

19. Soft Music for a Hard Heart

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Praise and worship music we sing before the teaching in our services is not for:

- 1) allowing people to come in late
- 2) pleasing some individuals with their favorite worship and praise songs
- 3) a part of the things to do in the service

But it is:

- 1) to please our God with our adoration for Him and His love for us
- 2) to enter into His presence
- 3) to prepare our hearts, so that we may receive His Word through the pastor's teaching.

A. SAUL IN THE PIT

1 Sam 16:14 But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him.

During the OT time, the Holy Spirit comes and goes at His will, but now He resides in the hearts of the born-again believers. Once He makes Himself a residence in a believer's heart, He does not leave until the time for death of the believer or the time of Rapture.

Indeed, the v14 is a sad verse. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David, but He left from Saul due to his disobedience and pride in his heart.

Sometimes, to get our attention while we are continuously rebellious against God, He takes off His protection from us, so that we may be tormented by evil spirits. That does not mean that the Holy Spirit leaves us or abandon us.

Sept. 11, 2001 was a case in point. America has been spitting at God with her rejection from every corner of the society. The majority of American were so swelled up in their own ego and capabilities that they felt that they don't need God. So, in His infinite wisdom and abounding love, God took off His protective hands from America for about 40 minutes. Within that time, the symbol of America financial strength, the World Towers went down in a heap of ashes with 3000 people under it. It doesn't pay to be disobedient to God. Never!

B. THE DISTRESSING SPIRIT BY GOD

This verse can be quite confusing to many people. "A distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him." Does it mean that an angel came from heaven and started to torment Saul? Or does it mean that a demon came from God and torment Saul? Does it mean that demons hang around God in heaven and get dispatched by Him to torment or temp people on earth? No way!

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

According to James, God does not tempt anyone, nor He can be tempted. I believe that it was a demon who was dispatched by God. That does not mean that a demon lives in heaven and waits for God's order.

According to the words from the lips of Jesus, there is no evil in heaven. But we see God converses with the devil himself in Job. Some commentators say that Satan still had an access to heaven to talk with God. I don't buy that. I'd rather believe what Jesus said than them. They are limiting the presence of God as we are limited. God is an omni-present God. His presence is everywhere. The devil and his demons don't have to be inside of heaven for God to speak to them.

The demonic torment to Saul was the consequences of his disobedience to God. He brought this to himself. With a permission from God, a demon was allowed to torment Saul. There is not a thing that God does not know about our lives. Nothing escapes His infinite wisdom.

Today, Saul would probably be diagnosed as mentally ill. There are many people in mental hospitals today that are really suffering from spiritual problems. It is certainly wrong to assume that every case of mental distress is spiritual, because chemical imbalances and physiological problems are also real in our fallen world. Even so, there are certainly some that liberation from a distressing spirit, and may never find it in our modern mental health system.

C. SAUL'S STRANGE MALADY

1 Sam 16:15-17 And Saul's servants said to him, "Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me."

These servants understood the power of soothing music.

God created music, and gave it the capability to touch people with great power. Music can be used for great good or for great evil, because it is such a powerful tool of communication to our inner being.

God wants the power of music to be used in worshipping Him. Worship is, and should be, more than music and singing. But it should be a God-appointed way to worship the Lord!

D. WORSHIP LEADER AND TEAM

God wants His people to worship Him, and God can do a tremendous work in the hearts and lives of His people through worship. Because worship is so important, worship leaders and team are important. Saul needed to be led into worship, so it was important to seek out a man to do the job.

There is a sense in which the worship minister is like a priest in the Old Testament, standing between God and the congregation. His job is not to entertain the people, or even to please the people, but to lead them into worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

In describing the ministry of priests in Exodus 28, the priests are to wear twelve tribes' names on their shoulders and breastplates of their priest garments.

This shows both aspects of worship ministry - it has to be done unto the Lord, yet with the people on our hearts and shoulders.

