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God's Glorious Attributes
THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE
Part 19

By Rayola Kelley

This is the last article in this series. Needless to say, I have not exhausted the glorious attributes of God. Even when it came to the attributes I did write about, the information I was able to present represents a very small part of the tip of the iceberg as to who God is.

An iceberg is a good way to approach the next attribute of God. It is not the top that you have to be worried about when estimating the size of such a subject, it is what is underneath the surface of the water that will ultimately sink a great ship. When it comes to faith, this subject can shipwreck our faith if we fail to approach it with child-like faith.

Our faith is established by the Word of God. The Word of God was inspired for the purpose of instructing, reproving, correcting, and establishing us in righteousness (*Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16*). Active faith on our part is a choice to believe that what the Word of God says is true and respond to it in obedience. Obedience to the Bible is a manifestation or fruit of faith that adheres to what the Apostle Paul said in *Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,"* and Paul once again confirms this is *2 Timothy 2:17, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*."

Obedient, scriptural actions that come out of unfeigned faith are considered "good works" by God because He can reckon them as so, but they are "ordained" works where we are concerned. They have already been laid out in eternity and by zealously doing them out of love for God according to the pattern of faith (believing it is true, acting upon it as true, and walking it out in confidence by assimilating it into our walk), we are simply letting our light (life before and with God) shine before men (*Matthew 5:16; Titus 2:14; 3:8*)

I say all of this because there are those who, when they hear the term "doing good works" in relationship to the Christian walk, associate it as one "earning his or her salvation." As soon as they hear the term, "good works," these people throw up a wall, raise their arm in protest, point their finger at you like a gun and begin shooting all kinds of accusations at you such as you do not believe in grace and that you are promoting another Gospel and so on and so forth. It doesn't matter how many Scriptures about "good works" you show them that have been laid out in the Word as being ordained by God, and point out that if you really love the Lord, you will obey Him by doing these works, they will not hear you because in their mind you are a heretic, promoting a false gospel (*John 14:15*).

I encountered such an individual not long ago on Facebook. I talked about discipleship and he would speak of grace that requires no response on our part. I would quote a Scripture about Scriptural responsibility and he would ask if I even believed in God's grace. I would try to point him back to basic truths and he would immediately ignore them and put up his banner of grace, while wildly waving it around so everyone within his reach would have to duck or be knocked out by his stubbornness.

From what I could read on this man's Facebook, he understood salvation, but because of his incorrect or limited understanding of grace he proved to be obstinate and unteachable when it came to the Christian walk of faith, obedience, discipleship, and the consecrated life. You could tell he was frightened about such a notion because he held so tightly to his very limited concept of grace that anything that challenged him past the box of his theology was a terrible afront against the Gospel. Instead of discerning that his fragile, limited understanding about grace could not stand under the scrutiny of the full counsel of Scripture, he fiercely clung to his little soap box with notable fervor. Clearly, he needed to let it go and seek the face of the Lord to put it in Scriptural context. Meanwhile, his reaction to any challenge in this area made him appear as an obstinate, fearful little boy who insisted on holding onto a childish reality. This reality has kept him in a narrow little box that prevents him from exploring deeper truths so he can grow in the knowledge of the Lord and begin to understand how grace really works. As John reminds us in *John 1:16-17, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* The Christian life is not just about grace. Grace is upheld by truth, allowed to flow down into our lives by faith and is manifested in love.

I might add that this man calls himself an evangelist and is out on the streets making converts to his concept of grace. Up front, those who choose to believe his message of God's grace could very well become heirs of salvation, but if they stay under his influence, they could also easily find themselves confused when their fragile faith becomes shipwrecked after hitting the iceberg of truth that challenges their fragile foundation, resulting in unbelief, judgmentalism, or skepticism. This is why we are told in *1 Timothy 1:19, "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck"*

Hebrews 12:26-29 states, "*Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things*

which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." Notice how we are told everything will be shaken, including all foundations and those that are not founded on the true foundation of Jesus Christ will collapse (*1 Corinthians 3:11*). Clearly, Jesus' kingdom will not be moved and we are to possess His grace that allows us to serve God in an acceptable fashion in the attitude of worshipful reverence and godly fear.

The one aspect of God's attributes that ensures that each of His attributes will never be moved from what it is and always has been and will continue to be is the fact that He is eternal. Every attribute of God is marked by this characteristic. It can't be moved, changed, stopped, or disregarded because each characteristic is immutable just like the one true God who possesses them.

The fact that God is eternal is hard for man in his finite, fleshly state to understand. In fact, it is impossible, and that is why we choose to believe this one aspect of God that can throw us into utter confusion if we step beyond the simple faith of a child and try to calculate this subject according to the dimension of time that we are living in. Being eternal is what makes God incomprehensible. We can't comprehend the fact that there is no beginning to God or end to Him because, in our present state, we are marked by time.

