

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

*Colossians 3:16*

One of the promises that the LORD gave to HIS disciples (in light of the fact that HE was about to go away from them in body) was that he would send HIS SPIRIT to instruct and guide them. *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."* (John 16:13-14)

What they did not understand (having sat under HIS teaching ministry on a daily basis) was that HIS guidance and instruction would sometimes be manifested to them in ways which they probably did not properly conceive of at the time. Paul went on to expand upon these varied manifestations of instruction when he wrote to the Ephesians, *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* (Eph 4:11-13)

The LORD called twelve apostles (Paul taking Judas' bishoprick) to be those who would set forth the foundational truths upon which the New Testament Church would stand. (see Eph.2:20) In a descending fashion HE vouchsafed these truths to succeeding generations (see II Tim.2:2). Even until the present day as HE is pleased to manifest HIMSELF among HIS people in the various gifts which HE is pleased to give to every member of the body for the edification of the whole. (see I Cor.12:7; Eph.4:16)

It is no longer necessary that the gifts of the apostles be active since their work has been done and the New Testament scriptures are complete. All of the instruction and words of exhortation which are spoken one to another (by the saints) in the present time must of necessity be founded upon that which is already revealed in those pages. Though we yet see through a glass darkly as to a complete understanding of every jot and tittle which is found therein yet the LORD gives HIS people the measure of faith that HE is pleased to.

HE said that HE would build HIS church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it and we are quite sure that HIS promise cannot fail to occur in the exact fashion as HE has been pleased to manifest it. There are hundreds of "denominations" and "sects" which all claim to be the "one true body". We are quite convinced that they cannot all be correct and must contend against those who we feel would preach any doctrine which is not "of CHRIST". *"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."* (Rom 14:5) Cleaving to that which the apostle Paul said, *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so*

*say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal 1:8-9)* Only the doctrine of CHRIST will do for true believers.

Then being joined together with the saints of like mind, Paul exhorts us to admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Most of the time when men look at this verse they center their thoughts on a consideration of singing as it might be considered in the current vernacular or performed in these carnal bodies. We are not saying that there is no application in that respect but think that the truth of this passage is much deeper than telling us we ought to get together and “sing” in one fashion or another.

First of all he describes how this type of singing must begin. *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”*. This activity cannot be carried out unless the word of GOD is a very precious commodity to those engaged. One cannot teach or admonish the sons of GOD apart from a clear grasp of the written word. Neither can those who revere the immutability of that word receive teaching or admonition from those who do not revere it in the same light. (see Isa.8:20) We might disagree as to our understanding of it from time to time, but we cannot ever disagree as to it being the deciding factor in all disputes, we appeal to no other court. Therefore this “singing” must always have a proper foundation.

Then he says what the purpose of this “singing” is. *“Teaching and admonishing one another.”* The primary purpose of this “singing” is not to “limber us up”, “get us in the right mood” or “prepare us” for some greater activity but is a very important activity in its own right which is in no wise to be considered as inferior to any other activity which takes place among the saints. It is an activity in which every part of the body is to participate (i.e.; one another). Every part of the body is edified by that which the other parts of the body provide.

Then he describes the “singing” itself. David wrote most of that portion of the scriptures which is called the “Book of Psalms” which in the Hebrew literally means a “book of Praises” or even a “book of Hymns”. So there is no great significant difference in Paul’s reference to Psalms and Hymns except to note that the word Psalm also can mean a song or a prayer. It seems likely that the book of Psalms were not only “songs of praise” but often used as “prayers” as well by the Jews. It is very likely that the LORD “sang” one of the Psalms with HIS disciples after the last supper when they *“sang an hymn”* as Matthew 26:30 records. The singing of any Psalm or Hymn is not primarily concerned with the musical style with which it is sung as it is with the substance of that which is its basis. In other words the coarsest of style with proper substance is to be preferred over the most lilting of melodies without it.

He goes on to speak of “spiritual songs” which are not appreciably different from Psalms and hymns. It must be noted that the songs are described as “spiritual” which is to distinguish them from that which is “carnal”. A spiritual “song” is a testimony of one’s delight in the blessings of GOD. Solomon wrote a “Song” in which he pictured the love of the BRIDEGROOM for HIS Bride. Mary “sang” unto the LORD in contemplation of the blessing of her soul in being chosen to bear the blessed CHRIST CHILD. The saints shall sing at the throne of GOD of the worthiness of the LAMB.

Then lastly Paul speaks of the style of “singing” which is to be done. Men are prone to wrangle over the carnal “style” in which the singing of the saints should be carried out. One preference is deemed by them as superior to another but the truth is that the only style of singing that is of any importance at all is *“singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* Whatever else may be done is of no value at all without this important ingredient.

The OBJECT of our praise is the ONE to whom our songs are lifted. *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col 3:17)* How shall we edify the brethren unless our hearts are all in one accord as to the ultimate purpose for which we are singing. Our singing is not primarily to please us but to exalt HIM and we can in no wise do so without grace in our hearts. May the LORD cause the high praises of GOD to be on our lips and in that course cause the saints of GOD to be admonished and taught. *“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill” (Isa 5:1)*

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