rock and roll music was born after more than a century of musical cross-pollination between blacks and whites. Furthermore, Jews played an early, important role in producing, song writing, talent cultivating, and record making for rock and roll. With a rich musical heritage, rock music was a cultural evolution rooted in slavery. Music was an important part of the slaves' lives, and it helped them express their emotions in terms of their own culture, while experiencing the awful realities of slavery. They began to assimilate other forms of music around them. It was a syncretistic blend of European and African musical and cultural forms. Former Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart deeply studied the roots of rock's heritage. Following a

trip to Africa, he said, "It was my first exposure to the mother rhythms from West Africa that later mutated into my tradition becoming rock 'n' roll." Jazz, blues, gospel, Western swing, rhythm and blues, and jump blues, all sprang up after WWII. These musical styles began in the give and take of many cultural backgrounds, and musical blending was taking place all over the country at that time. Country musicians introduced blues tunes into their repertoires, Delta blues musicians began using electric guitars to adapt to the nightclubs in the city, jazz orchestras were adding blues vocals. Furthermore, the original blues singers rejected Christianity, seeing it as part of hostile white culture. There has been much debate over the story that Delta bluesman Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil. Whether he did or not, his songs like "Me and the Devil" give credence to the story. Out of this fertile soil, the roots of rock and roll began to sprout. Some believe that the first rock and roll record was recorded on December 28, 1947 by Winonie Harris. The song was "Good Rockin' Tonight"—which was a euphemism for partying and fornication. Rock historian James Miller said, "When Harris sang his pathbreaking song, he was simply doing what he had done for years... [making] music that would lift listeners up, put people into motion, and let them dance the night away." Miller continues, "At the time he recorded 'Good Rockin' Tonight,' he was already a minor legend. Renowned for his fast living and hard drinking, he'd been...building up a reputation as one of the wildest black showmen of his day." The song fit Harris well. Roy Brown, who wrote the song, said, "But now, 'Good Rockin' Tonight,' you know what that means. I had my mind on this girl...Listen, man, I wrote them kind of songs. I was a dirty cat."³ Three cities were ahead of the game when it came to this new music: New Orleans, Chicago, and Memphis. Some would claim that "Rocket 88" by Ike Turner was the first rock and roll song, not 'Good Rockin' Tonight.' "88" was produced by Sam Phillips in Memphis, TN, in 1951. In 1952, Bill Haley and the Comets had a huge hit with "Rock around the Clock." Back in Memphis, Sam Phillips had been telling his friends that if he could find a white man who could sing like a black man, he would make them both rich. He found that man in Elvis Presley in 1954. Presley's first single for Sun Records was the culmination of two hundred years of musical crosspollination in the South. It changed history and the

³Robert Palmer, *Rock and Roll: An Unruly History*, 15.

music business forever. Phillips went on to give Howling Wolf, Jerry Lee Lewis, B B King, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, and Ike Turner their first opportunities at recording. Early rock and roll blended elements of R&B, jazz, blues, boogie-woogie, honky-tonk, Appalachian folk music, and religious music. Later in the 60s, the Beatles became the most phenomenal success in music history, followed by the Rolling Stones, and what was called the British Invasion. From that time to this, a steady stream of artists and bands have multiplied and expanded into numerous genres and sub-genres of rock and pop music. Pop-rock, soft rock, hard rock, punk rock, folk rock, country rock, heavy metal, death metal, thrash metal, alternative, indie—the categories are

endless. But one thing has not changed: rock music's sensuous, party life, hedonistic character. All of these genres of music were written by men with sinful hearts, to express their sinful desires and sinful lives. They chose a style of music that expressed their rebellion, their hatred of authority, their sensuality. From its beginning to the present, from three-chord rock to its most elaborate styles, "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" is what this music is about.

The apostle John wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the

world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1Jo 2:15-17).

CONCLUSION: Music is a language of the emotions and an expression of the human heart. It is therefore subject to the pollution of original and actual sin. Composing or hearing music is not an amoral or neutral experience. Let us then realize that some styles of music—rock, blues, metal, punk, etc—are not fitting for the worship of the most high God. We will conclude our thoughts in the next message. Let us look to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and live. Amen.

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News from the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

March Bible Conference and 2016 SGBF Annual September Meeting to be Held at Community Baptist Church, Elemendorf, Texas.



From Pastor Kyle White: God has chosen to bless us with numerous additions over the past year, for which we are

thankful. We are also saddened by the movement of one of God's great blessings back to Kentucky. Brother Russ Brown has served as an elder in our church for 2 of the 3 years he and his family have been with us. The sudden death of his mother in November has prompted him to move back to Kentucky to care for his ailing father. We are sure God will use our brother in a new church "back home" just as he was used while serving here at CBC.

We look forward to our annual March conference. The dates are March 23-27, 2016. (Further info below). March is a beautiful time of the year in San Antonio,

so we trust that you will plan a vacation to the area and spend some of that time with us. Please contact us if you need assistance with finding lodging.

For those who are able to plan ahead, don't forget that the annual Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship meeting will be hosted at our facilities in Elmendorf, TX, September 12-14, 2016.

The theme will be missions and evangelism. We plan to begin that emphasis on the Sunday prior to the annual meeting. More details will follow.



March 23-27, 2016
Spring Bible Conference
Community Baptist Church
5697 Labus Road # 1, Elmendorf, Texas 78112
Kyle White, pastor

Services

The Conference begins on Wednesday, March 23 and continues through Sunday, March 27.

Mornings: 10:00 AM

Evenings: 7:00 PM

There will be no Saturday or Sunday evening services.

Speakers

Dean Olive, Don Johnson, John Greene, Curtis Knapp, Ron Crisp, and Greg Barkman

Conference Information

The church provides a large noon meal after each morning session. All attendees are invited.

We can accommodate some guests who contact us early: cbelder59@gmail.com

Report from Larry Dean: The 2015 Annual Meeting of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship was held in Mountain Home, Arkansas and hosted by the Summit Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Summit, Arkansas on Sept. 7,8,9, 2015. Ryan Butler is pastor of the host church. Due to concerns about seating space and hotel availability in the immediate area of the church, arrangements were made to have the entire meeting at the River Rock Inn and Restaurant in Mountain Home.



There was a meeting room right next door that perfectly accommodated our needs.



The meeting began with the evening service on Monday with a welcome from the outgoing Chairman, Ryan Butler and a message from Kyle White of Community Baptist Church, Elmendorf, Texas on Eph. 4:1-3, "The Unity of the Brethren." Each of the meetings had extended opportunities for fellowship afterward with snacks and drinks provided by the host church.

Tuesday morning began with coffee and fellowship followed by a time of sharing reports from the churches by the pastors and representatives of the churches who were present.

The afternoon was taken up with the Annual Business Meeting. An amendment to the constitution was approved which extended the terms of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to two years from one. This means that they may serve a total of 4 years instead of two. A new Executive Committee was elected: Kyle White as Chairman, Curtis Knapp as Vice Chairman, Larry Dean as Secretary and Ron Staley as Treasurer.

During the evening service we were privileged to hear the SkyMeadow Fine Arts string orchestra. This is a non-profit ministry, an outreach of Summit Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, committed to teaching music from a biblical world-view and providing children with instruments.

There were two speakers for the evening service. Jeffrey Johnson brought a message from Eph. 4:1-3 titled, "When and from Whom Do We Separate?" And the closing message was by Curtis Knapp, from Psa. 133 and Eph. 4:1-3, titled "The Blessing and Promotion of Unity."

On Wednesday morning there were reports on mission work around the world. Trevor Johnson reported on the work in Indonesia and another missionary, who works in a sensitive part of the world, told of his vision to serve the Lord by carrying the gospel to a very dark region.

The meeting ended with the entire body of the Messengers of the Fellowship profoundly grateful for the hard work, hospitality, and welcome provided by Ryan Butler and the Summit Sovereign Grace Baptist Church.

JIM D. GABLES' RETIREMENT FROM PASTORAL MINISTRY

On December 13, 2015, Jim Gables gave his farewell message to the Vineland Park Baptist Church in Hueytown, Alabama, announcing his retirement from his 52 years of pastoral ministry.

Jim was born near Springfield, Missouri in 1941. He was converted to Jesus Christ in 1959, just a few months before his graduation from high school. He married his wife, Carolyn, in 1962



and they moved to Los Angeles, California. It was there that God called him into the Gospel ministry. They moved back to Springfield where he enrolled at Baptist Bible College. While there he was honored with being chosen as class speaker of his graduation class.

Upon graduation, he went on to serve three churches in Missouri. The first was near Springfield, the second in St. Louis County (of which he was the founding pastor), and the third just south of Kansas City. In 1984 he moved to Birmingham, Alabama

where he served two churches for the past thirty-one years.

In addition to his pastoral ministry, Jim has ministered in over a thousand various ministries as a speaker. These include various Bible conferences as well as youth and family camps, and home Bible studies. He has traveled 18 times to Mexico to speak in the annual Bible conference for the Mexican Indian Training Center, which is a Bible college for the training of men for the ministry.

Jim is best remembered for his extensive 72 part series of messages on John Bunyan's book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the present time he has over 2400 sermons on the internet ministry known as SermonAudio.

