

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND AUTHORITY

Colossians 3:16-17

INTRODUCTION:

- A. There is a great need for a standard of authority in all areas of life.
- B. One of the problems facing our country today is the lowering or removing standards of conduct and principle.
- C. Likewise there are many in the religious world, even in the Lord's church, who are striving to revise or remove the standards of God.
- D. Concerning religious matters, we must remember what Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." *Matthew 28:18*.
- E. THE AUTHORITY PRINCIPLE, **Colossians 3:16-17**.
 - 1. All you do in *WORD: teaching*.
 - 2. Or in *DEED: practice*.
- D. In the NAME: in scripture this word has a strong connotation. "*In the name*" signifies the authority by which something is done.
 - 1. Suppose a police officer says, "*Open up in the name of the law*." This means that he is not telling you to open that door on his authority as an individual.
 - 2. When he associates a name with that order, he is telling you the authority by which he issues the command.
 - 3. He is saying he is there as a deputy sherrif, police officer, FBI agent, or whatever.
 - 4. The word "name" signifies the AUTHORITY by which an act is done.
- E. Likewise, everything that WE do in religion must be done by HIS authority.
- F. Let's study the importance of authority and how it is obtained:

I. ONLY THAT WHICH IS AUTHORIZED IS ACCEPTED BY GOD.

- A. Cain and Abel, *Genesis 4*.
 - 1. Abel worshiped in the way God had instructed.
 - 2. Cain did not worship in the way God instructed and God did not accept it.
 - 3. What was the difference? Abel worshiped as God had authorized, (Heb 11:4).
- B. Nadab and Abihu, *Leviticus 10:1-2*.
 - 1. God had not said that they could not use that particular kind of fire.
 - 2. But, he had commanded a *specific* kind, which excluded *all others*.
 - 3. They did what God had NOT authorized.
 - 4. We will look at this example again in a few minutes.
- C. Very simply, "If it is not authorized, it is not accepted."

II. THERE ARE THREE WAYS IN WHICH BIBLE AUTHORITY CAN BE FOUND:

A. *Direct Command.*

1. There is the *Law of Exclusion*. Example: Noah was told to build an Ark.
 - a. When God specified which type of wood to be used, that excluded all others.
 - b. When God gave the dimensions of the Ark, that excluded all other dimensions.
2. There are Generic and Specific commands. "Bring me a red book from the foyer."
 - a. If I had said, "Bring me a book" that would have been a *GENERIC* command.
 - b. I said, "Bring me a red book" and that was a *SPECIFIC* command.

B. *Approved Examples.*

1. Some examples are binding and some are not.
2. To be binding, an example must illustrate a divine command:
 - a. Example of Philip and the chariot, (Acts 8).
 1. A binding example: teaching the gospel.
 2. A non-binding example: walking and running to meet the chariot.
 - b. Example of the Lord's Supper:
 1. Partook of bread and fruit of the vine each Lord's day. Binding.
 2. Met in an upper room. Non-binding.

C. *Implication.*

1. Whatever is *necessary* to carry out the command is implied and authorized.
2. Examples:
 - a. Disciples are told to assemble. A time and a place are necessary.
 - b. Jesus told His followers to preach the gospel. How we are where we go is up to us.
 - c. In singing, you need notes, a leader, books, a melody.

III. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IS NOT AUTHORIZED IN ANY OF THE THREE WAYS EXAMINED TODAY.

A. It is not *commanded*.

B. We don't have an *example* in the NT.

1. There is a total of nine passages in the NT concerning music offered to God:
Matt 26:30; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; James 5:13; Hebrews 13:15; Hebrews 2:12.
2. There is NO mention of instruments of music in the pages of the NT. To use an instrument is to *go beyond that which is written*, **1 Corinthians 4:6**.

C. It is not *necessary* to carrying out the command to sing. USING THE INSTRUMENT IS NOT AN AID, IT IS AN ADDITION OF ANOTHER KIND OF MUSIC NOT AUTHORIZED.

D. To use an instrument is to add to what the Bible teaches us to do in worship, and adding to or taking from the Word of God is prohibited, (Revelation 22:18-19).

IV. THE MAIN OBJECTION OFFERED: “BUT THE BIBLE DOESN’T SAY YOU CAN’T USE AN INSTRUMENT.” *THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE.*

A. Martin Luther’s view of the Silence of the Scriptures:

1. Luther argued that the silence of the scriptures was *always permissive*. He believed that anything not expressly forbidden is allowed in religious practice. Hence he retained images, altars, ornaments, church bells and the like.
2. Luther once wrote: “What is not against Scripture is for Scripture, and Scripture for it.” (A.H. Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, Vol. II, p. 308).

