

# Spirit-filled Praise

Ephesians 5:19

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## **Introduction**

In our Ephesians series last week, we zeroed in on Ephesians 5:18 where we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

- We saw that the filling of the Spirit is something that is one of the main features of the New Covenant...
  - By the prophets, the Lord promised that when the Messiah came,
    - He would pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people.
  - The Holy Spirit, is, of course, poured out upon His people in order that they may be filled with the Him.
- This is a great blessing because we are helpless sinners...
  - And the Holy Spirit is poured out on us to transform us into all that God has called us to be...
  - Jesus Christ came to redeem us, and He did that by going to the cross to bear our sin so that we might be completely pardoned...
    - We obtain forgiveness by trusting in Him...
  - But we would never come to Him and never desire to serve God if He had done nothing other than dying for our sins...
    - We would have been pardoned, but we would never have wanted to come to God because of our fallen rebellious condition...
    - So when He comes to us to call us to His salvation,
      - He gives us the Holy Spirit to change our heart so that we will come to Him and so that we will desire to be pardoned and reconciled to God...
  - When the Spirit changes us, He causes us to delight in God's law.
    - We want our lives to be a beautiful expression of all that God commands—all that He calls us to be as His reconciled children.
    - The Spirit gives us the desire as well as the ability to serve God.
  - God goes to work in us to make us more and more like Jesus...

- All the trials and all the things that you experience—even the failures—are all working toward bringing you from where you are to where God has called you to be!
- Just think what it will be like to at last be free from all sin!
  - For all of us to be like Jesus—
    - to be perfectly holy
    - to love as He loved us...
    - to know God as He knows Him
    - and to delight in Him as He delights in Him.

And you see, Christian, all you who are looking to Christ for salvation...

- God has begun this wonderful work in you—this is what He is doing and He will finish the job!
  - Surely you want to be filled with the Spirit so that this new life will increase in you!
    - Surely you want your whole life to be lived out in the power of the fullness of the Holy Spirit!
    - This is your inheritance and it is most glorious!

Last week I showed you that this little command to be filled with the Spirit is explained by a series of participles...

- These are the i-n-g words that you see in verses 19-21...
  - We are going to look at these over the next few weeks.

But this week, I want to concentrate on the first one—Spirit-filled praise...

- You can see what it says in verse 19...
  - Eph 5:19: “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”
- If you put this together with the command in verse 18 to be filled with the Spirit, you get...
  - Eph 5:18-19: “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”
- In other words, when you are filled with the Spirit,
  - you will be speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

I want to begin by showing you that in Ephesians 5:19,

**I. The Lord calls you to sing praise with His people in the church.**

A. Let me begin by explaining the basic structure of this verse...

1. I have already explained that this verse as well as verse 20 and 21 are participles that modify (or explain) the command to “be filled with the Spirit.”
  - that being filled with the Spirit involves “speaking to one another in psalms—and so forth...
2. But in verse 19, you have two other participles—two other i-n-g words
  - the participle “singing...”
  - and the participle “making melody.”
3. The question is,
  - What do these two participles modify?
    - a. Do they modify the command in verse 18 to be filled with the Spirit so that we have three different activities listed here?
      - speaking to one another...
      - singing
      - and making melody in your heart to the Lord...
    - b. Or do these two participles modify the participial phrase, “speaking to one another?”
      - so that they are telling us how we are to go about speaking to one another...
      - that our speaking is done by singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord?
    - c. I would argue for the second—that the second and third participles modify the first one and tell us that this is whole verse is about singing...
      - and here is why I say that...
        - 1) First, because the word “speaking” (*lal-eh'-o* in the original) is a word that means “to utter articulate sounds” and is in no way limited to what we call “speaking” in the narrow sense—
          - speaking as opposed to singing...

- *lalew* is much more general than that... and easily takes in the idea of singing.

