

Thursday, August 6, 2020 – Instrumental Music IS a Salvation Issue

In recent months, a preacher stated he did not “know” that the use of instrumental music is a salvation issue. This dangerous and incorrect statement has implied to young Christians, new Christians and immature Christians that, even though instrumental music is NOT instructed in the New Testament, it is a matter of choice. This is simply NOT consistent with what the Bible teaches.

No question is more important than the question of authority. Everything which men do is either by authority of God or by the authority of men. The question Jesus poses in **Matthew 21:23-27** makes this clear.

The passage explains that Jesus is teaching in the temple at Jerusalem, and the Jewish chief priests and elders ask him, “(23) By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?” Now notice Jesus’ reply recorded in verse 25. Notice carefully that He specifies two sources of authority, God and man: “(25) The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?”

No question is, or can be, of greater importance than the question of religious authority. All legitimate authority is traceable to God. All such authority inherently resides in God, by virtue of the fact that he is the Creator of all that exists, other than Himself. Since the Bible is the word of God, what the Bible teaches is authoritative as if God Himself were to speak from heaven in an audible voice. The “chain of authority” goes from God (the Father) to Jesus Christ (the Son) to the Holy Spirit, to the apostles and prophets and finally to the sacred Scriptures, the Bible (**Eph 3:5; 2 Ti 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 John 9-11; 1 Cor 4:6; John 10:35**). Therefore, Christianity is the religion of Biblical authority. In fact, whatever one does, if he is to have God’s approval, must be authorized by Bible teaching.

Christians believe we have an objective standard, the Bible, and we operate from an objectivistic point of view is to say that he holds truth is absolute. To say that truth is absolute is to say that it is not dependent on the subjective condition of the knower. It is to say that truth has objective stability and independence outside of the knower. It is to say that when an individual human being comes to the knowledge of a certain truth, this does not change that truth in any way. The truth is that man must have some objective standard to which he can refer in order to obtain the correct answer given by anyone to any religious questions.

If any sense is to be made of human existence, there must exist an objective standard. There must exist that to which men can refer in order to ascertain the correct answers, not merely answers, to the most important questions that men can ask, those that pertain to their spiritual welfare.

The Bible is the word of a Being that can and does do what He claims He will do. And, further, the Bible does claim that it can be understood by men (Is 55:11; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17). So, it follows that there is an objective standard, and it can be known by man. Jesus prayed, in John 17:17, that the apostles would be sanctified (set apart) for a holy purpose. Heeding and obeying the truth will accomplish Jesus' prayer. Diligently holding to the truth will keep them from Satan (see John 17:15). One who abides in the truth subjects Himself to God. James says, "Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Truth will never force itself on anyone. The truth, God's word, is both absolute and attainable (John 8:32).

In John 4:23-24, we are told we are to "**worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him**" (v.23). Furthermore, we are told that we "**must worship him in spirit and in truth**" (v.24). Notice the elements for proper worship: "spirit" and "truth." To worship in spirit means that we must have the right attitude in worshipping the Father. God does not want our worship to be vain or insincere. Spiritual worship is that which is done from a pure heart, and in accordance with God's will (this is not to be confused with emotion. Just because worship "feels good" doesn't mean it's spiritual)! To worship in truth means we must worship in a manner that is pleasing to God, doing only the things which he has prescribed! If we are to worship in truth, this MUST mean God has provided us THE TRUTH! Why is this important? Because we worship a God of truth (John 17:17), a God whom we can know (John 4:22) and whose commandments we can understand (John 8:31-32).

The Bible speaks of ignorant worship (Acts 17:23), vain worship (Mark 7:7), creature worship (Romans 1:25) and other types of false worship. When men choose through various innovations or tactics to sensationalize the worship in order to appeal to the participants' emotions, does this not make "emotionalism" the object of worship? And when man moves away from the authorized pattern by changing the acts of worship to bring about these "feelings", does he not violate the command to worship as Jesus said in John 4:24?

What is the truth about music in worship?