The dimension of eternity has no time. What was yesterday for us is what is so in heaven now, and will continue to be so in the present, and will remain so in the future. All of history stands before God as is, while the present is what has always been and the future is what is so. That is why we read in *Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."* God's will has been perfectly carried out in heaven. It is the reality of what always has been, stands as being so and continues to be. Because of time, God must bring forth the right events and people to bring forth His will on earth, but it is a "done deal" no matter what Satan does to hinder it and in spite of man running from it, ignoring it, and/or fighting against it.

I recall one day when our brother in the Lord, Steve Brown, challenged our concept of eternity in Bible Study with a simple statement, "Do you realize we all step into eternity at the same time?" Silence filled the room as finite minds, bound by time wrestled with such a concept. How can that be so; but it is so because there is no time to mark eternity. In a sense, every believer is already abiding in eternity. It may not have been brought to fruition on earth, but there is no doubt as to who belongs there and will abide there forever.

Eternity points to various factors about God we have already considered, but it is good to remember them once again in light of this subject. I have already mentioned the first factor of God being eternal: there is no beginning or ending to Him. We have a beginning in this present life and the life we know now will come to an end. In fact, we are part of a cycle that is marked by seasons that end with our physical demise. However, there is no beginning to God. There was never a time when He was not who He is, and there will never be a future time that He will cease to be who He is. He has always been God and will always be God. All things are inclusive within the character, purpose, and plan of God.

To consider the aspect of God being eternal is like asking the question, "Who came first, the chicken or the egg?" What came first eternity or God? The answer concerning the chicken according to Genesis is that all of creation was brought forth in a mature state so that it could reproduce itself. Therefore, the chicken came first and when it comes to God, He always has been eternal and operates in a dimension that is eternal, unmarked by times and seasons. This dimension is beyond our comprehension because we are limited by what we see, what we can know, and what we can accomplish. The problem is that we feel we must perceive a matter to believe it is so, which is opposite of faith. Because our approach to the subject of God is according to fleshly attempts to understand that which is incomprehensible about Him, we must bring God down into our realm and fit Him into our logic and thinking. Ultimately, we humanize God and often deify our understanding of Him by creating an image of Him. This simply means we have erected an idol in our mind to our own liking and named it "God."

This is why genuine faith is of utmost importance. It possesses a child-like disposition that simply accepts what it is told in Scripture about what is incomprehensible, receives it as being true about God, and has no doubt that it will remain so no matter how it might be twisted and misconstrued to fit the personal narratives of others.

Since there is no beginning and end to God, we are reminded of another important fact, "He is the first and the last" to all matters. Let me take you on a quick journey in the Bible, beginning with *Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God"* while comparing it with *John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" From there we can go to *Hebrews 11:3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* The story continues in *1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."*

What theme can you pick up in this short presentation? The first part of the presentation reveals everything begins with God. Nothing can find its origins outside of God. Even though man tries to control the elements of earth, the most he can do is pervert and taint the perfection found within the functioning world of God. He may elaborate on it, use it to either advance his agendas while exploiting what he can to promote himself while becoming deluded to the fact that if it was not for God he would not even exist. It is for this reason that the Bible declares only a fool says in his heart there is no God (*Psalm 14:1; 53:1*).

However, one of the important aspects of God is that everything that we see was brought forth by the unseen. We can't see God because He operates in, though, and from a different dimension that is referred to as "Spirit." The unseen is manifested through what can be seen. This dimension of eternity is spiritual, but the material world around us speaks of God's great design, intervention, and movement in, among, and through His creation.

Everything must begin with God to ensure the **right premise**, but eve-

rything must line up to God to be assured of remaining in the **right way**. Jesus stated, *"I am the way."* We are told He is the door which means He is the entrance into all matters pertaining to truth, the Spirit of God, and the life **promised** us. However, no one can simply stand in a doorway (*John 10:1-5,7-11;14:6; 17:1-3*). A door points to the fact that a man must enter through it if he is to come into a certain place. Once a man enters in by way of the door of life provided by Jesus Christ, he does so to follow Him into the life he is being called to in order to reach the **potential** of his high calling of reflecting Jesus in this dark world.

