

## **Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs**

Ephesians 5:19-20

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 25, 2020

Before we get started in our sermon, I have an announcement to make; something exciting to tell you. Next week on November 1, we're going to take a break from our current sermon series. We're going to take a break from the book of Ephesians to look at church history. This is something that we've never done before here at Grace Fellowship.

We're going to looking at an event that happened 500 years ago in history known as the Protestant Reformation. November 1 is known as Reformation Sunday in many churches around the world. It's a day that's set aside to celebrate that event. Because if you know some of the history, on October 31, 1517; Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. He nailed up 95 concerns that he had with the church at his time. He wasn't doing anything strange when he did that. It sounds kind of odd to do that today. But that's just the way they did things back then, if you had a concern with the church, and you wanted to debate it, you didn't put it on Facebook, because they didn't have Facebook, you nailed it to the door of the church. And unbeknownst to him, some friends of his were going to take what he nailed on the door of the church and publish it and send it out to the world.

The leaders, by the way, were the only ones who could read it. The normal people couldn't read. And it had such an impact on the leaders in Germany that they would eventually break from the Catholic Church; a number of them would break from the Catholic Church and never go back. That's how the Reformation began. It began because of what Luther did, and men like him. And in fact, the reason that we're not Catholic today is because of this event. The reason we have independent churches and Baptist churches and Mennonite churches and Dutch Reformed churches and Presbyterian churches in Canada is because of what happened so long ago. We don't even think about that today. But it all started because of what happened way back then.

So we want to talk about that next week. We want to honor the memory of those men who came before us. It's been said that we all come from somewhere, we all got our start somewhere. If you're a Protestant this morning, if you come from one of those churches that I just described, this is where you began. This is where your faith comes from. You trace it back to the Bible, you trace it back to Scripture, but the reason you can read the Scripture in your own language is because of what they did. The reason you have a Bible in English is because William Tyndale died for it. So we're going to look at that together. Next week, we're going to study five leading reformers. We're going to look at Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox and William Tyndale. So those are the five men are going to cover next week.

I just want to say if that makes you nervous, if studying history makes you nervous because you feel like it's going to go over your head (some of you dreaded history class in high school), I just want to tell you, it's not going to do that. The goal in this is not going to be to be over your head, it's going to be at your heart, because this is a personal subject for you. This is a devotional topic, because this is like studying your family. This is like studying where you come from. You come from these men. Say it this way, Grace Fellowship Church didn't fall from the sky. It comes from a place in history; we believe it comes from a place in time. And it started at the Reformation. So, we're going to talk about that next week. Please join us for that. It should be an interesting study, I trust.

And with that said, while we're talking about that, please take your Bibles, your English Bibles, or even if it's another language that came from that time, and turn to the book of Ephesians. We're going to turn to a book that actually talks about some of the issues that were addressed in the Reformation. And that is the book of Ephesians. And we're in chapter five. And I just want to read our text to you before we get started so it's fresh in our minds.

If you look in Ephesians 5:1, Paul writes,

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

For this reason it says,  
 “Awake, sleeper,  
 And arise from the dead,  
 And Christ will shine on you.”

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”

And we're going to stop the reading there. Just to say a few words about this. I told you last time that when the Reformation occurred, it was built on five principles that were known as the five solas. You might have heard of these before ; they are they are as follows Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, Sola Scriptura, and Soli Deo Gloria. We're going to look at those together next week. We'll study them one at a time. But the last one of these, Soli Deo Gloria, is of interest to us today because it means glory to God alone. The reformation was built on the principle that glory belongs to God alone, because He's the only one worthy of it. He's the only one who deserves it. We're responsible to believe, we're responsible to repent; but we do nothing to save ourselves. We can't take the credit. God does it and the glory goes to Him. And that's what our passage is about this morning. That's what our text is about. It's about how to bring glory to God.

Just to give you the background for this, if you look in your Bibles, verse 18, it falls toward the end of what we just read. And if you look at verse 18 it says,

Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Now, as you look at that, it's kind of a strange passage, it looks sort of odd when you read it. But the word 'filled' here is the Greek word 'plérōma', which means to fill up or to fill to the top. One Bible Dictionary said, it means to fill your cup until it runs over to sort of spills over the sides. And Paul says, "you need to do that with God, you need to do that with the Spirit, because that's how you defeat sin."

