

**Intro:**

Is music evil?

What do I mean by that question? I am approaching this discussion from the standpoint of a Bible believing preacher, not as a musician. (Just in case you were wondering!)

The question is a question of philosophy. Today in the church there are two competing views on this question.

- One philosophy says music is amoral — it has no moral component, no moral quality. Music they say is neutral thing.
- Another philosophy says music is moral — some music is morally good, other music is morally evil.

The view that music is neutral is often illustrated by demonstration: have pianist play a note – question: is there anything moral or immoral about that note?

Then a chord is played: have pianist play a chord – question: is there anything moral or immoral about that chord?

Then the speaker triumphantly turns to the audience and says, “See? Music is notes and chords. Since they are neutral, music is neutral.”

*Something is seriously wrong with this kind of logic.* We will get to that in a moment.

As I said in my preview in last week’s bulletin, if music is neutral, we should have no argument about music in the church. Any music will do, depending on the tastes or preferences of the people in the church.

If music is neutral, then it should be selected by democratic principles – with tolerance for individual tastes. Anything should be legitimate for use in the church, if this is true.

It would be excellent if God had given us direct, clear revelation in the Bible to settle the question. The fact is, He did not give us this kind of information.

Since we do not have direct revelation, ***we must decide if the revelation we have applies to the question at all.*** If it does not, then we should simply conclude that music is a matter only of taste and preference and no style should be banned and no style exalted as ‘proper’ or ‘right’ for Christians to use.

Our text: Matthew 15.10-20. We will read from verse 1 in order to get the context.

## I. The source of moral evil in mankind: the human heart

### A. The principle succinctly stated (10)

#### 1. No external things actually defile anyone

The Jews misunderstood the OT law. The laws of cleanness and uncleanness were meant to teach a principle of corruption, not imply actual moral and spiritual corruption.

Touching a dead body does not actually make you unclean before God (you already are unclean!)

Eating unclean things (by not washing) does not make you unclean before God.

#### 2. Only internal nature defiles anyone

The principle as stated here by the Lord is unclear so the disciples demand an explanation.

### B. The principle clearly explained (16-20)

#### 1. The digestive system keeps your physical body alive: it is entirely a naturally created process, no spiritual dimension whatsoever (16-17)

Notice that the Lord mildly rebukes them for their ignorance.

#### 2. The heart is the source of evil – this defiles the individual and can defile those around him (18)

#### 3. Products of the evil heart: (19)

- a. Evil thoughts
- b. Murder
- c. Adultery
- d. Sexual immorality (fornication)
- e. Theft
- f. False witness
- g. Slander
- h. etc. This list is not exhaustive

No one denies that these are evil things. Where do they come from? From inside a man.

### C. The theology of human corruption

#### 1. Innocent of sin: man as originally created (Gen 1.26-27)

##### a. Created in the image of God: the principle of supreme beauty

1) Capable of creativity

2) Appreciation for intrinsic goodness and beauty

##### b. Created in the image of God: the principle of interpersonal fellowship “us ... our, “man ... male & female”

1) Community / fellowship

2) Communication (including artistic communication)

The created man is created whole – man in his stage of innocence is part of what God saw in His creation that is “good”.

All of this changed (but was not destroyed) by sin.

#### 2. Imputed sin: you and I are guilty of Adam’s sin by imputation (Rm 5.12-14)

##### a. You sinned in Adam

##### b. You are under a death sentence as a result

Many people do not like this doctrine, but it is so. The Bible declares it — we must accept it.

However, this fact of human corruption is not the source of the principle we are discussing.

#### 3. Inherited sin: you and I have inherited a sin nature from Adam through our parents

##### a. This principle exists even in the man who is born again and desires in his spirit to do what is right (Rm 7.21-23)

##### b. The desires of the flesh are opposed to the Spirit, leading you away from walking in the Spirit (Gal 5.17)

##### c. This has been the state of man since the beginning (Gen 6.5, 8.21)

##### d. The fact that moral corruption exists at all proves that the source is morally corrupt (Job 14.4)

##### e. Job acknowledges that it is impossible for man, in himself, to be morally pure (Job 15.14)

- f. David acknowledges that this condition is passed from parents to children (Ps 51.5)

So we have spent this time talking about man's nature and have demonstrated that man is internally, spiritually corrupt.

So far we have not addressed music. What does this have to do with music?

**Proposition:** The moral nature of man is such that it is capable of good and evil: the expressions of human hearts are not neutral. Music is one such form of expression from the human heart.

## II. The expression of man's heart as seen in man's art (Generally)

### A. Conformity to the standard of intrinsic beauty

1. The standard of beauty is God himself
2. Man's art is capable of approaching this standard

### B. Corruption from the standard of intrinsic beauty

1. Every expression of man, if not controlled by the standard (God) tends toward a revelation of the corruption in the human heart

III: Something as simple as a house and yard can reveal the corruption of a man's heart.