We all love the concept of Jesus being the door to the sheepfold, but very few realize He is the door that they must enter in and through to follow Him to the life they are being called to live and experience in the present age in preparation for the next age of glory to come. The promises of God are conditional and attached to our heavenly, eternal inheritance. For the most part, we will only realize the fullness of these promises in the glorious age to come. Keep in mind, these promises were given to us in the present age in order to discipline our focus in our daily life to line our walk up to what awaits us in eternity. After all, we must remember and realize that the life in us is the life of Christ and it is eternal in nature. It is a bit of heaven that resides in us, but it is also part of a dimension that has no part in the one we live in. It identifies us to that which will be unfolding before us, and to us for ages to come (*Ephesians 2:7*).

As we follow Christ in this world, we will ultimately end up with Him in a most glorious way. We will find He is our prize we were reaching for, our inheritance that we were promised, the essence of life that is meant to be brought to full maturity, and the hope of glory yet to be fully realized. Jesus is what will be found at the end of all matters. We are told in *Luke 1:33* that there is no end to His kingdom and *Romans 10:4* points out, that He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. *Isaiah 46:10* gives us this interesting insight, "*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*." When we begin with God, we can start from the end of all matters and come out with the same results because His counsel (Word) will stand, and He will bring forth that which He has ordained according to His will and for His glory and pleasure.

We must remind ourselves that we have such promises as *Psalms 119:89* which declares, "*For ever, O LORD. thy word is settled in heaven,"* and *1 Peter 1:23-25* states, *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."* Like God, His Word is eternal and I am often surprised that people think He does not mean what He says, or say what He means, when it has been made clear that His Word can never be changed, and will not change! It is eternal and what was declared in the past is so and will be found so today and will remain so tomorrow. It is clear that if you begin with Christ, you will also end with Christ, and if you follow Christ from the end, you will realize He marks the beginning.

This brings us to the last book of the Canon. What is the last book all about? Most people say it is about the end of the last days. It is true that it gives us an incredible account of the last days, but the Apostle John sets both the theme and purpose of this book in *Revelation 1:1a, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him."* Remember our quick journey through the Bible. We started with God (premise) in *Genesis 1:1*, graduated to the expression of God (the Word) in *John 1:1-3*, and how the earth was framed by His Word in *Hebrews 11:3*, and the mystery of godliness in *1 Timothy 3:16*, that God was manifested in the flesh; and now we land on the major theme of not only the last book of the Bible but the glue that brings the whole Bible together in the most glorious mosaic, the "Revelation of the Living Word, Jesus Christ." The Bible begins with God, is held together by the living expression of God (the Word) and ends with a revelation of the Word, Jesus.

The last part of God being eternal is the fact that He possesses the element of the mysterious. God has clearly put down in one book what man needs to know and He gives us the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to us in greater measure to bring about inner transformation. But through it all, our Eternal Creator maintains the mysterious edge to Himself that remains incomprehensible to us because it is of a dimension we cannot understand and do not need to comprehend to change the dynamics of our faith walk. This mysterious aspect of God is what distinguishes Him the most as being God, infinite, incredible, unspeakable, indescribable, and beyond our limited comprehension.

I am thankful for the great mysteries of God because at such times when darkness of His mysterious ways and plans overtakes my understanding, I must choose the way of faith and trust His immutable character. I long ago concluded that understanding the mysteries of God will not end in my faith being established. The reason is because one day my understanding will ultimately hit the darkness of that which is the sovereignty of God and I still must choose to trust what I know about Him in order to continue to advance forward until Jesus is unveiled to my heart in greater ways. At such times I realize my great smallness in light of His incomprehensible wisdom.

God is so far beyond us in all things (*Isaiah 55:8-9*). We get minuscule glances into eternity to only become more and more aware that we know nothing outside of who He is. If we do not end with God in light of eternity, we will find ourselves being sucked into some vacuum that has no beginning to its emptiness and no end to its gnawing insanity as we can quickly descend into unbelief.

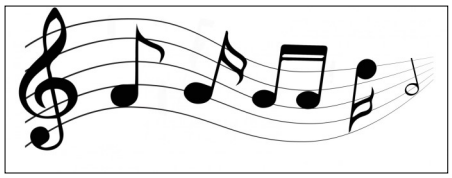
The next time you try to logic out God's eternal attributes and ways, stop and know that you will end up overwhelmed because they are incomprehensible, or digressing into unbelief because it is not for you to know what is in the heart and mind of God about that which is His business. When you stop before going over the edge and finding yourself in a freefall in the incomprehensible, choose to trust that God knows all things, has all details taken care of and has the end worked out for your benefit and His glory. It is when you come to this place that you can begin to rest in who He is and know with confidence that you are on the winning side of eternity. †

ELEPHANTS IN THE CHURCH
Part Five

MUSIC AND WORSHIP

By Jeannette Haley

"Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."- Psalm 22:3
"O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard" - Psalm 66:8



Through the years we've experienced the sad fact that one of the touchiest areas imaginable in churches is when it comes to the subject of music and worship. We've witnessed such things as power-plays, competition, self-exaltation, jealousy, anger, disagreements, and division. The question is, what is there about worship (which should be holy and pure) that elicits such strife and contention among Christians? After all, worship is about glorifying God, not ourselves. *James 3:16* addresses this problem, *"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."*

From an artist's standpoint, I experienced this problem to some degree in the visual arts world of painting and sculpture, but such envy and strife should never be tolerated among God's people. We have no business jostling for the "upper seat" in our service to Christ any more than the disciples did who were arguing over who was the greatest in His kingdom. (See, *Luke 9:46-56*.)