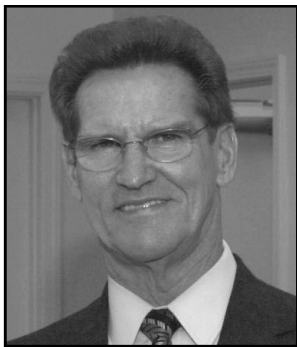
He was honored by being chosen by the steering committee of the first Southern Baptist Founders Conference to preach the first sermon at the first service held at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.

He also founded the Grace Abounding Ministries in 1982. This is a ministry designed to advance the cause of Christ in multiple ways. He continues to serve as its director with a board of 7 members. His internet ministry reaches an average of 1500 people a month.

While closing out his pastoral duties, Jim plans on expanding the internet ministry and making himself available for pulpit supply, weekend meetings in local churches, and Bible conferences as his health allows. He also plans to spend more time ministering to his wife, Carolyn, their 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

Jim has met many hundreds of pastors and church leaders in both Baptist and Presbyterian churches who have helped to balance his ministry and give him encouragement. It is for this that he is eternally grateful.

His theme text which he chose when entering the ministry is II Corinthians 4:5 - "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Jim has been noted for often saying that while he grew up as a child desiring to be a major league baseball player like his father, God bestowed upon him the far greater honor in calling him into the Gospel ministry of representing His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.



Tom Henry is the assistant pastor of Bible Baptist Church of St. Louis, Missouri. He is a frequent conference speaker and served as a past Chairman of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship.

Judgment at the House of God

(Exposition of 1 Peter 4:12-19)

Tom Henry

should not be amazed or perplexed when faced with *fiery trials*, seeing that these are by design, and intended to *try* them. "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.*" (Vs. 12) Christians who suffer, especially for Christ and truth, stand in need of frequent direction and encouragement. Those in affliction are always in danger of taking some sinful course for their case, or else to suffer heartlessly, and ready to think themselves forgotten. Thus, the Apostle, having already addressed this subject earlier in the epistle here returns to it again, and reopens the discussion with this loving compellation, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial.*"

This is no well kept secret, in fact, the Scripture are very clear, "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" (II Tim. 3:12) Jesus said plainly, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*" Perhaps we Americans have not fully appreciated the force of these warnings, having been privileged to live out our faith in a far less hostile environment than did the first century Christians and many others since who have stood for Christ in places where the gospel influence had not been so great as it had been here. However, it now seems that with respect to Christian persecution, what Peter wrote to believers in the first century can be applied to us perhaps more so today than ever before in the history of this great nation: "***For the time is come.***" (Vs. 17a)

The second word of direction, which Peter has for tried saints, is stated *positively*. They must count it a great joy that they had the honor of suffering for Christ. "*But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy.*" (Vs. 13) After the Apostle exhorted them to *think it not strange*, he then added this second word, *but rejoice*. They should rejoice, first, because those who are honored to suffer for Christ do in a special manner *partake of His sufferings*, in that they have a special measure of that wisdom and strength purchased by His death and communicated to them under trials. (Rev. 12: 11) Thus, they are brought to a nearer conformity with Him in His humiliation. (Rom.8:29; Acts 9:4; Col. 1:24) They should rejoice secondly, because they

will have a share in His glory. "*That when His glory shall appear, ye may be glad with exceeding joy.*" The Apostle Paul wrote, "*If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together.*" (Rom. 8:17)

To the two reasons given in verse 13 for why believers ought to rejoice in suffering for Christ, the Apostle adds a third reason in verse 14. "*If ye be reproached...happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*" The Spirit of the Lord delights to reside in the hearts of suffering souls.

Yet another word of direction for Christians under persecution is given in verse 15. They must suffer for Christ's name, and not as evildoers. Although the world will often speak against them as evildoers, they must never allow that such charges be true. They were to keep themselves from those evils, which even heathen magistrates would readily punish, and so be the less sympathetic with them in their sufferings for Christ. "*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*" The Apostle here, in effect, expresses agreement that all people, Christians included, deserve the stroke of human justice should they be guilty of criminal misconduct. But more to his point is that their sufferings for Christ are to be without offence, so that even in suffering men may by their good works, which they shall behold, *glorify God in the day visitation.* (Ch. 2:12)

The Apostle then further directs them, that should they suffer as Christians they should cleave to the profession of the name and truth of Christ. (Vs. 16) There is no shame or contempt that the world can pour upon sufferers for Christ for which they ought to be ashamed, but rather, let them *despise* shame for Him, as He did for us. (Heb. 12:2) "*If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.*"

Two further arguments are given to encourage them in time of persecution. "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*" (Vs. 17) The first reason why the godly can take

Peter in this chapter presses upon all believers to walk in holiness, and gives them many encouragements against suffering for sake of it. These are the two principle parts of the chapter. The sum of the first part is that believers should renounce the slavery of their sins. His first argument for this comes from the fact that they were esteemed judicially to have suffered for sin in their Surety, Christ (Vs. 1, 2). Secondly, he argues that they had already been too long in the pursuit of wickedness. (Vs. 3) Thirdly, those who wondered at and slandered them for changing courses would one day give a sad account to their judge. (Vs. 4, 5) Fourthly, because censure and opposition had been the lot of the saints departed (Vs. 6). And fifthly, because time was now near an end, therefore they should be the more watchful and prayerful, and give themselves wholly to Christian conduct and duty. (Vs. 7-11)

The sum of the second part is that hardest sufferings should not be thought strange to believers, and this for a number of reasons. First, their sufferings are sent by God in order to try their graces (Vs. 12). Secondly, by hard trials they are being conformed to Christ in whose glory they shall share (Vs. 13). Thirdly, reproach for Christ's sake is a joy because of the realized presence of the Holy Spirit and because therein Christ is glorified (Vs. 14), providing the suffering was not for any miscarriages of their own (Vs. 15), but was an injustice endured with cheerfulness (Vs. 16). Fourthly, God's appointed time was now come for purging of His Church by such fiery persecution that even the godly could not come to heaven but with great difficulty. (Vs. 17-19)

The second part of the chapter gives several directions for attaining to a right disposition and conduct under persecution and suffering for Christ. The first of these, set forth *negatively*, is that Christians

courage is that persecution can only come according to God's time and purpose. It cannot arise in the church when wicked men are pleased to plot it, or when they think the time is right that it should begin. It can only begin when the fit and prefixed opportunity (as the word here signifies) is come, which has been determined in the eternal counsel of God, who has also determined its design and duration. (Hab. 2:3; Psa. 102:13) This consideration should quiet and comfort the hearts of the godly under their sufferings, for it is here presented as a ground for cheerful submission, that the time prefixed by God for that particular thing has come.

It is certain that God Himself sends and governs this *judgment*, because the church is *the house of God*, wherein He delights to dwell (Psa. 132:14). The church is therefore God's family, which He will surely defend (Zech. 2:5). The Lord will have His family to be well ordered, and its members holy. (I Tim. 3:15; Psa. 93:5) Thus, the church is here called *the house of God*, and as a faithful Father, God will discipline, chasten, and correct His children. Because God would purge and purify His church, judgment must there begin: "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.*"

It would appear that Christians here in America will be facing increasingly difficult days ahead. All who will stand for truth and righteousness must be prepared to pay a price, *for the time is come*. Let us be sure that God will purge and purify His Church. He will attend the fiery trials as the great Refiner, removing the impurities, and purifying the silver. (Mal. 3:3) He will continue to burn away the dross until He sees His own image in the purified silver. (Rom. 8:29)

Although the troubles and sufferings of the godly are called *judgments*, there is no vindictive wrath, since Christ has born all of that in full (Rom. 5:19). All of God's dealings toward His own, including persecution itself, must be mercy and truth (Psa. 25:10). Yet those tribulations wherewith the Lord tries His church may be called *judgments* because even persecution itself, and suffering for Christ and His truth, while they are acts of the Lord's love to them (Heb. 12:6), they may be also acts of His holy justice, correcting and humbling them for those iniquities which He had pardoned (Psa. 99:8). Thus, those same sufferings, which Christians endure for Christ and His truth, may be to them also fatherly chastisements, which in Scripture are called *judgments* even to the

godly (Psa. 119:75). Here, the Apostle, speaking of the trials and sufferings of Christians, says, "*Judgment must begin at the house of God.*"

There is a second reason seen in verse 17 why Christian people can cheerfully submit under the rod of judgment as it is applied to them. It is that the trials and tribulations of the church are certain forerunners of the woeful end awaiting the instruments thereof, when the Lord has done His work by them. It is necessary that persecutions and sufferings come upon the church of God, but woe unto them by whom they come. "*What shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?*"

The instruments of Christian persecution are often those whom the church had tried to reach with the gospel. Not only do they refuse to hear the gospel, but they develop an inexplicable hatred toward those who, in Christ's name, seek the good of their souls. They show their disdain for Christ by persecuting His ambassadors. As the blood of many a Christian martyr cries from beneath the altar for retribution, it is certain that divine justice has not turned a deaf ear. Even still, persecuted believers pray, not for their persecutors' *damnation*, but for their *salvation*; that they, like one Saul of Tarsus, *who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*, be able to say, *but I obtained mercy*. (I Tim. 1:13)

The Apostle goes on to say, "*And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*" As the righteous are ordained to much suffering for righteousness sake, and since they must through much tribulation enter into their eternal rest, where does this leave the ungodly and the sinner? Not only do they refuse to take up a cross and follow Christ, but they add weight to the crosses born by Christ's people by becoming instruments of their persecution.