The theme of chapters four and five, as we've been going through it, is how to fight sin. And Paul says, "You fight it this way, this is how you defeat it; by being filled with the Spirit. Don't fill your life with other things that won't help. You know, filling your life with sports and entertainment and work and recreation. You fill it with the

Spirit.” Which is another way of saying, “You fill it with the Word of God, you fill it with the Bible.” I mean, so many people tell me they struggle with sin. They struggle with all the things that are mentioned in chapters four and five, with lying and stealing and anger, and they struggle with their lust and their morality. But they never read their Bible. They never open it up. And I tell them, “Well no wonder you struggle with it, because that's what God has given to help you with this. No wonder it's a problem for you, because this is what He's given to defeat it and you're not even taking the time to use it.”

Or you meet other people who say they struggle with sin. They struggle with these things in these chapters. But they're too busy to read their Bible. They've got so much going on and you have to tell them, well, that's your problem. Your priorities are in the wrong place. Because if you want to defeat your sin, this is what you do. You fill your life with the Spirit, you fill it with the Word of God. Paul says you're not strong enough to do it on your own. You don't have the power. God does it all on His own. And if you look on in the passage, Paul tells you what happens if you do that. He tells you what happens if you are filled with the Spirit.

Verse 19 says this is what will happen; you will be speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. That's another way of saying you will worship with singing, making melody, that's all a reference to worshiping the Lord. That's what happens when you're filled with the Spirit. You can notice in your in your Bibles here, those verbs are all participles, they end with “ING”, which means they tie back to the original verb of filled, this is what happens when you're filled, you will be speaking and singing and making music and giving things. You don't have to manufacture that, you don't have to work it up. It just happens. It just pours out of you. You guys know what it's like when you fill a cup full of water, it just pours out right? It just gushes out because there's not enough room to contain it. So the idea here is there's not enough room in your heart to contain the Holy Spirit. There's not enough room in your heart to contain the Word of God. And so when you hear it, it just gushes out of you.

There's something very natural about the way this is written. We've all been in churches where people kind of try to work up the enthusiasm, they kind of work up the worship. In fact, there's an interesting connection here to the previous verse, because earlier in verse 18, it says, “Do not get drunk with wine.” And if you're wondering, you know what that means and how it ties into this past as well. The reason is simple, drunken people love to sing. Drunken people love to make music. You can hear it every Friday night in downtown Chilliwack. You go and hear all the bars and the taverns, and all that stuff, but they're not singing to the Lord. They're not singing about God, because they're not full of Him. They're full of alcohol. Paul says you're full of Him, you're full of the Lord. And so you need to sing accordingly. One commentator said it this way, “Christians cannot sing the world's philosophies or ideas because they sing from different hearts.” We have different priorities, and therefore our music is different. It's not the same.

I don't know if you've thought about this. But this is such an important topic today. It's so relevant, because, you know, 200 years ago, if you were to ask the average person in Canada, “why do you go to church?” he would say, “I go because of the preaching. I go to church to hear the pastor preach.” A high value was placed on that in the 1800s. People chose churches based on the preacher. Then, 100 years ago, if you asked the average Canadian, “Why do you go to church?” he'd probably say “I go because of my heritage. I go because of my parents. My parents were Mennonite, my grandparents are Mennonites. So I'm Mennonite.” Or “My parents are reformed, my grandparents are reformed, so I'm reformed. It's in my blood.” But if you ask the question now, “Why do you go to church?” most people would probably tell you, or they might tell you, they go for the music.

