

# The August CFAMC Devotional Page

So last month I left us with, "Psalm 22:3 is FOR REAL, y'all!" Just to refresh our memories, here's the verse:

**Psalm 22:3 -- But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.**

I had pointed out that we have occasion to give God a place to have a "vacation," that is, to manifest Himself in a special way among us (or even to one of us, alone) when we begin praising and worshipping Him, because praise and worship makes God feel at home with us, just as He is at home where He is worshipped and praised the most -- in Heaven. So, whenever we praise and worship our Lord, we create a heavenly atmosphere in which He enjoys being and sharing Himself with us.

Now that was last month's page, to which Chuck Beck posed the question:

“Methinks there is a lesson, too, with respect to the music we compose and our purpose as composers for Christ. No?”

Good question, Chuck. I had to think about that all month long. I think I have an answer for us. Go get those thinking caps and put 'em back on, folks...

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Assuming that all God's people have the privilege of making God feel at home through their worship and praise, what purpose would there be for all these musicians God has chosen and scattered down through human history? What's so special about music, anyway, in God's economy?

*Answer: Music has a multiplying, magnifying effect on any human expression it is applied to. Therefore, God's musicians have the tremendous privilege of multiplying and magnifying His praise and worship.*

Now if THAT doesn't make us look twice at and pray three times about what we choose to play, sing, arrange, and compose as Christian musicians, nothing will. If we work with music of the highest quality and most God-honoring content (presuming the piece has words) available, consider the possibilities -- we can assist a whole group, a whole ensemble, a whole choir, a whole church, a whole auditorium full of people in offering praise and worship to God. In other words, our worship and praise to God in selecting, preparing, and making such music ends up being multiplied out many, many times -- sometimes in ways that transcend time and space!

I'll give you two examples. How many of us know this song?

**"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see."**

John Newton has been in Heaven for centuries. And yet, his praise of God for His grace is still multiplying over the centuries and in many different languages and cultures, every time some Christian sings or plays or teaches it to a children's group or choir or arranges it instrumentally for solo players or ensembles. Countless people, therefore, are in the "multiplier effect" of Newton's praise.

Here's another example. How many of us know this song?

### **Psalm 23**

1. The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.
3. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.
5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now, beyond the countless Old Testament Jewish saints that loved their great king David's most

famous song of praise, and beside all the countless Christians up to the present day that love this psalm, one has to consider a few more things. How many songs have been written based on this psalm -- and how many people have been involved in writing, arranging, playing, singing, teaching, recording, and otherwise passing on those? And, since we know the Word of God lasts FOREVER, how much longer is Psalm 23 going to be multiplying out God's praise -- and to how many uncountable myriads of human beings and spirit beings, all down through eternity?

Let me go from King David back to some other composers -- us! I don't think we always realize how God has blessed us with the gift of creating music around His praise -- or, to go further, I don't think we realize how tremendous a blessing it is that He sings His praise through us to others, so that we and they might return it to Him. I kid you not when I speak of God singing! God does sing over His own, and as I was recently reminded, there's Scripture to back that up!

**Zephaniah 3:17** -- The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing.

That, in context, is a description of what will occur for the nation of Israel when God restores it in holiness and perfect fellowship with Him. But if you consider that verse in light of the reconciliation God has accomplished for us in Christ, one might see that the way has been cleared for Him to sing over us as well -- for He has saved us, and the rest would seem to follow naturally!

I know in my own case that there have been songs that have arrived "whole" to me -- one night in 2010 after I had spent the day sick in bed, with only the Lord for (excellent) company, I heard, in E flat, in soprano-alto-tenor harmony, with every single chord change in place, this:

**Lord, You are so good, so good, all the time!  
Oh yes! So good, so good, all the time!**

**Lord, You have freed me from all of my sin,  
Given me joy and peace within,  
Put my feet safe on the heavenly way,  
Walked with me there both night and day!  
All of my needs You so richly provide,  
From Your abundant resources on high!  
Whether or not I enjoy this world's wealth,  
I'm rich, for You have given me Yourself!**

I was up for much of the night, weeping, completely overwhelmed by the experience I was having quite by myself ... but can you imagine, when I came to myself in the morning, my feelings when I realized that one of the choirs at El Bethel could sing it (albeit in D flat), and that I would have the privilege of sharing it with the choir and hence with my whole church? Can you imagine my feelings this year, upon realizing I have been invited to work with a choir next year that can sing that song in the original E flat ... a choir that numbers close to a hundred, will be presenting to hundreds, and will be reaching, through recordings and YouTube, THOUSANDS?

Some of you reading this will be God's mouthpieces through which He will sing, and will multiply and magnify His praise so that it may be amplified by uncountable millions, across time and space. But it isn't about the numbers... it should be enough for us to know God inhabits the praise of His people, whether there are a lot of people or just a few, to get back to Psalm 22:3 where this all started. We Christian composers and musicians have the awesome privilege of helping God's people as a whole to create an atmosphere of praise and worship, an atmosphere reminiscent of Heaven, an atmosphere in which God feels at home and delights to manifest His presence and power in a special way. Let us go about our work with that in mind, praising Him for the grace, love, and mercy (because, after all, SINNERS don't merit any blessing, and yet He saved us and blessed us anyway), He shows us in allowing us to make music for Him!