The righteous, because of the fiery trials which often come in the form of afflictions suffered at the hands of the ungodly, are *saved with difficulty* (as the phrase signifies). This is so because our Lord had ordained it. Jesus said, "*The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*" (Matt. 11:12) Ironically, that which God has ordained to fit His people for heaven is the very thing that makes the way difficult. Let them never forget, however, *that the upright shall hold on his way* (Job 17:8), because God will see to it. "*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the*

rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shall not be burned." (Isa. 43:2) The psalmist said, "*The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*" (Psa. 1:6)

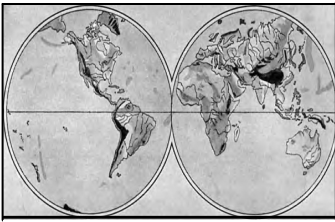
Lest the plain warnings regarding Christian suffering, particularly the difficulty they pose in their attaining salvation, should be a discouragement to believers, the Apostle gives one final instruction. They should give up their souls to the keeping of the Lord for whom they suffer, and so hold on to their duty notwithstanding the sufferings. (see Vs. 19)

The consideration of the difficulty with which the Lord's people are saved, by reason of the many fiery trials they must go through, should stir them up to make sure of the well being of their souls by putting them in Christ's hand. In so doing they shall gain courage and strength for their sufferings. One good result of Christian persecution is that it produces in true believers a renewed sense of priorities. They will more highly esteem the preservation of their souls, especially in troublesome times, than of all other things in the world. It is a special part of heavenly wisdom to ensure that by putting their souls in Christ's hand, they shall in quietness of spirit endure all sufferings with resolute confidence. David prayed in his distress, "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*" (Psa. 31:5) With our most valuable possession safe and secure, we shall value less other losses that we might suffer.

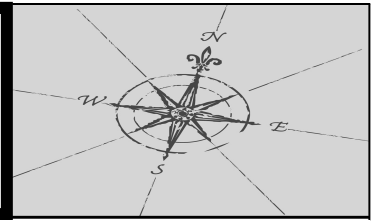
Souls that are committed to Christ cannot be lost, however, the Christian's assurance and comfort cannot be kept but in the way of duty. Therefore, the Apostle qualifies this instruction, "*Commit the keeping of your souls to Him in well doing.*"

The Apostle further encourages sufferers by representing the Lord who keeps them as a faithful Creator. The Christian is God's creation twice over, because he has been created anew in Christ. (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:26) As a faithful Creator, He will faithfully bear them up through all of their trials. (I Cor. 10:13) The Apostle Paul wrote, "*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it.*" (I Thess. 5:23, 24)





World Missions



Report from the Sniders, Missionaries to Indonesia

We cannot express enough thanks for your prayers during my (Paul) recovery from Dengue, and for Trish and her family due to the passing of her father. Your prayers were evident. The Lord has been so kind, so gracious, and ever more near in the suffering. When I read Philippians 1:29, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him, but also suffer for His sake," and I think about what Christ has brought us through, I am left with a resounding effect in my soul that He would not only set His affections on me, but count us worthy to suffer for the Gospel. Is there anything more blessed than to be counted worthy by God through the merits of Christ? No! He is the Treasure of the Universe.

I must confess, this last year in Papua and several months here in the States have been difficult. However, this may sound strange, but I would not trade any of the events that have happened, in the village or here. I do believe with my whole heart that Christ has taught us to set our affections deeper in the promises of His Word. He does not need us, but chooses to use us in the Korowai, and that doing cross-cultural ministry is not just about the hearts of the people we serve, but about our hearts communion with Christ our Lord.

Our prayer as missionaries for the Gospel is that you will see our lives bearing much fruit, and finding it all joy to do the work of the Gospel. Our prayer is that God will be glorified in my Dengue. This was not an accident, but as one veteran missionary told me, "A Gift."

We are currently in North Carolina resting and spending time with Trish's family. We are very thankful to be able to spend time with her family. I am excited to report that my energy is improving. We have rescheduled our tickets back to Papua. We return to Papua January 12th. If the Lord wills, we will be able to enter the village the 2nd or 3rd week of February. Trish, Lane, and Marianne are well. I thank my Lord for such a wife. She has looked after me with a love that I cannot express to you. Lane and Marianne are progressing in their school work. Pray for me that I will be a husband and father that leads through the Word.



Danowage: Pray for the believers in Danowage and Waina. When we left the village in August, I had just finished teaching the story of Gideon. We had spent weeks on this section and the Korowai believers were telling the story to many in several villages and the tree houses. Pray for Wayhu, Saulus, Simson, Petrus, Yohannes, Yadison, Yon, Salomo, and Barnabas.

Pray for Airus, an older Korowai man. He has been displaying the fruits of the Spirit this past year. I have witnessed several occasions where he has shown love in front of the whole village when someone had done him wrong. He has protected us several times in different situations. He has the desire to do what is right. When we return I plan to spend more time with him in the Bible stories.

Our 3 intern teachers from Jakarta are set to leave the village on the 22nd of December. Andreas, Yana, and Yeni have been teaching in the village since June. This has freed up Jimmy and Perin's time so they can focus more on overseeing the school and spending more time with the Korowai. Jimmy will be accompanying the teachers to Sentani to help their exit back to Jakarta.

The paving of the airstrip has started again. The company that is paving it will be completed before the summer of next year. They are paving 1040 meters. Plus they are building a small airport terminal. We believe that the government has plans for this area. That is why they are paving such a long airstrip. Pray for the progress of the Korowai. Things are happening very fast for the people. I believe it is too fast for them. With new infrastructure comes more people. Pray that the believers will not be distracted with too much advancement.

Our friends, Yus & Epi Weya are having a baby in February. Pray for Yus as he completes his Bible School. Epi, his wife wants to enter a morning Bible School this coming year, but does not have the funds. Pray that Yus can gather the funds to finish his school and help her study.

Thank you for praying and encouraging us as we labor for the Gospel together. Pray for the Korowai. Pray for Papua. Pray for Indonesia.

All for Christ, Paul & Trish Snider

Missionaries: Are You Interested in Reporting Your Work in the *Sovereign Grace Messenger*?

As a service to missions and missionaries the SGM dedicates a special missions section in each issue.

The Missions Editor, Larry W. Dean, should be contacted for further information. larrywdean@aol.com

Trevor and Teresa Johnson Prayer Update:

We continue to adjust to our new baby Gideon who doesn't sleep much at night. He is gaining weight, but was sick with an infection for his first 2 weeks of life and was in the NICU for much of that time. Had Gideon been born in Indonesia, the infection would probably have gone undetected and become severe. Active infections of this sort range from 5%-20% mortality one study told us. As things worked out, Gideon's illness, treated immediately in a Western hospital, proved little more than an inconvenience. So, even though we fight contentment over our delayed visa, we do see how God may have been blessing our family by "ruining" our plans to return to Papua "on time" and by keeping little Gideon safe. God sometimes overrides our prayers for His own glory...and our own good and He is always "on time."

Ministry activities this year have been many: I've been able to advise at least a dozen people preparing for missions to some degree as well as offer some limited counsel to several dozen more. I've been able to travel and speak at churches (over 100 speaking events in a year and travel through 30 States), have been able to teach seminary classes for Reformed Baptist Seminary, teach missionary trainees at To Every Tribe Mission in Los Fresnos, Texas. In addition, I have contributed a chapter to a nursing textbook used in nursing schools. Recently, I was able to participate in a missions conference for Reformed Baptists near Denver, Colorado that was highly encouraging. I continue to preach on occasion at Bible Baptist Church in Saint Louis and am

trying to refine and improve my speaking abilities. I continue to limp and stumble forward with my doctoral dissertation and this is a constant thorn in my side, but I hope to have that done by January.

Right now, the paperwork situation in Papua is not promising. So we are preparing to switch visa sponsors as a Plan B in order to get back into the country. This represents no change to the ministry on the ground yet, but only a change in the routing of the paperwork. So far. Many activities in Papua are under Indonesian government scrutiny due to flare-ups of violence in Papua. God bless. Email us at sovereigngracemissionary@gmail.com for updates or questions about this ministry.

Trevor and Teresa Johnson



Gideon David Johnson was born on October 3, 2015, weighing over 9 pounds.

From Sergei Mochalov in Siberia, Russia - Edited by Larry Dean



Gratitude and Praise to the Great and Almighty God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit for ever and ever!!! We thank God for you and for your prayers for us and our service to Christ. The Lord blessed us, and we had good three day conference attended by 35 to 55 people from different churches across Siberia. The blessing of the Lord was on the brother Andrey, the pastor of Grace Baptist Church of the city of Yakutsk. He came by plane to us in Irkutsk for our spiritual edification. Praise to God. Those of Yakutsk, as well as we in Irkutsk, are engaged in a huge spiritual fight, extending a fragrance of glory of our Sovereign God. Alas the majority of churches across Russia are churches where the man is the center of their theology. Therefore, we are not loved, and contradicted everywhere. We have seen fresh attacks of Satan against the truth through churches who seem to be drawing nearer to the doctrines of Grace. There is a mixture of true and false doctrine. They speak as if they believe in God's Sovereignty but their practical Christianity differs little from a worldly charismatic way of life. They continue to live for the flesh and for what pleases the flesh.