2) Secondly, because of the context—

- We are told that we are to speak psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and all three of these words refer to what is sung...
  - Therefore, the participle “singing” is not adding something in addition to speaking,
    - but rather explaining the kind of “speaking” that is in view...

TRANS> So this means that what we have here in verse 18 is a call to us to sing...

B. And now I want to show you further that this call to sing is a call to sing in the church...

1. Because it says:

- “speaking *to yourselves*” and the speaking in view is “singing,”
- There are some who have given this a rather strange interpretation...
  - They have thought that this is calling us to sort of spontaneously sing little ditties to each other to encourage each other...
    - That when you go over to someone’s house, you are to break out in a little song to encourage them...
      - or when you see another Christian down at the market—you are to start singing to each other...
  - Most of those who hold to this interpretation don’t practice it,
    - but they are usually among those who hold to the notion that corporate worship—the ecclesia or the assembly—happens any time we get together with other Christians...
      - The idea that the Christian Assembly is not a special, set apart gathering...
        - that it happens whenever Christians get together for fellowship.
      - This view does not recognise the fact that God has appointed an assembly for us that is set apart from ordinary fellowship...
        - that the Christian assembly is a calling out of God’s people to transact His business...
          - The Greek word *ecclesia*, translated church, means “an assembly of called out ones...”

- We are called out by the Lord to hear the word preached, to hear the scripture read, to have corporate prayer and praise, and to eat the Lord's Supper.
- There is quite a lot about the Christian Assembly in the New Testament.
  - We read, for example, of "Nymphas and the church that is in his house" (Col 4:15),
    - and of "Aquila and Priscilla with the church that is in their house" (I Cor 16:19).
  - Paul is not talking about just any old assembly (ecclesia)...
    - an assembly for the purpose of doing crafts or an assembly to discuss a problem in the neighbourhood...
    - He is clearly referring to those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ gathered together in His name for worship.
  - In I Cor 11:18, Paul uses the words, "When you come together as a church,"
    - again, referring to an activity that is set apart from ordinary activities—

TRANS> There is good reason for believing that the singing that is spoken of in Ephesians 5:19 is the singing that is to be done in the Christian assembly.

2. The words our translators have chosen,

- "speaking to one another,"
  - do not have to mean that one speaks one thing and then another speaks another thing...
    - as those who sing back and forth to each other the way people do in the Sound of Music or My Fair Lady...
- But these words can also be taken to mean speaking in concert—
  - The assembly singing in unison.
  - The best Greek exegetes agree that the words in the original can, and probably do, convey this meaning.
- There are some who think this refers to antiphonal singing,
  - but history seems to show that that was an innovation of a later time and was not done under the administration of the apostles...

- By far the most reasonable interpretation is that this is a command to sing together at church...
    - a thing that Christians have done from the beginning...
    - a thing that the Jews did in their synagogues...
3. This command to sing together has an important application.
- a. We are to be filled with the Spirit when we do this, and as you know, the Spirit is very concerned about unity...
    - Remember Ephesians 4:2—that we endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...
      - And Ephesians 4:30, where we are told not to grieve the Holy Spirit who has sealed us,
        - but rather to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away with all malice,
        - and to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you—
        - and that we are to walk in love as Christ also has loved us...
  - b. It does not do, therefore, to come together in the church to sing praises with your brothers and sisters when you have strife and contention...
    - Paul rebuked the Corinthians about this in their assemblies...
      - 1 Cor 11:18: For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.
    - You must carefully guard against this...
      - You can't sing together in a way that pleases God with those that you have unresolved issues with...
      - Sunday morning is often one of the hardest times for families—it seems to be the day that quarrels break out more than any other!
        - And then there are those unresolved contentions that you have with others in the church...
        - These must be dealt with!
  - c. You need to make it priority to be reconciled lest you offend God in your worship...
    - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that if you come to worship and there remember that your brother has something against you...
      - that is, that you have wronged him some how...

