

# Is This the Holy Spirit's Fire?

## The Worshipping Church Part 3

Revelation 4:5, Ephesians 5:18-19 1-15-2012

Summary: Worship is for God, so it is an end in itself. The only worship God is pleased with is that which is produced by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enlightens (opens your eyes to see God's glory), that produces joy, and the expression of that joy is the Holy Spirit's "fire" that pleases God. Therefore, be filled by the Spirit through Scripture and the gifts through the saints (including the musical ones – spiritual songs from all eras).

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**Revelation 4:1-11** After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

# Introduction

## *Why Does God Want Worship?*

Why does God want worship? What does He get out of it? Why does He want us to sing His praises? We come here, we sing – does that somehow enrich God? Of all the things God could do for enjoyment, how could listening to my lame efforts at singing possibly be anywhere on His list?

He does enjoy our praises. The sweet-smelling incense that the angels use to worship Him in Revelation 5:8 is the prayers of the saints. So when we pray and praise and worship Him, it does rise up to heaven as a pleasing aroma to Him. But why? What is the appeal? He can listen to choirs of angels offer flawless, perfect, glorious music all day long – why would He enjoy coming here and hearing me croak out my sorry little effort at singing? He enjoys hearing that because it is ... impressive.

“Impressive? Darrell – have you ever heard yourself sing?”

Yes, I have.

“Do you not realize that half the time you are not even hitting the right notes? Switching back and forth on octaves because the song is too high for you? That is NOT impressive, Darrell.”

Oh – it’s impressive. How? How could my singing possibly be construed as impressive in any way? I will tell you [in about](#) a little later. But first let me remind you of where we left off last week.

## *Review*

This is part 3 of our series on corporate praise, and last week we looked at the first half of Revelation 4, which focuses on the throne of God in heaven. John is describing the ultimate worship service that takes place in the very throne room of God, and yet the first half of the chapter mentions nothing about worship or worshippers, because before there can be any worship, there must be a display of God’s glory. Worship is what happens when you see something wonderful about God, your eyes are opened to appreciate it, and you respond either 1) by expressing your delight in experiencing that attribute or 2) by expressing your longing to experience that attribute. All true worship is a response to truth about God. And that is why we are SO picky about what songs we will sing here. As much as possible we try to avoid songs that are shallow or that do not say much about God. There is a place for what we call “testimony songs” – where we sing about ourselves in the first person singular: I love You, Lord, I rejoice, I long for Your presence, I need You, You saved me, etc. There is a lot of that sort of thing in the Psalms, so we know there is a place for it in worship. I will probably get more into that in chapter 5. But for now my point is this – even though there is a place in worship for testimony songs, we want to make sure we do not get out of balance and sing more about ourselves than about God. And that is exactly what would happen if we just sang the top twenty most popular contemporary Christian songs on the radio. It is true that the Psalms have a good deal of personal testimony in them, but even the testimony portions are jammed full of truth about attributes of God. So we work hard to find God-focused songs.

## **Worship is for God**

We need to be reminded of this constantly because we are so prone to make everything in the church man-centered instead of God-centered. You can hear it in the way people talk.

“How was worship today?”

“I didn’t get much out of it”

I want to say, “Well, were the people worshipping you?”

“No”

“Maybe that’s why you didn’t get anything. You still haven’t answered the question. I asked how the worship service was, and you responded by telling me what you didn’t get.”

What would you say to your child if they went to someone else’s birthday party and you ask how it went and he says, – “I didn’t get much”?

When we come to worship, it is God’s party. It is His special day. He should be the focus, not us.

You would think that would be obvious – that worship should be God-focused. But the human heart is an idol-factory and we are so prone to make it all about us. There is a Phillips, Craig, and Dean song that has this line:

“It’s because I’m forgiven, It’s because I am free, It’s because You’ve shown me mercy and You believed in me”

A “worship” song where we sing about God’s faith in me? How backwards can we get it? Here is another one:

“Am I really something beautiful? Yeah, I wanna believe, I wanna believe that ... Jesus help me believe that I am someone worth dying for.”