We thank God for good Puritan books which we have received through the Roundwood Trust. They translate and print many books of the Puritans and of Charles Spurgeon into Russian. Brothers from this missionary endeavor, Jonathan and John, visited us and encouraged us from the Word of God.

The Lord continues to bless us as we preach the gospel to the villages of Siberia. In the settlement of Elantsa one woman, Anna, who is about 45 years old, was very attentive to the Word of God. The Lord opened her heart and she wept, sobbing, over her sins and taking a Bible so that she could know the Will of God. We ask you to pray for Anna's salvation. Also, two Buryats (Mongols) came: Roma, 31 years old and Andry, 28 years old. These young people are dying from their alcoholism and we prayed for the rescue of their souls. Please remember them when you pray. There are lost young people who attend the church here in Irkutsk: Ilay, Michail, Igor, Taysiay, and Ira. They listen to the sermons and are reading their Bibles. We are praying for their regeneration and implore you to pray for them with us.

Please remember my poor health as well, as the winter and frosts are coming. On December 7th we are planning to visit Yangel's church in the city of Bratsk and the church in Tulun. Also we ask you to pray for good weather so that we can journey to the North. Your prayers and support helps us to continue to serve the Almighty in distribution of a fragrance of glory of great God across Siberia! We always remember you in our prayers, and we ask the Almighty to fill you with the Holy Spirit for Christ's glory!!!

Jesus' slave for glory of sovereign God, Bro. Sergei.
bro.sergey@gmail.com

Missionary Lives Spared - From Kyle White

As most of you already know, the Galaviz family was involved in an automobile accident that totaled their vehicle. We are very thankful to God that He was pleased to not only spare their lives, but brought them through this accident with relatively minor injuries. They are healing. Thank you for interceding on their behalf.

Brother Andres wanted me to express their deep appreciation for the kindness that has been shown to them by so many. Your love and care for them has been made obvious. From my own perspective, I saw and heard emotion in brother Andres as he spoke of the interest brethren have expressed to them during this difficulty. God has been their strength and He has blessed them through you.

Several years ago God provided a new vehicle for the Galaviz's by way of the generous giving of supporting churches. The Nissan Xtrail served them well. They are once again in a position of trusting God to provide for a replacement vehicle through the contributions of the churches. To replace the Nissan Xtrail with a new Xtrail would cost about \$21,000. Of course, the replacement vehicle does not have to be a new one. They will shop around for the best price, and will work with whatever funds are made available. The insurance payout for the totaled vehicle will be about \$6,000 ("about" is used due to uncertainty of exchange rate, and the insurance company has not yet paid out).

A number of you have asked about the need and how you might help. Community Baptist Church will be doing our best to fund as much as possible. If you are able to join us in meeting this need, we will pool all funds contributed by the end of December and will let the Galaviz's know at that time how much they have to use as they

make their purchase. We don't want them to buy on credit. They don't need that extra monthly burden.

If you want to contribute, please send money to 5697 Labus Road #1, Elmendorf, TX, 78112, and make the payment to Community Baptist Church, noting Galaviz Vehicle on the memo line. If more money is given for the vehicle than is needed, the extra funds will go to pay for other needs related to the accident and/or needs related to their medical conditions.



If you have any question please feel free to contact me by email, or **210-723-6586**. You may also contact the Galaviz's directly: andresgalaviz@yahoo.com.mx.

COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
5697 Labus Road #1 * Elmendorf, TX 78112
210-723-6568 or cbelder59@gmail.com

Report from the Philippines - Barry Carpenter

As of this writing, it is early December and I thought it would be a good time to reflect on the last year of our ministry here. On the negative side: 1) We established a board of directors in the Philippines (which gives the ministry and the seminary legal status) but we have not acquired the tax exempt status. In fact, we were recently told that we should re-file. 2) An Over-sight board in the US: There was a meeting in June but the issue seems to be on hold at this time.

Positives: 1) Our leaders in the church have grown in their understanding of doctrine and their ability to defend what they believe.

2) I have seen a "trickle-down" effect from our seminary. For example, what Pastor Ben learns in the M.Div. classes he teaches to other pastors in the city. These pastors are unable to come to the BES classes because if they do they will be disciplined by the Baptist Association so they meet with Ben privately.

3) There has been an enormous growth of ministry in the church. Even though our membership roll is only 13 people, we have weekly evangelistic outreach on two college campuses, a ladies' evangelistic outreach at a local boarding house, a children's outreach, and weekly evangelism in the parks.

4) In 2015 we added an Associates of Bible Studies program. We hold these classes in three different churches in the city.

Vision for the coming year: 1) We hope to expand our support by sharing our ministry with more people and churches. I am currently creating new materials to make it easier for our friends and supporters to share our story. While we are so thankful for the provision of God through His faithful people, we recognize that more support and prayer partners are needed.

2) In the summer we will graduate our first year Associates of Bible Studies students. We already have 3 students interested in enrolling in this program in 2016. This will mean we will have a first-year class, a second-year class and a M.Div. class for 2016.

3) We are praying to acquire scholarships to support more students. We have one pastor now in Bukidnon who wants to enroll. We have opportunities to do some work in Davao (8 hours away) but we are still praying if it is wise to expand there. And we are still praying about the prospect to plant another church in Indahang. There are numerous opportunities but we are already stretched very thin.

Thank you for your support and prayers in the past year. And we pray you will continue to stand with us to disciple the nations.

barrvgcarpenter@gmail.com or <http://expositorsim.webs.com/>

Support: Pleasant Hill Baptist Church
3049 Pleasant Hill Rd.
Orlinda, TN 37141

“Heartache and Happiness” - From Paul Brown



Grace to Thailand

Paul and Susan Brown

Email: 241thai@gmail.com

Phone: (405) 812-1923

Blog: www.gracetothailand.com

Sending Church
Central Baptist Church
327 Second St.
PO Box 876
Grenada, MS 38902

“Can you come! My little girl died last night and we must bury her today!” November was a month of heartache and happiness. Please pray with us concerning all of these.

Happiness... Yes, the joy of spreading the Gospel to the ends of the world. In my special report on November 21, I told of our trip to what seemed to be the end of that world. But there were people waiting and full of joy to hear the glorious Gospel of Christ. Their prayer requests: 1) a pastor; 2) a filter so they can have safe water (I am seeking to find what system would be best for them, a village of 13 families, and where I can get it.) The Lord willing, we will be making that treacherous journey again on December 25th.

Happiness... It is harvest time and so it was a month of many Thanksgiving services with the preaching of the Gospel and the joy of the harvest. We have already been to many villages for their special thanksgivings to God for the harvest and we are looking forward to many more this month. In one village where we just expected a few there, more than a hundred people showed up. These Thanksgivings are a wonderful opportunity to preach the Gospel. Pray for me as we will have two within the next week.

Happiness... We met with six men from communist Laos who are hungry for the Word. I received word today there are now nine men from Laos who want to meet with me for several days each month for discipleship training. We are seeking a location now.

Happiness... Our children continue to be a joy to our hearts. They are doing well in school. The older two were tops in their class the last semester. Susan also is teaching a class of English one afternoon a week in the younger children's school. But then...

Heartache... Yes, it was a sadness to hear of the death of this precious 7 year old little girl. We were thankful we were able to be with them in their time of grief and to set before the crowd the hope that is alone in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heartache... A storm hit last Friday night in one of the mountain villages resulting in a fire consuming the home and all the possessions of one of our dear elderly brothers. He and his wife escaped, but he was badly burned down his left arm and hand as he sought to save some of their food (rice) for the coming year. This little man has had a testimony of working hard with his hands so that he might have to give to the Lord's work and to others. I don't think I have ever seen him without a smile on his face. And it was still true when we arrived on Tuesday. What a blessing to now have our turn to pray with him and show the Lord's love to him, his wife, and the villagers in ministering to their need with a financial gift. The brethren in the church and village are now helping with rebuilding. Continue to pray for the upcoming Preachers' Training up in Mae Ai next month. Right now it looks like there will be more than 20 men coming from Thailand and Myanmar (Burma). We will be studying from morning until evening four days a week for 2 months. Whatever the case – in joy or in sorrow – our God is sufficient. We are privileged to serve Him here in Thailand and thankful for your support that makes it possible! For Christ count everything but loss.... Bro. Paul

P.S.: You can see the pictures of many of these people, events and places on Susan's blog page: www.gracetothailand.com. She is an excellent writer and sets before you our daily life here in Thailand.

“World Missions” continued on page 21

Good Advice from John Newton¹ - Author of “Amazing Grace”

"As to your opponent, I wish, that, before you set pen to paper against him, and during the whole time you are preparing your answer, you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing. This practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your heart to love and pity him; and such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write.

If you account him a believer, though greatly mistaken in the subject of debate between you, the words of David to Joab, concerning Absalom, are very applicable: 'Deal gently with him for my sake.' The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore you must not despise him, or treat him harshly. The Lord bears with you likewise, and expects that you should shew tenderness to others, from a sense of the much forgiveness you need yourself.

In a little while you will meet in heaven; he will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have upon earth is to you now. Anticipate that period in your thoughts; and though you may find it necessary to oppose his errors, view him personally as a kindred soul, with whom you are to be happy in Christ for ever.

