

THE POWER OF A SONG

By Jerry Bennett



Many things have influenced our society through the centuries, but few things have affected us more than the songs we sing. We have had heroes who have done great things and demonstrated acts of bravery during difficult times. We have also had heroes who have not been ashamed to speak out for truth and suffer persecution for the gospel. Many of them did that through the songs that they wrote and sang.

Known for signing the *Emancipation Proclamation* to free African people from slavery in America, Abraham Lincoln is one of the great heroes of American history. But I have another hero named John Newton. Newton penned a powerful song during the era of slavery. That song has lived and affected us for over two centuries. The song is none other than, "*Amazing Grace*." John Newton, when he was saved, was remorseful because of the part that he had played in slave trade years before. He was amazed at the saving grace of God. The idea that God would forgive him for such dastardly deeds was just too wonderful for him.

As a singer/songwriter I want to be mindful of what comes from my pen and lips. The farther I go along in life the more aware I have become of the Scriptures. Sad to say many of our gospel songs today are not in line with the word of God. I have been in congregations which worshiped with uplifted hands, with tears of emotion streaming down their faces because of the anointing and power of a song. On the other hand, I see seeds being planted in our gospel songs that are often not Scriptural. That leads to confusion and misconceptions among people about our faith. My prayer is "Lord, give to us song writers who are more learned in Biblical truths so that they can write with more truth and conviction."

It grieves me when I find a best-loved hymn promoting a thought that is more "tradition" than "Scripture." Error in a popular gospel song only inspires more error to be written by other gospel song writers. Songs written without solid biblical base and foundation may seem to inspire us, but actually forward untruths. Surely that is not the will of God for his people. Surely that does not glorify God.

We have seen how music, especially in our time, is used by the enemy. Melody and song are gifts of God – given to humanity for praise and worship. But the world has turned those gifts into influences for evil. We can't overlook how powerful rock, acid rock, and rap music has become in promoting inappropriate sex, drugs and violence.

Music is a powerful tool. An anointed gospel song has the power to bless, heal, encourage, and strengthen. Perhaps millions of Christians out there can testify to having been won to the Lord through an inspired gospel song. Many of us were saved in a church atmosphere of worship and anointed singing and preaching. However, our songs must be firmly Scriptural because people receive a lot of what they believe through our songs. There is something about a melody that can carry a thought into a person's mind and cause it to lodge there. We as gospel songwriters must be sure that what we cause to lodge in people's minds really is the truth.

Let me particularly say to my fellow gospel music songwriters - let's not mislead others about Christ and his origin. We should be making a separation between God and his Son in our worship. The Scriptures do and so should we. God deserves the highest praise. We should always honor Christ Jesus because he gave his life to bring us to God. I love the songs about *Calvary* and the *Cross*, they are inspiring and necessary but I would also love to hear more songs written about our Father. Songs like "*How Great Thou Art*" and "*How Big Is God.*"

We must remember that Jesus never claimed to be God anywhere in Scriptures. That idea has been taught from pulpits for centuries not because of Scripture, but because of religious tradition. Even when Jesus was accused of making himself God by his critics, He corrected them and said, "*I am the SON of God.*" Jesus was without sin, and that means that he never lied. If he was God then why would he withhold that "truth" and leave the world to believe otherwise? When John baptized him, a voice came from heaven and said, "*This is my SON in whom I am well pleased.*" If Jesus was actually God, then who spoke those words from heaven?

Let's empower our churches with songs that are speaking more truth. Sometimes I shake my head in disbelief at the new praise and worship songs of today that make Jesus and God sound like they are one and the same. I fear that we may be committing idolatry when we give the Son the praise that belongs to our Father. The theology and belief that gives Jesus the Father's glory started some 150 years after Jesus was taken up into heaven. It began after the Bible was written. Nowhere in the Old Testament do you find a teaching that Jesus is God. At the time Christ walked this earth it was blasphemy to say that he was God. Yet we sometimes sing it and proclaim it as though it is truth!

The Scripture teaches us that God is a jealous God and he will have no other god's before him. When we say or sing that Jesus is God it goes against what God's word teaches. We should not fail to give honor to Christ for the price he paid for our salvation. Christ deserves the praise we give, but we should never confuse that praise with the worship that God alone should receive. God has been patient and tolerant - but when the truth is revealed to us we should not hold our peace. I think that we as gospel songwriters and singers have a responsibility toward God and to people. We must be careful to make sure that what we write and sing is accurate according to the Scriptures. Let's give God the best praise, and let's do it with wonderful songs of truth!