And it goes on: “You’re worth it ... Yeah the Cross has proven That you’re sacred and blameless Can’t you see you’re something beautiful ... Yeah you gotta believe, you gotta believe that you Are someone worth dying for You’re someone worth dying for You’re someone worth dying for.”

Why did Jesus die for me? Is it because Jesus has unfathomable grace? Is it because Jesus has unfathomable love? Is it because Jesus has unfathomable mercy? No, it is because I have unfathomable worth. I am so important and so worthy that Jesus was actually getting a pretty good deal when He traded His life for me. That is how man-centered the outlook of some Christians has become. And not just some – enough that someone can write a song like that and it gets air time on the radio. We need to get back to the basics – the most basic of all basics: *worship is for God*.

### ***Where does worship terminate?***

And so all worship must end with God. It is not, “God did this, therefore I’m worth a lot.” We do not use worship as a stepping stone to get somewhere else. Once you get to God, there is nowhere else to go. If God is supreme, then worship must be an end in itself. We should never make worship a means to some other end. We should never worship God in order to get something else. It would make no sense to say to God, “God, You are my greatest treasure, and I’m saying this in order to get something else besides You.” Someone was telling me the other day about a church where the leadership was trying to decide whether to have contemporary music or traditional. And they decided on traditional because they found out that the people who like the traditional music give more money than the people who like contemporary. The purpose of their “worship” was to raise money.

“God, You are our greatest treasure; and we are saying this for the purpose of getting money.”

That places money up at the top of the list of valuable things. But if God is at the top of our list, then we will not worship Him to get other things, we will use other things to worship Him.

So we do not worship in order to get money, nor do we worship in order to get people, or grow the church. We do not worship God in order to heal human hurts. We do not worship in order to promote church unity, we do not worship to give talented musicians an opportunity to fulfill their calling, we do not worship to teach our children about God, we do not worship to evangelize the lost, we do not worship to motivate people to serve, we do not even worship for the sake of our own spiritual growth.

Now, true worship does accomplish many of those things, which is wonderful. It might help us grow spiritually, it might teach our children, it might attract people to the church and one hundred other things. But if those things are the  *motive*, it ceases to be authentic worship. If I say to my wife, “Tracy, you are so beautiful and gorgeous, and I hope that my saying that will cause you to make me some brownies after church today” – what does that communicate? It communicates the worth of brownies, not Tracy. If I say to Josiah, “Son, I love playing ball with you so that the neighbors will see what I’m doing and learn how to be good fathers” – what does that do? Does it show Josiah as

valuable to me? No, it shows my influence on the neighbors as most valuable.

If you walked up to one of the twenty-four elders or four living creatures in Revelation 4 and asked, “Hey, why are you doing this?” what do you think they would say? Would they say, “We’re doing it because we’re trying to establish a more positive and encouraging atmosphere here in heaven”? No. I think if you asked that question they would just say one word: “Look,” and then point to the throne.

“Why am I worshipping? Why am I singing praises? Why am I bowing with my face to the ground? Look! Look at His glory. What else am I going to do?”

### ***Worship for Your Own Enjoyment of God?***

But what about this question – is it OK for me to worship God for the sake of my own enjoyment of God? If my motive is, “I want to enjoy God – I’m worshipping because I want to experience enjoyment of His presence” – is that OK? Yes! There should be no other motive besides glorifying God. So if my motive is enjoyment of the music, or enjoyment of the sense of community – that would be wrong. But if my motive is enjoyment of God’s presence, that is OK because glorifying God and enjoyment of God’s presence are not two different things. Enjoyment of God’s presence is right at the core of what worship is. It cannot be separated from worship. So it is perfectly OK for you to have enjoyment of God as your motive for worship, because enjoyment of God is, by definition, God-centered, and it glorifies Him.

### ***Commanding Praise is Loving***

This is why it is a good thing for God to command us to worship Him. Normally we do not like being around someone who says, “Praise me.” If you had a friend who always said, “Praise me – tell me what a great piano player I am. Tell me again how smart I am” – that would make you throw up. So why is it good for God to do that?