But having said that, we need to take a closer look at music itself, and what makes it such a powerful element in our worship, and why Satan works overtime to defile it and use it for his own evil purposes. We must never forget that Satan's goal is to be worshipped above God, and if he can't persuade, deceive or delude people to bow before him, he will instead come as an "angel of light" in the area of music to profane true worship of God, which is "*in Spirit and in truth*." (*John 4:24*.)

First, we need to think about where music originated. The simple answer is, it came from God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible. We know there is music in heaven because in *Revelation 4:8, 9* we read *"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."* See also *Revelation 14:2, 3; 15:2-4.*

In *John 1:3* we read that, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." 1 Corinthians 8:*6 tells us, "But *to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* "Things" in this verse in the Greek is agathos which means "good," benefit, well. Therefore, this can mean physical matter, or unseen spiritual attributes. Concerning the visible and the invisible, *Colossians 1:16* tells us, *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."* Therefore, there is nothing before God, above God, outside of God (in the sense that something exists that He did not create), or greater than God; nothing that exists whether seen or unseen originated from a source other than God. This includes music as well as art and literature which three things I personally consider to be the three essential "pillars," talents or expressions, given by God to humanity upon which, if a person wisely incorporates them into his or life through and in the righteousness of Christ, by revelation of the Holy Spirit, according to a right spirit for the sole purpose of utilizing inwardly, and imparting outwardly what is good (beneficial), well (beautiful) for the emotional and inspirational satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness of man as he is led by their excellence, as God willed, to glorify the Creator, exalting and worshipping Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. (See *Hebrews 12:2*.)

Talents are invisible gifts from the God of heaven to mankind which is possible because we are made in His image. Originally given as a means of expressing love, beauty, truth and worship, these talents and abilities can be expressed (when there is freedom to do so) by visible outward means such as through works of art in different mediums; works of literature through means of language that enables the expression of every impulse, thought, emotion or revelation extending from the simplest forms to the highest and most complex eloquence. Finally, in music we have been given the wonderful means of unequivocal expression on a grand scale that embraces every aspect of life; that is, from descending to the lowest emotional point of tragedy that the soul can experience to soaring upwards into and beyond celestial glories beyond description, and every sensation and feeling imaginable in between those two points. It is inarguable that music itself has the power to inspire, delight, embolden, and heal when composed and directed by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, evil forces of godless darkness likewise understand the power of music to depress, discourage, as well as produce fear, anger, rage, hatred and even bring about sickness and even death. Dr. Jack Wheaton wrote, "The sharp backbeat (soft/loud) of the drummer in rock music is the *anti-thesis* of the natural rhythm of the heart (loud/soft). The automatic nervous system will try to adapt (homeostasis) to its most immediate aural, visual, and physical environment. The reverse pattern of the natural heart rhythm can cause heart arrhythmia and other cardiac problems if prolonged, or if the person has a heart problem to begin with. This might explain the rash of young people dying of heart attacks at ages way below the normal for that type of physical degeneration."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Music... will help dissolve your perplexities and purify your character and sensibilities, and in time of care and sorrow, will keep a fountain of joy alive in you." Johann Sebastian Bach said, "Music is an agreeable harmony for the honor of God and the permissible delights of the soul." Martin Luther said, "My heart, which is so full to overflowing, has often been solaced and refreshed by music when sick and weary." Alex Doman said, "Music has real health benefits. It boosts dopamine, lowers cortisol and it makes us feel great. Your brain is better on music." And *Psalm 96:1* says, *"O sing unto the LORD a new*

song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth."

When it comes to the wonders of music, art and literature, we need to remember that God created eyes with which to behold His wonders, especially in His written Word; eyes to see beauty that inspires us to explore and express our own God-given desire to be creative, (which I believe is deep within the heart of every child). These three "pillars" are indeed gifts from our loving heavenly Father—gifts that enhance our lives through not only expressions of one's heart, mind and emotions, but also as a means of communication. Powerful expressions given forth in art, literature and music can move us to tears, stir up feelings within us we didn't know we had, or usher us into the presence of the Lord. What a shame that these beautiful gifts from God, gifts that are eternal in their invisible, heavenly "substance" because they can never be exhausted, depleted, fully explored or expressed, or used up, but in and of themselves are evidences of eternity itself, are so little considered, appreciated or thought about in our busy day and age where much of humanity is consumed with wicked personal causes and agendas fueled by lies, greed, hatred, rage, and defiance against God Himself and all that is pure, good, decent, upright, beautiful, and of heavenly origin.

