

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

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Articles

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Instrumental Music in the Church

Instruments have always been used in churches. Haven't they? No they haven't! For many centuries, no church used them. The Eastern Orthodox Church has always forbidden their use. Not all movements during Reformation used them. They were rejected at the beginning of the Restoration movement.

It's easy to think that whatever is done today as worship to God has always been done. But any student of religious history knows that there has been and continues to be changes in how people worship God. This is especially true concerning music in the church. Following is just a sampling of historical references noting the absence of mechanical instruments being used in worship.

HISTORICAL NOTES

“Musical instruments were not used. The pipe, tabret, and harp here associate so intimately with the sensual heathen cults, as well as with the wild revelries and shameless performances of the degenerate theater and circus, it is easy to understand the prejudices against their use in the worship.” (Augustine 354 A.D., describing the singing at Alexandria under Athanasius)

“The general introduction of instrumental music can certainly not be assigned to a date earlier than the 5th and 6th centuries; yea, even Gregory the Great, who towards the end of the 6th century added greatly to the existing church music, absolutely prohibited the use of instruments. Several centuries later the introduction of the organ in sacred service gave the place to instruments as accompaniments for Christian song, and from that time to this they have been freely used with few exceptions. The first organ is believed to have been used in the Church service in the 13th century. Organs were however, in use before this in the

theater. They were never regarded with favor in the Eastern Church, and were vehemently opposed in some of the Western churches.” (McClintock and Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, Vol 6, p. 759)

“If instrumental music was not part of early Christian worship, when did it become acceptable? Several reference works will help us see the progression of this practice among churches: ‘Pope Vitalian introduced an organ in the church in the seventh century to aid the singing but it was opposed and was removed.’” (James Hasting, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.)

“The execution of Byzantine church music by instruments, or even the accompaniment of sacred chanting by instruments, was ruled out by the Eastern Fathers as being incompatible with the pure, solemn, spiritual character of the religion of Christ. The Fathers of the church, in accordance with the example of psalmodizing of our Savior and the holy Apostles, established that only vocal music be used in the churches and severely forbade instrumental music as being secular and hedonic, and in general as evoking pleasure without spiritual value.” (G. I. Papadopoulos, A Historical Survey of Byzantine Ecclesiastical Music (in Greek), Athens., pp. 10,



THE RACE OF A LIFETIME

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

The art of running has come a long way over the centuries. Better training techniques and equipment have been perfected. Improved gear and shoes have lowered times dramatically. The physical, emotional and psychological aspects of coaching have become very sophisticated. All of this has aided athletes in their performance. Yet, with all the help, the individual must run the race to win.

There has been much progress made in helping people gain knowledge of God's word (the handbook for running the Race of a Lifetime). First, there was the printing press with moveable type, which made mass production of the Bible feasible. Next came typesetting machines and high speed printing presses that lowered the cost of Bibles to the point where even the poorest soul could afford a copy of the Holy Scriptures. Countless books have been written to aid in the study of the Bible. Numerous classes have been held, and are being held, to help the individual gain the knowledge of God's Word.

Living for Christ is a whole lot like running. The bible, books, and training classes are only aids which help us prepare for the Race of a Lifetime. Nothing can take the place of individual participation. While teams may win track meets, it is the individual who wins the race. This is also true in the Race of a Lifetime.

There is no prize awarded to those who are members of a church full of winners. No individual can claim credit for what “we” did unless he or she was an active participant.

In every race there are rules which must be complied with. It's same in the Race of a Lifetime. When one competes as an Christian, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:5

The Race of a Lifetime is won or lost individually. This is not so say we can't or shouldn't help one another. But each person is responsible for working out their own salvation. The blame for failure cannot be placed on others no more than a coach can be blamed for a runner's poor performance. Pathetic performance on the track, or in the Lord's church, can usually be chalked up to one or more of the following: (1) inadequate training, (2) little dedication, (3) lack of desire, (4) lack of self-discipline, (5) becoming encumbered with the things of this world, (6) quitting before finishing, and such like. Our performance in this Race of a Lifetime is determined by our willingness to do whatever it takes to be a winner. Therefore, with the Lord's help, run in such a way so as to gain the prize!

Be a winner in ***The Race of a Lifetime!***

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

‘BUT I THOUGHT . . .’

We all have thoughts. They are based on our knowledge and understanding. Such thoughts are fashioned from our perspective which may lack pertinent information or be colored by emotions and or prejudice. All of us can recall, when confronted with facts, replying, “But I thought ...”