- First go and be reconciled to your brother—then come and offer your worship to God...
- Your sacrifice of praise will not be acceptable to God if you come before Him with malice toward your brother...

TRANS> Okay then, having seen that this verse calls you to sing praise in the assembly with your brothers and sisters,

- I now want to take a look at the content of that praise...
  - at the songs you are called to sing...
  - So secondly, see here in Ephesians 5:19:

## II. You are told what to sing in the Christian assembly; namely:

- **psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.**

### A. What do these three words mean?

1. First, let me show you what they mean in themselves, without consideration of the context.
  - a. **Psalms** (ψαλμοὶν) generally refer to songs that are accompanied,
  - b. **Hymns** (ὕμνοι) refer to songs of praise, either to praise God or to praise man,
  - c. And **songs** (ᾠδαὶν) are simply that—any kind of song...
    - and that they are **spiritual** songs means that they are somehow related to the spirit—
      - usually the spirit of God.
2. Now there are two things I want you to notice about these words...
  - a. First, I want you to understand that all three words could easily be used to refer to the same song...
    - 1) The same song could easily be a psalm, a hymn, and a spiritual song.
    - 2) In fact, all three of these words are used in the title of Psalm 76 in the Greek translation—the Septuagint.
  - b. Secondly, I want you to understand that the words themselves do not bear a distinctively Christian meaning.
    - All three of them could be used to refer to idolatrous or profane songs.

TRANS> So then, with this in mind,

3. Are we to conclude that Paul is telling us to unite our voices in singing whatever songs we may choose in the church?
  - Of course not!
  - a. As is always the case, the context must determine the meaning...
    - Let me show you an example...
      - A couple of weeks ago, we looked at 2 Tim 3:16 where it says that:
        - “All scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.”
      - What does the word **scripture** (*graphe* in the original) refer to?
        - The word itself simply means “**writings**”...
          - The word in the original did not bear the specialised meaning that our English word bears...
          - It refers to writing of any kind...
        - So does this mean that all writings of any kind are God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof... etc?
          - Of course not!
            - It is very evident to all but the most contentious that the word “**writings**” refers to the inspired collection of writings that the Lord has given us in the Bible.
  - b. Well now, when Paul instructs us to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,
    - should our first thought be that he is referring to no songs in particular?
      - Should that be our first thought when we have a collection of 150 inspired songs that He has given to His people to sing?
      - And when these inspired songs were constantly in use within the synagogues that were in almost every city?
      - And when these divinely given songs were referred to in the writings of the times by various combinations of these words,
        - psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs?
      - And when these songs even bear in their very titles the words psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, in the Greek version of the OT that the Ephesians were using?
    - Should we not assume that the Apostle refers to the divinely inspired Psalter that He has prepared for His people to sing...



- a collection that was constantly used in all the synagogues by His people at the time Paul wrote this?
- and a collection that was brought over with the rest of the scriptures into the churches?

TRANS> And further...

- c. Should we assume that he is commanding the Ephesians to produce songs?
  - In telling them to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
    - is he calling them produce new songs, or is he calling them to sing songs that they already have in their possession?
    - The words are not that they should produce songs, but that they should sing them...
  - And does it not seem that if it had been the Lord's will for the New Testament believers to write new psalms and hymns and spiritual songs for use in public worship,
    - He would have inspired the prophets and apostles of the New Testament period to compose them?
      - And that we would have a collection of songs in our New Testament scriptures that are divinely inspired?
      - If the Lord saw fit to give his people divinely inspired songs in the Old Testament, would He settle for something else in the New?
  - But the fact is, we have no such collection.
    - And when we consult history, we find that the church primarily sang the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that are found in the Old Testament...
      - Yes, we can find a few other songs or poems that were written, but there is no indication that these were used in public worship...
        - except for songs by a couple of heretical sects like the Marcianites who rejected the Old Testament completely...
  - There are no songs that were received by the church as canonical,
    - and all historians are agreed that the collection we call "the Psalms" was by far the dominate source for worship song in the early church.
      - For example, the noted church historian, Philip Schaff says:
        - "[The church] long adhered almost exclusively to the Psalms of David, who, as Chrysostom says, was first, middle, and last in the assemblies of the Christians; and it had, in opposition to heretical predilections, even a decided aversion to the public use of uninspired songs. The Council of Laodicea, about 360, prohibited even the

ecclesiastical use of all uninspired or 'private hymns,' and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 confirmed this decree.”

