I want to talk to you tonight about some things that I think most of us haven't really considered; one thing we perhaps haven't considered. Really, really, how rich Christ can be, to take Him and give Him. This is very, very simple. I praise the Lord for this meeting tonight. I almost think maybe somebody knew what I was going to talk about tonight. I just felt like maybe the rumor got around, but I didn't tell anybody at all what I was going to talk about tonight; not even my wife knew.

I'm going to talk about church singing. Church singing. Church in song. Now, is it Christian to sing? Are you really sure about that now? Is it a Christian thing to sing?

Ephesians 5:18-19 - *Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another in spiritual psalms and praises, and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord.*

Alright, that's one verse. That's about all there is in the New Testament, isn't it? No. What does Colossians say? Colossians 3:16? Alright. Most Christians are not aware of how much singing there is in the New Testament.

Alright, brothers and sisters, singing is not just part of the Christian experience; it is a vital part of our being. Praise the Lord, even in the New Testament. "Let the Word of Christ…" "Let the words of Christ dwell richly in you."

Exodus 15:1-2. *Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord and said, 'I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song.*

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. It cannot dwell in you to its fullest richness unless it dwells out of you. You can't have it totally in until you get it totally out.

Brothers and sisters, something of the Spirit is singing. There is something of the Spirit that is a song. There is something of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very element of Christ, that is a song. Have you ever heard of King of kings? Who is the King of kings? Jesus Christ. Have you ever heard of the Lord of lords? Who is the Lord of lords? Jesus Christ. What is the song of songs? Jesus Christ is the King above the king. He is the Lord who rules the lords…and *He is the song above all songs*. He's the final song. He's the first song. He's the best song. He's the greatest song.

I tell you, this afternoon I listed at least 75. The only reason I'm not reading them tonight…I was tempted to have the whole meeting tonight be nothing but reading the verses, just one right after another, of singing in the Word of God. The first time it is really mentioned clearly, believe it or not,

there are two places in Scripture where the Lord begins. The Lord begins in Genesis 1, but because of the fall, the Lord has to make another, a second, really clear beginning of His work. I think any Bible scholar who knows the Word of God clearly will tell you that Exodus 12 is where we have a second beginning, for it is in Exodus 12 that the Lamb is given.

If you will take the book of John, John 1, you will find that John 1 is the beginning book. Can you follow me? But John 1 is primarily two Old Testament chapters. It is Genesis 1 and Exodus 12. There are two beginnings in the Old Testament: Genesis 1 and Exodus 12. In Exodus 15, the Lord's people begin to sing. It happened this way, and it was just so spontaneous.

They came up to the Red Sea and looked over a hill, down the valley, or across the plain, and saw Pharaoh's mighty army. There was nothing but drowning ahead of them or death behind them, and by Moses and his authority in striking the water and commanding it, it opened. You can see them looking at the walls of the water and thinking, "That's a miracle." And everybody knows the miracle is very fragile; it will go away, and at least a million of us have to go through that water. That water's got to stand back all that time. Who knows when it's going to close in?

A few brave souls start across because it's either death by drowning or death by an army. A few run in, keep running, and nothing happens. A few more brave souls follow, and after that, a few more think, "Oh well." So here they go, and pretty soon they all begin to say, "It's working." They start across fearfully, and then hundreds begin to go; then thousands; then tens of thousands. They begin to get used to it. I'm sure somebody walks right up to the wall of water and goes… and another one starts shouting.

Then, spontaneously, with thousands and thousands of people out in the riverbed, they begin to sing and shout. They begin to dance, and they begin to praise the Lord. The last few hundred thousand who walked across the water danced, shouted, and sang all the way across. By the time they got to the other side, they had composed a song. It was the song of Moses, and it's in the book of Psalms. And they sang it with joy over the Lord's great deliverance of them.

I don't know what it sounded like by the time they got to the other side, but can you imagine a million people singing to the glory of God after a miracle like that? That was marvelous. That was the beginning of Christian singing. Praise the Lord.