There is no doubt that Satan knows all about these three heavenly blessings given to man for his pleasure, his good, and his mental and physical well-being and God's glory. No wonder he works so hard to pervert all that is holy, pure, true and good in all three areas since his goal is to cause people to hate God and worship him instead. As for the visible church, these three areas are especially targeted by Satan. Concerning Christian art, I have written about that subject in a previous article, and how sad it is to see its decline in our churches; as for literature, this ministry has "fought through the jungle of junk" that is passed off as so-called "Christian literature" for many years; and, when it comes to music it is both Satan's target and his weapon of choice to defile, profane, deceive, and destroy true worship in the beauty of holiness. After all, he knows all about precious things, and music is certainly one of them. *Ezekiel 28:13* says, *"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created."*

In *Genesis 4:21* we read, *"And his brother's name [was] Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ"* (the latter meaning "lovely instrument.") We really can't declare that he "invented" music because, as I tried to express above, music is an intangible, immaterial means of communicating through vocalization (audible) song, or through any of the numerable instruments that man has made. But the heart and soul of music itself, along with its countless mathematical equations and invisible influences originated with God Himself. This means that ancient man, having been created in the image of God as a three-fold being of body, soul and spirit sought for a way to express the very essence of himself, his heart desires, emotions, and thoughts. Every emotion known to man, as stated above, can be expressed in some way through music, either with or without lyrics. Music is a powerful medium of communication, and can be used for good or evil as early man discovered. We've all heard the saying, "Music is the language of the soul." And so, it is.

Even the animal kingdom responds to music. As many of you know, our Chihuahua, Tucker, (and sometimes Bell) loves to "sing" when I practice the piano. There are certain worship songs and hymns that he particularly likes. I'm sure if you have U-Tube or Facebook you've seen hilarious videos of dogs, and cats, trying to "make music" on keyboards, with accompaniment "doggie" singing. Horses love to prance in time to marching bands in parades, cows will travel clear across a pasture to listen to ballads, one man plays the piano to help keep a nervous elephant calm, and more than one person with a box full of active puppies knows that soft music will put them to sleep. Not so with rock 'n roll! I know of one man who installed a radio in his chicken coop, turned it on to a rock station so his chickens would lay better, but they hated it so much they managed to fly rather high to knock it down and bring peace once again to their domain.

Dr. Jack Wheaton wrote, "Loud rock music triggers the fight-or-flight response, initiates the first stages of hypnosis, and overcomes conscious resistance to becoming part of a group consciousness. Detoxing from rock music can be just as difficult as detoxing from cigarettes, alcohol, or so-called recreational drugs." David Wilkerson wrote in the *Trumpet,* 1986, "Satan will go to any extreme to pollute the worship directed to the Lord so that it will be rejected. In this way he succeeds in hindering worship in spirit and in truth. He simply adds another spirit and mixes in a lie, knowing God will reject it. God must, and always does, reject all worship that is not born of the Holy Spirit and that is not all of truth. And even if that music inspires the performers and listeners, it does not get beyond the ceiling—God won't touch it. He abhors it!"

The highest expression of music is music that, like rain from heaven which is received by the thirsty earth, likewise "washes" over our soul and lifts our spirit towards heaven on waves of ecstatic glory. All worship offered up to our glorious and holy God should come straight from the blood-bought hearts of sinners saved by grace who praise and worship in the Spirit. Such worship arises from a redeemed soul, and not from any part of the flesh, or unsanctified emotions. There is a difference between fleshly, hyper, carnal, and unsanctified "emotional worship" and selfless abandonment to God through the offering of highest praise and adoration in truth. I say "truth" because anything offered to God in the way of "praise and worship" that lacks Spirit and truth is a profane, vain and worthless offering. A simple test is to honestly ask yourself if jumping up and down or singing mind-numbing, vain, repetitious, hypnotic, "me-centered" popular music of today is acceptable before the throne of our Holy God.

We are living in a time where countless numbers of emotionally fueled, fad-chasing "Christians" have lost their moorings, bearings and brains because instead of seeking, knocking and asking for the real Jesus of the Holy Bible (Authorized Version) they have followed after their own undiscerned, undisciplined and unbalanced emotional responses to whatever "feels good." I'm not knocking emotions; in fact, I'm very emotional in my own God-given nature.