But if you look upon him as an unconverted person, in a state of enmity against God and his grace, (a supposition which, without good evidence, you should be very unwilling to admit,) he is a more proper object of your compassion than your anger. Alas! 'he knows not what he does.' But you know who has made you to differ. If God, in his sovereign good pleasure, had so appointed, you might have been as he is now; and he, instead of you, might have been set for the defence of the Gospel. You were both equally blind by nature. If you attend to this, you will not reproach or hate him, because the Lord has been pleased to open your eyes, and not his."

¹Works of John Newton, 1:268-279, submitted by Trevor Johnson

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor

In the Fall issue 2015 is an article by Brother Curtis Knapp with which I would think many would disagree. Though Curtis is not a theonomist, his position of advocating the death penalty for homosexuals is a definite Theonomic approach that shows little New Testament grace.

“Shall the government impose the death penalty on homosexuals?” is a question from those who see the Kingdom of our Lord as in the hands of ‘magistrates,’ and such a kingdom that needs the protection of unconverted political leaders.

All Bible believers certainly agree that homosexuality is not only abnormal and unnatural but is declared by God to be an abomination. In the nation of Israel, the law put them to death by stoning. However, working unnecessarily on the Sabbath also was to be dealt with in the same manner. I see no Theonomist advocating such actions by New Testament churches.

I feel Brother Knapp’s use of the words “worthy of death” in Roman 1:32 to apply to the *physical* death of homosexuals is completely out of context and should strike fear in the heart of every believer who has ever been disobedient to parents, too proud, or has ever gossiped (backbiters); for those are some of the other sins besides homosexuality that are listed as “worthy of death.” That text is very clear in its referral to the divine punishment of an *eternal* death for those who know there is a God who is the Judge of all the earth and yet, defiantly practice the many sins listed, and

are glad when others do the same. The death spoken of is eternal, not physical.

Are we to expect civil magistrates of the world to exercise Biblical and godly judgment? The civil magistrates of Paul’s day put him to death and our Baptist history is a story of those who have always been persecuted by the civil authorities, whether by state-church or pagan governments. When the state church did execute homosexuals and witches, they also included ‘heretics,’ such as the anabaptists and later, Baptists!

The SGBF Articles of Faith, Article XVI, *Of Civil Government*, says government is of divine appointment, for the good of human society, and that we are to honor and obey (with the exception if they should require of us to do that which is contrary to His Word), and to pray for those over us. The next article, Article XVII has to do with the *Righteous and the Wicked*, between which there is a great difference, yet the wicked are not without hope, but may ‘through faith’ be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus...’ Are we advocating for sinners, like the homosexual, physical death or eternal life in Christ?

Of course the practicing homosexual is an affront to God and His Word, but so is the thief, the infidel and liars. Paul reminds the church of Corinth that the unrighteous shall NOT inherit the Kingdom of God. “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind [i.e. homosexuals], Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.” Did Paul ever advocate that any of these be put to death by civil magistrates? Was the church at Corinth to admonish the

civil authorities to execute homosexuals? The next verse makes it plain.... “And such *were* some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:9-11). In this text, homosexuals are not beyond the scope of merciful redemption.

If we are persecuted by the civil magistrates as our forefathers were, let it be for preaching and teaching the forgiveness of sin, even the sin of homosexuality. Will a homosexual seek deliverance and help from a church which advocates their execution? Or will help be found of those who unashamedly proclaim life over death and hope over guilt?

May the Lord give us that spirit that prays for the homosexual and welcomes them to come and hear the way of deliverance in Christ Jesus. Let us ‘slay’ their carnality with the Sword of the Spirit and tell them there is eternal life in the Savior.

We live in a country where Baptists still enjoy relative peace with the civil government – Should we now ask the government, that once persecuted us, to execute those we have not been able to win to Christ? We should not see these persons as ‘trees walking about’ that need be ‘cut down,’ but as lost men and women in need of the Word of Life.

Do not the words of our Lord apply to this situation regarding homosexuals? “For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Gary Long, pastor
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church
Springfield, Missouri

As Gary Long sent a copy of the above letter to Curtis Knapp, there was given him an opportunity to respond.

Clarification by Curtis Knapp

In the last *Messenger*, in an article on persecution, I briefly explained my view that the civil magistrate should punish homosexuality (not promote it) and should do so the same way God did in Israel– with the death penalty. I was trying to clarify why I had advocated this in a “controversial” sermon I preached in 2012. Unfortunately, the brevity of my explanation might have raised more

questions than it answered, so I feel I should explain myself better. In doing so, I speak only for myself, not the SGBF.

1. First, my belief that homosexuality should still be a capital offense does not mean that I think homosexuality is the unforgivable sin. Case in point, I once attended a conference session at the University of Kansas which hosted “Big 12 Gay Day.” At this session, they were attempting to reconcile homosexuality with the Bible. I stood up in their midst and appealed to them to be reconciled to God. By the grace of God, I did so in a loving

manner. They were utterly disarmed and did not feel hated. Some even thanked me for coming.

2. In the 2012 sermon, the death penalty comments were only briefly articulated. I was not speaking about the church, but rather the civil magistrate, whose purpose, according to Romans 13, is to punish evil-doers. Consequently, an exposition on Romans 13 is not the best place to look for my views on the gospel or the grace of God. Because the media is very good at creating caricatures of people (including me), I say all this to assure you that

preaching death to homosexuals is not my “niche ministry.”

3. In that sermon, I addressed Lev. 20:13 in an apologetic fashion. Many argue that such “morality” is out of date and many say that we Christians are hypocritical for dismissing the death penalty part while retaining the morality part. They say they are consistent, because they throw out both. They sense many Christians are embarrassed by God’s “harsh” judgments in the Old Testament. I was serving notice that I was not embarrassed by God’s judgments by saying that if the magistrate was interested in following God’s revealed will on the matter of homosexuality (which it isn’t), it would still put homosexuals to death. I then said that the government would never do that, but it should. In saying this, I was trying to defend the justice of God against the cavils of the world. I have little optimism that the civil magistrate in America will be soon consulting the Word of God (much less my sermons) in an effort to reform the penal code, and I have little fear that they will go too far in applying the Bible. I was trying to demonstrate that -- contrary to current popular belief -- homosexuality is not a wonderful thing. God punished it with the death penalty the only time He ever wrote a penal code.

4. I also referenced Romans 1:32 as evidence for my position. This was perhaps not the best verse to use in light of the fact that “worthy of death” could be referring to eternal death alone. Even so, eternal death in hell is something far worse and more terrifying than the sword of the magistrate – and if you think about it that way, it is far more controversial. Anyone willing to faithfully preach that all sinners – homosexuals included – are worthy of eternal death and therefore should flee to Christ, will be met with the same disdain I experienced, especially if a few sentences of your sermon are plastered on gay websites. My convictions do not rest solely on Rom. 1:32. I believe Romans 13 and 1 Tim. 1:9-11 are also instructive. In Rom. 13, Paul gives the clearest exposition we have regarding the civil magistrate. Romans 13:4 says, “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

But didn’t Paul know that the Romans were evil and that they would persecute Christians soon? I’m sure he did, but even

if he didn’t, this is the Word of God, not merely the word of Paul. That being the case, God certainly knew about the existence of evil magistrates, and He still said (through Paul) that it was a minister of God for good, “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” By way of comparison, consider the example of marriage. Marriage is good and a blessing from God. However, because of sin, many do not see that marriage is good. They only see unhappy marriages and divorce. But that does not argue against the essential goodness or validity of marriage. In our present context, the magistrate is a mixed bag, as it usually is. On the bad side, it rewards evil people by blessing homosexual “marriage” and punishing righteous Christians who oppose it. On the good side, the government still punishes murderers, kidnappers, thieves, vandals, perjurers, etc. And for that I am glad. One week of life in America with no civil magistrate and no punishment of evil would have us all quickly praying for some law and order and justice.

1 Timothy 1:8-11 says, “But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind (i.e. homosexuals), for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”

This passage tells us that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. I’m assuming Paul is referring to Old Testament law, as I’m not sure what other law he could be referring to. Since he expressly mentions homosexuals in the passage, I then have to see what the Old Testament law said about homosexuality. That leads me to Leviticus 18 and 20, for there are no other passages in the law dealing with homosexuality (unless you count Gen. 19). Leviticus 18 tells me it is an abomination. Leviticus 20 tells me it warrants the death penalty. How is this law good and how do I use it lawfully? My understanding is that it is good for showing the sinfulness of sin and helping people see their need for Christ. Again, that was my purpose in my sermon – to show that it was considered so wicked that God imposed the death penalty for it.

5. Isn’t this theonomy? No. I am not a theonomist. I do not believe that the kingdom of God is physical. Almost all theonomists are postmillennialists, but I am not convinced of postmillennialism (though I believe there are some merits to some of its tenets). I do not have any hope for societal transformation by virtue of the political process (though I do vote). I also do not believe the civil magistrate should regulate the “Sabbath” and matters of worship. Why not? Because unconverted rulers are wholly unqualified to understand proper worship. Why then are they qualified to legislate commandments like “Thou shall not murder” and “Thou shall not steal”? Because those things are so clearly revealed to our conscience that even unconverted magistrates can understand them. Magistrates, out of pure self-interest, generally want there to be some order in society and it is very hard to have any order if everyone can steal from, rape and kill anyone they wish. With respect to homosexuality, it has been outlawed by most governments, including ours, for the last 2,000 years. Needless to say, it was not enlightenment that caused the Supreme Court to throw out anti-sodomy statutes in 2003.