We are not alone. There are numerous references of Bible characters who, to their dismay, said “I thought.”

OLD TESTAMENT: ‘I THOUGHT’

In the Old Testament, Abraham lied to Abimelech “... because I **thought**, surely there is no fear of God in this place; and they will kill me because of my wife.” Genesis 20:11

Eli thought Hannah was drunk as she prayed in the temple. “Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli **thought** she was drunk.” 1 Samuel 1:13

Naaman, seeking a cure for his leprosy “was furious and went away and said, ‘Behold, I **thought** he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.’” 2 Kings 5:11

NEW TESTAMENT: ‘I THOUGHT’

In the New Testament, Jesus used parables to show the fallacy of Jewish thought. They envisioned themselves receiving preferential treatment because they had been God’s chosen people for so many years. Jesus said in one parable, “And when

those hired first came, they **thought** that they would receive more ...” Matthew 20:10

Simon, a new convert, thought he could buy the gift of laying on of hands from the Apostles. But Peter said to him, “*May your silver perish with you, because you **thought** you could obtain the gift of God with money.*” Acts 8:20

Paul the Apostle said, while explaining his former actions, “*I **thought** to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*” Acts 26:9

These references clearly show that our thoughts are limited by what we know, but God’s thoughts are limitless. Our ability to see with our mind’s eye is feeble when compared with the mind of God. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 11:33, “*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*”

TODAY: ‘I THINK’

So much of what passes for teaching in many churches today is nothing more than an assortment of “I thought.” Some think that the account of creation in Genesis isn’t inspired because it doesn’t agree with their understanding. Others think that a loving God will not condemn anyone to torment for all eternity. Many think that the Bible is only a suggestion book, rather than a rule book (This includes some “deep thinking” theology professors). A great number of individuals think they are going to heaven based on what they think.

THINKING DOESN’T MAKE IT SO

There is everything right and nothing wrong with thinking. However, we need to recognize the limitations of our thoughts.

We must not attempt to make our thoughts the basis for doctrine or religious practices. God has given us the Bible in order to change the thoughts, hearts, and lives of mankind, not the other way around. His word has the power to save. Our thoughts are powerless.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16



UNIVERSAL NEED

There are three universal needs of all mankind: Purpose for Existence, Meaning of Life, Direction for Living. These needs are sought by all in some form or another.

The one who believes in atheism, when seeking to fulfill the universal needs, concludes that being the product of chance evolution, there is no logical explanation for existence, no other purpose than to live for today, with death ending it all. The best answer is summed up in "Let us eat and drink, and enjoy life, for tomorrow we die."

The one who is an agnostic, when seeking such answers is left with uncertainty. "If there is a supreme power" leaves all answers that are presented for acceptance on a shaky foundation.

Those who believe in God as the creator of life, the One who controls it all, and the One who cares about what He created in His own image, have a sure foundation. The Lord God knows our needs, and has freely supplied them. One verse says it all: In the Gospel of John, Chapter Three, Verse Sixteen:

*For God so loved the world that
He gave His only begotten Son
that whosoever believes in Him
should not perish, but have eternal life.*

BELIEVE (TRUST) IN HIM

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 10:28-30

LOVE HIM AND BE LOVED BY HIM

“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” John 14:21

HOPE IN HIM

For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. 1 Timothy 4:10

FAITH, LOVE, HOPE

FAITH

Gives purpose to life. Something to believe in, rely upon, trust, a foundation.

LOVE

Gives meaning to life. Someone to love and be loved.

HOPE

Gives direction to life. Something to look forward to, to secure in the future.

These three are the answers to mankind’s universal needs!

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 1 Thessalonians 5:8-10



‘BASED ON’

Often we hear about a movie that is based on the Bible. But when viewing it, the content seems only vaguely familiar. Names of the characters and some events can be recognized. But that’s about it. Parts are changed, added or deleted.

We need to realize that movies are made to appeal to the viewers. Drama, sex, and other items are injected to “enhance” the storyline. The same can be said about books “based on” the Bible.

Today some religious groups, fellowships, and churches claim to be followers of Christ. They say their teachings, programs, and activities are “based on” the Bible. But when comparing them to the church that Jesus built they are only vaguely familiar. Things are added, deleted, and changed while “marketing” the church. “Give the people what they want and they will come.” And they do. They may join the group, but have they been joined to Christ? Jesus Christ saves. Churches don’t.

