

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 40, No.12, March 25, 2014 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter** is a weekly Bible Study, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."**

WHAT ABOUT HAND CLAPPING/APPLAUSE IN A WORSHIP SERVICE?

QUESTION: In the scope of all the serious matters in the world and in our lives today— why give a flip about whether or not to have hand clapping/applause in a worship service? RESPONSE: BECAUSE THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD MATTERS SUPREME!

In Christian worship, God is the focus and not man. We gather as a church **to prostrate** ourselves before God in submission to His Word, **to offer unto Him** honor, praise, adoration; and the first fruit, tithes, offerings, and **to recognize and rejoice in** God's glory, greatness, power, victory, majesty and rule! True worship is all about what God receives, rather than about what we get! True worship is not an issue of our likes, preferences, imaginations, and/or creativity.

AS to Hand Clapping/Applause— the historic place for such is the theater, the sports arena, the social gathering, political speeches, and etc. Applause during a Christian Worship Service tends to **shift the focus** from the vertical to the horizontal. It spotlights human talent/performance while making God and His truth secondary. Much that goes on today in the way of worship services is about pleasing/impressing folks so that they will come back— therefore, it has to be FUN or entertaining! The music may be contemporary, southern gospel, or more historic classical and the preaching must be brief and have humor— but regardless, the KEY issue is our ENJOYMENT.

In contrast, the Word of God models worship services which are focused on the preaching of the Word of God, bringing conviction and repentance of sin; and then OVERFLOWING in praise and worship. Such worship services bring worshippers into fresh encounters with Almighty God, sending them/us forth in AWE of God and in glad obedience to God. AND YES, an overflow result is that we are built up, edified in the faith!

As to Hand Clapping/Applause, this practice often picks winners and losers. One brother stated, "At a college I attended, an 'applause meter' was used to select the prize winners in amateur-hour-type programs. We clapped with all our might in an effort to drive the indicator up for our favorite competitor. In a similar fashion, congregations are now VOTING with applause for their favorite performances at church!" This is all very sad, as the purpose in worship services is to bring offerings of praise and worship **exclusively** to God— not to PRAISE TALENT; nor to entice or stroke egos.

INDEED, it is a tragic fact that a number of talented young people who WON THE APPLAUSE and PRAISE of congregations became addicted to the RUSH that applause gives. NOW THEY themselves are WORSHIPPED as rock, rap, country, and/or 'Christian' musicians. Likewise, a growing number of pastors are 'worshipped' similar to rock stars.

Judith Martin once wrote, "Having forgotten church manners, people are substituting those [manners] that would be proper for a performance... Hard as it may be to imagine, musicians in church are suppose to play or sing for the glory of God, not for the pleasure of the congregation." In response to the protest that Psalm 47:1, authorizes clapping, Judith Martin (Famous as Miss Manners) continues and proves herself to be a better theologian than many evangelical pastors and worship leaders, when she simply asks, "Where is the Biblical reference by which God commands applause to honor musicians...?"

Moreover, she notes that there is a clear distinction between the clapping of hands as an EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS AWE and JOY IN GOD in contrast to the clapping of hands to denote approval and appreciation for the achievements of a performer. She is right. Psalm 47:1 is all about God. Such is not the case with most hand clapping/applause in worship services today.

NOTE: Several years back, (when I first sent out an article on this subject), I received this objection: "Scripture is only one source about this expression of worship. The Holy Spirit is the other authority." I have witnessed a growing number of Christian folk who live out his statement in this way: "**Yes, the Bible is an authority for the Christian; but the Holy Spirit is another and greater authority.**"

In other words, they value their SUBJECTIVE, claimed 'being led by the Holy Spirit' over the pure OBJECTIVE TRUTH of the infallible Word of God. **They love to speak** of "God telling them one thing or another; **or of** God telling them to do this or that"... **or of** ... "Being led by the Spirit to do one thing or another or to go here or there or to do this or that." **Granted,** the whole Christian life is one of "following Jesus!" and of "being led by the Holy Spirit" (John 10:27-28; Romans 8:14)— however, the Holy Spirit, (who breathed out the Word of God!), will NOT lead contrary to the Word of God.

The tragic reality is that there are many folk who HATE AUTHORITY— except their own authority! **Thus, they make their "being led" pronouncements in a fashion of ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY—** even over the Holy Spirit breathed, written Word of God.

BEWARE: When we reject the pure objective Word of God and elevate our subjective leadings above the Word of God— deadly, cancerous deception easily gains authority! **OK, but what does this have to do with Hand Clapping/Applause in a worship service?**

SIMPLY THIS: WORSHIP practice is another critical area where many reserve to themselves the right to choose practices and styles in accordance with their likes and personal preferences. What the Bible says or models is of little or of no authority— certainly of no absolute authority. Subjectivity reigns. Be all that as it may, let us take an objective look into the Scriptures.

PRESENT DAY REALITY: Hand clapping/Applause at various times during church worship services is quite popular in our day. What can we learn about Hand Clapping from the Word of God?