B. However, a study of the Scriptures will show us that silence is sometimes *permissive* and sometimes *restrictive*.

V. THERE IS PERMISSIVE SILENCE:

A. The Bible tells us to go and preach the gospel, *Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.*

1. This specific command offers no leeway. We can preach **ONLY** the truth of the gospel.
2. What about the means or expediciencies necessary to carry out the command?
 - a. We can go by boat, plane, car, bicycle, or even on foot.
 - b. We can use radio, TV, printed page, the Internet, etc.
3. The Bible is silent concerning **HOW** we are to go and the methods we are to use, provided they do not contradict scripture.

B. The scriptures are silent as to some aspects of the Lord’s Supper.

1. We are commanded to do so. To fail to partake, partake in an unworthy manner or on an unspecified day violates the dictate of the scriptures.
2. What about the means or expediciencies necessary to carry out the command?
 - a. Do you buy the unleavened bread or make it yourself?
 - b. Partaking of the L.S. requires some type of container -- cups, plates.
 - c. Using these dishes in no way alters the nature of the command.
3. However, to change the elements on the basis that the scriptures do not specifically state what you cannot use alters the command: what if you decided to use a double cheeseburger and diet Coke instead? That changes a specific command of the scriptures.

C. There are some times when the silence of the scriptures permits us to choose incidentals that expedite carrying out the command.

IV. EXAMPLES OF PROHIBITIVE OR RESTRICTIVE SILENCE:

A. God told Noah to build an ark. *Genesis 6:14.*

1. He was silent concerning the use of any other type of wood. In specifying “gopher wood” to build the ark, God was employing “the law of authority”, also known as “the law of silence” or “the law of exclusion.”

2. If God had merely instructed Noah to build an ark out of wood, then any wood would have been acceptable because of the generic nature of the command.
3. However, when God gave the specific command to build the ark out of gopher wood, that excluded all other types of wood.
4. You can apply the same principle to the specified dimensions of the ark: 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high -- about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet high.

B. Nadab and Abihu, *Leviticus 10:1-2*.

1. They were consumed for offering strange (profane) fire before God.
2. Did God tell them not to use the particular fire they used?
3. He did not have to name every kind of fire not to be used because He specified what kind to use.

C. God's legislation concerning *the Levitical priesthood*, **Hebrews 7:12-14**.

1. "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." **Verse 14**.
2. The writer of Hebrews was discussing the priesthood of Christ.
3. Jesus could not have been a priest in the Levitical system because He was of the tribe of Judah.
4. There was no command that stated: "Thou shalt not serve as a priest if you are a member of the tribe of Judah".
5. However, the implication of Hebrews 7:12-14 is clear. No one from Judah could serve as a priest because of the silence of the law of Moses regarding such a practice.

D. ILLUSTRATION FROM JUDGE JUDY – "Is Silence Consent?" (See below)

V. WHAT IF SOMEONE ASKS, "WHY DON'T YOU HAVE MUSIC IN YOUR CHURCH?"

- A. Tell them that WE DO.
- B. We are attempting to do only what is authorized by the Lord in the NT.
- C. This could open the door for a good teaching opportunity.

CONCLUSION:

- A. ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS ONE VERSE IN THE NT THAT AUTHORIZES INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC.
- B. Remember the statement that came from the Restoration Movement: "Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent."

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IS SILENCE CONSENT?

Judge Judy has become a popular figure. After serving over 20 years as a judge in family court in New York, she has brought her courtroom to television.

A recent episode caught my attention. A young man had been engaged to house sit for two weeks while the owner went on vacation. The lady left detailed instructions about what was to be done, along with permission to eat the food in the house which she had prepared. Her instructions were so complete that she even told about the frozen meals, how they could be thawed, and at what temperature they should be cooked.

During the course of the two weeks the young man was house sitting he did something for which he did not have permission. He drove the owner's car, and caused over a thousand dollars damage. He now found himself before Judge Judy. His defense was that her silence gave consent: "She didn't say that I couldn't use her car!"

Quick as flash, Judge Judy asked the young man, "If you saw my car on the street, would you take it for a drive?" "No," he replied. "Why not?" countered the judge, "I didn't say that you couldn't use it."

In a heartbeat the judge ruled that silence did not give consent, and the house sitter owed for the damages incurred because he took the car without permission.

It seems to me that there is a lesson in this for the religious world. It is one thing to have authority to do something, and quite a different matter to argue that we can do whatever we want in worship because the Bible doesn't prohibit it.

Have you ever heard the expression: "Speak where the Bible speaks; and be silent where the Bible is silent?"

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