- In the 1800's, a commentator speculated that the passage in Phil 2 where it is rather poetical, might have been a hymn...
  - and even though there is no evidence that these words were ever sung,
    - the idea caught on by those anxious to find hymns in the early church and many other poetical sections have been referred to as hymns...
    - but this is only in the last 100 years or so, and it is without the least shred of evidence.
- Instead, at the Council of Laodicea (364) when the canon of the New Testament was settled, it was also concluded in Canon 59 that:
  - “No psalms composed by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments.”

TRANS> The conclusion is that we have no warrant for assuming that when the Holy Spirit commands us to sing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs in Ephesians 5:19,

- He is referring to any other songs than the divinely inspired songs He has given us to sing.

B. Consider these additional arguments:

1. If we have a complete book of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs that is given to us to sing in our assemblies,
  - what authority do we have to compose additional psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to sing in our assemblies?
  - Do we have any more authority to do this than we have to compose new writings to read in our churches when the Holy Spirit has given us 66 divinely inspired books to be read?
    - And if we did take it upon ourselves to do this,
      - would it not be an even worse offence to then prefer our own writings to the point where the 66 inspired writings were almost completely neglected?
  - Is this not what has happened with the Psalms?
    - Fragments and very loose paraphrases of the psalms are about all that remain to be sung in many Christian assemblies.

- Uninspired hymns have almost completely crowded out the songs given to us in scripture.
2. Secondly, is it not presumptuous of us to suppose that we are capable, as fallen sinful creatures, to compose songs of praise to present to God?
- a. I tell you, uninspired psalms and hymns have been one of the great causes of error in the church...
- In the early days of the church, the first uninspired hymns that were used in the churches were those written by heretics who denied the Trinity or those who denied the Old Testament.
  - They wanted to give expression to God as they understood Him rather than as He is revealed in Scripture.
- b. Furthermore, it is the case that even with the better uninspired songs of the church,
- there is a distorted, unbalanced, culturally biased view of the Almighty.
  - For one thing, you can read the hymns and almost tell by their content what period they were from...
    - A sappy sentimental song like “I come to the garden along while the dew is still on the roses,” will be from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - There is also a general omission in all the hymnody of the last several hundred years...
    - It is sadly deficient in its praise of God’s wrath and judgement.
      - This has laid the foundation for the prevailing theology of our day that omits the doctrine of the glory of God’s judgement upon His enemies.
      - Some even claim that God has changed His ways in the New Testament,
        - Such persons must have never read the book of Revelation...
        - Such persons must have never read the gospels where our Lord Jesus speaks of persons being cast into the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth,
          - where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.
      - The truth is, we have a fuller revelation of God’s mercy and His wrath in the New Testament...