You know that Deborah was delivered; she and her people were delivered in a situation in the Old Testament, and she wrote a song. There's the song of Deborah in the Old Testament. Did you know that many, many of the Old Testament Psalms written by David were written after tremendous

experiences? You all know that, I think, but are you aware that he took one song, and he wrote it — it's in First Chronicles — and having written a song, do you know what he did with it? He took it before the Lord, and he prayed it. He prayed a song that he had written to the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, have you ever prayed a song? There's something I really would like to see the saints of the Lord do. Really like to see them do. I'm going to talk to a brother, this brother right here, about it privately, because I believe at this time, this is a time to strike the iron hot. I would like to see a brother go all the way through the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and find all the marvelous things that have been written by the children of God. They can be found. Things written in dungeons. Things written in prison. Things sung at the stake. Then take the very best essence of all the others and make it available to the church.

There is tremendous power in a song; tremendous power in a song. A song is the deepest expression, the very essence of what is left of a great, cataclysmic experience with God. It's what's left over, and it's left over for you and me. Brothers and sisters, the song is no small thing. It's what is left on the altar after a tremendous offering has been left to the Lord, and there is still a remembrance of it left. If you ever get desperately ill or desperately in trouble, take the Psalms or any good songbook and begin reading it. You'll make a startling discovery; those words mean a hundred times more than you've realized.

Have you ever picked up a song and felt so awakened? "Why, that man has gone through what I'm going through." You're comforted because you knew nobody else on earth really understood what you were going through. Brothers and sisters, you can even take a song and pray to the Lord.

Just listen to this. Jehoshaphat won a battle with a song. He took his priests; he took those priests who could sing, and he put them out front, and he said to them, "You go into battle first, and the army will be right behind you." The priests started out singing, and when they got a little farther along, the enemy came up to them, and the enemy was completely defeated by the song the priests sang. Praise the Lord.

Hezekiah was about to die, and everybody knows he was praying to the Lord, but did you know that Hezekiah wrote a song and sang it to the Lord? It was by that song that Hezekiah was given an extension of life. Even his singing of the song brought favor to the Lord, and the Lord extended his life.

All through the Old Testament, it's just there over and over and over and over again: the singing. When the ark was brought into the city, the whole city just broke forth with singing. All along the road

as the ark came back, there was nothing but singing. Well, that's wonderful. That's interesting, but did you realize something? The ark has been brought back; the ark has been lost.

I'm going to say something, and I say it boldly. I don't believe that, in modern times, the Lord Jesus Christ has ever been revealed so centrally in the church as He is being revealed today. There's been a tabernacle without an ark, and at times, an ark without a tabernacle, but praise God, the ark has been brought back. What do you do when the ark gets brought back? You sing!

I want to touch on two or three or four things. Brothers and sisters, singing was such a big part of Old Testament believers' lives. Would you just… Psalm 32:7. 1 Chronicles 6:31-32. 2 Chronicles 5:12. 2 Chronicles 29:27.

Psalm 32:7 - *God has encompassed me round about with a song*. The Lord has encompassed us round about, brothers and sisters, with…a song. Brothers and sisters, that song is around you all the time. All you have to do is reach out and take it. You are encompassed round about with a song. Just think, if the devil tried to get you, he'd have to go through the song. Praise the Lord, it's alright; if he gets you, he may get converted in the process.

When your mourning has been turned to joy, what are you supposed to do? Bring a song! Did you ever get delivered from the Lord and then keep it all locked up inside of you? Oh, brothers and sisters, the Lord wants the offering. He wants the offering. Have you been delivered lately? Actually, I get delivered two or three times per day. Then there is time for a song. When do we sing? In the meeting? Yeah. "Is that the only time? No!

Okay, it's much clearer in another translation. It says that the priests were appointed to sing. The priests were appointed to sing. I would like all the priests in this room to sing. Brothers and sisters, you were appointed, in your office as a priest, unto Him…as one of your duties, you have been appointed to sing.