We live in an age where music is given an extraordinarily high priority in the Church of Jesus Christ. Today in 2020, people leave churches and start churches and split churches all over the issue of music. That didn't happen 100 years ago, because there wasn't anything to pick from. They play an organ over there, they play an organ over there. They have a choir over there, have a choir over there; but now it's all different. In fact, it could be argued that music is the single greatest factor in the growth of most churches in North America in the last 50 years. It is

the single key ingredient in the modern mega church movement. If you were to go in a lot of mega churches in the United States, and maybe even here in Canada, and you were to change their music for a couple of months, they would lose half their congregation. And we're not immune to this. I mean, this kind of thinking has made its way to the Lower Mainland. If you visit churches that are growing up here and in Abbotsford, and blowing up, it's often over this issue because they have a good music program. The pianos had been replaced by the drums. The organs have been replaced with guitars. The call to worship has been taken out and replaced with a lightshow and a fog machine and video stuff. And I'm not saying all that's wrong. I mean, the fog machine - don't do that! - but there's a place for some content. We do some contemporary things here. But what I what I am saying is that none of that really matters to God. None of that stuff is important, and true worship is not about that. True worship is not about the style and the instruments and the fog machines. True worship comes from the heart. It's an intangible thing.

If you notice, verse 19 says, we're to sing and make melody with our heart to the Lord. And that means we're to do it with our soul in our inner man, because that's what God cares about. That's what matters to Him. Verse 20 says where to give thanks, it comes from the heart that comes from the soul. You can't put thankfulness up on a stage it just doesn't work that way. That's what matters to him is what should matter to us. Listen, friends, I hate to burst your bubble. But guitars are not mentioned in the Bible. They're not! You can read the whole Bible, you'll never see them there. And listen to this pianos, aren't either. That may shock some people, pianos are not in the Bible and organs are not in the Bible. That's all a choice you make that what this passage is saying is that the issue is what's the heart behind your worship?

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning; we're going to talk about what really matters to God on this issue of worship. This is a relevant topic, right? It should be helpful for us. And so let's talk about that with two areas where the Holy Spirit impacts our worship. That's our outline for today. That's what we're going to talk about in Ephesians 5:19-21. We're going to look at two areas where the Holy Spirit impacts our worship.

And this is important because some people think they're worshipping today simply because they're having a feeling. We talked about this last time when it talks about being filled with the Holy Spirit. Some people think they're worshipping because they're having an experience. And then the way the thinking goes, is they say, "Well, I liked the band today, I was really into it, so I worshipped today." And next week, they come back and they say, "You know I didn't like the band so much, you know, they didn't do such a good job, so I was not worshipping." That's the wrong way to look at this. It has nothing to do with your worship. True worship is about something that's so much more substantial than that. Let's talk about that. We're going to look at two areas where the Spirit impacts our worship.

The first one is in the area of words. The first area here in this passage, where the Holy Spirit impacts our worship, is in the area of words, which means that he impacts what we say. He impacts what we sing and the content that comes out of our mouth. If you look in verse 14, Paul writes,

For this reason it says,  
 "Awake, sleeper,  
 And arise from the dead,  
 And Christ will shine on you."

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, peaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Just to explain this context again, because it's important. As I just said, the context for this passage is sin. The context is now that you're saved, now you become a Christian, you need to make war with your sin nature. That's the setting. And to help with that, verse 14 says, You need to awake which means awake from your sin, awake from your apathy and your slumber you need to care about it. Verse 15, says, You need to be careful, careful with those things; take it seriously. Verse 18, says in order to do that you are to be filled with the Spirit, filled with the Word of God. That's where you get the power to resist sin. And verse 19, says that if you do that, you will be speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Paul starts off with the word speaking here, which can mean to address someone or to talk to them. But as you can tell from these other terms that that come afterwards the context is clearly worship. The context is music. We are to speak the Word of God to one another, but the setting here is worship. Because the best way to tell someone what God has done for you, is to sing about it. And you guys know what this is like? Right? There's some things that can't be said, they have to be sung. The best way to describe some things is to put it alongside of music. They mean so much to us, they're so important to us. I mean, how many of you have cried after singing Amazing Grace? We've all done that, haven't we? Because it means something to you. That's what the music is about. We need to put it into a song.

And as you look at this, there, there's been a lot of debate as to what these three terms refer to in verse 19. Different churches take it different ways. But from what I've read, psalms here refers to Old Testament songs. These are music with lyrics from the Bible, from the Old Testament. They're actually not literally from the Bible, because the Bible is in Hebrew, and I don't know any church and around here that sings in Hebrew. So there is a change, even if you sing a song that is put in English. But that's the idea here of the word psalms. And there's times where we use those.

