

BEHIND THE
MUSIC



Alistair Hamill

04/03/07



Introduction

- **Worship (re)defined**
 - Worship > singing, despite appearances!
 - (re)defining of worship to capture something of the vast biblical scope of the concept

- **Why do we sing then?**
 - But if worship > singing, then singing should still be worship!
 - Singing is obviously imp't to God –
 - Singing mentioned over 400 times in OT and NT
 - 50 direct commands to sing God's praise inc
 - Ps 47:6 Sing praises to god, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
 - Spontaneously modelled in all of life's circumstances
 - Moses & Miriam
 - Psalms of David
 - Prayer song of Habakkuk
 - Jesus & disciples on his last night before crucifixion
 - Paul & Silas in prison cells
 - Lack of clarity on issue – we all have ideas, but how united are they?
 - Different backgrounds in Glenabbey – all churches and none
 - Different experiences
 - Different temperaments
 - God clearly wants at least some of our praise to be expressed to him in song –
 - Next wk – pick up on worship in its broadest sense – 'Live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called'
 - Relationships in the body of Christ
 - Families
 - Alcohol, sex, our speech
 - But before then, our purpose this morning is to ask the question why and, in seeking to answer it, to learn how we might honour God more fully in this aspect of our Christian lives.

1. Truth has value as well as validity

- We have a tendency to **separate** head and heart
 - Head = people with more intellectual bent, who like ideas and working through arguments – often more level headed;
 - Heart = emotionally driven people; excitable, passionate, enthusiastic, artistic temperament, a little bit more up and down!
- Paul doesn't – in fact, 1st 3 chpts of Eph classic illustration of his integrated approach to truth:

Truth has value as well as validity

(A) Eph 1:3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved...

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be **to the praise of his glory**. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, **to the praise of his glory**.

Bookmarked with and infused with praise!!
Purity of thought AND passion of heart

“Theological facts may give people a big head, but truths give the reverent saint a burning heart, a thrilling encounter with God.

Warren Weirsbe

(B) Eph2:4 But God, being **rich** in mercy, because of the **great** love with which he loved us, 5 when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the **immeasurable riches** of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Rich in mercy...

Great in love ...

Immeasurable riches of his grace ...

Phrases intended to show the **value** of the truth

(I pray) that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Expansive language, designed not just to inform the head but stir the heart! Not just **checking** in with God out of duty, but **cherishing** him for who he is and what he has done.

No wonder Paul launches into one of his trademark spontaneous outbursts of praise!

One quick other eg – Ps 19

8 the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;

Validity – they are right
Value – rejoicing the heart

Poetic analogy
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.

Gold

Honey – sweeter than Italian cheesecake from Café Renoir on Botanic Ave while it drips with perfectly whipped full cream!!

So, truth has value as well as validity – we are clearly not meant to separate out head and heart, choosing either or – God is more honoured by a people who see the truth of who he is and savour that truth, taking it as precious as it is.

We're not just here to **TELL** the truth,
but to develop a **TASTE** for truth.

2. Why do we sing?

How does this relate to singing? Why does God want us to sing?

(A) Singing helps to combine our heads and hearts in a unique way.

What's unique: music is a language of emotion; music combined with words in songs stimulates our minds and our affections simultaneously.

"The reason we sing is because there are depths and heights and intensities and kinds of emotion that will not be satisfactorily expressed by mere prosaic forms, or even poetic readings. There are realities that demand to break out of prose into poetry and some demand that poetry be stretched into song. The realities of God and Christ, creation and salvation, heaven and hell are so great that they demand more than discussion and analysis and description; they demand poetry and song and music. Singing is the Christian's way of saying: God is so great that thinking will not suffice, there must be deep feeling; and talking will not suffice, there must be singing." (PIPER)

"Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits... The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given only to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely by proclaiming the Word of God through music...A person who gives this some thought and yet does not regard music as a marvellous creation of God, must be a clodhopper indeed and does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs." (LUTHER)

" Words and music did for me what solid, even rigorous religious argument could never do: they introduced me to God; not belief in God, more an experiential sense of God.' (BONO)

- Singing gives us an emotional language in which to express our proper affectional response to who God is and what he has done
- It's the **combination** which is unique in singing:
 - Words which convey truth & content
 - Music which is specifically designed to stir us emotionally
 - Songs allow us to **proclaim** truths about God, shoring ourselves up with great ballasts of objective truth about God truth our songs;
 - But songs also allow us not just to be **aware** of these truths, not even just to **acknowledge** them, but to be **amazed** by them

- Examples
 - Profound, robust truths expressed with rousing melodies
 - **In Christ alone**
 - Faith-building truths sung at the top of your voice
 - **The splendour of a King** (bridge sung at last praise night)
 - Simple, yet meaningful devotion
 - **This is the air I breathe**
 - Words of intense gratitude for all that our Saviour accomplished for us on the cross
 - Gilbert & Ps 32 – journey from ‘God forgives’ to ‘I am forgiven – God forgives me!’ – wanted to sing!!!