It is good for God to do it because the most loving thing God can possibly do is put His glory on display for you to see and enjoy and rejoice in. If you are the Grand Canyon, the most loving thing you can do is let people stand there and look at your beauty. The reason it is unloving for me to tell you to look at my glory is looking at me does not do you any good. But looking at God is the best thing that can happen to you. The very thing that is in our best interests happens to be exactly the same thing that honors and glorifies God the most.

## **Worship is from God**

So ~~the~~ when God wants to show us the ultimate worship service, He spends half a chapter just focusing the camera lens on Him. We worship Him because He is glorious. We look at His glory; it thrills our hearts, and down go our knees out comes praise. The key to worship is God. The secret to great worship is clearer glimpses of the glory of God.

But what happens if you strain your eyes to see God’s glory and ... nothing? You think long and hard about the fact that He is **holy**, and He **was and is and is to come** and it does nothing in your heart? You do not feel delighted, you are not impressed, you are not floored, you do not feel amazed.. You wish you did. You know you should, and you would give your right arm to feel that way, but it just is not happening. So what do you do? We know worship comes from a heart that sees the glory of God, but where does a seeing heart come from? How do I get a heart that can see His glory more clearly? There is a verse that I skipped last week because I wanted to save it for today. Last week I told you about all the beauty and glory, but I did not mention the fire.

### **5 ...Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.**

Most commentators agree that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The number seven can

symbolize completion or perfection, so referring to the Holy Spirit as the seven Spirits of God is probably a symbolic way of referring to the Holy Spirit in especially exalted terms. I think that is the most natural way to read it, because the first time that phrase appears, the seven Spirits of God are part of the Trinity.

**Revelation 1:4 ... Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.**

Grace and peace to you from the Father, the Spirit, and the Son – and each gets an especially exalted, extended title. If the seven Spirits were a reference to angels or some other created being you would not expect it to appear between the Father and Son in a “grace and peace to you” formula.

So the ultimate worship service begins with a description of the glory of the Father, and the fire of the Holy Spirit – pictured as seven blazing lamps. That calls to mind the vision in Zechariah 4.

**Zechariah 4:2 He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. ... 4 I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" ...6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.**

So a vision of seven channels carrying oil from a bowl to seven lamps represents the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as oil fuels the fire of a lamp, so the Holy Spirit is the fuel and power source for worship and service of God. So the seven blazing lamps that are the seven Spirits of God in verse 5 point to the idea that all this worship that is going on around the throne of God is powered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the power supply for worship. In the first four verses we see that worship is *for* God. Now in verse 5 we see that worship is *from* God.

And once again, this fits exactly what we see in Ephesians 5:19, where corporate praises all come as a result of the filling by the Spirit.

**Ephesians 5:18 ...Be filled by the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.**

The “fire” of true worship comes only from the Holy Spirit. In Philippians 3, Paul is describing the difference between the true people of God and the phonies, and one of the things in his list is spiritual worship.

**Philippians 3:3 For it is we ... who worship by the Spirit of God**

The difference between the phonies and us is our worship comes from the Holy Spirit. They might sing and pray and bow and raise their hands – but it is all smoke and mirrors. Our worship is different because only we have the Holy Spirit’s fire.

## ***Joy***

You cannot genuinely praise God without special enablement by the Holy Spirit, because praise requires joy in the Lord, and joy in the Lord is impossible unless the Spirit gives it. The only way to look at one of God’s attributes and genuinely be thrilled by it is for the eyes of your heart to be opened to see that aspect of God’s glory. Our natural condition is to be blind to the glory of God. And it is only the Holy Spirit who can give sight to our blind eyes so that when we consider true things about God it excites our heart. That is why when unbelievers come here I can stand up here all day long and talk about God’s attributes and they will be bored out of their mind. They are bored because they are blind. Take a blind man to the rim of the Grand Canyon and he will be bored. That is what it is like for unbelievers when they hear about God. And to the degree that we blind ourselves to His glory through

sin, that is what it is like for us too. So the only way anybody can take true delight in what God is like, is by the Holy Spirit opening their eyes to God's magnificence. That is why again and again in Scripture you see joy in the Lord connected with the Holy Spirit. That was true even for Jesus. If anybody might be expected to generate his own joy it would be Jesus (since He was God in human flesh). And yet, **Luke 10:21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth..."** The same was true for the Apostles.