And then hymns and spiritual songs refers to music that comes from outside of the Bible; it was written by the early church. In fact, you can even see this term used in other parts of the Bible. I just want to read Acts 16, verse 25; that's where it uses this term. And this interesting verse says, "But about midnight", not really a time when you want to hear somebody singing, "about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying, praying and singing hymns of praise to God." Now you can just imagine how annoying that would be. You're in jail, you want to go to sleep. And these guys next to you are singing. It's kind of an interesting time to do that. But it says they were singing hymns of praise. That's this term here. They were singing hymns that were written by the early church. Paul was Jewish, he could have sung anything he wanted to. He could have sung the Psalms and those kinds of things. But there was other music that he enjoyed, written by other Christians.

And the point is that you can use all of this in your worship, you can use all of this in your praise. It doesn't have to be one or the other. If you notice, it doesn't say songs or hymns or spiritual songs, these can all be taken together. One scholar, Peter O'Brien said this, "taken together psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, describe the full range of music which the spirit prompts, they describe the full range of worship that comes to those who are full of Him. The Spirit uses different types of songs, because he uses different types of people."

You know, we have a church where our people are from many different countries. And I'm guessing most of you, if you come from another country, you came in here, and you didn't recognize all the songs. That's okay. This is Canada, we sing songs that are familiar to people in Canada. So this is the way it works, this is how they did it back then.

And if you notice, there's a connection here in this passage, there's a link between verse 18 and what follows. Since the spirit has filled you, since He's coming to your soul, you need to worship; and since He keeps filling you, since He keeps coming into your soul, you need to keep worshipping. That's what we're speaking here, it's got an ongoing tense on it. You do this on a regular basis. In other words, you need to sing when you feel like it, and you need to sing when you don't. You need to sing when you're into it, and you need to need to sing when

you're not. You need to sing when you like the musicians and you like the band and you like the experience of it all. And you need to sing when when you don't. You need to sing when it's not appealing to you. Because it's not about you. It's about the Lord and what he says in his Word.

Which leads to a couple of applications here. Let me just give you some practical ways this applies to our lives. For one thing, this means that our words matter to God. When we sing, and when we worship, our words matter to Him. God cares what we say in church. He cares what we put up here on the screen. Most people don't care about that. I mean, the world doesn't care about that, because they sing songs in a rock concert that don't make any sense. If we listen to secular songs on the radio, half of them are just nonsense. But that doesn't matter to them. They don't care about that. We do care about that. God cares about that. It's not all about the band, the stage and the lights to him. This can be so easy to forget today, it can be so easy to ignore. Because, like I just said, if the band is good, a lot of people don't care about the words, they kind of push them off to the side. In fact, in some churches it's so loud you can't even hear the words at all. You don't even know what you're singing about.

Several years ago a professor from Duke Divinity School in the States did a survey of 100 of the most popular worship songs ever written in the last several years. And she found that the content was very concerning. Duke is a liberal school. But even for a liberal school, she was saying the content was concerning. Because there was so much missing from them, like the Trinity. Looking at 100 modern worship songs, the most popular ones on the radio and sung in churches, and the Trinity was not in any of them! She also found that sin was not mentioned in them, not in a clear way. Or the atonement. And the cross was mentioned, but nothing specific about it. In fact, she said after reading all these lyrics and studying them, the only thing that they kept mentioning was Jesus. The only thing they kept talking about was their love for him. But she said the problem with that was you couldn't tell if they were saying, "I love Jesus because He's my Lord", or "I love Jesus because he's my boyfriend."

What Paul is saying here in this passage is that it doesn't it should not be that way with us, it should not be that way with our worship, because our words matter to God. What do we sing about is important. It's not just about the experience of it, it's about what's behind the experience. By the way, if you tie this back to verse 18, "do not get drunk with wine" - drunk people have their songs, drunk people have their music - but the difference is in the words, what are we singing about. This leads to another way to apply this to our lives. And that is - our doctrine matters to God, and music as well. Our doctrine and our theology matter to God, we have to get that right too. You can't just play whatever you want, as long as it sounds good. You can't sing whatever you want, as long as you like it. It needs to have sound theology.