We have to be in close communion with God, and have the people on our hearts (loving them) and on our shoulders (working hard for them).

E. DAVID'S RESUME

1 Sam 16:18 Then one of the servants answered and said, "Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is (1) skillful in playing, (2) a mighty man of valor, a man of war, (3) prudent in speech, and (4) a handsome person; and (5) the Lord is with him."

We find a few requirements of worship leader and team from this verse:

1) Skillful in playing: The technical quality of music makes a difference in being an effective worship leader. The heart matters, but so does technical ability.

This doesn't mean that a person has to be so good before they can be used of God. But it does mean that they cannot tolerate a too casual, unconcerned, lazy, "we don't really need to practice" attitude. Skillful in playing reflects an attitude as much as it reflects ability.

2) A mighty man of valor, a man of war: Worship ministry is a constant battleground. If someone isn't equipped and ready for spiritual warfare, they will probably be spiritually and emotionally "injured" in worship ministry, and probably "injure" others.

Worship ministers must make war against the world and flesh. Worldly ideas and approaches to music don't belong in worship ministry. Worship team member should not be in for their own glory, but only for the glory of Jesus.

Worship ministers must make war against the devil. He is constantly trying to stir up strife, jealousy, hurt feelings, pride, discouragement, and anything else he can find. Satan has a special "regard" for worship ministry, because before his fall, he was the "worship leader" of heaven (Ezekiel 28:12-15).

3) Prudent in speech: Good worship ministry needs a lot of diplomacy. As everyone has a nose, everyone has an opinion on worship music, and everyone has a suggestion. Effective worship ministers know when to speak and when to be quiet on the platform, among the team, and in the congregation.

4) A handsome person: An effective worship minister doesn't need to be a fashion model, but their appearance is important. They need to present themselves as invisible to the congregation. If they are so dressed up, or so dressed down, that their appearance calls attention to themselves, it needs to change. I've seen some of worship team members wear clothes that are lot to be desired. Wearing too tight clothing, low cut or short skirts that making other people to stumble need to be avoided.

5) The Lord is with him: This is the most important attribute. It must be said of any worship minister and team members. This means that they called by God, submitting to God, and submitting to whatever leadership the Lord has placed over them.

F. WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DO WE LISTEN?

So what kind of music do we listen? Music with the lyrics of illicit sex of one night stand, or cheating spouse, rap or hard metal music that filled with profane and vulgar words? Do those music minister and edify to our hearts or bring more strife?

You might say, "I just like the beat, I don't listen to the lyrics." In pig's eyes! I bet you can recite that lyrics.

You can not tell me that you cannot find similar categories of music in Christian music area. You name it, Christian music has it all: rap, country music, hard metal, folk style, bluegrass, rock 'n roll, contemporary, and the list goes on.

Whatever we listen and put in our hearts that we become and the end result may not be pretty. I am not saying that we will lose our salvation, because we listen to secular music. But why listen to those garbage music when we can listen to Christian music that glorifies God and edifies our hearts?

G. HERE COMES DAVID

1 Sam 16:19 Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep."

After David was anointed by Samuel, he simply went back to his old job, taking care of sheep. He waited for the Lord to open the doors for him.

1 Sam 16:20-21 And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by his son David to Saul. So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer.

God is bringing David into the presence of Saul in the palace to prepare him to be a next king.

1 Sam 16:22-23 Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

Although he was Saul's successor, David didn't try to elbow him off the throne. Once a faithful shepherd, he was now a faithful servant, humble and supportive, willing to use his gifts for the king's good.

The Berkeley Version says that David's music "eased Saul."

H. APPLICATIONS

1) The consequences of our disobedience will change and destroy our lives.

It ain't worth it. Let's be obedient to the Lord and His Word.

2) Worship and praise are for our Lord and to minister to our hearts, not to entertain us.

Let's not insist our personal preferences in worship music.

3) Let's be careful with what we put in our hearts, whether it is music, books and movies.

Garbage in, garbage out!