**Acts 13:52 the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

**Romans 14:17 The kingdom of God is ... a matter of ... righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**

**Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy ... by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:6 in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit, more than anything else, is to open spiritual eyes. He opens our eyes to see our own sin (that is called conviction), and He opens our eyes to see the glory of God (that is called enlightenment). And the result of seeing God's glory is always joy in God, which is the fire of true worship.

### ***Music a Mighty Work of the Spirit?***

When you first read Ephesians 5, verse 19 might be a little unexpected. He is listing the results of being filled up by the Holy Spirit of God with all the fullness of Almighty God. If you never read Ephesians before, and you get to the part where he lists the results of being filled up with the fullness of God, what would you expect him to say? You might expect he would say, "Be filled by the Spirit and you will be able to preach with such power you will win souls by the thousands." Or, "Become filled up by the Holy Spirit and you will move mountains and raise the dead and have world-wide impact..." Or, maybe just, "Be filled by the Spirit and you will be able to conquer the sins you struggle with and enjoy victorious living." But he does not say any of that. He says, "Be filled up to the brim by the Holy Spirit with all the fullness of Almighty God, and you will ... sing?" Is not that kind of a small thing? No, it is not a small thing. Regular singing is a small thing, but this kind of singing is not. It is huge. It is huge because it is praise – which is singing driven by joy in the Lord. And for someone like you or me to have joy in the Lord is an awesome work of God's power. It is supernatural in the extreme.

### ***Pleasing to the Father***

In the throne room of God, take the Holy Spirit out of the picture and the fire goes out – worship ceases, because all true worship comes from the Holy Spirit. The golden lampstand with seven oil lamps in the Temple was the only light source for the Holy Place. And it was to be lit 24/7 – all the time. The priests were to tend to it every morning and every evening, because if that lamp went out, the Holy Place would go dark. The Spirit's fire is the only fire in before the throne of God – all true worship comes from Him. Whenever you worship God in any way, that worship was masterminded and generated by the Holy Spirit. It is your worship. He is not manipulating you like a puppet. It really is your heart worshipping, but it is worshipping because of what the Holy Spirit did to it. It is His work that got your worshipping heart up and running. And that answers our question we started with. Why does God desire worship? Why does He enjoy it? Is it because He is amazed at your vibrato or your ability to harmonize? No. It is because He is delighted and thrilled and glorified by *anything* the Holy Spirit produces. The Father and the Son *love* (and I mean *LOVE*) absolutely anything and everything

the Holy Spirit ever does. The reason God is impressed with my worship is because my worship is the handiwork of the Spirit of the living God. It is the Holy Spirit's fire.

### ***Is this the Spirit's Fire?***

Now, of course that is only true if my worship is genuine. If I come here and sing my heart out, but it is not the product of the work of the Spirit, then it is not pleasing to God in the slightest. I could sing like an angel, harmonize, shout and dance and blow out a lung trying to hit some fabulous note and it would all be detestable to God if it does not come from the Holy Spirit. So the question at hand when we evaluate our worship as a church is always the same question: Is this the Holy Spirit's fire? Is it the Holy Spirit's fire, or is it smoke and mirrors? Is it the real thing, or just our own cheap imitation? How can you tell? How can you tell if what the people around you are offering is really the Holy Spirit's fire? And how can you tell in your own heart?

The answer to the first question is, you can't. There is no way you can know if someone else's worship is genuine. We cannot see into people's hearts, so let's just agree right now not to ever pass judgment on each other's worship based on any external display or lack of display. Obviously, if they are not confessing the truth about Christ then they are not worshipping. What I am saying is, for people who are singing the truth from Scripture, you cannot tell if it is the Holy Spirit's fire or not just by looking at their body language.

But what about your own heart? How can you tell if your worship is the Holy Spirit's fire? Any time you want to test something to see if it is from the Spirit just line it up against the fruit of the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22 But the fruit (results, outcome, things that come from the Holy Spirit's influence) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.**

Is your worship driven by love for God? Is your expression of that characterized by love for others? Is it motivated by joy? Is it characterized by peace and patience and kindness? That is the Holy Spirit's fire.