And in verse 19, when Paul says, "speaking to one another", he means speaking to one another in church, speaking to one another in the house of God. Which means there should be an edifying aspect to our music, there should be an instructional aspect to it. Music should teach you something. It should give you some information about the Word of God; there should be something to take home with you. Because that's what music does.

Have you guys ever done this? What do you do on the drive home? You are singing a song you just heard in church, right? Or you're at the office, or you're at the house doing something and you start humming, and you're humming a song you heard in church? Well, that's what music does. There's a lingering aspect to it. And what Paul says here is with this in mind, the music should remind you of Scripture, when you're humming and singing, it should make you think about the deep things of God. It shouldn't just tell you Jesus is your boyfriend, it should tell you so much more than that. It should talk about the Trinity and sin and the atonement, and the work of Christ. And we sang this morning about the Ancient of Days. Those are the kinds of things you want to have rolling around in your head throughout the week. That's what music should do.

And I just want to stop here and say our worship team does an excellent job with this, don't they? They do an excellent job of finding music with good doctrine in them. It's a lot of work. They put a lot of effort into it. In fact, they contact me every week or I get word to them about what I'm preaching on so they can find songs to match it.



And during the week, it's kind of like a matching game, you know, this song goes with this sermon. Next week. This one goes with this one, and they're doing that because that's what worship is. They're doing that because that's what praise is. You want to hear God's word and sing it back to Him. You want to hear the Bible preach and then worship Him for it. The word needs to go in and out of you. The Scripture needs to flow in and out of your heart. But it can only do that if the doctrine is good. It can only do that if the theology is sound. And that's why this is so important for the church.

The story is told of the time a church had a man in the choir who couldn't sing. He was tone deaf. I know you guys have never been in a church that had that kind of issue. But I have before in Tennessee, and so the choir members asked the pastor if he could talk to him about that. And so he did. He approached the man about it. After hearing the pastor's story the man said, "Who says this?" The pastor said, "I can't say their names but several people said this, about half a dozen or so." The man replied, "well, Pastor, that's okay because 50 people have told me you can't preach, but you're still here! We haven't fired you because we like what you say and like what you preach about, even if we don't like the presentation." Now, that's a little rude. But there's a lesson in there, right? There's a principle. And the principle is that it's not all about the presentation. It's not all about the style, and the show, and the band. When you eat lunch at someone's home, you don't say, "Before I eat this I want to go through your kitchen and see everything you used to make it." No, you don't care, it's lunch. So the same thing with the Word of God. It's the same thing with the music and the worship. It's about the meat behind it. And we need to remember that because it can be so easy to get sidetracked.

There is another point to consider this morning where the spirit impacts our worship. Just to review the last one. The first one point is in the area of words. The first area where the spirit impacts our worship is in the area of words. He impacts what we say and He impacts the things we sing about. It's been said that when the Spirit saves the man, he saves all of him, including his mouth. And so the first place that we should be impacted in our worship is in our mouth, and the things that we speak.

And that leads to another point to consider, an area where the spirit impacts our worship, and that is in the area of our hearts. We've already said a little bit about this one. But it's so important, I think we need to talk about it some more. Another area where the spirit impacts our worship is in the area of our hearts Which means it impacts our soul and impacts our inner man as well, because that's where our words come from. That's where our words mean something - in our soul. And if you look in verse 18, Paul goes on. And he says,

Do not get drunk with wine, for that as dissipation but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.

This is the first time the word heart appears in this passage. It's the first time Paul mentions it. He mentions it earlier in chapter four, verse 18 to refer to the Gentiles in the hardness of their hearts. They had lost hearts, they had dead hearts to the things of God. But now he's referring this to the heart of a Christian. And just to explain the word heart is 'cardia' in Greek from which we get the word cardiology, the study of the heart. It means the physical heart of the part of you that pumps blood. But it also refers to the spiritual heart as well. It refers to the place where your soul is. That's what the ancients believed - they believe your soul lived in your heart; not up here in your head, but in your heart. Because they understood that so much of life is not just based on facts and figures and brain stuff, a lot of it is feelings and emotions and deeper things. And Paul said this with that in mind.