However, our personal emotions should never be the determining factor to reality, truth, or to when and how we worship God. We must not get the cart before the horse! We worship God based on His Word, according to Who He is, what His Word says, and in obedience to Him, because in Him we live, and move, and have our being. As our spirits are lifted up in reverent praise and worship in Spirit and in truth, we will be ushered into His divine presence and then, in that place of pure glory, light and power our hearts will naturally respond in the right way emotionally.

As Christians, our guidebook to acceptable worship before God is the Bible. Can you even begin to imagine four-thousand musicians praising God at the same time in a worship service? Consider this description of such an event in *1 Chronicles 23:5, "Moreover four thousand [were] porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith."* Just trying to imagine such a powerful time of worship brings me to tears. Then in *2 Chronicles 7:6* we read of this commanding scene, *"And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood."*

Dr. Jack Wheaton wrote, "The centerpiece of any worship service is God Himself. We do not attend worship services to be entertained, cajoled, celebrate fellowship, or to receive homilies 'about' the Bible. Our primary purpose for being there is to offer worship from our sin-stained hands and lips to a Holy God. Music's purpose in worship is to edify, unify, and drive out the evil forces that may be present by lifting up the name of our Saviour and Redeemer in song. The musicians are not entertainers or 'artists.' They are priests, assisting in the worship service dedicated to a holy, forgiving, loving God. After achieving the first goal—the primary lifting up of our sin-stained hands to a holy God who has allowed us to have eternal fellowship with Him through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross—the second goal is to hear the Word of God from a pure translation of the Bible. The proper attitude for a congregation is to stand when the Word of God is being read. Scripture reading should be no shorter than one chapter or psalm. A series of short scriptures taken out of contexts is always dangerous. When that happens, any message can be twisted and supported from the Bible."

Keep in mind that Jesus warned us, *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" John 10:10,* and there is ample evidence of this the world over. Satan works to snuff out the light of Christ that is in the world through His saints, and any God-given means by which that light can shine; that is, through the creativity of dedicated art, literature and music which is in the <u>*right spirit*</u>, and committed to God for His glory and is a means of ministry and worship. Such brings joy, happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment to us. But, in the midst of it all, we must always discern the spirit behind everything, and that includes art, literature and music for Satan is a master at seduction, deception and delusion. Since music has the power to open us up mentally, spiritually and emotionally, we do need to guard our hearts against "the beautiful side of evil" that accompanies hauntingly beautiful and seductive music as well as that which expresses the most primitive beats and rhythms of purely pagan music. Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of discernment!

As we stand in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation and witness everything crumbling around us that is morally upright, decent, true, and just, it becomes increasingly clear that Satan is hastening to his prophesied end. His destructive wiles, through lies, slander ,and delusion have corrupted and corroded the underpinnings of not only every tongue, tribe, and nation, but of much of the institutional church as well because she has let down her guard, tossed aside her commission, rejected sound doctrine, failed to develop a love for the truth, and embraced the world. Thus, the "elephant" in the music arena has grown so out of proportion to what true worship is, and is so basically "politically correct" and accepted by those who have rejected "the old paths," that the thief has succeeded in destroying the hearts and souls of those who have tasted the poison of perverted, pagan, profane music and become literally addicted to it. Consider this, *"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it" Jeremiah 6:16-19.*

Dr. Jack Wheaton wrote, "Rock music has always been associated with the carnal and demonic (sex, drugs and rock 'n roll). It has no legitimate place in Christian life and ministry. Rhythm is not only the most powerful element in music, it is the most dangerous. Underestimating the power of certain rhythms to override your conscious controls is just as naïve as believing you can drink a lot of liquor without feeling its effects. Properly and carefully used rhythm can inspire, elevate, relax, activate, and unify the listener. On the other hand, rhythm can be the catalyst that breaks down our cultural and religious barriers and takes us back to the primitive times, dangerous times. . . . music, and in particular loud, repetitive, and syncopated rhythms used in much of our contemporary rock/pop music, can be a legal substitute for a dangerous mind-altering drug. More care needs to be taken to protect our society from the spiritual, cultural, and moral degeneration found in contemporary music. Yes, there is a Pied Piper (the legend of Hamlin) that can lead our children out of the village and into darkness, but he doesn't play flute, he plays drums."

