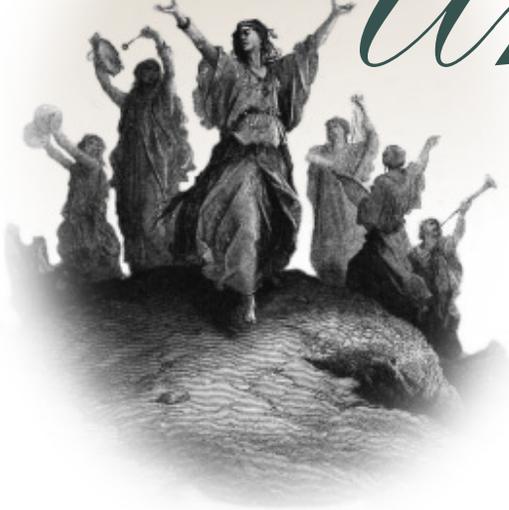


In Unison



The trumpeters and
singers joined in unison,
as with one voice, to
give praise and thanks
to the Lord.
2 Chronicles 5:13

Excellence: Beginning

behavior of the choir that demonstrates a worshipful attitude; and it is the face of the choir that reflects the glory of the throne.

In a sense, the choir can become, within the worship service, a bridge between heaven and earth, spanning the gap between congregation and God.

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.
2 Chronicles 5:13-14

Should we not be humbled by such a responsibility? Should we not vow, before God, to do our very best in this service? Can we, in good conscience, approach the time of worship with anything less than our finest effort?

Our relationship with our Maker is based on faith—not works. We do nothing to buy His favor, because His

favor has already been purchased at the cross. We cannot add to that; we can only believe that it happened.

Some, however, have committed themselves to the *event* of salvation while disregarding the *process* of living a life that has been saved. Some have confused the error of "salvation by works" with the call to "work out our salvation."

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:12-13

It is a hollow faith that ends with the 'right hand of fellowship.' It is a shallow relationship that does not seek to please the one through whom salvation has been given.

We have been warned against working to obtain that relationship, but we are encouraged to work as a *result* of that relationship—and thereby obey the one with whom it is shared.

Excellence begins with obedience. More than that, excellence begins with the desire to obey.

W

*hatever you do, work at it
with all your heart, as working for
the Lord, not for men.*

Colossians 3:23

The church choir is a microcosm of the entire, local church body. In the choir are both men and women, young and old, new Christians and mature. The choir is made up of people from all walks of life: laborers, white-collar workers, homemakers, artists, students and the unemployed. It is the church in miniature—with one exception.

The church choir has been given the responsibility to lead the congregation in worshiping God. As a unit, it is the voice of the choir that leads out in the unfamiliar hymn; it is the voice of the choir, in its anthem, that paints a sound-picture of Scripture truth; it is the

Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:30-31

“The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters which at the most cannot concern him for very long; but even if the multiple burdens of time may be lifted from him, the one mighty single burden of eternity begins to press down upon him with a weight more crushing than all the woes of the world piled one upon another. That mighty burden is his obligation to God. It includes an instant and lifelong duty to love God with every power of mind and soul, to obey Him perfectly, and to worship Him acceptably.” (A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, HarperCollins, 1992)

*The only way to truly soar
in the work of the Lord is to com-
mit ourselves to a close relation-
ship with Him.*

The word translated “hope” in the NIV and “wait” in the NASB and KJV is a root word meaning, literally, to *bind together*, as one would a sheaf of wheat. It is used in the Old Testament to describe a strong, confident hope—not just thinking something might happen, but hope with an expectation that it *will* happen.

Soaring does not happen accidentally. Excellence is not something that just springs from us unattended. We serve our Lord with excellence because we intend to, because we love Him so much that we are compelled to serve Him to the very best of our ability.

The Lord has gifted you with certain abilities; it is your responsibility to identify those abilities and place them in His service. He has not entrusted those abilities to you for them to be squandered or spent lazily. He has entrusted them to you for their quality investment in the work of His Kingdom. True Biblical excellence is not flash and glitter—it is not ‘trying to impress people.’ True excellence springs from a heart devoted to a God who loved us enough to spend His excellence at the cross. How can we withhold from Him anything less?

*My gracious Lord, I own Thy right to every service I can pay,
And call it my supreme delight to hear Thy dictates, and obey.*

*What is my being but for Thee, its sure support its noblest end?
Thy ever smiling face to see and serve the cause of such a friend.*

*I would not breathe for worldly joy, or to increase my worldly good;
Nor future days or powers employ to spread a sounding name abroad.*

*'Tis to my Saviour I would live, to Him who for my ransom died;
Nor could untainted Eden give such bliss as blossoms at His side.*

Philip Doddridge

Scripture

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:5

And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? Deuteronomy 10:12-13

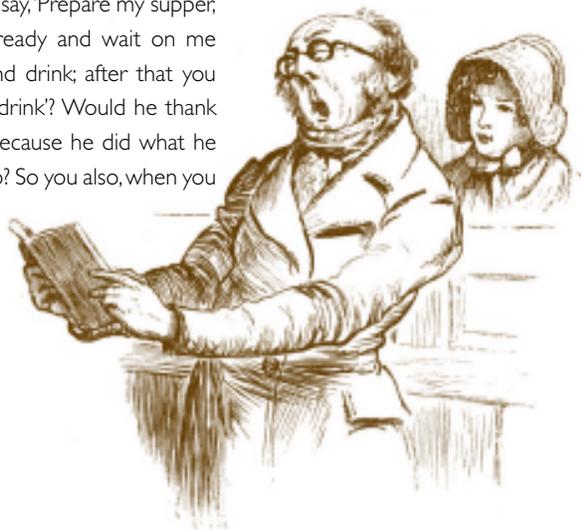
"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!" Joshua 24:14-16

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:36-40

"Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you

have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" Luke 17:7-10

But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." John 4:32-34



Hymns and Choruses

Jesus Calls Us (Alexander)

Jesus calls us: by Thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,
Serve and love Thee best of all.

A Charge to Keep I Have (Wesley)

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my pow'rs engage
To do my Master's will!

All For Jesus (James)

All for Jesus, all for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed pow'rs:
All my tho'ts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours.

I Surrender All (VanDeVenter)

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
My Thy Holy Spirit fill me,
May I know Thy pow'r divine.

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