- The wrath of God and mercy of God are both revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ in a way that overshadows the mere temporal judgements of the Old Testament...
    - In the Old Testament, the ground swallows men alive or fire comes out to consume them,
      - but in the New Testament, they are tormented in the Lake of Fire forever and ever.
  - Our songs that omit the vengeance of God upon His enemies have only served to produce a foppish theology that does not grasp the significance of what it meant for Christ to die on the cross...
    - Neither is there a clear sense of the holiness of God, or the demerit of human sin, or of the judgement that is coming.
- c. The problem is, as fallen creatures, we are prone to idolatry...
- Our hearts are an idol factory...
    - Our constant tendency is to change the truth about God into a lie and worship a modified and sanitized version of God rather than the true God as He is revealed in Scripture.
      - We need divinely inspired writings to constantly check us.
  - And the fact is, our worship is first thing to go...
    - That is because we sometimes are willing to accept a doctrine we don't particularly care for...
      - such as the doctrine of Hell or the doctrine of God's wrath and judgement...
      - We are willing to **confess** such things in our creeds with our teeth clinched—we believe them to be true...
        - but we are not prepared to praise these aspects of God that we don't much care for...
        - Our creed is one thing, but our praise is another...
  - So if we take it upon ourselves to write our own songs of praise,
    - it is nearly impossible for us to include those attributes of God and those truths that we do not delight in.
    - But if we restrict ourselves to singing the songs that God has given us as inspired by His Spirit,
      - we are forced to sing what is true and honouring to God rather than what we would prefer.

- We are not always comfortable singing divine songs—I admit it—but as we continue to do so,
    - we learn to praise God as He is...
      - our minds are transformed by the word of God—they are renewed...
      - We will not be transformed by merely human sentiments.
      - Do you want songs that are pure and true and free from human bias and prejudice?
        - Then you cannot improve upon the Psalms.
3. Thirdly, (and related to this) the Psalms unify us in our Christian worship.
- The church is divided enough, but if we sing psalms, no other Christian can object...
    - How many times do our own songs have their own doctrinal distinctives that alienate other believers from joining their voices with us in praise...
    - Sermons can be listened to critically, but when we sing, we are all lifting up praise to God together and we need something that no one can question.
4. Fourthly, in Colossians 3:16, Paul also tells us to sing Psalms and Hymns and Spirit Songs,
- only there, he says that we are to teach and admonish each other with them...
  - Now it seems quite an odd thing to teach admonish each other with the words of men when we have the word of God!
  - Moreover, in the Colossians passage, Paul also refers to our singing as letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly with all wisdom...
    - We have seen recently in our study of Christ in the office of Prophet that the scriptures of both testaments are the Word of Christ...not just the words in red...
      - You will remember that we saw that all scripture is from Christ and about Christ who is the living Word.
      - If we are to teach and admonish one another with the word of Christ,
        - should we look for His word in inspired songs or uninspired songs?

TRANS> So you see that we have every reason to stick to the inspired songs that God has given us for our public praise...

- C. Now I know that some will have objections to this, and I want to answer a couple before we move on...
1. Some will say, but do we not have a lot of good Christian songs that have been the source of much good to God's people?
    - And I will happily admit it...
    - There are many excellent songs of human composition, and they can be very encouraging.
    - But surely the divinely inspired songs are better!
      - And if God has given them to us to use in public worship, we are not authorised to supplement them with songs that have been useful.
    - Let hymns of human composition be used for personal encouragement just as we use commentaries and Christian books...
      - Let them have a large place in our lives!
      - But do not use them in the place where God has given us inspired writings.
  2. Some will say, but the Psalms are not the expression of our heart to God—we need to express our own praise of Him in our own words...
    - But you see, in saying that you make a grave confession...
      - You are admitting that your heart and sentiments are more in accord with uninspired songs than with the songs God has given us for His praise.
    - What needs to change?
      - God's songs or your heart?
      - If your heart does not resonate with God's word, should you set aside God's word and find songs that suit you better?
    - You will say, but then it is not coming from my heart—it is not sincere...
      - And again, I will agree with you...
        - But God does not want us to praise Him according to what our own heart desires...
        - He wants us to be renewed so that our hearts are conformed to His truth—so that we delight in Him...
          - If you admit that you are working on bringing your heart into conformity to His truth, you are not being a hypocrite to sing His praise,
            - but an earnest Christian who is looking to God for growth in grace.