Second Chronicles 29:27- *Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar. As the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord also began, accompanied by the instruments of David, king of Israel.*

Please get this and remember this is a picture. When the children of the Lord came together to offer their sacrifice to the Lord, as soon as the priests came and began to offer it, the entire congregation broke out in singing. Then they would blow the trumpets and strike the cymbals together, and they'd offer up the sacrifice amid praise and singing. Praise the Lord, this is a glorious picture for all of us.

Offer your sacrifice with singing, whether before, after, or during; sing with your sacrifice. Okay, what is our next one? Alright, brother.

1 Chronicles 6:31-32 - *Now these are those whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the Lord after the ark rested there. And they ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting*. Brother, that says they ministered to the Lord with what? This term used in Acts 13, "and they ministered to the Lord," is one of the most fascinating terms in all Scripture. How do you minister to the Lord? Those brothers in Acts 13 were not praying; they were ministering to the Lord. I don't know everything they did that day; it was one of the holiest days in all of human history. I'll tell you this: they ministered to the Lord, and it says the priests ministered to the Lord with songs.

2 Chronicles 5:12-13 *And all the Levite singers*, and it names them, *stood before the altar with a hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in unison, and the trumpets and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord. When they lifted up their voices, it was accompanied by all sorts of instruments, and they praised the Lord, saying, 'He indeed is good, for His loving kindness is everlasting.'" Then the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud.*

In the midst of the singing, the blowing and playing of the instruments, and the shouting, hallelujah, the cloud descended and filled the house of the Lord. It says, "He indeed is good, for His loving kindness is everlasting." This was the song they sang. "Lord, You're good; indeed, Your loving kindness is everlasting." That's a good song. Praise the Lord.

In Numbers 21:18, there is a record of the wilderness journey when the brothers and sisters were going through the wilderness, and they came to a place called Beer, or it's called 'the well'. When they got there, either by commandment or perhaps by instinct, I don't know.

*From there they continued to Beer; that is, the well where the Lord said to Moses, 'Assemble the people that I may give them water.' They all got together in front of the well, and they began to sing. And this is what they sang: 'Spring up, well, with water. Spring up, well, with water.'*

They sang to the well, and the well did what? It sprang up with water. Brothers and sisters, there's a well in you. Have you ever watched it spring up? You know how it can spring up? Sing to it; sing to the well, and it'll spring up.

I think many brothers and sisters don't have the habit of singing. Do you? Do you have the habit of singing? As soon as I got saved, I got the habit of singing. Except I have to add two words. I got the habit of singing…off-key. I have a problem, and I really wanted my wife to be here because I got an

announcement to make to her. After my children got older, I stopped. I do it more, but not as much as I used to before my kids grew up. Brothers, I used to get up and bring every morning into being with a song. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord. I know it's not singing.

When Brother Warren Alexander first came and visited us, we were just a small group. One night, I got up and led the brothers and sisters in a song, and it was just awful. Brother Warren pulled me aside, and he was very worried. He said, "Gene, you really got up there and just really made a real fool of yourself," or something like that. He said, "You know, brother, leaders don't do things like that." And it's really true. Leaders don't do things like that.

I praise the Lord, brothers and sisters; I know how bad I sing. If you want to laugh at me, that's alright. I know it's bad, but don't you think that I won't get up there in front of you and encourage you to sing. I don't care how dumb sounding I am, and this is the announcement I want to make to my wife and children tonight: you're going to get it off-key, out of tune, the wrong words, and early.

Brothers and sisters, I admonish you to get up in the morning and sing. Let your roommate suffer the consequences; let your husband suffer the consequences, and let your wife suffer the consequences. There is a well within you, and it will arise to the sound of music. Praise the Lord; it will come out with the sound of music.

This is really an admonition tonight. I'm going to pass over some things and say to you: I want you to look at this. I want you to see an entire city called Jerusalem, that when it was at its highest and best in its spiritual keenness - not when it was in a backslidden state - the city of Jerusalem was filled with singing continuously. The daughters of Zion would go parading through the streets, singing songs, and they would be admonished, "Go to the heights of Zion. O daughters of Israel, march to the heights of Zion and sing."

