

# THEN SINGS MY SOUL | *Capturing the spirit of worship from the Psalms for Today*

## Lesson 13

*"A psalm is the blessing of the people, the praise of God, the commendation of the multitude, the applause of all, the speech of every man, the voice of the Church, the sonorous profession of faith, devotion full of authority, the joy of liberty, the noise of good cheer, and the echo of gladness. It softens anger, it gives release from anxiety, it alleviates sorrow; it is protection at night, instruction by day, a shield in time of fear, a feast of holiness, the image of tranquility, a pledge of peace and harmony." - Ambrose (ca. 339-397)\**

We have introduced a study of the Psalms and we have now covered the application of those forms we sing in our own form set in our modern era that are like the praise hymns, the laments and the numerous subjects of the Psalter.

We will in the next quarter begin a study on Wednesday nights of the great Wisdom Psalm of 119 and on Sundays, we will look at different Old Testament songs that are found outside the Old Testament Psalter. In all of these studies, one thing becomes more and more evident: That for the God worshipper, praising God in music is as natural as praying to Him. In fact, some of those hymns were prayers and visa versa. "How can I keep from praising your Name" is hardly – just – a modern praise song. It is the nature and the spirit we capture in the Psalms for our modern worship today.

However, much of the actual music and song used by Christians in the early centuries is unknown; namely because there was no recorded universal method of note writing. Further, many debate how Christian music in the first centuries was influenced. Was it exclusively Jewish? Were there also Pagan influences in meter and melody? Or, was it all Spirit inspired? (c.f. 1Corinthians 14:15). For the latter, if all song was inspired based on this text, then so was all prayer. And that cannot be (c.f. 1Timothy 2:8). The scarce traces of original sources of these songs give us so little information that all we can say is that each of the questions are probably true to some extent.

Keeping this in mind regarding early worship, we still find hymnic sources in the Old Testament. Among these may be cited

1. The Songs of Moses,
  - a. I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted (Exodus 15:1-19).
    - i. Although the Book of Revelation does not quote the OT verbatim, it alludes to it over 550 times and especially here for us in 15:3-4.
    - ii. The post-Exodus song celebrating the Lord's victory over Pharaoh, the enemy of God (Exodus 15) becomes the basis for the song titled, "Song of Moses" which is all about the Lord's victory. Specifically, it was God's Messenger, or Angel, that protected them, the pre-incarnate Christ (Exodus 13:21-22)
  - b. Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak.. for I proclaim the name of the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:1-43).
    - i. Some New Testament references are Matt 17:17 with v.5, and 1Corinthians 10:22 with v.21.
    - ii. But it is Paul with Romans 15:10 that applies the sweeping conclusion of Moses' song with the grand conclusion of what God has accomplished with His Messiah.
2. Hannah's Song of Thanksgiving,
  - a. My heart exults in the Lord (1Samuel 2:1-10).
    - i. And these are the words that Mary uses to express her own joy as a Virgin in being chosen by God for His work through her (Luke 2). See picture on page 2.
  - b. The parallels between the women may suggest why the words were on the mind and heart of Mary.
    - i. Both were "closed" to pregnancy (1Sam 1:5-6 and Luke 1:34).
    - ii. Both were "maid-servants" of the Lord (1Sam 1:1; Luke 1:38).
    - iii. Both were told of their motherhood by revelation (By Eli, 1Sam 1:17; By Angel, Luke 1:35).

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- iv. Both gave birth to prophets.
- v. Both gloried in the filling of their empty vessels (1Sam 2:1; Luke 1:46-47).

In our class tonight, I want review what the common New Testament passages illustrate about this truth of song, hymnody, and praise in the life of believers.

## Applications to Bringing Song to the Heart of Worship.

In Luke's record of Mary's song, it must have been **the source book for their emotions**. Imagine all the thoughts flooding through the young and newly pregnant Mary's heart. Her first words were Hannah's words. It says she "believed" what the Lord said would happen (1:45) but it never says Mary's song was inspired in that moment. Luke's record is inspired.

However Mary's heart was filled with the inspired written testimony in Samuel of Hannah.

Song of Hannah 1 Samuel 2:2-10	Song of Mary/the Magnificat Luke 1:46-55
1 Sam 2:1-2 And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation.	Luke 1:46-47 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
1 Sam 2:2 "No one is holy like the LORD, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.	Luke 1:49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.
1 Sam 2:3 "Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.	Luke 1:51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts
1 Sam 2:4 "The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength.	Luke 1:52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly.
1 Sam 2:5a Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger...	Luke 1:53a He has filled the hungry with good things
1 Sam 2:9a He will guard the feet of His saints...	Luke 1:50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation
1 Sam 2:9b-10a But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. "For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth...	Luke 1:52a, 53b He has put down the mighty from their thrones... And the rich He has sent away empty.
1 Sam 2:10b ....The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed."	Luke 1:54-55 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to His seed forever."

Is that how we approach our worship today? The Psalms are replete with bursts of emotion expressed within the conduit of the cultural place. There is not just *\*one\** way to emote our feelings in song – but each culture has its norms and we should express with words that honor God in a way that our hearts meet with our emotions. James 5:13 says, "Is any among you cheerful? Let him sing praises!"

In Acts, Paul and Silas were "praying and singing hymns of praise to God" (16:25) in ways that other prisoners *heard*. Peter and John "lifted their voices to God and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heaven and the earth" (4:24). **Each of these songs in prayer were unaffected by (and maybe were the result of) their life experiences.** They praised Him in prison. They praised Him under arrest. The conditions did not prevent the compulsion to adore God – but only made it larger.

And then Ephesians 5:19 says, "Speaking to one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" and Colossians 3:16 says, "Singing Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with your hearts to God." **This is the sharing of praise with a group.** The "one another" is sometimes taken to indicate antiphonal or responsorial singing which could possibly describe the form of musical rendition. However, the point made in these texts is that while there are times one person sings directly to God; in another, two together are personally singing and praying to God; Here, the groups is singing to God and singing to each other.

Praise together is the joy of the assembly. The union of hands in prayer lift our petitions. The union of our eyes upon the Memorial Feast raises our hopes. The union of our ears on the Word of God raises our knowledge. But the union of our voices raises our hearts. Just as Paul concluded his great argument for the righteousness of God with "I will give praise, I will sing" (Romans 15:9) and "let all the people praise Him" (15:11), we too should never cease singing song that can unite our hearts and lift our spirits to praise the Lord.