3. Some will say, but the Psalms are Old Testament Scripture—
  - They have little to say about Jesus—we need New Testament songs...
  - a. To that I would say first of all that if we needed New Testament songs,
    - God would have provided us with a collection of inspired songs in the New Testament.
  - b. And secondly, I would contest the point and argue that there is more of Christ in the Psalms than you think—
    - much more than there is many of the moralistic hymns we have...
    - But you must learn to sing the Psalms covenantally...
      - as the songs that belong to covenant community as a whole...
      - That is, as songs that belong to those who are united to Christ by faith as one covenant people—one body in the Lord.
    - When you look at them that way,
      - You understand what it says in Hebrews 2:12 where the Lord Jesus says that He will sing praise to the Father with His brethren in the midst of the assembly.
      - When you sing the psalms with Christ as your covenant head in the assembly,
        - you sing them as one who is in union with Him.
    - For example, when you sing Psalm 1 about the righteous man that is blessed and the unrighteous man that is cursed,
      - who is the righteous man?
      - It is Christ together with all those who are in Christ by faith—
        - They are blessed as one body because of His righteousness...
    - And when you sing Psalm 51, a confession of sin,
      - Jesus is singing with you in the assembly...
      - He is the one who took the sin of the whole covenant community upon Himself and bore it to the cross...
        - It is His broken and contrite heart that God does not despise,
          - and we are accepted, when we confess, not first of all because of our broken and contrite heart, but because of His to whom we are united by faith.
    - And when you sing about the destruction of your enemies...say, Ps 109,

- Are you talking about the neighbour that you can't get along with?
- No, you are talking about the enemies of the covenant people of God, the enemies of Jesus Christ...
  - And you are rejoicing that they will all be destroyed at last—that they will all be brought under our feet...
    - because they will all be brought under His feet.
    - Heaven will be a place where God is no longer opposed because all His enemies will be brought to judgement.
      - Tell me, do you want Satan to be destroyed, or to go on with his work forever?
        - What about all those who are in league with him without repentance?
        - God will judge them.

TRANS> And one more objection before I move on...

4. There are those who say,

- Why should we stick to inspired songs when we pray uninspired prayers and hear uninspired sermons?
  - If God allows us to preach uninspired sermons and pray uninspired prayers, why may we not sing uninspired songs in the assembly?
- And the answer to that is that God has clearly authorised uninspired prayers and sermons,
  - He has commanded them...
  - but He has not authorised uninspired songs or uninspired scriptures.
- This is His choice...
  - In His wisdom, He commands that those called by Him and duly ordained should expound the Word in the assembly, explaining it and applying it to the hearers.
    - And He has commanded us to pray specific prayers for one another, and to ask for specific needs that we have and to pray for those in authority over us.
  - But when it comes to the text from which we preach or to the material we read as a standing rule in the church, or the songs we sing,
    - He has given us inspired material.
    - You can see why inspired scripture is needed,



- and I trust that you can also see why inspired praise is needed—especially when you remember what I pointed out before...
  - that our praises are more likely to be off than our creed!
  - that we will more readily believe something we don't particularly care for than life up our voice in praise of something we don't particularly care for...

TRANS> But the bottom line is that God has given us a complete collection of songs to sing, and we are not authorised to supplement it unless He tells us to any more than we are authorised to supplement the scriptures.

- Nothing can take the place of the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual songs that God has given us...
- But now,
  - having seen that Ephesians 5:19 teaches us that we are to sing together in the Christian assembly,
  - and having seen that we are to sing the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs that God has given us,
    - let us turn now to consider thirdly

### **III. With what you are to accompany your singing...**

- **What instruments are we to use for accompaniment in our New Testament praise?**

A. The answer is given right in our text...

- “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”
1. The word translated “making melody” (qallontev) originally meant “to strike the lyre” and came to signify “to strike up a tune.”
    - This passage is calling upon you to strike up the tune in your heart...
      - that is, to accompany the song with your heart!
    - Your heart is to pulsate in unison with the melody!
  2. Do you see what this is getting at?
    - a. The accompaniment that God calls for in our New Covenant assembly is the accompaniment of every worshippers heart!
      - He is not interested in the making of noise but in hearts that all in unison with the songs of praise that He has given us to sing!