The government has always been “in the bedroom.” For the moment, it still punishes other sexual sins -- incest, polygamy, pedophilia, child pornography and rape, and I hope it continues to do so. I don’t believe that makes me a theonomist. I think most Christians would agree that such things should be prohibited. I also include homosexuality in the list of things that ought to be prohibited. Some obviously don’t. Some might disagree that the death penalty is a proper punishment for homosexuality. Fair enough. Even so, we shouldn’t indirectly criticize God for having punished it that way in Old Testament days. In fact, Lev. 20:22-23 makes clear that God ordered Israel to destroy the Canaanites for practicing things like homosexuality and other grotesque sexual sins. And yet the Canaanites did not have the Word of God and were not in covenant with God. I deduce, therefore, that it has nothing to do with a theocracy. It is simply a moral law to which God holds everyone accountable, Christian or not. For my part, I would far rather see a homosexual saved by grace than put to death by the magistrate. But since the road to eternal life is narrow and few find it, we must have a magistrate to restrain sin with the threat of punishment or we will have a very scary society, indeed. ♦ ♦ ♦

How Does Music Affect the Worship of God?

Jeff Pollard

WHAT IS THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSIC AND WORSHIP?

Music is a vital part of our worship of God. As we have seen, God commands us to worship Him with music. Our sacred music then is something that brings Him glory, and apparently, brings Him pleasure. Zephaniah 3:17 declares, “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” This is an astonishing thought! The Holy God of heaven rejoices over His blood-bought children with singing! When we come together as the corporate body of Christ, our hearts and souls should be focused on God, and our music should reflect that. As the thrice-holy Sovereign God, He loved us before the foundation of the world. He purposed to save His people from their sins. He appointed His eternal Son to be their Surety, the sin-bearing Substitute of His elect. Christ agreed to be our Mediator, our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. The eternal Son became flesh; and in His holy Person and work, He accomplished everything infinitely necessary to save and preserve His people for all eternity. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit into the world to apply the merits of Christ’s blood to His people. He opens their hearts in regenerating grace, bringing them into eternal union with Christ Jesus. The Spirit works repentance and faith unto everlasting life in their souls. He sanctifies them and bears the fruit of good work in their souls, so that they love and obey the living God in holiness through faith in Christ the Lord. And they wait patiently for the Lord Jesus to return for them in majesty and resplendent glory. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God had loved them from eternity and saved them in Christ “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” And there it is—to the praise of the glory of His grace. This is the revelation of God’s truth in Christ. Our corporate worship is our response to God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, informed by the Word of God. It has a twofold purpose: 1) Maturing the children of God: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

Christ.”¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). 2) Bringing glory to God: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph 3:21). Our singing should reflect this glorious revelation of our God and His saving purpose in Christ in its content, and we should present it with a *form* that is appropriate.

The music we use for worship should be *declaratory*—declaring the glory and perfections of God. The Psalms are filled with proclamations of God’s holy attributes and His perfections. “I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high” (Psa 7:17). “Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power” (Psa 21:13). Our worship music must be God-focused, God-exalting.

The music we use for worship should be *doxological*—filled with praise to God. Once again, the Psalms are filled with praise, adoration, thanksgiving. Our worship music must include psalms and hymns that lead and instruct our hearts to praise our great God in His holiness, goodness, righteousness, mercy, grace, love, infinity, eternity, wisdom, power, etc.

The music we use for worship should be *instructive*—doctrinally sound. One of the great tragedies of contemporary music is its lack of solid doctrinal instruction. But

this is not confined to contemporary music: many old hymnbooks and hymns are filled with Arminianism, Finneyism, and general man-centeredness. As with the Psalms, we should be singing the eternal truths of God, branding their glorious content upon our hearts. Ephesians 5:19 gives us a blessed

picture of Christ’s people instructing each other in holy music.

The music we use for worship should *cultivate maturity*: It should help God’s children grow in Christ. A solid diet of Christ-centered, grace exalting, doctrinally sound psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs grows God’s children in the faith. Their minds will become a treasure chest of exhortation, gracious promises, and gospel comforts. It will fill up with food for the soul to grow on, truth for the mind to expand on, grace for the heart to rest on, Christ for the soul to hope on.

It should help the saints become mature emotionally. Biblical sacred music should instruct God’s people in fundamental emotions. Our culture has saturated us with false

notions and distorted, sensual emotions. The media manipulate human emotions in our culture, and we are often perverse in understanding how we should feel. Men are feminized, women are masculinized, and children are confused. One of the signs of being turned over to a reprobate mind is being “without natural affection” (Rom 1:31). We do not love what God loves, we do not hate what God hates, we do not bless what He blesses, we do not joy over what God joys over. Our wicked, deceitful hearts, our sinful flesh, and our reprobate culture have confused, damaged, and stunted our affections. We need solid worship music that orients our emotions to

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God's will and purposes. We do not need insipid, sentimental Jesus ditties, we need psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that will give us hope, fill us with assurance, strengthen our backbone, rebuke our sins, cast us on Christ, comfort our hearts, and mature in holiness.

The music we use for worship should be expressive—satisfying our desire to express our love to God. How can we thank God enough for loving us from all eternity? How can we praise Him enough for spilling the precious blood of His Son that our filthy sins might be washed away? How can we express our joy that our sins are blotted out and our names are in the Lamb's book of life? We need music to help us express our utter dependence upon God, our sorrow and hatred for our sins, our joy for eternal life, our cries for protection from our enemies, and our hope for the consummation of Christ's kingdom! And much more!

IS PREFERENCE ALL THAT MATTERS?

It is clear that we all have preferences—one prefers this psalm, hymn, or spiritual song, while another prefers something else. Even among the Reformed, there are exclusive psalmodists, traditional hymnody, and now even CCM [Contemporary Christian Music]. Is this all just a matter of preference? Should we just live and let live? "You may have your CCM, I will have my psalm." If I have properly understood the Scriptures and drawn biblical conclusions, I can find little or no room for CCM in the corporate worship of God. If we take seriously that God's Word must guide us, that its doctrine must inform us, that its view of emotions must heal us, and its Psalms model sound doxology for us, then we must reject much of CCM by default. Many styles of CCM simply cannot be suitable vehicles for the purity and beauty of God's worship. Rock's raunchy sensuality, its volume and aggression, and arrogant rock posturings cannot carry the soul in humility before the throne of grace. But the styles are not the only problem.

To claim that no style of music is inappropriate is to deny the effect of radical depravity in human communication. This denial arises from a heresy called *Pelagianism*. Pelagius was a fifth-century British monk, who had no place in his theological system for the doctrines of grace or the sovereignty of God. His man-centered theology denied original sin and human depravity and exalted human nature, especially free will. He actually believed that it was possible, though not

probable, for a human being to live a sinless life. This is serious error. Saying that no style of music can express sinful passions is to take a Pelagian view of man. Because Scripture teaches that we are radically depraved, musical expressions from our heart can be inappropriate and can communicate sinful passions. I want to be clear: I am not saying that people who hold *The Rocker's Creed* are Pelagian at every point of their theology. I am only applying this to their view of music.

Radical depravity affects all human beings. To say that my taste and my preferences cannot be perverse is a distortion of the biblical truth of depravity. The term *radical depravity* means that human beings are sinful in every aspect of their humanity. It does not mean that every human being is as sinful as he or she can possibly be: but it does mean that every faculty of every person is affected by the power and pollution of sin. Scripture is clear at this point: as the representative of all human beings, Adam sinned, and passed on a sinful nature to all his descendants: "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom 5:19). God plainly declares our dreadful condition: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer 17:9). Outside of Christ, we are "dead in trespasses and sins" and we live "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:1-2). Human history has proved this true: "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). Sin has affected our minds: human beings "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom 1:21). Sinners are "alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works" (Col 1:21). Paul even describes us as living "in the vanity of [our] mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:17-18). Paul even goes on to show that our emotions have been damaged by sin: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph 4:19). Paul speaks of "the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24) and that those outside of Christ are "lovers of their own selves...Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,"⁴

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2Ti 3:2-4). This reveals depraved emotions and perverted feelings. Not only this, but "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1Jo 5:19) and live "according to the prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2). Those outside of Christ are slaves in "the snare of the devil," and "taken captive by him at his will" (2Ti 2:25). They are under "the power of Satan" (Act 26:18), and "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2Co 4:4). The music composer who does not know Christ is an enemy of God, alienated from God, with a deceitful heart, a foolish heart, a darkened heart, a blind heart, a wicked mind, a futile mind, a blinded mind, an ignorant mind, depraved emotions, and a slave of Satan—do you really believe that an expression of his heart is neutral? He has fashioned and delivered a musical expression as a vehicle appropriate to the content of his lyrics. Many CCM artists and other professing believers fill their minds and hearts with the music of lost, God-hating rebels. This is not sound in either lyrical content or emotional content. I fear that those who constantly fill their minds with the music of this world are in violation of Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." When the Lord first started dealing with me, I encountered some of the early CCM musicians. As I began to understand Scripture more clearly, I realized that some of them had never let go of their rock and roll. Peter says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" (1Pe 1:13-14).