When a music style I do not like comes up, am I grumbling about it in my heart? That is not the Holy Spirit's fire. Am I focused on what the praise team is doing wrong? Are my thoughts fixed on the procedure and how it could be improved? Am I focused on the people on the platform? Am I holding a grudge against my spouse because of the harsh things that were said on the way to church? Not worship. It is actually not a very hard question to answer most of the time. I think most churches could go a long way in improving their worship if each person just got in the habit of asking himself all the time, "What I'm doing right now – is this the Holy Spirit's doing?"

## **How to Get the Fire**

So, what is the most important thing we can do to improve our corporate praise? Get a new sound system? Hire professional musicians? Pick different songs? No – the greatest thing we could do to improve our praise is to gain more and more fullness from the Holy Spirit. And there are two main ways to do that. If you want to be filled full of grace by the Holy Spirit, there are two flames that you need to hold your wick close to. Two S's – the Scriptures and the saints. If you want to be filled by the Spirit, it will happen through the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit inspired and that the Holy Spirit illumines your heart to understand and embrace; and, secondly, it will happen through the ministry of the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the saints. That is what the gifts are for. Each spiritual gift is a fire hose of influence from the Holy Spirit. Expose yourself to the Scriptures and expose yourself to the ministry of the spiritual gifts through the saints. Stand under those two flames of grace with a receptive heart and the Holy Spirit will fill you with grace and your heart will light on fire with white hot praise.

## ***The Gifts Point to God's Glory***

And the reason that works is because both those things – the Scriptures and the spiritual gifts in the saints – both point you to the glory of God. Did you know that is what spiritual gifts are for – to point people to God's glory? People in the church will use their gifts to encourage you, comfort you, teach you, exhort you, rebuke you, strengthen you, motivate you, help you – all kinds of wonderful things. But the way those wonderful things are accomplished is always by pointing you to the glory of God.

For example, suppose you are discouraged and you need encouragement. The saints will work to encourage you – not by telling you to look on the bright side, or by some kind of pep talk; but by pointing you to the amazing promises God has made, and reminding you of His reliability and faithfulness in fulfilling those promises.

Suppose you are struggling with a sin and you need someone to help you fight against temptation. The saints will do that – not by a bunch of worthless self-help techniques, but by showing you how delightful the presence of God is so you won't want to do anything to jeopardize it. They will showcase how satisfying His nearness is, so that instead of just resisting temptation you can have victory by preferring something you actually desire more.

If you are weak they will strengthen you by pointing you to God. The reason the ministry of the spiritual gifts increases worship and praise is they all showcase the glory of God.

## ***Musical Gifts***

And one of the categories of spiritual gifts that can do that is the musical gifts. Did you know that the songs that we sing are not the product of mere human creativity? These songs we sing on Sunday mornings do not come into existence the same way secular songs come into existence. In Ephesians 5:19, the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are all the product of the filling by the Spirit. That is what the phrase “spiritual song” means - a song inspired by the Holy Spirit. (And when I say “inspired” – I do not mean that in the same sense that the Bible is inspired. When we talk about the Bible being inspired, that means it was breathed out of the mouth of God word-for-word. So every word, every phrase, every letter is the authoritative, infallible, inerrant, perfect, flawless, Word of the living God. When I talk about songs being inspired by the Spirit, I do not mean “inspired” like the Bible is inspired. I just mean they come through the enablement of the Holy Spirit – just like all the other spiritual gifts). The songs that we use in our corporate praise are products of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His servants. That does not mean they are perfect. Just like if the Holy Spirit enables me to preach a sermon, that does not mean the sermon is perfect. What it does mean is it has divine power to transform the human heart through grace.

This is why the argument between traditional and contemporary music is a silly argument. Our music should be both old and new. If you are the type who says we should only use modern music, and you do not like the old hymns, let me ask you something: Is the Holy Spirit producing better material now than He used to? Did He start out kind of weak, and then get better over time so that now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century He is finally hitting His stride? Why would we throw aside the work of the Spirit from ages past?