- b. And I would add that there is a change here from the Old Testament singing which was accompanied by trumpets and stringed instruments and horns.
- 1) All of these were played by the Levites in connection with the Old Testament Levitical service.
    - They were part of the shadows that are done away in Christ...
    - They go out with all the other fleshly worship of the Old Testament—
      - the burning of incense, the offering of sacrifices on an altar, the vestments, the holy vessels, the many washings and baptisms.
  - 2) The playing of instruments was clearly a part of that Old Testament worship...
    - Just as no one but the Levites was to burn incense, so no one but the Levites was to play instruments in the worship of God...
      - They could be played in victory celebrations and at weddings and for relaxation at home by anyone,
        - but they were not to be played in the worshipping assembly.
- c. This is not a loss at all!
- 1) We have something better than the Old Testament carnal worship...
    - Now we worship God in spirit and truth...
      - Of course, that does not mean that they worshipped him in falsehood or without the spirit...
      - But it means that they worshipped him by means of fleshly ordinances (like playing of musical instruments) and things that were symbols of what would come...
        - What replaces fleshly worship is spiritual worship...
        - And what replaces symbols is truth (or the real thing).
  - 2) What makes the difference is that now we have Jesus Christ...
    - And Christ has offered the true sacrifice of which all the Old Testament Sacrifices were but symbols...
      - That is why we worship in spirit and truth now...
    - And as far as instruments are concerned,
      - In the OT we had instruments to accompany our singing because we did not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit together with the revelation of Christ crucified to lift our hearts to God.
      - The singing of the Old Testament needed accompaniment because the revelation was not yet complete...

- not that the OT worshipper was not to accompany his praise with his heart,
    - but that until Christ came, we could not understand what we were singing as well as we can now...
    - Now we can draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water...
  - Now, instead of worshipping at the shadowy tabernacle,
    - we come to God by Christ to continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.
3. That the hearts of believers are the instruments that are to replace the musical instruments of the Old Testament was the universal judgement of the early church fathers:
- a. In the third century, Origen said,
    - “The *kithara* is the active soul being moved by the commandments of God, the *psalterion* is the pure mind being moved by spiritual knowledge. The musical instruments of the Old Covenant understood spiritually are applicable to us.... The organ is the church of God composed of contemplative and active souls. The pleasant sounding cymbal is the active soul captured by the desire for Christ.”
  - b. Eusebius, the church historian, who wrote in the fourth century said:
    - “Of old at the time those of the circumcision were worshiping with symbols and types it was not inappropriate to send up hymns to God with the *psalterion* and *kithara* and to do this on Sabbath days (breaking the rest and transgressing the law concerning the Sabbath). But we in an inward manner keep the part of the Jew, according to the saying of the apostle...(Romans 2:28f.). We render our hymn with a living *psalterion* and a living *kithara*, with spiritual songs. The unison voices of Christians would be more acceptable to God than any musical instrument. Accordingly in all the churches of God, united in soul and attitude, with one mind and in agreement of faith and piety, we send up a unison melody in the words of the Psalms.”
  - c. And Augustine, commenting on Psalm 150 said,
    - “You [God’s saints] are “trumpet, psaltery, harp, timbrel, choir, strings, and organ, cymbals of jubilation sounding well,” because sounding in harmony. All these are you: let not that which is vile, not that which is transitory, not that which is ludicrous, be thought of here.”
  - d. This was in fact the universal consent and practice of the church until the seventh century when musical instruments were first introduced,
    - and then not without much opposition.

- The reason they were opposed was because God did not authorise them for New Testament worship.

TRANS> So you see then that we are not to sing without instruments,

- but that the instruments we are to employ are not carnal, but our hearts, accompanying the words we sing with our mouths.