(B) Concerns about emotions

(i) Uncomfortable with emotions

- You may see overt public displays of emotions as inappropriate – see restraint as a sign of maturity
- Certainly there are eggs of emotions being hyped and ppl responding more to feelings than truth BUT does that mean we consign emotions to the periphery, to be kept in check at all times
- Martin Lloyd-Jones – evangelistic campaign in London
Reported to him with obvious approval that emotions were playing no role in the hundreds who were responding to the message of the gospel.

He was not impressed and said:

What can one say about such an attitude? I content myself with asking a few questions. Can a man see himself as a damned sinner without emotion? Can a man listen to the thunderings of the Law and feel nothing? Or conversely, can a man really contemplate the love of God in Christ Jesus and feel no emotion? The whole position is ridiculous. I fear that many people today in their reaction against excesses and emotionalism put themselves into a position which, in the end, they are virtually denying the Truth. The gospel of Jesus Christ takes up the whole man and if what purports to be the gospel does not do so it is not the gospel.

- If there are things in our lives that command deeper affections, that draw out stronger emotional reactions, what are we really saying about them and God? Is there any more worthy or our purest, yet most passionate affections?
- God's emotions – evidenced in the prophets

Hos 11:8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim?

How can I hand you over, Israel?

How can I treat you like Admah?

How can I make you like Zeboiim?

My heart is changed within me;

all my compassion is aroused.

9 I will not carry out my fierce anger,

nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim.

For I am God, and not man—

the Holy One among you.

- There as a profound danger in separating head and heart, choosing one or the other.

- Certainly we need to be careful with emotionalism
 - Emotions not deeply rooted in truth are unsteady and not a good foundation for life;
 - Emotion does not create truth; it expresses it and allows us to appreciate its value and worth
 - Our feelings are not the ultimate arbiter of truth
- BUT, aware of these dangers, and trusting in God, we are the ppl who are to dive deeply into the truth of God.
 - Jack Hayford said:
Given an environment where the Word of God was foundational and the Person of Christ the focus, (then) the Holy Spirit could be trusted to ... enlighten the intelligence and ignite the emotions. God is not asking us to abandon reason or succumb to some euphoric feeling. He is, however, calling us to trust him – enough to give him control.
 - I mtn stream in Atlas mtns
 - Looking @ stream thru window of 4x4
 - Splashing in stream – entering fully into the truth that, in a desert, a diving into a mtn stream is a truly reviving experience!

(ii) Past hurts make you guarded

- You may have become detached as a defence mechanism
- The ideal as we sing is that we **DELIGHT** in God...
 - ... we have a **LONGING** for God...
 - ...we have a **SORROW**...
 - for feeling nothing → repentance
 - from past hurts and disappointments
- Open up to God – the road to healing
Zeph 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."
- God is a God of healing and restoration
 - Study the stories of those restored
 - Victim of others
 - Woman @ well in Samaria
 - Victim of self
 - Peter in the beach after denial
 - David forgiven for his despicable indiscretion
 - Get contacted with ppl here who can help

Alistair Hamill

Copyright © 2007 AW Hamill. All rights reserved.

- Rebuilders
- Counselling service

Hear again the words of praise from Paul's lips:

2 Cor 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

(iii) Consumer mentality dampens affections

- When we see our role as spectators who might join in if the cheerleader at the front finds the right combo of songs or exhortations
- BUT there is no perfect set of songs, no perfect exhortation
 - We come as ppl who are needy
 - The invitation is not merely to sing some songs, BUT to choose to use the context to go hard after God, to align our little stories with God's big story unfolding throughout history.

3. The future...

A church with a passion for truth

Truth – expounded, relevant, challenging, authoritative

Passion –

- ppl arrive with sense of expectation
 - love conversation, but who, for the sake of the depth of that conversation later, lay it aside when the music begins, and focus on going hard after God
 - who would bow in unashamed earnestness of prayer as we begin, tuning our hearts in to hear from and meet with our God
 - a ppl who come eager to engage w God from the first song, not waiting till we see if the leader will do or say something that might prompt us to get involved
 - a ppl who choose to go beyond personal preferences; who, for the sake of the hundreds of others gathered, will purpose to meet with God through the songs sung or prayers prayed, or perhaps in spite of the songs sung!
- That there would be a tangible sense of joy, gratitude and adoration that characterises our family;
 - just as Christmas Eve in a house with young children is bursting with anticipation & excitement, so we would overflow with praise and song to our God

- that there would be unfettered hearts of joy, free to engage in worship of God in whatever way they desire – hearts overflowing in song, free to return to God thanks and praise for who he is and what he has done
 - that we would continue to be the ppl who love truth, who are always seeking to learn more of the inexhaustible well of who God is;
 - AND that we would be the ppl who value this truth, who celebrate it, who savour it as well as see it
 - a people gathered, hungry to hear the Word of God, and to make a joyful noise to the God of their salvation with song and guitar and piano and drums, and shouts.
- That as we meet together,
 - old grudges melt and festering wounds are healed in the warmth of the joy of the Lord.
 - battered saints absorb the strength and power of the Lord to re-enter their work revived and strong on Monday.
 - That Glenabbey would be known as a church that values the truth, where we meet with God in such a real and unmistakable way that strangers will enter and say, "God is surely in this place!" Not that we want in any way to build a name for ourselves, but that God would be honoured here!