BASED ON THE BIBLE ONLY

We can’t rely on movies, books, or church teachings to know Jesus, His teachings, and His saving power. Saving faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Unadulterated and unchanged.

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:9-11

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having

been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

WARNING

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10



There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6



THE STORMS OF LIFE

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall.”
Matthew 7:24-27

Chapters five, six, and seven in the book of Matthew contain Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.” Many instructions, lessons, and warnings are mentioned. And there are teachings that cover what one should do, and not do.

It’s important to not only hear Jesus, but to obey His teachings. Failing to obey will be met with a fall. A great, tragic, fall.

When Jesus finished, his hearers noted that His teachings were not something He had been taught by a scribe or Rabbi, but He taught as one who had authority.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribe. 7:28-29

WARNING

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” 7:21

Those who hear and act upon His teachings will be like a house built on the rock that will withstand the storms. Those who hear and do not act upon His teachings will be like a house built on the sand that will not withstand the storms.

Notice the similarities: Both houses are assailed by wind and storms and floods. Both followers and non-followers of Jesus will experience “the storms of life.” Trials, problems, and temptations will come upon those whose house is built on the sand and on the rock. Those “built on the rock” are not immune. Worldly people have trials. Christians have trials. Worldly people get sick. Christians get sick. Worldly people suffer tragedy. Christians suffer tragedy.

THE LESSON

Yes, life can be hard. Temptations can be strong. Opposition can be great. Persecutions can be violent. Rulers can become tyrants. Laws can become unjust. Friends and family may become part of the opposition. Such has happened in the past, and we know not what the future holds.

That’s why it is so important to be built on The Rock: Jesus and His saving power. Remember, it’s the goal that is important. If the goal is reached, the effort was well spent. Be one who says, like Paul the Apostle, “*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*” Philippians 3:14.

ADMONITION TO HIS DISCIPLES

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately

forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25



SIX WAYS SATAN GAINS THE ADVANTAGE

. . . in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

2 Corinthians 2:11

Whenever churches fail to act as the Lord directs, they become vulnerable to Satan's schemes which are many (Ephesians 6:11). Our adversary realizes that a direct attack on the church usually fails, therefore he works to sidetrack and destroy the church and its members from within. How do churches become vulnerable?

BY CONFORMING TO THE WORLD

Rather than require men conform to God's ways.

It's appealing because it offers large church memberships.

Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:17-24

BY BEING BUSY WITH EVERYTHING BUT SAVING SOULS

Political, social and environmental issues taking precedent.

Involved in everything from day-care to entertainment to recreation.

It's appealing because it addresses the current wants of society.

But to neglect the greatest need is to fail!

Matthew 16:21-26

BY CHURCHES BEING LAX IN DOCTRINE

Doctrine is not considered important.

Some churches “test the wind” to set forth teachings. They adjust their teachings to reflect the state of society at the present time.

Without sound doctrine, churches are “build on sand.”

2 Timothy 1:13, 3:16-17, 4:1-3; Matthew 7:26

BY MEMBERS BECOMING DOGMATIC IN THEIR OPINIONS

Being radical about a position or a belief considered “standing firm for the truth.”

Preferring a “split” over “fellowship”—dividing over opinions.

Misguided attempts to keep the church pure, end up sterilizing it!

Ephesians 4:1-3, Romans 14:1,10-12, Philippians 4:2

BY MEMBERS QUARRELING AND FIGHTING

Confuse contention with “contending for the faith.”

Ephesians 4:26-27, James 4:7-12

BY MEMBERS BEING UNWILLING TO FORGIVE

Refuse those seeking forgiveness, thereby making sure that a barrier remains.

Matthew 6:14-15

YES, SATAN GAINS THE ADVANTAGE

When the church is polluted by worldliness.

When members are busy with other things than His.

When churches seek to attract people by “glitter”
rather than the Gospel.

When “thus says the Lord” is considered radical and
narrow-minded.

When members fuss, fight and splinter the body while
demanding their way.

When members refuse to maintain the spirit and
attitude of Christ.

The advantage is ours; the playing field is tilted in our favor if
we faithfully follow the Lord and heed His commandments. *For
if God is for us, who can be against us?* Romans 8:31



JOYFUL OR MISERABLE?

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.”

Romans 6:17

Some of my most miserable moments in life have been when I was involved in doing what I didn't want to do, participating in what I felt was a waste of time, or doing what I had been talked into doing. These feelings are not mine exclusively. No doubt, you can relate to these feelings. And the reason for the misery is obvious: my heart was not in what I was doing.