BIBLE REFERENCES TO HAND CLAPPING

I found 9 references in the Bible to Hand Clapping and all are in the Old Testament: Psalm 98:8; Isaiah 55:12; Ezekiel 25:6; 2 Kings 11:12; Job 34:37; Lamentations 2:15; Job 27:23; Psalm 47:1; Nahum 3:19. **In these 9 references** there are 4 Hebrew words used to express the action of clapping. And all of them convey the idea of striking something or someone. When used in conjunction with the Hebrew word for *HAND*, then hand clapping or "the striking of hands" is the literal action the word reveals.

Depending on the context, these words were used for,

- (1) **An expression of joy** as when Joash ascended the throne.
- (2) **An expression of disgust or anger** as with Balak being angry with Balaam.
- (3) **An expression of malicious glee** as from those who rejoiced over Niveveh's impending judgment from God; or as from those who rejoiced over the ruins of Jerusalem.
- (4) **An expression of joyful worship to God as found in Psalm 47.**
- (5) In Biblical scenes of either Old Testament or New Testament congregational worship, or of WORSHIP IN HEAVEN— there is, surprisingly, no clear evidence of hand clapping. **ONE possible EXCEPTION: it would seem that Psalm 47:1 gives an open door— IF the intent is praise and joy in God.**

Psalm 47:1-3 "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." **Psalm 98:8-9 calls for all creatures and creation to praise God; and even the floods (rivers) are to "CLAP THEIR HANDS!"**

NOTICE: In Psalm 47:1, the action **clearly is** one in connection with worship to God. It **clearly is not** the applause of a congregation's pleasure from a religious performance OR applause to encourage or praise a performer!

A Grand Old Testament Worship Scene is in Nehemiah 8 and 9.

Nehemiah 8:1-8 ¹ And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; **and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses**, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. ² And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

³ **And he read** therein before the street that was before the water gate **from the morning until midday**, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

⁴ **And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood**, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. ⁵ **And Ezra opened the book** in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, **all the people stood up:**

⁶ And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. **And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.**

***** What can we learn** from this wonderful scene? The focus of this congregational worship is all **upon God! Moreover, it is focused on God's Word which points us in the path of being/getting RIGHT WITH GOD** and leads to the worship of God. The congregational worship response to the Word of God is '**AMEN**' ... "So be it LORD!"

The Acts of the Apostles gives us a Clear New Testament Worship Scene!

Acts 2:41-47 ⁴¹ Then they that **gladly** received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ⁴² **And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all

things common; ⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ **Praising God**, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

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**Here we see that true New Testament worship is, again, all about God and His agenda!** Moreover, the New Birth brings about AUTOMATIC DISCIPLESHIP. There is no need to seek to motivate by appealing to carnal flesh culture loves. **For with new hearts**, new Christians have an awesome **indwelling compelling** for sitting at the feet of Jesus in the Word of God!

They are drawn to fellowship with other believers; and they are drawn to worship at the LORD'S TABLE; and they are drawn to prayer with other saints; and they are drawn to ministries of doing good one to another. THEY ARE DRAWN TO PRAISE to God! In other words, they are led by the Holy Spirit! (Romans 8:14)

**Here is one of the Many Wonderful Worship Scenes in the Revelation!**

**Revelation 19:1-6** <sup>1</sup> And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, **Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:** <sup>2</sup> For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. <sup>3</sup> **And again they said, Alleluia** And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

<sup>4</sup> And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, **Amen; Alleluia.** <sup>5</sup> And a voice came out of the throne, saying, **Praise our God**, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. <sup>6</sup> And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, **Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.**

**What Should be Crystal Clear from these Various Scriptures?**

**(1)** The total **GOD FOCUS** of true worship.

**(2)** The emotion, intensity, and **VERBAL** nature of God-focused congregational worship!

**(3)** Various **POSTURES** in true worship— Kneeling, Standing, Bowing, and the **LIFTING UP OF HANDS**. **AGAIN, CONGREGATIONAL** praise is prominent — **“AMEN! ALLELUIA!”**

**(4)** **EVERYONE IS PARTICIPATING**— there are no spectators: **“AMEN! ALLELUIA!”** **“Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the LAMB!”** (Revelation 7:10)

**(5)** **Now, I do not know why— but in all of the congregational worship scenes recorded in the Bible— Hand Clapping/Applause is absent!**

**This is not to say that there is NO SITUATION** where **Hand Clapping would be appropriate, as to experiences in genuine Christianity.** But surely, whatever God has made prominent— well, we should get in step!