To say that personal taste is all that matters is to embrace an atheistic perspective. Most of us have embraced the view that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. While I hear Christians say this all the time, this is the view of an atheist, not a Christian. I am applying this only to the issue of music and taste; I am not saying that those who believe this *are* atheists; but at this point, they are embracing an atheistic perspective, whether they realize it or

not. Atheism does not believe in absolutes. It is a man-centered worldview that has no ultimate standard of right or wrong. So it cannot say that a music style is bad. In this worldview, one can say, "I prefer another music." But one cannot say, "This music is an inappropriate style and that music is appropriate." But in a universe ruled by a thrice-holy Sovereign, there is good and evil. Sin has corrupted every aspect of our lives, and we must have the Word of God to teach us. We must bring our preferences to God's Word to see if they are legitimate. And we must ask the Lord to heal us from the love of the world.

DO WE WORSHIP OURSELVES OR CHRIST?

Satan has many wicked tricks and deceptions to keep God's children from biblically worshipping Him. Having deceived Eve in the Garden, he continues his foul deceptions, especially in the realm of worship and music. What we often fail to see is that we become strongly attached to cer-

tain *feelings* in worship. Then we begin to think that if we do not have that feeling, we have not worshipped. We must be very careful here: it is possible for us to attend the worship of God with no thought of honoring Him; and we are consumed with expecting a particular feeling—often it is a feeling attached to music. If we are not careful, we will end up idolaters, worshipping ourselves instead of the God of grace and beauty.

CONCLUSION: We are now ready to answer the question, "How do we know what music pleases God in our corporate worship?" The Content must be in harmony with God's Word, it must be doctrinally sound, it must exalt God's perfections, it must praise His character and works; it must mature God's children, it must instruct their souls, and it must let them express biblical affections to God. While there is latitude in certain styles of music, the style must be in harmony with God's holy character. Styles such as rock and roll,

metal, punk, and hip-hop usually express aggression, harshness, sensuality, hypnotic rhythms. The music that pleases God must instruct and mature our emotions. Does it teach us to fear God? Does it help us sense the grandeur of God? Does it provoke us to love God? Does it humble us to repent before God? Does it speak with gentleness; does it speak with majestic strength? Does it speak with joy, does it speak in godly sorrow? This takes prayer, care, study, skill, and above all, a desire to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Music affects our worship by influencing us toward self-centered, worldly, feelings-based religion or God-focused, Christ-centered, grace-exalting praise and adoration. May every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, declare and sing, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." May we look to Jesus Christ by faith and live! Amen.

C.H. Spurgeon's Thankfulness for a Period of Deep Depression

Some years ago, I was the subject of fearful depression of spirit. Certain troublous events had happened to me; I was also unwell, and my heart sank within me. Out of the depths I was forced to cry unto the Lord. Just before I went away to Mentone for rest, I suffered greatly in body, but far more in soul, for my spirit was overwhelmed.

Under this pressure, I preached a sermon from the words, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*" I was as much qualified to preach from that text as ever I expect to be; indeed, I hope that few of my brethren could have entered so deeply into those heart-breaking words. I felt to the full of my measure the horror of a soul forsaken of God. Now, that was not a desirable experience. I tremble at the bare idea of passing again through that eclipse of soul; I pray that I may never suffer in that fashion again unless the same result should hang upon it.

That night, after sermon, there came into the vestry a man who was as nearly insane as he could be to be out of an asylum. His eyes seemed ready to start from his head, and he said that he should utterly have despaired if he had not heard that discourse, which had made him feel that there was one man alive who understood his feeling, and could describe his experience. I talked with him, and tried to encourage him, and asked him to come again on the Monday night, when I should have a little more time to talk with him.

I saw the brother again, and I told him that I thought he was a hopeful patient, and I was glad that the word had been so suited to his case. Apparently, he put aside the comfort which I presented for his acceptance, and yet I had the consciousness upon me that the precious truth which he had heard was at work upon his mind, and that the storm of his soul would soon subside into a deep calm.

Now hear the sequel. Last night, of all the times in the year, when, strange to say, I was preaching from the words, "The Almighty hath vexed my soul," after the service, in walked this self-same brother who had called on me five years before. This time, he looked as different as noonday from midnight, or as life from death. I said to him, "I am glad to see you, for I have often thought about you, and wondered whether you were brought into perfect peace." I told you that I went to Mentone, and my patient also went into the country, so that we had not met for five years. To my enquiries, this brother replied, "Yes, you said I was a hopeful patient, and I am sure you will be glad to know that I have walked in the sunlight from that day till now. Everything is changed and altered with me."

Dear friends, as soon as I saw my poor despairing patient the first time, I blessed God that my fearful experience had prepared me to sympathize with him and guide him; but last night, when I saw him perfectly restored, my heart overflowed with gratitude to God for my former sorrowful feelings. I would go into the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit: it is good for me to have been afflicted that I might know how to speak a word in season to one that is weary.

...Reckon, then, that to acquire soul-winning power you will have to go through fire and water, through doubt and despair, through mental torment and soul distress. It will not, of course, be the same with you all, nor perhaps with any two of you, but according to the work allotted you, will be your preparation. You must go into the fire if you are to pull others out of it, and you will have to dive into the floods if you are to draw others out of the water. ...Payson truly said, "If anyone asks to be made a successful minister, he knows not what he asks; and it becomes him to consider whether he can drink deeply of Christ's bitter cup and be baptized with His baptism."

...I often feel very grateful to God that I have undergone fearful depression of spirits. I know the borders of despair, and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone; but hundreds of times I have been able to give a helpful grip to brethren and sisters who have come into that same condition, which grip I could never have given if I had not known their deep despondency. So I believe that the darkest and most dreadful experience of a child of God will help him to be a fisher of men if he will but follow Christ.

Don Currin Ministries

As you may know, Don and Cindy recently completed a visit to Germany and Romania for ministry and conference work. "The first conference was held in Winterberg, Germany, where I spoke to missionaries from Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden. My subject matter included messages entitled 'Helps to Gospel Efficiency' (enhancing evangelistic effectiveness). 'The Lord for the Body' (how the gospel enables us to conqueror sexual impurity), 'Facing Attacks/ Finding Approval' (what is a proper response to attacks in ministry) and 'The Gospel Driven Home' (exposing four predators that destroy the foundation of the home and undermine the gospel). I was very encouraged by the testimonies in response to the messages."

"Following the conference, Cindy and I flew to Bucharest, Romania, where we ministered in conferences and churches in Dragonesti Olt, Pucioasa, Brasov and Bucharest. Sponsored by HeartCry Missionary Society, many of the conferences' attendees were HeartCry supported missionaries. Once again, we were very grateful for the feedback that we received."

For 2016 another trip to Europe is being planned. "In January, we will be returning for the fourth time to Varhung, Norway, a third time to Gotenberg, Sweden, and a third time to Manchester,

England, while during the months of April and May we have been extended invitations to speak in conferences in Denmark, Switzerland, France and Italy."

But, Don has recently been experiencing some health issues. "Weeks ago, I was diagnosed with coronary artery disease... After returning to the cardiologist, he scheduled a heart catheterization which revealed multiple blockages. The main artery (widow maker) was 90% blocked and two others were 80% and 50% blocked. This constrained my heart doctor to insert a stent in the main artery and plan another procedure for a future date to implant at least one more stent in my heart.

"Please pray for me as I continue to have irregular heartbeats and feel that my heart at times is out of rhythm. Please pray for wisdom for us and the doctors."

With grateful hearts, Don and Cindy Currin



Note: Surgery on 12/16/2015 was successful! Praise the Lord!

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A Man Among a Thousand¹

(Based upon the portrait in the Interpreter's House [*Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan],
a word picture descriptive of a God-glorifying minister of Jesus Christ)

By Carolyn Staley

As the Interpreter leads the way into the first private room, notice that it contains one single item – a portrait hanging on the wall. Although it is not a great masterpiece or the work of a famous artist, study it carefully, my friend. Who is the solemn person depicted there? Why is his portrait displayed so prominently in the Interpreter's House? And what valuable insight may we gain from viewing it?

Although the Holy Spirit lives in every child of God as his/her resident Teacher and Guide, we have need of instrumental help if we are to safely navigate the Path of Life. God graciously provides this help by calling and gifting men to be His watchmen, the guardians of His flock. Upon the Gospel 'battleground,' these men form the vanguard and bear the brunt of the conflict. At the same time, they must guard the flank lest the enemy break through, for part of their calling entails protecting the flock against the intrusion of deadly error. The man of God does this by his uncompromising declaration of the truth and by maintaining a vigilant watch over those who have been placed under his pastoral care.

Thus, the godly minister is a rare and precious gift. Like Great-heart (*The Pilgrim's Progress: the Second Part*), he is the conductor and spiritual guide of those entrusted to his charge. His faithful ministry is highly instrumental in their conversion, spiritual growth, increase in godliness, and perseverance in faith. Therefore, he occupies a vital place in the Kingdom of God.

However, not all who claim to preach the Gospel are the true servants of Jesus Christ. Many "hirelings" assume the name and claim the office when they are really "wolves in sheep's clothing." Imposters driven by ulterior motives, not genuine love or concern for the flock of Christ! Thus, through disingenuous words, they pervert the Gospel and wreak havoc in the churches (Acts 20:28-30).

So how do we distinguish between the true minister of Christ and the false pretender? By what criteria are we to make this vitally important judgment? Take a good look at the man in the portrait. Ponder his expression and note well his features, for in them we shall find the answer.



