

"Is Any Merry? Let Him Sing."

By: Bill Hall

God, in His infinite wisdom and foresight, provided a natural response for every mood and condition that man faces. For times of affliction, there is prayer. For times of sickness and guilt, there is the summoning of good men (elders) who can assist. For times of cheerfulness and joy, there is singing. "Is any merry? let him sing" (**James 5:13**).

The natural response for the godly man, however, will not be just to sing "any old song," but to sing psalms and praise. The godly man lives with an awareness of God. In his cheerful moments he sees God as the source of his joy and happiness.

Where could he find a better avenue for expressing his joy and gratitude than in the words and melody of:

"My Jesus I love Thee, I know thou art mine; For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;

My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou: If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now." -W. R. Featherston

or in the words:

"He leadeth me! O blessed thought! O words with heavenly comfort fraught! What-e'er I do, where-e'er I be, Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me." —Joseph H. Gillmore

Indeed, one indication of the depth of a man's spirituality and godliness is the songs which he naturally sings when he is merry.

A happy church is a singing church. The happy church does not view the singing portion of its worship as a dull, emotionless requirement, but as a powerful expression of its love and praise and joy. The happy church does not allow its singing time to be cut short so the preacher can have more time. Rather, in its singing it builds enthusiasm and emotion that enhances every other part of its worship.

Happy homes often express their happiness through singing psalms. This can be done in a more formal way while sitting around a table with song books in hand, or in less formal ways, while riding in the car or working around the house. We once heard a teenage girl where we were visiting request that we sing their "family's theme song" —no, not "Tennessee Waltz" or "Mares Eat Oats," but L. O. Sanderson's lovely hymn, "The Lord Has Been Mindful of Me." Her request resulted in joyful praise from a joyful family.

Happy Christians find singing as a natural way of expressing their joy when they get together. We are not suggesting that every social should be built around singing, but having a group in for singing can make for a good evening. It is an activity in which Christians of varied backgrounds and interests can all participate, leaving no misfits.



But some are hesitant to have a group in to sing. They are fearful that the jovial surroundings are not sufficiently conducive to true worship. In some cases, their fears are well founded. Spiritual songs containing God's name and divine truth should be sung with reverence and respect. We have been in groups where the challenge of the music — getting the parts to come in at just the right moment and timing the half-beats — was obviously the predominant concern, and where every song ended with hilarious laughter. Such casual use of that which is spiritual cannot be right. At the same time, a cheerful atmosphere that makes it easy to laugh does not automatically render worship and praise impossible; in fact, it is under these very conditions that the Holy Spirit says, "Let him sing psalms." Somewhere, then, between that thoughtless joviality that makes "praise" irreverent and that somber, death-like atmosphere that makes "praise" virtually impossible is a happy, merry environment that makes true praise so easy and natural. It is this environment that we try to establish when we invite a group in to sing.

Some of the songs of the world have aesthetic and even moral value, but many of them are pure filth. The Christian must be cautious. He can no more please God in singing filth than he can in speaking filth. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (**Matthew 12:37**). We see no wrong in a person's singing the songs of the world that are morally pure, but better still: as Moses and the children of Israel sang praises after their deliverance from Egypt (**Exodus 15**); and as David would "give thanks unto the Lord, and sing praises unto Thy name, O most High" (**Psalms 92:1**); and as the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" around God's throne sing "Worthy is the Lamb" (**Revelation 5:11-12**); so today, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."