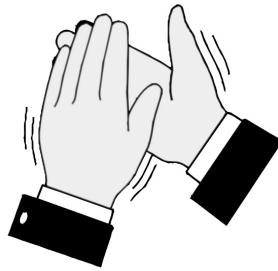


The Silence of Reverential Awe and Thoughts on Applause

Psalm 47



In American culture, applause is most often understood as acknowledgment or acclamation of a performance. It is very closely linked to entertainment. We applaud at a sporting event, a concert, a school play, a music recital, etc. True worship is to be **God-centered**. Choirs and singers and preachers are not worthy of acclamation; only God is worthy. Congregations are not audiences, and leaders of worship are not performers.

When it came to oratorical skill, the preacher Chrysostom (347-407) was unequalled. His hearers were engrossed and captivated by his words. The Greek custom of that day was to burst into a demonstration of applause upon hearing a good orator. Chrysostom's messages were often interrupted in this manner, and he would often rebuke the people for such improper behavior in the house of God. "It is characteristic of his age that a powerful sermon of Chrysostom against this abuse was most enthusiastically applauded by his hearers" (Philip Schaff).

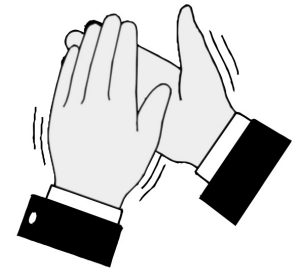
The church gathers to worship God, not to be entertained by men. Nor do we gather in order to highlight the talents of particular individuals or groups. If we are blessed by a truth that is preached or a truth that is sung, we can thank God and "Amen" from our hearts. Recently on a routine trip to town, a rain shower synchronized with the shining of the sun and produced a spectacular double rainbow. Many near me at the shopping center were outside observing this event. I witnessed their behavior. They did not burst into applause. Instead they gazed in silent wonder, thrilled with what their eyes were seeing. It was awe-inspiring. The silence was briefly interrupted by comments such as, "Wow" or "That's incredible!" They were witnessing something that could not be attributed to man, and the amazing hush of the moment was appropriate.

Lord, teach us to worship!

~George Zeller: www.middletonbiblechurch.org

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