Studying the characteristics of the imposter will do little to help us identify a minister of Jesus Christ. He is only known by a careful consideration of the true. The portrait hanging in the antechamber of the Interpreter's House is placed there for just this reason. It is a composite of the genuine under shepherd of Christ, both as to his godly character and the exercise of his divine gift. Its distinguishing features show the high standards required for this highest and most noble calling. So, as we carefully ponder each feature of the man in the portrait, what do we see?

First, we must understand that he is a **man**, not an angel or a super-human being. He would be the first to say that he is fallible, limited in wisdom and knowledge, and fully aware that his strength is not equal to the task set before him. And yet, he is a very special man, described by John Bunyan as "one of a thousand." He is what he is by the grace of God – a chosen vessel filled with the Spirit of Christ and set apart for special service in the Kingdom of God.

The sobriety of mind and Christ-like character of the man of God can be traced in the deeply etched lines of his face. There is no hint of frivolity there, for the heavy responsibility and serious nature of his labor is ever in his thoughts. The sorrows and burdens of his unique calling give his face its rather care-worn appearance, yet there is a beauty in his features as well – the beauty of one who is selflessly devoted to the service of his Lord (1 Tim.6:11-12).

His eyes are worthy of particular note, for they reveal both the nature of his calling and the orientation of his heart. Rather than looking straight ahead, his eyes are lifted upward. And, although you cannot see it, so is his heart! This precious servant of Christ has answered a heavenly call. Thus, he labors tirelessly for both time and eternity, not out of mere duty or for earthly honor or reward, but out of love for his Lord and the souls of men. The power to faithfully perform his commission comes from the Spirit of God, who called him and placed him in the ministry (2 Tim. 2:1-4).

Although he is a man of spiritual strength, he is keenly aware of his utter dependence upon the Lord. Therefore, he spends much time in prayer, seeking help and strength from the One whom he serves and to whom he belongs. And then, coming out of his prayer chamber, he goes forth as a mighty man of valor, equipped by faith for spiritual battle and armed with the "whole armor of God."

After duly noting the man's uplifted eyes, our attention is next drawn to the book in his hand. This book, which is continually in his heart and mind, is the Word of God. As his sole authority, it constitutes both the rule of his life and the message of his lips. Shunning the commandments and doctrines of men, including his own personal opinions, he diligently labors to learn and rightly interpret the Scriptures. And in so doing, he is thoroughly "furnished" for the task of properly expounding it to others (2 Tim.3:14-17).

Even though the minister of Jesus Christ is a leader of men, he is a leader led by his heavenly Master. He is well aware that he can only accomplish his great task if the Spirit of God is the source of his knowledge, wisdom, and unction.

Therefore, the man of God is no stranger to the house of the Interpreter. In fact, like Pastor Great-heart, he is a frequent resident there. Within its 'walls,' he often withdraws in order to commune with his Lord, receive instruction in the truth, and seek guidance as to its proper application. In this way, he becomes an able minister of Jesus Christ – skillful in the Word of God and apt in the ready defense of the Gospel. Then, being filled and led by the Spirit of Truth, he is a

proper guide for other pilgrims on their way to Zion (1 Timothy 4:12-16).

The next feature of the portrait – the “law of truth written upon his lips” – is not visible to the natural eye. It is a characteristic that has to do with the godly example of the minister of Christ (1 Timothy 4:12-13). Truth flows from his lips because it is a living reality in his heart. Since his life is consistent with his message, the man of God is a worthy example to his flock (1 Timothy 4:6-8 Hebrews 13:7).

We might presume that a man of such exemplary character would be loved and appreciated by all who know him, but this is not the case. Because he labors for the approval of God and not men; because he “*buys the truth and sells it not*”; because he is an uncompromising defender of the “*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*,” he is often misunderstood, slandered, reproached, and despised (2 Timothy 2:1-15). He expects no better treatment from men of the world but, ironically, a significant part of this kind of suffering comes from those who claim to be brethren in the Lord.

However, the truly spiritual person will perceive his value and highly esteem him in love.

After studying the various features of this very rare portrait, the perceptive viewer will observe that the world is placed behind the man’s back. He serves a heavenly Master – a risen, reigning Lord; therefore, his heart is firmly set on things above. The world and its vanities hold no

charms for him. Whatever earthly position or honors he could have attained, or temporal goals he might have achieved by pursuing a lesser calling, are gladly sacrificed to his Lord. Knowing full well that “*no man can serve two masters*,” he follows his Lord with singleness of heart and mind. And he does so willingly and joyfully, out of love for the One who saved him and placed him in the ministry (2 Timothy 2:1-4).

Gazing yet more closely upon the countenance of the man in the portrait, we observe that he “seemed to plead with men.” In this, we may infer much concerning both his ministry and his heart of love for the souls of men. The hireling prophet has no genuine care for men; he possesses nothing of the true shepherd’s heart, but ever seeks his own selfish purposes. Therefore, when the tide turns and trouble or persecution comes, he is the first one to flee!

But unlike the hireling, the true man of God loves men enough to tell them the truth, even though he must often do so at great personal cost. As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, to whom the “*ministry of reconciliation*” has been committed, he faithfully declares the glorious message of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), the good news that through Christ men are reconciled to God and “*made the righteousness of God in him*.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-21) But since this precious truth is neither universally loved nor accepted, spiritual travail is an inevitable part of his courageous defense of it. Yet, he does not shun this pain.

Rather, in earnestly contending for the faith, he boldly confronts, exposes, and reproves error. So even though suffering often attends his valiant stand for the truth, he can honestly say with the apostle Paul, “*Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*.”

And then there is the maternal and paternal aspect of his calling, seen in his concern for the spiritual growth and welfare of those placed under his care. As they strive to follow the Lord and be more like Him; as the image of Christ is gradually being formed in them, their pastor travails in birth right along with them (Galatians 4:19). He can truthfully say with the apostle John, “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth*.” (3 John 4) On the other hand, he knows no greater pain than seeing those whom he loves reject the truth and depart from it.

What possible reward could be due such a man as is depicted in the portrait? Certainly nothing that this world has to offer! But then, he does not seek earthly recognition, esteem, or reward. The “*crown of gold hung over his head*” signifies that a heavenly recompense awaits him (2 Timothy 4:7-8). When earthly honors and corruptible crowns have all been left behind, something much higher is reserved for the faithful under shepherd of Jesus Christ – “*a crown of glory that fadeth not away*.” (1 Peter 5:1-4)

¹Excerpt from “Portrait in the Antechamber”; *Journey Through Pilgrim’s Progress* by Carolyn Staley

A Different Portrait of a Modern Pastor

If your pastor resembles the one pictured above, he is indeed a divinely given gift, a man who does not want to set forth himself but only preach “*Christ Jesus the Lord*,” ever pointing you only to Him, putting your true interests above any personal recognition. I know and am challenged by such men as this! But I know of none who would esteem himself or even dare say that he fits all the descriptions above, yet would his heart be for the glory of Christ and the spiritual maturing of His sheep.



If though a portrait were painted of the modern pastor, would it not be a far cry from that portrayed by John Bunyan? The man’s eyes are downward, focused upon the world and its methods, using the best sales and management skills. The book in his hands would be something like, “*The Best Way to Accomplish Church Growth and*

Increase Your Budget.” If “the law of truth” was ever in his mind, his seminary education managed to remove it and replace it with so much doubt as to overcome any true conviction of its meaning. Instead of the world being at his back it is always before him, spending more time on the internet or before modern media than the Book, unaware of the deadening influence that has claimed his time. Sin, judgment and hell are too disturbing, so the Gospel of the Cross has no impact if ever it is mentioned. His is only “a positive gospel,” making the sinner comfortable, wanting a “seeker friendly church,” lest he lose most of the congregation and the offerings dwindle. Away with the old standard hymns and their outdated melodies, emphasizing the grand truths of the Gospel! After all, the world has grown accustomed to music that moves the emotions, or even the body, so that more of the world is drawn by what appeals to the world. And he is so obsessed with his vision for numbers, a large congregation, and a higher place of honor among his peers, than to think of any crown of glory hung over his head.

God grant us ministers who look far more like Bunyan’s word portrait! - **Editor**

Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship



Speaker:

Kyle White, pastor of
Community Baptist
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The Seventh Annual Convocation dedicated to praying for an Awakening in Our Time and Revivals in our churches will meet Tuesday through Thursday, February 23-25, 2016 at Bridgetown Baptist Church, Nesbit, MS (Memphis, TN area). The meeting will begin on Tuesday, February 23 at noon and end with the final message on Thursday evening. The afternoons will be spent in sessions of prayer, with preaching each evening.

Pastors and laymen are encouraged and invited to join us.

Conference and the Annual SGBF Meeting at Community Baptist Church on Page 8

April 19-21, 2016

Spring Sovereign Grace Bible Conference

Bible Baptist Church

3150 Sutton Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63143

Holmes Moore, pastor

Tom Henry, assistant pastor

Services

The conference begins Tuesday morning, April 19, 2016 and continues through Thursday evening, April 21, 2016. Morning services begin at 10:00 AM and the evening service begins at 7:00 PM.

Devotional and prayer at 9:00 A.M. each day of the Conference

Two meals a day, each day of the Conference, are provided by Bible Baptist Church for all who attend. Dinner follows the morning sessions. Supper is served before the evening sessions at 5:30 PM.

For Conference and Accommodation Info - Web: www.bbcstlouis.com Email: bbcstlouis@yahoo.com

Check out the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship Website: www.sgbf.com

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