

HURDLES TOO HIGH

(Colossians 3:16-17)

I. The presence of singing only in New Testament passages.

- a. Whenever you read about singing when it comes to the worship activity of Christians in the New Testament, singing is what is mentioned.
- b. The word translated singing in Colossians 3:16 is what we know in English as “psallo”.
 - i. This word, in its early usage, was used not only for singing but also for playing an instrument.
 - ii. However, according to those studied in koine Greek, this word was not used for instrumental music in New Testament times.
 - iii. It was strictly used for singing.
 - iv. In fact, the final definition in Strong’s concordance for psallo is “in the NT to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song”.
 - v. Also, another Greek word translated “sing”, which is found in Revelation 15:3 is “ado”, which means to utter words in a melodic pattern.
- c. Nowhere in the New Testament do you see Christians being told to play instruments, only to sing.
- d. An interesting observation is that the translators, beginning with those that translated the KJV, were all members of religious bodies that used instrumental music in worship, however, despite obvious bias, they still translated the Greek “singing and making melody in your heart”.
- e. The Greek experts understood the meaning of the words.

II. No instruments of music in the early church.

- a. Br. Everett Ferguson has done some extremely scholarly work to show that instrumental music was absent from the early church until many hundreds of years after her establishment.
- b. Br. Ferguson is member of the church of Christ, but his work is so scholarly, it is respected by many who are of very different religious persuasions.
- c. Br. Ferguson wrote, “The historical argument is quite strong against early Christian use of instrumental music in church”.
- d. In a book entitled “Instrumental Music In The Public Worship Of The Church”, written by a Presbyterian named John Girardeau, Mr. Girardeau laid out the case historically of only singing in Christian worship for many centuries and used doctrinal grounds to prove it.
 - i. On pages 95-96 he concluded one argument with this statement: The abolition of the temple worship, so far as it was peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, has now been proved by an appeal to the nature of the case, to the statements of the New Testament Scriptures, and to the awful providence of God; and as it was before incontestably shown that

instrumental music was employed in that worship, so far as public religious services of God's people were concerned, it follows that that kind of music is, with those limitations, abolished, and that its use in the Christian church is contrary to the Word and will of God."

ii. He went on to show the similarity in synagogue worship, not temple worship, to the worship of Christians, and made the point that instrumental worship was not found in synagogue worship at that time and stated, "As, then, the use of instrumental music was unknown in the worship of the synagogue it was not introduced in the Christian church."

e. I realize that there is no Bible in this point, but to show it historically is a very valid reason to not use the instrument in worship and simply sing.

III. How God dealt with acts of unauthorized worship throughout history.

a. Why did God tell Cain that his worship was not acceptable?

b. What was wrong with Nadab and Abihu's worship in Leviticus 10:1-4?

c. What was wrong with what Jeroboam's worship in 1 Kings 12?

d. Since God does not care if we change the worship, why was His reaction so harsh in those instances?

e. God did seem to care if worship was altered under the Patriarchal and Mosaic systems of worship.

i. Do we really think that God would lose His desire for obedience in acts of worship under His Son's covenant?

ii. A covenant that is described as better in Hebrews 8:6.

f. God has always dealt with departures in worship harshly, so we must believe He would today as well.

IV. The fact that God draws conclusion using the silence of the scriptures.

a. Hebrews 7:14.

i. Jesus could become a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, but not under the Old Testament rule.

ii. The reason is that God had specified only those of the tribe of Levi and of the family of Aaron could be high priests under Old Testament rule.

b. Nowhere did the Old Testament explicitly say a high priest could not come from another tribe, but it didn't have to.

c. What the Old Testament specified in this regard was sufficient.

d. Notice that this argument is made in the New Testament.

e. The use of the silence of the scriptures to draw a conclusion in this case shows that using the same method of argument in other cases is valid.

i. As we mentioned in the first point, we are only told to sing in the New Testament.

ii. The scriptures are silent concerning the use of mechanical instruments of worship, therefore there is no authority for their use.

V. Authority can and must be determined.

- a. Colossians 3:17 – we must have the authority to do whatever we do and this included worship.
- b. Why do we sing at all?
 - i. Is it just because someone came up with the idea to do that?
 - ii. I've never seen that argument made.
- c. The basis for worship comes from the teaching of the New Testament.
- d. Because of that fact, nearly everyone would say there are boundaries to what can and can't be done in worship.
- e. If there is and must be divine authority for what we do, and rules for worship that are objectively determined, there must be acts that fall outside the bounds of what is authorized.
- f. Where are the boundary markers to be found if not in scripture?
 - i. It becomes completely subjective if they can be established anywhere else.
 - ii. Only the Lord has the authority to establish bounds and His bounds must be honored.

Outline from an article by Neal Pollard