

## Praise and Worship

Ephesians 5.18-20 reads, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The main command in these verses is “be filled with the Spirit” (vs 18) and what follows in verses 19-20 are results of a Spirit-filled life. Thus, praise and worship flow out of a life filled with the Holy Spirit.

We learn a lot about praise and worship in these verses. We learn that worship is not only vertical (“to the Lord,” vs 19); it is also horizontal (“to one another,” vs 19). We sing, not only to God, but we also sing to edify and encourage one another (see Psalm 95.1-2, 6; Isaiah 6.3). Thus, it is important that there be a teaching element in the songs we select (see Colossians 3.16). This is why many of our great hymns are so valuable in the worship of the church: they teach us great truths about God, Christ, salvation, heaven, etc.

Yet, this is not to imply that hymns alone are important in the church. The Apostle Paul admonishes us to speak to one another “in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (vs 19). What are these? Though certainty eludes us, the psalms may have referred to the Old Testament psalms in our Bible; the hymns may have referred to Christian hymns written in the first century (see e.g. Ephesians 5.14); and the spiritual songs may have referred to spontaneous, Spirit-inspired songs of worship and praise. Note that variety in music is to be a part of the church’s worship. As Pastor, I think we need to value the hymns of the past while being open to newer music that is solid and Scriptural. A healthy dose of variety would do us a lot of good.

As we employ a variety of music, Paul tells us to sing and make melody “in your heart” (vs 19). Thus, our praise and worship should not just be words that we sing; it should come from our heart, being a sincere expression of our love for Christ. And it should not only happen when we are at church or when things are going well. For the passage goes on to say that we are to give thanks to God “always” and “for everything” (vs 20). Is this easy? No, but it is possible through Christ who lives in us. Real victorious living involves praising God through all the ups and downs of life. It means that even when our circumstances are adverse, we continue being grateful to God. And thus we show that we are Spirit-filled people.