B. But sadly, this is a thing very difficult for us to do.

1. I dare say that everyone of us would be embarrassed for anyone else to know how often we have sung the words with our lips when our hearts were far away.

- As Adam Clarke says:

- “It is a shocking profanation of Divine worship to draw nigh to God with the lips, while the heart is far from him. It is too often the case that, in public worship, men are carried off from the sense of the words by the sounds that are put to them. And how few choirs of singers are there in the universe whose hearts ever accompany them in what they call singing the praises of God!”

- And as John Calvin said:

- “We should be very careful that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words. Augustine also admits in another place that he was so disturbed by this danger that he sometimes wished to see established the custom observed by Athanasius, who ordered the reader to use so little inflection of the voice that he would sound more like a speaker than a singer. But when he recalled how much benefit singing had brought him, he inclined to the other side. Therefore, when this moderation is maintained, it is without any doubt a most holy and salutary practice.”

2. And my brothers and sisters, the sad thing is,

- It is even more difficult for our hearts to accompany our singing when we sing the divinely inspired songs that our Lord has given us than it is when we sing psalms of human composition.

- This just shows how far off we are from our ultimate call from God...

- The call to love Him (not an idol we make up) with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

- We are to delight in Him as He is and not as we might wish Him to be.

3. But I have very good news for you...

a. There is a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God;

- and He came from heaven, took our flesh, and lived among us as a man...

- and He did love God with all His heart, soul, mind and strength...

- and when He sang the Psalms, His heart always accompanied what He sang with His lips...
  - There was a perfect correspondence between his words and his heart!
- b. And this Saviour came to save us...
- 1) First, He came to die for our sins so that He Himself was dealt with as the one who did not love God with all His heart, soul, mind and strength...
    - He was dealt with as the one whose heart did not resonate with the words of praise in the Psalms...
    - He was bruised, He was cursed, He was afflicted to the very depths of His soul for our sin...
      - How it pained Him to be regarded as one whose heart was not in tune with God's praises!
      - How ashamed He was to be charged with this sin of His people, perhaps more than any other!
        - But He was charged with it and with all our other sins so that we could be set free forever!
      - With Him there is complete forgiveness!

TRANS> But that is not the end of the good news for those who trust Him!

- 2) Secondly, He has freely given to all who look to Him the Holy Spirit...
  - The Holy Spirit that we are commanded to be filled with in Eph 5:18!
  - And the Spirit is the one who is working in you who believe to bring you from where you are now to where God calls you to be.
  - He is transforming you by divine power to become a true worshipper of God!
    - to become a person who truly delights in all that God is and all that God does—without the least reservation or hesitation!
  - He is making you into a new creation who has a heart that is able to fully accompany the singing of God's praise.
    - And He will complete this work in you...
    - The promise of heaven is that after you are resurrected, you will be able to sing praise with both lip and heart together!
      - If you are in Christ, you are moving in that direction now...
        - and God's promise is that He will complete the good work that He has begun in you.

- 3) You see then, why the Apostle first tells you to be filled with the Spirit.
- You cannot sing praise in a way that is pleasing to God apart from the filling of the Spirit...
  - Any hypocrite can enter the Christian assembly and join in the singing...
    - So can any believer who is not walking with God—whose eyes are on the cares of the world, or who is full of complaining or bitterness...
      - Such persons can come and open their lips to sing the Psalms....
  - But unless you are filled with the Holy Spirit,
    - You cannot accompany your singing with the instrument of your heart...
      - Your voice is sounding, but the strings of your heart as silent as death.

TRANS> But what good news that there is a Holy Spirit with which we can be filled!

c. Good news indeed!

- Surely you all want this!
- Surely you all want to be fixed so that you are not longer uncomfortable with your creator...
  - no longer out of harmony with Him!
    - That is what Jesus does by the cross!
    - Come to Him and He will not reject you!