- a. An orderly house and yard can reflect the image of God in man
- b. A disorderly house and yard that becomes a nuisance to one's neighbours reflects the corruption of a man's heart

However! A pristine perfection in house and yard can reflect the pride and self-centeredness of the human heart, even though it's appearance conforms to the image of God

2. Every form of man's art can be used to express the image of God or ever-present corruption
  - a. Literature
    - 1) Contrasting levels
      - a) Great classics that endure the test of time
      - b) Cheap, tawdry emptiness that lasts a moment

c) Base, pornographic, vulgarity that expresses the foulest aspects of human corruption

2) Combinations of quality

a) Vulgarity can be presented crassly or with a literary 'quality'

b) No amount of quality of style can redeem vulgarity — the vulgar is present in some classic literature

There are some pieces of literature considered classics that no Christian should ever read.

Why? Mt 15.20: "These are the things which defile a man"

b. Painting

1) Majestic representations of true beauty (expression of the image of God)

2) On the other hand: vile pornographic imagery also exists

Every expression of the heart of man always reveals his corruption in one way or another.

c. Sculpture: ditto

d. Movies: ditto, ditto

1) Movies are particularly powerful expressions – move the core of your being

2) Special discernment is required

3) Most of the so-called 'good' movies express in some ways a culture that is anti-God and anti-Christ

What to do?

Some of you ought to decide not to watch any movies at all, at least until you develop some discernment in this area.

The point that I want you to see here is that artistic expression in every form can be strikingly beautiful, or strikingly corrupt.

**Proposition:** The moral nature of man is such that it is capable of good and evil: the expressions of human hearts are not neutral. Music is one such form of expression from the human heart.

### III. The expression of man's heart as seen in man's music (Specifically)

A. Earlier, we considered the illustration of notes and chords

1. Notes and chords have no moral quality
2. Notes and chords are not music
3. Notes and chords are just sounds

Music is the creative use of "wordless" sound to communicate something

B. All music has some effect

1. It can move your body
2. It can motivate or de-motivate behaviour

Muzak, studies on buying and selling and music appropriate to each

3. It can set a mood

David soothed the troubled heart of King Saul by playing his harp.

4. It can enhance memory

Examples:

- What memory does this bring back: "It's the real thing..." (Thirty years ago... the Coca Cola jingle)
- Who can quote Psalm 19.7-11 for me?

5. Most importantly, music can affect your spirit

Mt 15.20: "These are the things which defile a man"

- a. Some music can make you unclean before God
- b. Some music will separate you from God

C. Some music is evil, a product of the corruption of the human heart

1. Rock musicians are often quoted regarding the nature of their music

Rock and roll is 99% sex.<sup>1</sup>

Everybody takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with sex.<sup>2</sup>

Sex, drugs, rebellion ...

a. Some say this is just culture, if you use a rock style for good, you can make it good

b. Music is not neutral:

1) If you play a Souza march, little children will start marching

Onward Christian Soldiers

2) If you play a Strauss waltz, people will tend to sway with the music

The music of Souza and Strauss was written in a culture far removed from ours — but their messages remain.

2. There is some corruption in other forms of music as well

a. Some more than others

1) Jazz

2) Country and western

3) Various other forms

b. Even classical music can contain elements of corruption (though it might be harder to see)

Rachmaninoff: frequent use of the Mass of the Dead in his music.

Tchaikovsky's homosexuality

Strauss' libertine lifestyle — waltzes

3. Christian music should avoid contamination by the corruption of the heart *as much as possible*

a. Some will argue that the music is OK if the words are OK

<sup>1</sup> John Oates, interview in *Circus*, January 31, 1976, quoted in Fisher, *The Battle for Christian Music*, p. 62

<sup>2</sup> Chris Stein, interview in *People*, May 21, 1979, quoted in Fisher, *The Battle for Christian Music*, p. 62

b. Words alone are not music

How many of you have any recordings of poetry readings, especially with no musical accompaniment? A *capella* doesn't count!

c. Every aspect of Christian music should strive to display the image of God as much as possible

4. CCM (as a general category) is an indulgence in the basest form of music to satisfy the lusts of the heart rather than the glory of God.

a. Rebellion against 'the tradition of the fathers' — the standard of the image of God

b. Inappropriate elevation of passion in worship

Accompanying sexual scandals in churches

Divorce rate in the church equal or higher than the rate in the world

c. Seen in the fruit of the ministry

Are Christians in general more holy, spiritually minded, etc. as a result of the music sweeping the church?

Are you more holy, spiritually minded, etc. as a result of the music you feed your soul upon?

- Are you angry or at peace?
- Are you jealous or living in joy?
- Are you desiring the world's pleasures or are you desiring God?

Are you more holy as the result of other cultural intake?

- Movies
- Books
- Internet, etc.

Music is only the tip of the iceberg

## Conclusion:

**Proposition:** The moral nature of man is such that it is capable of good and evil: the expressions of human hearts are not neutral. Music is one such form of expression from the human heart.

Read Mt 15.18-20

Some music is out and out evil.

Some is more or less evil.

We must be vigilant — decisive — determined to live holy lives before God with our music.