A.W. Tozer summed it up well when he said, "Worship is no longer worship when it reflects the culture around us more than the Christ within us." Kenneth D. Butcher wrote, "The more we give our lips to singing unreality the greater the danger of falling into deception. After we have sung repetitions of songs which boast of our love and devotion as God's triumphant people, we may start to think

that all is well with us and the church when it is not and just sometimes, we may cross the line completely and slip into singing our own praises. Have you ever thought about what God might really think about some of the contemporary 'worship'? Remember Cain brought an offering to God which was not accepted. In many churches hymns and songs of serious thankfulness and appreciation of Jesus and His sufferings and His glory have become rare. But true worship is inspired by lyrics that address the Lord and thank Him for His grace, that speak of our appreciation for the Cross, that remind us of His faithfulness, that magnify Him and imprint truth upon our minds while engaging our hearts with the attractiveness of Jesus."

In conclusion, even though Satan has made great strides to *"kill, steal and destroy"* God's truth, life and beauty in art, literature and music in our culture, government institutions, educational systems, and traditional churches, nevertheless let us, who do know our God, be strong and do exploits. (*Daniel 11:32*.) May we declare with missionary William Carey (1761-1834), "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." Then as we continue in faith and obedience to obey *Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* let us lay aside our pride and humbly remember this: God entered in with us—true worship allows us to enter in with Him. †

A STATE OF REBELLION?
By Dr. Jack Wheaton

Rock music—Christian or non-Christian is the music of rebellion. Samuel warned King Saul that God saw rebellion in the same light as he saw idolatry: *1 Samuel 15:22, 23.* Those churches that hope to boost their attendance and membership by introducing pagan music into the sanctuary are in a state of rebellion. They have deliberately ignored scriptural warnings, two thousand years of tradition, the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, and just plain common sense. Worldly music does not belong in worship. Changing the words means nothing; in fact, it is an even greater sin before a holy and righteous God, for you have connected the sacred with the profane, an unequally-yoked union that will not produce good fruit.

CHRISTIAN ROCK EVANGELISM?
By Dr. Jack Wheaton

Most of the Christian rock groups rationalize their performances as evangelical outreaches. First of all, in most instances, the words are barely intelligible because of the volume and distortion. People do not sing in rock music; they shout, they scream, they growl, they moan. Secondly, the costumes, the arrogant stage presence, all are imitations of secular rock groups. Third, the plan of salvation is never made clear, people are not made aware of their sinful nature, and there is seldom if ever an altar call. Fourth, the groups themselves are more concerned about making it in the secular Christian rock music field than witnessing. Fifth, in most instances the lives of the individual performers leave a lot to be desired as role models for a newly redeemed Christian.

The Holy Spirit, prayer, a commitment to scriptural accuracy and presentation, evangelism, and a strong commitment to missionary outreach and children's ministries are what build a healthy church. The early Christian church grew rapidly during times of great persecution because the early church relied on the Holy Spirit to guide and build their church. All nonscriptural teachings were disallowed and any music that was derived from common pagan worship practices was forbidden."

QUOTES FROM THE GREAT COMPOSERS

"Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with His gracious presence." - Johann S. Bach

"It pleased the Almighty, to whose great Holy Will I submit myself with Christian submission." - George F. Handel, composer of *Messiah*." (One writer stated that *Messiah's* music and message 'has probably done more to convince thousands of mankind that there is a God about us than all the theological works ever written.'")

"Since God has given me a cheerful heart, He will forgive me for serving Him cheerfully." Franz Joseph Haydn

"God is ever before my eyes. I realize His omnipotence and I fear His anger; but I also recognize His love, His compassion, and His tenderness towards His creatures." - W. Mozart

QUOTES FROM GREAT COMPOSERS (Continued)

"In whatsoever manner it be, let me turn to Thee and become fruitful in good works." - Beethoven

"It sometimes seems to me as if I did not belong to this world at all." - Franz Peter Schubert

"Pray to God that He may create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us." - F. Mendelssohn

"Oh, how good God is!" - Chopin

"Through Christ alone, through resigned suffering in God, salvation and rescue come to us." - Liszt

"Besides Goodness and Truth, there was Beauty, which proceeded from the other two as the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son." - Charles Gounod

"Don't try to do a great deal, but rather seek to do well." - C. Franck

"Sometime I will have to give an account of myself. How should the Father in Heaven judge me if I followed others and not Him?" - A. Bruckner

"Straightaway the ideas flow in upon me, directly from God, and not only do I see distinct themes in my mind's eye, but they are clothed in the right forms, harmonies and orchestration….'The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine.' No atheist has ever been or ever will be a great composer." - Johannes Brahms

"I study with the birds, flowers, God and myself." - Antonin Dvorak

"The Spirit of God is not something less than God, it is God." - Elgar

"Most of the forward movements of life in general . . . Have been the work of essentially religious-minded men." - Charles Ives