And if you are the type who only likes old, traditional music and nothing recent, let me ask you: Has the Holy Spirit retired? Are the Holy Spirit's best days behind Him when it comes to inspiring worship music? Is He washed up – doesn't really have it anymore like He did back in the day?

Both ideas are ridiculous, which is why the Spirit-filled saint sings psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The term “psalms” probably refers to the psalms of the Old Testament. Talk about traditional music – those are downright ancient. The word “hymns” just refers to any kind of worship song – especially festive ones. And then spiritual songs – songs the Holy Spirit moves His people to write in our time. (With the emphasis in the New Testament on the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church through the gifts, I think that is how that phrase was most likely meant to be taken.)



## ***Variety***

Paul uses three different terms for songs – that points to variety. God is a complex God and so our worship should be multifaceted. Variety in the music we use is a good thing.

## ***Old songs***

That is why we do not segregate ourselves into a traditional service and a contemporary service. We need both old and new. The great thing about the old music is most of the really bad songs have been long forgotten. In every era there are some terrible songs, lots of mediocre songs, and some great songs. And it tends to be the great ones that survive over time. Of the thousands of hymns that were written four hundred years ago, there are about twenty-five or so that are the truly great hymns, and those are the ones we do at Agape. And if you have a hard time appreciating them, keep trying. Those songs have carried countless people through all kinds of suffering and agonizing pain. When there is intense suffering, it is much easier to call to mind truth set to music than memorized Bible verses. If that happens to you, you will be glad if you have all the verses of “It Is Well with My Soul” memorized. But if all that comes to your mind at that time is some chorus, “God is good, yeah, yeah, yeah” – it is not going to have the same impact. If you pick up pretty much any hymnbook, you will find contributions from some of the greatest geniuses of modern time. There are contributors from composers like Haydn, Handel, Bach, Sullivan, Purcell... And there is also some of the greatest poetry. Look in the index and you will see names like Tennyson, Longfellow, Cowper, Kipling, Lowell, Whittier and Bridges. We would be crazy to throw away some of the magnificent works of the past just because they are old.

## ***New Songs***

But on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is just as active today, and there is no reason why we should not also worship God in the style that appeals to our cultural ears. Sometimes we can get so caught up in traditionalism that we start to think anything that is new is irreverent. That is not true. If someone comes to me and says, “If the old hymns are so great, why not only do them and no new songs?” The answer is very simple – we can’t. God won’t permit that. We are not allowed to do only old songs. Over and over God commands His people to sing to Him a new song.

**Psalm 33:3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.**

**Psalm 96:1 Sing to the LORD a new song**

**Psalm 98:1 Sing to the LORD a new song**

**Psalm 149:1 Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song**

**Isaiah 42:10 Sing to the LORD a new song**

**Psalm 40:3 He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.**

**Psalm 144:9 I will sing a new song to you, O God**

If all we have is traditional music, we are missing out on the spiritual songs the Lord is giving us today. A huge part of corporate praise is celebration. We celebrate wonderful things about God and wonderful things He has done—and celebration involves emotion. And the kind of music that expresses and intensifies celebration is a cultural thing. The kind of music that created a celebrative mood one hundred years ago, in our day does not have that same effect. That is one reason why new songs are so

important.

## Conclusion

So let's go out from here and start right now preparing for our corporate praise time next Sunday. Let's keep in step with the Spirit all week long, so that when we re-gather next Sunday the fires of true worship will be white hot and pleasing to the Father. And the Spirit will get the credit. The Father will get the glory. And we will get the joy.

**Benediction: Ephesians 1:16 I never stop giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.**

## 1:25 questions

- 1) What impact do you think it would have on your personal worship during the corporate praise time if you had a greater awareness of how pleased the Father is with the work of the Spirit in your heart? Is there anything you can think of that would help increase that awareness?
- 2) Can you think of a way you could improve in the area of using your spiritual gift to point people to the glory of God?
- 3) Which do you have the most difficulty appreciating – the benefits of new songs or the benefits of old hymns?