**CONSIDER:** Why would the **EXPRESSIVENESS** of worship scenes, as revealed in the Bible, (in both earth and heaven), be generally absent today and in place of such expressiveness churches promote and practice that which is foreign to Biblical worship scenes? **IT IS NOT FROM IGNORANCE.** It must be from a spirit that elevates our ideas over God’s revelation— which is what Cain and Aaron did! (Genesis 4:3-8; Exodus 32)

**AS WE HAVE SEEN, there are NINE references in the Bible to Hand Clapping— with all of them being** in the Old Testament. **Only Psalm 47:1** directly relates to the worship of God: "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." ***HOWEVER, one verse from the Word of God is enough to make a valid point!***

**WHAT’S THE POINT:** In Psalm 47:1 the hand clapping clearly is focused on the worship of God. **It clearly is not the applause of a congregation expressing pleasure for a religious performance.** There is no connection between this verse and most of the hand clapping/applause that goes on in churches today.

**Nehemiah 8:1-6; Acts 2:41-47; Revelation 19:1-6— FROM THESE VERSES we found the following focus:** The true worship of the true

God is totally focused on praise, worship, honor, submission, and adoration of God Himself.

**Such worship is EXPRESSIVE: There are AMENS! There are HALLELUJAHS!** There are repeated calls to PRAISE THE LORD! There are various POSTURES which convey various heart attitudes. There are LIFTED HANDS! (Nehemiah 8:6; 1 Chronicles 16:8-36; Psalm 108:48; Revelation 7:9-12; Psalm 95:1; Ephesians 5:19; Psalms 28:2; Psalm 88:9b; Psalm 134:1-2; Nehemiah 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:8)

**NOTE: Hand Clapping/Applause for a truth presented in a sermon is a poor substitute for an open response of 'AMEN!'— IN OTHER WORDS, "So be it in my life O LORD!" There is no commitment to godly repentance and obedience with hand clapping!"**

**Exodus 20:1-10; John 4:19-21— when it comes to the true worship of the One, True, Living God, He tells us how to worship Him.** Acceptable worship to God is exclusive, no visual representations of God are allowed, reverence is the foundational heart attitude and such worship requires that we give vital time.

**AGAIN, the true worship of God does not focus on man and his needs, preferences, cultural likes or dislikes.** Rather, the exclusive focus is upon God. He alone is worthy to be worshipped and praised. And as the woman at the well learned, such worship must be IN SPIRIT and IN TRUTH!

TRUE WORSHIP is not about outward ceremony. **TRUE WORSHIP is not pumped up emotions from gospel boogie, religious ragtime, 'christian' rock, rap, country gospel, etc.**

**Seeking and/or desiring religious entertainment is radically different from worship:** The first is all about PLEASING MAN. The later is all about PLEASING GOD!

MOREOVER: The true worship of God is IN SPIRIT. It is in accordance with the Spirit, quickened by the Spirit. **THE SPIRIT OF GOD is—**

(1) The **HOLY** Spirit! The true worship of God is always HOLY WORSHIP. It is never sensuous. It always encourages HOLINESS.

(2) The Spirit of **TRUTH!** **He is** the Spirit of Truth. Jesus is the Living Truth. The Bible is Divine Written Truth, without mixture of error. **God's words are Spirit and Life!** (John 6:63)

(3) And the Holy Spirit's mission to Believers is to EXALT JESUS and to BRING to REMEMBRANCE the things that Jesus taught. True worship is all about TRUTH— Jesus! His written Word! The Spirit of Truth!

**Tragically, much of today's** WORSHIP practice is another critical area where many **reserve to themselves the right to choose practices and styles in accordance with their likes and personal preferences.**

Sadly, for the masses, what the Bible says or models is of little or of no authority— certainly of no absolute authority. Subjectivity reigns, as everyone does what is right in their own eyes!

**NEVERTHELESS, LET US GO FORTH,  
SEEKING TO GROW IN EMBRACING THE MODELS OF WORSHIP  
AS SET FORTH IN THE HOLY WORD OF GOD!**

Great Grace to all!          James Bell

[www.southsidegallatin.org](http://www.southsidegallatin.org)

## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!**

**TUESDAYS:** Come and sing with us every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Any questions contact Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

**\*\*\* WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! NOTE:** Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be with their parents in the Prayer Service.

**YOUTH GROUP: Wednesdays 6-8pm...** led by Byron Smith\_

**➔ NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Thursday, April 3, 11:00AM,** led by Cindy Bell

**\*\*\* SATURDAY MORNINGS @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! \*\*\***

## **REGULAR SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR MARCH 30**

- 1. 9:30am- Sunday School → Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship**
- 2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church**
- 3. Noon:** Fellowship 'covered-dish' Meal together!
- 4. 1:00pm-** Early afternoon Service, in the Fellowship Hall

**\*\*\*\* APRIL 20 IS RESURRECTION SUNDAY! \*\*\*\***

During our Sunday School hour, we will have a BRUNCH. DURING THE 10:45AM WORSHIP HOUR we will sing praise to God for the life, the death, and the resurrection of our LORD; Dr. Bobby Gupta, President of Hindustan Bible Institute, Chennai, India, will be preaching; we will conclude at the LORD'S TABLE.

## **SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL!**

***Children are like young plants in a garden— while young and tender they must be protected.*** Southside Christian School works in harmony with the local Church and empowers parents!  
<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>