"I'm a composer because I love music and a Christian because I believe….The difficulty for unbelievers is to acknowledge that Christ is God. We must direct our gaze towards the life hereafter and try to forget about this life." - Olivier Messiaen. "'Freedom' has "nothing to do with fantasy, disorder, revolt or indifference. It is a constructive freedom, which is arrived at through self-control, respect for others, a sense of wonder of that which is created, meditation on the mystery and the search for the Truth. This wonderful freedom is like a foretaste of the freedom of Heaven. Christ promised it when he said: 'If you continue in my word, then...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'"

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: "*Can you please explain why Jesus chose to heal the man at the pool of Bethseda (John 5:1-15) and not heal the other people? Thank you."*

A: There are some important facts that we must note about this incident. The first one is dealt with in *Romans 9:14-18, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."* Clearly, the Lord can and will show mercy to whom He will without explanation, but it is also clear that He has good reason or purpose for it that may not be obvious to others.

The second aspect of this incident is that the man was among a multitude waiting for an angel to stir the water, believing that the first one to step into it would be healed. This tells us three different things about this group: 1) they were **not** looking to God for their healing, 2) they were putting confidence in an experience and not in the One who is behind all miracles, and 3) Jesus the great healer was passing among them, but none of them were looking for Him or prepared to recognize Him. Keep in mind, those who were healed by Jesus were either seeking Jesus or crying out to Him because they knew who He was.

This brings us to the third aspect and that it was Jesus who searched out this man. This man had his infirmity 38 years, which no doubt Jesus knew. One has to wonder if every year at that time this man sat at the pool, waiting and hoping that he might be the first one in into the pool so he could be healed, and each year his hope was dashed into disillusionment.

Jesus would know this man's history and his struggles. He approached him and asked him if he wanted to be made whole. However, the man's answer revealed that he was still looking for the experience of healing and not for the One who could heal him. He admitted that he could not make it into the pool because he had trouble physically getting into it before others. It was then that Jesus instructed the man to, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

The man who sat among the masses was healed, but you have to wonder how many sitting in the crowd even noticed because they were still looking for the miracle, the supernatural experience, rather than the Great Physician. We must ask this very question in relationship to those who sit in the churches. How many are looking for some type of experience instead of Jesus, and as a result He is passing among the so-called "masses" without anyone realizing it because sadly, they are not looking for Him and would not recognize Him if they encountered Him?

Jesus might have had some concern that the healing of this man might cause others to chase after Him if they realized what had just occurred for we are told, "*Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place*."

This man took up his bed and walked away, but was there any rejoicing? Did he even bother to thank Jesus for healing him? I would think it would be such a joyful occasion for him that nothing could keep him quiet about what happened.

His healing took place on the Sabbath which serves as a another important point. Here enters the self-righteous and what were they more concerned with—not the miracle that happened but that the man was carrying his bed on the Sabbath. When confronted, the man told them the reason for his activity was because he had been healed. When asked who healed him, the man had no idea to the man's identity even though Jesus had healed him. Clearly, he was not interested in who Jesus was.

Jesus came to this man afterwards and must have introduced Himself to him, but he gave him an important warning, "*Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*." To me this is an important key. When God does something it often becomes a test to the recipient or to those around him as to how they will respond to it.

Jesus does not pinpoint an actual sin, but I think we can be assured of one of this man's sins being that of unbelief. He was not looking to God, seeking God, and trusting God with his plight. And, when he was healed there was no sign of thankfulness on his part that something unique had happened to him. He simply went his way without any regard to the grace that he had just encountered and experienced.

The final insight into this man's character came when he sought out the religious people to tell them who healed him. The question is why did he do that? In all honestly it appeared as if it was a type of betrayal. This man did not tell the religious people the first time because he did not know who healed him; therefore, he could leave them in ignorance. The reason I say this is because I am sure he had to suspect that their reason for knowing who was behind his healing was not to pat Jesus on the back. They wanted to cause trouble for Jesus and when they located him, Jesus gave His reason for healing the man, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And, what was the response of the religious people, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

I believe the man healed at Bethesda serves as a good example to us. We may want something supernatural to happen, but where are we looking to and how will we respond if it happens? We all have that moral deviation in us that tends to believe we deserve such consideration and it does not matter where it comes from, but it does. Satan can heal as well, and we need to make sure we are looking to God, while maintaining the right spirit in which we can receive something if it does happen and prepared to use such opportunity to bring glory to the Lord. †

ANDREW MURRAY QUOTES

"The highest glory of the creature is in being only a vessel, to receive and enjoy and show forth the glory of God. It can do this only as it is willing to be nothing in itself, that God may be all. Water always fills first the lowest places. The lower, the emptier a man lies before God, the speedier and the fuller will be the inflow of the diving glory."

"Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you."