In the morning, when the doors of the city were opened, travelers would come in from the small towns and villages, and they always approached the city singing. They were admonished, "Enter the gates with singing and giving thanks unto the Lord." Whenever there was a festival, the daughters of Zion would go outside the city, come in dancing in great whirling circles, and enter the streets of the city singing unto the Lord. You see, you thought we thought that up, didn't you? To march through the streets is something that's in the spirit of a man and a woman. Now you may not even agree with that. You may think, "Brother, that just can't be." Brother and sister, it is our heritage to sing. It just really is.

Now here's what I want to read, the last part and the best part, at least in the Old Testament.

Ezra 3:10-11 - *The priests stood with trumpets, and Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord according to the direction of King David of Israel.* How long had King David been dead? Around at least 300 years, maybe many, many years more than that. And yet, as the foundation of prayer was laid again, they sang; they praised the Lord according to the instructions of King David. *And they sang praises and gave thanks to the Lord, singing, "For He is good, and for His loving kindness is upon Israel forever."* The same song they sang before.

That's in the rebuilding of the temple under Ezra, in Ezra 3:10–11. *And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the Lord was laid.* Brothers and sisters, have you ever shouted praises unto the Lord because you could see the foundation laid? I have stood in this building, and I shouted for one reason: I could see the house; I could see the house, and I shouted for joy. Don't think you shout in here just because you shout; something in your spirit matches God's past work when that work is accomplished. It is no small thing that we sing praises as the foundation of the temple is laid. Let's not stop singing praises now. Praise the Lord.

Nehemiah 12:24. This is really neat. *And the heads of the Levites*, and he gives their names, *with their brothers opposite them to praise and give thanks as prescribed by David, the man of God, giving correspondence to each one of them*, so on and so on. Verse 27: *Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites shouted from all their places to bring them to Jerusalem so they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving and songs, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres. And the sons of the singers were assembled from the districts around Jerusalem and from the villages around about, too.*

Praise the Lord. It is very difficult to pronounce some of these words. Verse 43: *And on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy. Even the women and the children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.* Praise the Lord.

Verse 45-46: *For they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification together with the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the commandments of David and his son Solomon. For the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times, there were leaders of the singers, songs of praise, and hymns of thanksgiving unto God.*

Brothers and sisters, it was true in the days of David, and when they restored the temple, it was true in the days of Ezra. What was true in the days of Ezra, when they laid the foundation, was true in the days of Nehemiah, when they dedicated the wall. What they had done under David, they did under Ezra.

Well, praise the Lord. Listen to this: when Elizabeth found out that John the Baptist was going to be

born, she offered songs of thanksgiving to the Lord. And when Zechariah, her husband, learned that John was born, he offered a song of thanksgiving to the Lord. When Mary, dear sister Mary, our sister Mary, learned she was going to give birth to the Messiah, she sang praises to the Lord.

When the Lord Jesus Christ triumphantly entered the city of Jerusalem—oh wow, that must have been a sight. Can you see that? All of the Old Testament symbols were beginning to be realized that day, and the whole city broke forth in singing as the Lord Jesus Christ entered. If you read it carefully, I believe you'll find that He entered the city, and then He entered the temple.

Wow. He was showing a picture of what He was about to accomplish in three or four more days. That night, my brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, sat down with the disciples, and if you please, they had the really first meeting of the church there ever was because it was done right in the very light and shadow of the cross. That night, it says the Lord Jesus Christ sang a hymn in praise to the Father. Do you think He got up there and sang, "(a Jewish chant)"? Brothers, you know He didn't do that.

If I know anything about the Lord Jesus Christ, who had several million years of practice singing with angels in the heavenly places, I believe, brothers and sisters, the singing of the first-century church was taught to the saints by the Lord Himself. He must have been a singer *because He was God's song*. Praise God. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Then in Hebrews 2:10, it says, *He sang*. And in Hebrews 13, it says, *He is singing, for He sang in the midst of the congregation of God.* Listen, you have heard the Lord Jesus Christ sing. I have heard Him sing. I've heard the Lord Jesus Christ sing right in the room. I know. I've heard His voice. I just wanted to turn around and look. I have heard the Lord sing. Nobody else could sing like that, brothers and sisters. Only the Lord could sing like that in the midst of the congregation.

