

“I Will Sing Praises Unto the Lord”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Executable Outlines)

Introduction:

- A. In his web log, Ray Pritchard asked: “Whatever happened to congregational singing?”
 - 1. He visited many denominational churches and often found they had no congregational singing at all.
 - 2. In churches that had congregational singing, it lacked zeal and quality.
 - 3. He offered a number of reasons why this seemed to be the case:
 - a. Song leader chooses songs no one knows.
 - b. Style issues confuse people (Fanny Crosby vs. contemporary).
 - c. Architecture not always conducive to singing.
 - d. Not enough people (e.g., 70 in a building that seats 500).
 - e. Too many new songs presented too fast.
 - f. Tedious, monotonous worship leader.
 - g. Musical instruments so loud that singing is overpowered.
 - h. Songs with little sense of order or progression.
 - i. No expectation that the members sing.
 - j. Choirs and orchestras to do their singing for them.
 - k. Lack of spiritual zeal.
 - l. Preachers and other leaders don't sing.
 - m. Entertainment culture led them to expect to be entertained.
 - n. Lost the truth: God is to be praised in the singing of His people.
- B. In the Lord’s Church, congregational singing is a matter of authority.
 - 1. Opposed to instrumental music and choirs; it is not enough to be against something.
 - 2. But on an increasing basis, some sing with little zeal and intensity, and a few have quit singing altogether.

I. THE PRECEPT OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

- A. The Bible Precept
 - 1. The Messianic age is to be a time of singing praise - Isa. 12:1-6
 - 2. Christians are commanded to sing to edify one another.
 - a. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
- B. The Bible Practice
 - 1. Jesus and His apostles sang a hymn after the Passover in which Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper - Matt. 26:30
 - 2. Heavenly beings offer praise in song in the presence of God.
 - a. Rev. 5:9-12, 7:9-12
- C. The Bible Principle
 - 1. First purpose of singing is to praise the Lord, inherent in the meaning of the word hymn.
 - 2. Second is to teach and admonish one another - Col 3:16
 - 3. Third is to be enriched by the Word and Spirit - Eph. 5:18-19
 - 4. Congregational singing reaches upward, outward, and inward.

II. THE PRACTICE OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

A. What song leaders can do:

1. Lead with enthusiasm.
 - a. The song leader generally sets the tone.
 - b. His influence goes beyond simply announcing the number and starting the song.
 - c. The song leader's demeanor should reflect the nature of the songs he leads.
2. Lead with familiarity.
 - a. People respond to songs they know and love.
 - b. Few people are able to sing new songs without opportunity to learn them in advance.
 - c. Too many old songs, and our singing becomes routine, a short step away from dull and unedifying.
 - d. Song leaders need not be gifted, but they should be able to lead singing as well as a preacher can present a sermon.

B. What the congregation can do.

1. Sing with their understanding - 1Cor. 14:15
 - a. The words of the songs express praise and edification.
2. Sing with their heart - Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
 - a. We should allow the words of the song influence our emotions.
 - b. Not certain who taught faithful brethren that they must be stoic in worship, but he misled you.
3. Sing with their voice - Psalm 51:14-15; Col. 3:16
 - a. How can we teach each other and praise together if we do not hear one another?
 - b. Not sure who taught you that your worship is between you and God, but he misled you.
 - c. We are part of a collective group sharing worship in fellowship. And it's not just a word; it must also be a feeling.
4. Sing with their presence - Psalm 122:1
 - a. Practice makes perfect; sing with others at every opportunity.
 - b. Sit close to those who like to sing; we are likely to sing louder.

III THE POWER OF CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

A. It is clear that those who walked with God in Old Testament times delighted in singing - Psalm 146:1-2

1. Christians are taught to respond to the goodness of God similarly.
 - a. James 5:13
2. Acts 16:25 - Hymn comes from humnos, meaning "celebration, a song in praise of, a religious ode" (Strong's 5215).
 - a. Psalm 28:6-7
3. Heb. 13:15 - We don't offer goats or doves; we offer song - 1Peter 2:5

IV. QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR OWN SINGING

A. What limits do we put on where and when we sing?

1. Just the public assemblies or do we make opportunities to sing at other times with others apart from worship, or even alone?
 2. Singing, like prayer, does not need to be scripted - Psalm 34:1-3
- B. What limits have we placed on our emotions in singing?
1. Remember, singing involves the heart - Matt. 22:37; Psalm 103:1
 2. When it comes time to praise the Lord, it should not be done routinely or half-heartedly.
 - a. "It is a great sign of mediocrity to praise always moderately."
(Vauvenargues)
- C. Do we understand what we are singing?
1. Some songs, though beautiful, can be so complex as to distract or hinder understanding.
 2. Sometimes the pace of the song can be so fast that we don't absorb the meaning of the words.
 3. Do we stress singing the melody perfectly to the point where we overlook the words?
- D. Have we lost the joy of singing?
1. Psalm 104:33, 147:1
- E. More questions to stimulate our thinking.
1. Which is more important when we sing: how we sound or how we feel?
 2. Are we really teaching and admonishing one another in song if we just whisper or mouth the words?
 3. Do we sing because we are happy, or are we happy because we sing?
 4. Do we sing praises to God by ourselves throughout the week?
 5. Does our family ever sing spiritual songs together (while traveling in the car, doing dishes, etc.)?
 6. Which is more unscriptural: singing with mechanical instruments, or singing without engaging the instrument of the heart?