We find happiness in doing what we want to do, when we want to do it, in a way we like to do it. In other words, we are happiest when we fulfill our heart's desire. The good feeling is being produced because we believe that what is being done is important and needful; that it is a good investment of our time and energy.

THE HEART MUST BE INVOLVED

Unless the heart is involved, one is surely going to be miserable. We feel a lack of joy when we do “what's expected” of us. In order to be happy we must feel good about what we are doing. This is especially true in serving the Lord.

Commitment without the heart being involved makes one's participation perfunctory, and as a result one feels miserable. Perfunctory (that is, going through the motions mechanically, routinely) participation may give the appearance of true devotion to Christ, but without the heart being in it, it is just so much

activity – a “noisy gong or clanging cymbal.” In no way does it benefit the participant. And, in some ways it’s even detrimental.

HEART-LESS WORSHIP IS VAIN

Unless, and until, one is motivated by a sincere desire to serve the Lord, religion, church membership, and participation in church activities will be but empty actions. It does not bring peace and contentment, but the very opposite.

Without a sincere desire, assembling with the saints will never be the pleasant, refreshing and invigorating experience the Lord intended it to be. The song service does not lift the spirit. The prayers do not make one feel closer to God. The communion service doesn’t produce the true appreciation of Christ’s supreme sacrifice or a great expectation of His second coming. The sermon is tolerated as a necessary thing to endure. And the contribution is seen as a necessary “membership dues.”

But with a genuine desire to serve the Lord, participation in these activities become a joyful and meaningful experience. One that leaves the individual better off because he or she has been involved.

COMMANDS ARE NOT A BURDEN

The Lord knows that it is absolutely necessary for us to have fellowship (joint participation) with others for support and encouragement, as well as to honor Him and the Father in worship. He has not given the admonition so as to place a burden (obligation) upon us. A Christian whose heart is right sees it for what it really is: a necessary participation that helps one maintain and enhance his faith.

When some find themselves feeling miserable while participating in the things of the Lord, they may decide to stay away. But this only produces guilt. So they are torn between the two: feeling guilty for staying away, or being miserable while participating. The only way to resolve the matter is to have a change of heart. Changing one's thinking. Because that's where the problem lies – in the heart.

Once one has given his or her heart to the Lord, the rest falls into place. Living for the Lord becomes a joyful experience. Church services become a refreshing activity. Commands are seen, not as a burden; but guidelines to aid one in doing what is good and right.



PERSONAL FAITH

Personal faith is, well, very personal. It's something that is sacred to me. It's what I hold to be the truth, the facts of the matter. It's part of my inner being: guiding my actions, coloring my vision, affecting my attitude. Personal faith is so much a part of me, that no one has the right to force me to believe what they believe. I have a right to hold my personal beliefs.

Actually this right belongs to everyone. We all have the right to believe what we want to believe. We don't need others telling us that we must accept their beliefs. We don't like others saying their personal belief is better than ours.

However, in saying this, I must accept three things: (1) I have no right to demand or expect others to agree with my personal beliefs. (2) I have no right to expect God to approve of my personal beliefs. (3) I cannot expect my personal faith to save me in and of itself. It has no inherent power.

This generation's desire to accept everybody's personal beliefs has blinded them to a major fact: believing something to be true or right doesn't make it so. Beliefs based on emotions, current trends or moods in society, or personal perceptions have no merit, nor any power to save.

With people believing different things, even among those who lay claim to being Christians, it's evident that some personal beliefs cannot be right. More than holding different beliefs, some hold contrary beliefs.

In Christianity, personal faith must be based on the solid foundation of truth. The Scriptures speak of both personal faith and "the faith" (that system of doctrine or teachings). Personal faith

based on “the faith” is saving faith. Personal beliefs based on anything else is vain faith.

Jesus said of some religious people, “*In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.*” Matthew 7:7. In praying to the Father, He said, “*Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.*” John 17:17. And in another place, He said, “*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*” John 4:24.

Jude spoke of “*the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” Jude 1:3

Paul lamented, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*” Romans 10:1-3

Clearly, while having the right (or power) to believe whatever I want to believe, my personal faith will save me only when it rests solidly on the Gospel of Christ. Not as I want to see it, not as others see it, but as God reveals it.



May my faith and your faith be firmly based on the faith once-for-all delivered.