The Lord Jesus Christ is a marvelous singer. I bet the children of God in the New Testament were marvelous singers. It's just so interesting. When Paul and Silas got thrown in jail in Acts 16, they knew how to sing. They had practiced singing, brothers. They woke up the whole jail singing songs. Everybody took note, including the jailer, who was probably at his house. They all heard them singing praises to the Lord in the middle of the night.

There are three songs recorded in the New Testament. One's in Timothy, one's in Revelation, and the third one, I forget where it is. There are three Greek songs set to Greek meter in the New Testament epistles and the book of Revelation. The brothers and sisters in the first century were singers. One of the first records ever written by a pagan about Christians was written in the latter part of the first century. As far as I know, it's the only comment made. It is the only secular comment made by Roman

authorities about Christians.

It's a very short statement, and it says three things. You have to read it closely, but all three are there. They meet a lot; they sing a lot, and they eat a lot. That's essentially what it says. They met, they sang, they ate. That's all that we know from the secular world about the first-century church. They met, they sang, they ate. Hallelujah, brother. We can get by on that.

Here is what I want to say to you: Sing! Here's why I brought the message last night (*Being strong in Spirit*): sing with a strong spirit! Let all of your Babylonian ways go, brothers and sisters. How could the children of God sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land? They couldn't do it.

Do you know why the organized church has song leaders? Do you know why they have song leaders? Nobody will sing if you don't have a song leader. Brothers and sisters, I thank the Lord we sing because we want to. Brothers and sisters, sing…and I mean sing. I mean…really sing.

I want to tell you something. Most of my life, until three or four years ago, when the Lord just — three years ago the Lord just delivered me — most of my life, I have borne a throat infection, but I have never let that stand in the way. I want you to know that, with rare exception, I have sung only one song in all my life. Just one song… and that was my last. You announce a song, brother, and I'll get up and sing it like it's the last song I'll ever sing in my life. I don't care if my throat is gone; I don't care if it's hoarse; I don't care if it's the tenth day of a meeting and I have spoken every morning and every night, and I can't be heard above a whisper. If you'll announce a song, brother, I'll sing it like it's the last song I ever sing.

Brothers and sisters, there is a way to sing. I think it is in the Old Testament, in one of the Psalms; it says, "I sing to Thee with my flesh and with my spirit." Brothers, sing with all your — no, it says, "I sing with my flesh and with my heart." Brother, sing with all your being. I want to encourage you, brother, whether you can sing or not, that when you sing, forget every brother and sister in the room. Forget you can't carry a tune, and give yourself to two things: to the praise and adoration of the Lord in that song and to the deep meaning of the words, and offer them up to the Lord in the depth of reality.

When that song is a song and a half, when it's "We're Marching to Zion," or when it's the "Hallelujah Chorus," or when it's "The Victory's Won," then sing with all your spirit. I cannot explain it, but I want you to know that there is a spirit in you, and it wants to get out. We can speak with our soul, but I'll tell you, it is the spirit that sings. The spirit invented singing. The spirit matches a song, and a song matches the spirit. Brothers and sisters, you can't sing for long without singing with your spirit. If you sing with all your heart, you'll sing with your spirit.

When you're singing quietly, sing with a strong spirit. It's just so natural when you're singing quietly to just go along. You've got a spirit inside of you; connect it; plug it in - use it; employ it. While you're singing softly, gently, and sweetly, sing with adoration. Turn your whole being to the worship of the Lord. *Sing!*

Then, when you are singing with the shouts and praises of the Lord's people, sing not only with your spirit, but sing with your soul. And not just with your soul, but sing with your body. Give it all you've got.

This is an exhortation; that's all. You know this; that's the Old Testament, and that's the New Testament, but one of these days, the Lord is going to really get down to the essentials. He's going to strip off all the pictures. He's going to strip off all the flesh. He's going to strip away all the oldness and all the fallen nature, and then He's going to drill down to the essence.