



**Forest Hill  
Church of Christ**

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Matthew Martin, Associate  
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**VISIT US SOON!**

**Sunday:**

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.  
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

**Wednesday:**

Bible Study .....7:00 P.M.

**HOME OF THE  
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Words of the Master (Memphis  
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**IS INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC FORBIDDEN?**

Todd Clippard

In John 4:24, Jesus told the woman at the well, "God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." This single verse contains two imperatives, or absolutes, in regard to worshipping God. First, we must worship God in spirit; second, we must worship God in truth.

To worship God in spirit means that our worship springs forth from the inside, that is, it comes from our heart. God does not accept worship that is not heartfelt. In Malachi 1:13, one of the reasons God rejected the Jews' worship was because they considered it a weariness and a burden to worship God. Paul told the church at Corinth to sing with the spirit and the understanding also.

To worship God in truth means to worship in accordance with his divine prescriptions. God's word is truth (John 17:17). Therefore, to worship in truth means to worship according to the precepts of God's word. The apostle Paul commanded the Colossians, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). The phrase "in the name of Lord Jesus Christ" means "by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ" (see similar invocations at 1 Corinthians 1:10; 5:4-5; and 2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Thus, John 4:24 demands that all worship be according to the right attitude and with the right action. Any worship that does not meet the criteria of John 4:24 transgresses the law of God, and is thus sin.

Does the use of instrumental music meet both criteria? It does not. While one may worship with an instrument and a right heart/attitude, the use of instrumental music in worship cannot be done with the authority of Christ. Every mention of music in the New Testament is to singing, and only to singing. There is not one verse in the New Testament that commands Christians to play an instrument in worship. Neither is there a single example of the use of instrumental music in the church of the New Testament. Finally, there is not a single verse that even implies the first Christians ever used or considered using instrumental music in worship.

The Psalms, Psalm 150 in particular, have long been used in defense of the use of instrumental music. However, because Psalms is part of the old covenant, the force and authority of these texts has been rendered impotent by the New Testament, the new covenant (Heb. 9:15). Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:14-16 both teach that the old law has been done away with, having been nailed to the cross in the death of Jesus Christ. Paul described the old law as a dead husband in Romans 7:1-4. Therefore, any appeal to the Old Testament for justification of one's religious faith and practice is to attempt spiritual polygamy.

Paul condemned the Galatian Christians for their attempt to justify themselves by the old law, saying "You have become estranged from Christ, you who

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attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4 NKJV). In verse 3, Paul said anyone attempting to keep any part of the old law was debtor to keep it all. Will those who appeal to the Old Testament for justification of instrumental music also implement all the other practices of the old law such as the Levitical priesthood, the keeping of the feasts, the burning of incense, and the call for capital punishment for a host of sins including fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and obstinacy on the part of children? If not, why not?

Finally, the question seeks a specific prohibition against using instrumental music. Will one affirm that all things not specifically forbidden by the New Testament are permissible in the worship of God? If so, by what standard would one forbid worshipping Satan? There is no specific prohibition in the New Testament regarding devil worship. Therefore, using the questioner’s reasoning, devil worship must be permissible.

“But wait!” you say. “The Bible says to worship God.” Indeed it does, but it doesn’t explicitly prohibit devil worship. In like fashion, the Bible says to sing. In fact, every passage in the New Testament prescribes or describes singing at the only kind of music in the worship of the New Testament church. In specifying singing, God excluded every other kind of music form. Just like in Genesis 6 when God specified gopher wood in the construction of the ark. When God specified gopher wood, he did so to the exclusion of all other types of wood.

Singing, playing an instrument, and singing with an instrument are three different types of music among many that might be listed (including humming, whistling, yodeling, etc). To do one is not to do the others. God has specified singing, thus excluding all other music forms.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). We are to walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Anything that goes beyond the word of God is transgression and thus sin (1 John 3:4). Instrumental music in worship cannot be done in faith. It goes beyond (transgresses) the word of God. Thus, the use of instrumental music in worship is a sin. This is why faithful members of the church of Christ oppose the use of instrumental music in worship.

(from *The Words of Truth*, September 2006)

**2+2=???**

Chuck Webster

Children’s questions are innumerable. Some are manageable (e.g., How big is the moon? What makes the wheels on the car roll?...); others are more challenging (e.g., Why is the sky blue? How do we breathe?...). Then there are some that fall into a different category. A few years ago we began teaching Bailey fundamental math. In basic addition, we showed her that if you hold up two fingers, then hold up an additional two fingers, you’re now holding up four fingers: “See, Bailey, two plus two equals four.” On one occasion she responded, “Why does two plus two equal four? *I* want it to equal three!” Our response was, “It doesn’t matter what *you* want it to be. Two plus two equals four no matter what. That’s just the way it is!” She needed to understand that there are certain facts in life that you accept—that’s just the way it is. And no matter how hard we want those facts to change, facts are facts. The same principle holds true in religion—some things are true regardless of our preference.

Take, for example, the topic of baptism: what is its’ purpose? The Bible teaches that the sinner’s response to God’s grace is faith (John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3), confession (Acts 8:37), and baptism. Baptism is the act of obedience that puts us into contact with the death and blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3 ff.), which washes our sins away (Acts 22:16). Peter told the Jews on Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). The same apostle later wrote that “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). But in spite of these passages, many want to believe otherwise, that is, that two plus two equals three. “But I want to believe that baptism has nothing to do with washing my sins away, with saving my soul...But I want to believe that baptism is something I do because I’m saved, not in order to be saved...” Sounds a bit like Naaman, doesn’t it? When he was asked to dip in the Jordan River to be cleansed of his leprosy, can you hear him mumbling, “What in the world could the Jordan have to do with my being cleansed? That’s ridiculous!” Two plus two equals four, Naaman. And the same holds true today. Our kind response to folks about baptism should be similar to parents’ response to their children: “It doesn’t matter what we want it to be—two plus two equals four—regardless of our preference.”

If God said it, that settles it, and we must believe it. Facts are facts.

**AM I CONTENT,  
NO MATTER WHAT? (Part 3)**

Matthew Martin

What was it that Paul understood, that allowed him to be content in his circumstances?

**HE KNEW TO TRUST THE  
PROVIDENCE OF GOD**

Paul could be content in life because he understood that God's providence was with him. Such assurance allowed him to write:

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (Phil. 4:6)

Only a person who was truly content in life could say he never worried, and was never anxious. Now don't take Paul to mean that you cannot be concerned about some things. There is a difference between anxiety and concern: Anxiety is worrying over things I cannot control.

When I worry about things that are out of my control, I am essentially telling God that I don't have faith in Him to protect me. One should have faith, like Paul, in the providence of God.

Recall the words of Christ:

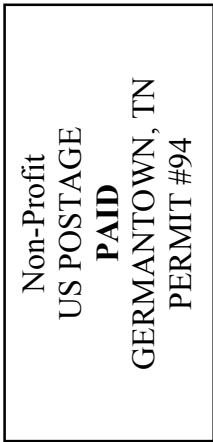
Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:31-33).

What comforting words from the Master. If we simply put God, His kingdom, and righteousness as our priorities, then all of the things that so many people worry about would not matter.

Earlier in Matthew 6, Christ used an illustration of a bird. A bird does not worry about where or what its' next meal will be. God takes care of that. Are we better than birds? Of course (Matt. 6:26). So we should certainly let God and his providence take care of us.

Paul could be content despite all of the things he endured in life. He could be content: because he knew to whom he belonged; because he knew his life was not priority; and because he knew he could trust the providence of God.

May we, like Paul, be content in our lives.



**The Forest Hill News**  
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