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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking

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Ed Smithson, Editor

MUSIC IN OUR WORSHIP

I love church music and I love to sing. I can't do as well as I used to but I still like to try, and occasionally I am in good voice.

I've been preaching almost 65 years and I've seen a lot of things in our services and Bible studies. Our brethren have always liked to sing, those that could (there are some who can't) and singing has been a large part of our worship to God. In some churches they even have special times when the only thing they do is sing. It usually happens on Wednesday night and there some new songs are learned.

While I like to learn new songs, I am particularly fond of the old songs. The other night, an hour or two before going to bed, I was rearranging some of the songs on the computer I used for the radio program I do. I started listening to songs and particularly the old songs I've heard since my childhood and it was a joy indeed.

These days, I'm sorry to say, many of those old songs are never used. Our younger men know so much more about "music" and the "praise songs" are so popular, many congregations don't hear the old faithful songs. I don't sing those songs, first, because I do not know them and secondly because I believe they are being used entirely too much.

For the next few minutes, let me talk to the song leaders and those in charge of things.

First, I understand that perhaps you are tired of the old faithful songs we have sung in our churches for the last 100 years or more. Every generation at some point, thinks they know more and can do better than the OLD FOLKS. That's understandable, and I don't resent that. But every once in a while, would you lead some of the old songs like, Old Rugged Cross, Sweet Hour of Prayer, Nearer My God To Thee and others that we learned as children and some at our mother's knee. These old songs have a lot of meaning to us old folks and it would be a favor and blessing to us, and after all, we are still a part of the congregation you lead.

Second, I know how the songs are written and I know that particularly the younger generation likes a little pep. But when you're leading, please at least occasionally lead a song slow enough that we can read the words. If we can't read the words we can't sing the song and if you're trying to save time, you could have all those who participate in worship on the rostrum ready for their part, instead of waiting for them to come from all over the auditorium.

Third, I heard a teacher some time back say that if we weren't singing we were disobeying the command to sing. Well, not to start a fight, but the places in the New Testament that refers to music says we are to ["speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord."](#) (Eph 5:19 ASV) But we can't do that if we can't read the words. I do not see that as a command. Sometimes there are reasons for a person does not sing. The music of the church is to uplift and edify each of us as we are gathered together. Songs that we don't know and can't sing does not do that, and how can we sing if we don't know the song?

I realize the old time song leaders had their quirks and some of them aggravated me somewhat, but what they had that I see lacking in many of our song leaders today is "feeling and understanding." While we complained that some of their songs were too slow, they did it with soul, feeling and understanding the meaning of the words and experiencing the joy of the music.

The congregation where I attend is made up of both young and old and that's good. Our ratio between those under 50 and over is about half us are older than 50. Now I can tell because I sit in the back and when we used the praise songs which haven't been learned by the congregation, about half of us do not sing. Not because we don't want to, but because we can't. And if we can't because we don't read music, or the singing is too fast, we are not going to learn them.

Now I am not trying to chastise anyone. We have some marvelous song leaders in the church today. I'm just asking for a little consideration of us old folks that don't know these new fangled songs and want to remember the times of old and to honor our God and Savior as we remember.

That isn't too much to ask, is it?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Amthor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

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