You need to worship God with the deep, deepest part of you, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. In other words, you shouldn't just mouth the words. You shouldn't just go through the motions. When you came to church today it shouldn't just be to check a box. Go back next week. Check another box. You should put your heart into it. That's what God wants. That's what pleases Him. And if you're wondering what this looks like, again, this is not so much a question of style. Because you can put your heart into it with a guitar. And you can

fake it with a guitar. You can worship like a total pagan with a guitar in your hand, and you can do so on a piano. It's not about that. It's about something deeper.

If you look on in verse 19, Paul says,

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

That phrase, "always giving thanks" means that this is the way you should sing. And this is the way you should worship - with a thankful heart. Again, you see the idea of the heart here. You should sing with a grateful heart, after all the Lord has done for you. It says, you should do this always, which means you should do it all the time. You should do this when you feel like it, and you should do it when you don't. You should be thankful and worship him with a thankful heart when you're into it, and when you're not. And it says also, you are to do this with all things. That means everything should do this to you. Everything should make you want to sing to the Lord and be thankful; because deep down you're grateful for what He's given you.

I think this is an encouraging passage, because this is not about whether you can sing or not. I mean, some of us can sing and some of us can't. But we can all worship. Some of us play an instrument, some of us don't. But that's not what this is about. This is about something deeper. In fact, if you think about it, this was important to the church in Ephesus, they could really identify with this because from what we could tell they were a poor church. Most of the churches back then didn't have a band or stage, or they were broke. They were under persecution. But they could do this though. They could worship the Lord like this. In fact, I'm very grateful that the Lord doesn't choose churches the way most people do, because he wouldn't have chosen any of the churches in the New Testament. I mean, none of them had a real fancy band. It was just unheard of. Archeologists have actually done some excavating in some of the catacombs in Rome. The catacombs are these caves that were kind of dug out for tombs underneath the city. And one interesting thing they found on the walls of these catacombs is Christian drawings. The Christian fish, and the cross. And one thing they've surmised from that is that this is where a lot of the Christians used to worship - in the tombs - because that's where the pagans and the Jews left them alone. They didn't have all the fancy stuff, they just had a graveyard. But they could still worship there. We need to get back to that today.

There is a couple of applications to this as well. I mean, for one thing, one way this applies to our lives here is that you need to be sincere when you worship. That's what God cares about. You need to be sincere. That means more to Him than anything. He doesn't want you to fake it. He doesn't want you to pretend. He hates that. Matter of fact, if you read the book of Revelation in the letters to the seven churches, the one thing He hates more than anything else is when people fake it in church. Because he wants you to sing from the heart. You can fake it anywhere, but you can't fake it in your heart. I just told you doctrine is so important. And it is important. It's huge. It's very important. But there is such a thing as dried doctrine. There is such a thing as dead orthodoxy. And in fact, one of the greatest complaints that people have had against Bible-believing churches is that our worship is boring. Sometimes they say our worship is dry. But it wouldn't be that way if we were sincere.

We're going to see this next week, but if you look at the lives of the Reformers, one thing that is interesting about them is how much music they produced. Men like Martin Luther and Zwingli played instruments and they wrote hymns. "A Mighty Fortress is our God" - songs like this. But they did it under the pain of death. They did it knowing that at any time, at any moment the Catholic Church could come for them and arrest them and burn them at the stake for the things they were singing about. But they just kept on singing. And they did it because it meant that much to them. They did it because they were serious about the things they were saying. We need to get back to that. It can be so easy to be apathetic in our worship, because nobody is trying to kill us anymore. It can be so easy to get lazy, because they're not trying to burn us. But we need to go back to that mindset.



