

## 19. Soft music for a hard heart

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If you are like me, many of us cannot sing well or play instruments well. I wish I could, but it is one of those things that it ain't gonna happen in my lifetime unless the Lord does something.

Music has played an important part of every human culture, both past and present. Music has its own language to speak to the human heart in a universal way. Science has now proven what music lovers already know, that listening to upbeat or soothing music can improve your mood. Listening to and playing music reduces chronic stress by lowering the stress hormone. Music can turn a stubborn and callous heart to a gentle and considerate one

By the way, praise and worship music we sing before the teaching in our Sunday 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 customary things to do in the Sunday services

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

Who has an interpretation of this section for me?

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 resident in a believer's heart, He does not leave until the time for the death of the believer or the time of the 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 hassled or tormented by evil spirits. It does not mean that the Holy Spirit leaves us or forsakes 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 Americans were so swelled up in their own ego and capabilities that they felt that they didn'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 American financial strength, the World Towers went down in a heap of ashes with 3,000 people under it. It doesn't pay to be disobedient to God. Ever!

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 is it that a demon came from God and tormented Saul?

*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. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 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 can He be tempted. I believe that it was a demon who was allowed by God to torment Saul. It does not mean that demons had free access to heaven, rather the Lord took His protective hands off of Saul.

Speaking of the devil and his demons access to heaven, since God is holy and absolutely without sin according to Isaiah 6:3; and since He will not even look on evil according to Habakkuk 1:13, how can satan be in heaven? In Job 1, satan stood before God to give an account of himself. Does it mean that satan and his cohorts still have an access to heaven? No, let me explain.

*Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and satan also came among them.*

Here are some other facts to note:

- 1) Satan did not have open access to God’s presence. He was summoned by God.
- 2) The visits were temporary.
- 3) Satan’s access was only granted prior to the final judgment according to Revelation 21:1.

After the judgment, God creates a new heaven and new earth.

The demonic torment to Saul was the consequences of his disobedience to God. He brought this to himself. There is not a thing that God does not know about our lives.

Today, Saul would probably be diagnosed as mentally ill. There are many people in mental hospitals 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.

## **B. SAUL’S STRANGE MALADY**

*1 Samuel 16:15-17 And Saul’s servants said to him, “Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. 16 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.” 17 So Saul said to his servants, “Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me.”*

What do you see here?

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 with 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 with our lives.

There is a sense in which the worship minister is like a priest in the OT, 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 priestly 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 – loving them and on our shoulders – working hard for them.

### C. DAVID'S RESUME

*1 Samuel 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."*

Now that's not a bad resume, is it? David is a skilled musician; he's a man of valor; he's a warrior; he has control of his tongue; he's handsome; and the Lord is with him. We find five 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" lazy 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 leader and team members must make war against the world and the flesh. Worldly ideas and approaches to music don't belong in worship ministry. Worship team members should not be in for their own glory, but only for the glory of Jesus.

Worship leader and team members 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 according to 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 leader and team members should know when to speak and when to be quiet on the stage, among the team, and in the congregation.

**4) A handsome person:** An effective worship leader and team members don't need to be fashion models, 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 worship team members wear clothes that leaves a lot to be desired.

**5) The Lord is with him:** This is the most important attribute. It must be said of any worship leader and team members. This means that they are called by God, are

submitting to God, and submitting to whatever leadership the Lord has placed over them.

### **D. TO WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DO WE LISTEN?**

So to what kind of music do we listen? Music with the lyrics of illicit sex of one night stands, or cheating spouse, rap or hard metal music that are filled with profanity and vulgarity? Does this music minister to and edify our hearts or bring more strife? People might say, "I just like the beat, I don't listen to the lyrics." In pig's eyes! I bet they can recite the lyrics without any problem.

You cannot tell me that you cannot find similar categories of music in the Christian music arena. 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 to 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 that garbage music when we can listen to Christian music that glorifies God and edifies our hearts?

### **E. HERE COMES DAVID**

*1 Samuel 16:19-23 Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." 20 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. 21 So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer. 22 Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." 23 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.*

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.

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

### **F. APPLICATIONS**

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

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

3) Let's be careful with what we put in our hearts, whether it is music, books, or movies. Garbage in, garbage out!