1. Singing

1.1. Thirteen New Testament passages deal with singing.

1.2. Of those, five passages relate to how we are to worship in song

- 1.2.1. In the first two passages, **I Cor. 14:15, 26**, Paul corrects worship abuse at Corinth. Two points stand out in these passages – both spirit and mind are involved in worship in song, and everyone should understand and benefit from the songs in the assembly.
- 1.2.2. The third passage, **Eph. 5:18-19**, contrasts the irrational worship of one drunk with wine, with Christian worship in song. Singing is edification. It involves "speaking to one another." Singing is heartfelt praise to the Lord.

- 1.2.3. The fourth passage, **Col. 3:16**, discusses the attributes a Christian should put on as a new self. One attribute is gratitude to God. The passage also shows that singing can help us teach and admonish each other. It further shows that singing arises from a thankful heart.
- 1.2.4. A fifth passage, **James 5:13**, is brief and expresses that singing praises is the natural expression of a cheerful heart.
- 1.2.5. Note from these passages that singing was done as personal praise to express joy, as edification to one another and as praise to the Lord
- 1.3. No New Testament scripture authorizes anything other than singing. Not choirs, praise teams, humming, or instruments.
 - 1.3.1. We each are to sing from our heart, speak to another in songs and hymns. Through this act alone we can express joy, glorify God, focus our mind on the sacrifice made for us, teach and even admonish those who hear. Everyone is to sing not just a group of people.
 - 1.3.2. Those who try to justify instrumental music, praise teams, clapping, etc, use the excuse "that it sounds so much better." To who? Humans?
 - 1.3.2.1. **Does God judge our singing the same as humans do?** We are not worshipping to please humans; we are worshipping to please God!
 - 1.3.2.2. The scriptures say that scriptural singing comes from each of our hearts to the Lord!
- 1.4. Consider all the passages dealing with our music.
 - 1.4.1. **Acts 16:25** - "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."
 - 1.4.2. **Rom. 15:9** - "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name."
 - 1.4.3. **1 Cor. 14:15** - "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."
 - 1.4.4. **Eph 5:19** - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;"
 - 1.4.5. **Col. 3:16** - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
 - 1.4.6. **Heb. 2:12** - "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."
 - 1.4.7. **Jam. 5:13** - "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."
 - 1.4.8. **Heb. 13:15-16** - "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

1.5. Music and its subcategories.

1.5.1. There are two subcategories.

1.5.1.1. Vocal

1.5.1.1.1. Communicable (a message)

1.5.1.1.1.1. A foreign Language.

1.5.1.1.1.2. One's mother tongue.

1.5.1.1.2. Non-Communicable

1.5.1.1.2.1. Making sounds with our voice but those sounds not communicating a message.

1.5.1.1.2.2. Humming, whistling, making our voice sound like instruments of music, long sustained "Ah's" or "Oh's," etc.

1.5.1.2. Non-Vocal

1.5.1.2.1. Mechanical (instrumental).

1.5.1.2.1.1. Brass (trumpets, trombones, tubas, etc.).

1.5.1.2.1.2. Woodwinds (clarinets, oboes, flutes, etc.).

1.5.1.2.1.3. Percussion (bass drum, snare drum, castanets, timpani, etc.).

1.5.1.2.1.4. Strings (violin, viola, cello, bass, etc.).

1.5.1.2.1.5. Electronic Synthesizers (electric piano, organ, etc.).

1.5.1.2.2. Non-mechanical (instrumental).

1.5.1.2.2.1. Sounds that are humanly produced.

1.5.1.2.2.2. Snapping fingers, stomping feet, hand boning, clapping hands, etc.

1.5.2. What God did authorize (considering the above).

1.5.2.1. He did not simply state to make music (if He had then anything would be permissible).

1.5.2.2. God did not simply state to use vocal music (which would authorize any type of vocal music).

1.5.2.3. The only thing God authorized is singing (which is communicable vocal music) whether in our native tongue or in a foreign language.

1.5.2.4. Nothing else is authorized.

1.5.3. Instrumental music (mechanical or human—non-mechanical) is sinful.

1.5.4. Non-communicable vocal music is sinful.

Jesus Christ declared there are three elements to appropriate Christian worship. Our worship must be directed to deity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), it must be rendered in "spirit" (sincerely), and it must be offered consistent with revealed "truth" (Jn. 4:24; 17:17). Arguments employed in defense of instrumental accompaniment in worship are bereft of New Testament support thus, without question, it IS sin.

In Christ,

Chuck Davis