Which brings us to another application for this particular part of the passage, another way this applies to our lives. God wants you to focus on spiritual things when you worship. He wants you to be sincere, and he wants you to focus on spiritual things. He wants you to focus on the hidden things of the heart. You don't need to have your mind focused on the lights, and the show on the stage, and the band, and the experience of it all. That's not what this is about. You don't need to get your mind focused on how well the voices blend and all that sort of secondary stuff. You need to find music that helps you look past what is happening on the stage. There's a lot of good music coming out today. But there's a lot of music that is not. And what Paul is saying here - you want music that drowns out the things on the stage. It's okay to have extra stuff on stage, we do that; we have microphones here. We have Powerpoints. We have pianos and guitars, from time to time and amplifiers. But that's all secondary. It's all kind of peripheral. The most important thing is the spiritual aspect of what we're doing.

Someone asked me a couple of years ago, "Why did you choose this style of music here at Grace? Why do you pick this type of songs?" And I said, "Well, it's simple, really, we have a very diverse group of people here. We have old people and young people. We have people from this background and people from that background. And we just tried to find a style that was reverent to both." We didn't have a six-hour meeting on it. We didn't write a 25-page doctoral dissertation, we didn't need to, we just used some common sense. Someone else asked me, "Why does your worship team pick these particular songs?" And I said, "Because of the lyrics. You can tell that by listening to them. We do it because the lyrics puts your mind on the things of God. They put your thoughts on the deep things of Him."

You know, I would be happy for you guys to go home humming any of the songs you hear on Sunday morning. I'm so blessed by that. I mean, I'd be happy for you guys to be singing them. The author A.W. Tozer once said it this way. He said "any man who is bored of worship is not ready for heaven." Because that's all we're going to be doing there. And if you're bored with worship now, you'll be bored with worship then. If you don't like it now, you won't like it then. And it's the job of the church to help you with that. To help you be ready to worship.

Which leads me to ask, what about you? Are you bored with worship today? Is it dull for you? And I don't mean just worship here at our church, but worship at any church? I don't mean worship here. But I mean, worship anywhere. Do you dread it? Do you come to church with a sense of foreboding and looking at your watch because you can't wait until this is over. I ask you that because if you do, you need to be worried. It means you may not be ready for heaven. Heaven is a place of worship. It's a place of praise. The angels praise and heaven is where the people's praise. It's just one big worship service from beginning to end. So if you want to be part of that you need to start taking that seriously today.

To ask it another way, I mean, what do you look for when you worship? What do you look for when you come to church? If you're watching this online, some people are looking for churches right now during the pandemic. Well what are you looking for? Are you looking for the style, and the instruments in the band, and the show? Or are you looking for something deeper? Because Paul says here that you need to be looking for something deeper, because that's what God does. You need to look past the show, and the stage, and look to the words, and the doctrine and the heart behind it all.

The story is told of a time a little boy knelt by his bedside after church on a Sunday. He said, "Dear God, we had a good time at church today because the choir performed well, and the people sang very nicely. But I wish you had been there God, I wish you had showed up at church because we left the same way we came in. We went out just as mean and nasty and rude to each other as we were when we got there." Friends, if you get anything from our passage this morning, you need to get this - you don't want to be that way today. You don't want to leave the same way you came in. You want God to change you, you want God to show up. And in order to do that, you need to focus on the things we've talked about. So let me pray for you and pray that God will give you grace to do that, in a closing word of prayer.

“Heavenly Father, we thank you for these words from the Apostle Paul that we've read this morning, just for his insight into a topic that's become so distorted in many ways in our world today.

God, we do want to worship you. We came here this morning to do that. It's on our hearts and is on our minds. But Lord, we need to be focused on the right things and we pray for your help in doing that. God help us to put aside all the physical stuff. And think about what's really going on when we sing to you. And think about what we're really saying and doing.

God we thank you, you're a God who's worthy of worship. We thank you that you are a God who's worthy of praise. Every believer and every Christian in this room can say you have shown up in their lives and change them. And as a result, Lord, they want to sing.

If there's any who are lost this morning, Father, I pray that they would be convicted of all we've talked about, because they can't worship You, they don't even know what that means. For those who have not trusted in the Savior as Lord presented with a passage like this one, make them say, “I want that, I want what Paul is talking about”, and draw them to Christ.

Thank you for salvation. Father, thank You for Christ and thank you for His Spirit who fills us and gives us all these things. Let us go out now and glorify Him we pray. In Jesus name. Amen.”