

How the Newest Name in Rap Turned the Grammys Into an All-Out Act of Worship

Last night, Chance the Rapper took home three Grammys for his independent album *The Coloring Book*. Chance is a mainstream rapper who has recently taken to merging Christianity into his hip-hop worldview. Five of the 14 tracks of *The Coloring Book* have deeply religious themes and sample Christian contemporary artists like Chris Tomlin, Fred Hammond, Kirk Franklin and Byron Cage. Franklin and Cage are even featured on a few of the album's songs.

A few years ago, Chance was on a completely different path. When asked about his transformation on *The Coloring Book* in a radio interview, Chance shared a personal story. "One day during my Acid Rap tour, my grandmother saw me and began to pray. She said, 'I break off anything in your life that is not God.' After that, things began to change."

For the past year, audiences have seen Chance on *SNL*, *The Tonight Show*, and now the Grammys alongside Kirk Franklin and Tamela Mann, proclaiming his love for his savior, Jesus.

On the Grammys, Chance performed a combination of several songs off his award-winning album. The main songs were "How Great" and "Blessings." At one point, he exhorted the crowd and told them to stand up for his God because He is worthy to be honored. As tears rushed to my eyes, I began to feel what you feel right before the church altar call. I was overwhelmed by the strong, tangible presence that could be felt through the screen by even the most callous of souls.

I listened to the words and was inspired by the lyrics of Chance's journey to God, seeking to release worship so high it "would make Jesus come back early" and how his power

ultimately endowed him with a super strength like Netflix superhero hit Luke Cage. Wait, how could this be? How could have felt this coming from this artist who has such a visceral tension in his album's trajectory with God and the world? How could the Spirit be resting and dwelling in him? The Scriptures tell us:

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16).

God created Chance and gave him the spiritual intellect to make this powerful music to reach the masses. Chance's raw salvation is enlightening; and for us, it represents the true process and messiness of salvation.

God is literally transforming him in the spotlight, and he isn't afraid of it, either. He lets it be known "I speak to God in public, He says my new stuff jams, and I think we are mutual fans." Later, he said, "I used to hide from God".

Chance does not omit God from his music; he includes Him and gives Him his platform. Chance is not the first to do this, but perhaps the first to make such a major impact by conjoining the secular with the gospel. We are watching the true work of the cross on national TV. We are watching a man's life be transformed by the same God who changed our lives. Not only were the Grammys turned into a worship stage, but so was this independent rapper's life. {eoa}