

## 9. The Music Commanded of the Church in the 21st Century

The 21st century sees many, many innovations to the worship, which Jesus and the Apostles did not command. These include the centuries-old issue of singing and instrumental music in the worship. However, these innovations now include, but are not limited to, hand clapping, arm waving, dancing, choruses, choirs, dramas, choral readings, candle burning, and the singling out of lead singers. The list could go on *ad infinitum*. The case gets down to this proposition: Must 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians worship in the manner specifically commanded in the 1<sup>st</sup> century by the Lord and his apostles, or are we free to add to the worship as we see fit, thus making it a contemporary worship. It should be clear to sensible people that the New Testament cannot tell us everything not to do—the list would be endless.

This lesson will focus on the principles of interpretation that to follow in order to maintain the integrity of the New Testament and the word of Jesus Christ and his apostles. This lesson applies these principles to establish the New Testament pattern for singing in the church. They will also apply to every other situation where innovation attempts to override the specific pattern of teaching in the New Testament.

### ***The New Testament, a Pattern for Work and Worship***

In matters of religion, man must follow the pattern of sound teaching. In 2 Tim 1:13, Paul wrote, “13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.” In the 1st century, the apostles made very clear that there was this *pattern of sound teaching* and that there was also a *pattern of the world*. Paul said in Rom 12:2, “2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” In the question of what kind of music, singing or playing, one must ask, “What is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God?” In the New Testament, every single mention of music in the church specifies singing. When we test and approve what God's will is, it will have to be singing.

People of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, who permissively add to the worship innovations of their own liking or invention, ignore that to change the pattern given to us is to be an enemy of the cross of Christ, according to Phil 3:17-19:

17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Our salvation and our deliverance depend on following this pattern. Rom 6:17-18 teaches:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

The word *form* used in this passage is from the word, *tupos*, translated *pattern* in the previously cited verses. This form of teaching that we are to follow comes from only one source—the God-breathed scriptures of 2 Tim 3:16-17:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The scriptures equip us for every good work. In the case of music, we then can only use the music of the pattern of sound words found in the God-breathed scriptures. That music is singing.

## ***Understanding Generic and Specific Commands***

Innovators in the manner and means of worship in the church ignore God's teaching and examples regarding generic and specific commands. From the beginning, God held man to keeping his specific commands. For example, when the New Testament specifies singing, it excludes other specific kinds of music. Paul told us exactly how our music (general) is to be singing (specific) in Eph 5:19, "19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord." In Col 3:16, he restated the same specific command, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." This same requirement to obey the specific commands of God was true from the very beginning. In Gen 4:2-7, we find Cain the son of Adam made a sacrifice (general) of fruits of the soil (specific):

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

All innovators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should get the message, "Sin is crouching at your door." If the church is to master sin, we must do only what is accepted—sing and make melody in our hearts.

In Lev 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, used unauthorized fire in their worship. Here fire is generic and unauthorized fire is specific:

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

All innovators should get this message, too. Unauthorized worship, contrary to the commands of the Lord, results in death before the Lord. Noah, in contrast, to these first two examples, fulfilled God's specific command when he built the ark of gopher (specific) wood (generic). Gen 6:13-14 gives God's command, "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood."

## ***Conclusion: Guiding Rules of Faith and Practice in Worship***

Jesus and the apostles laid down the guiding rules of faith and practice in worship to the Lord, Jesus, and God, almighty.

The worship cannot be of our own invention, but it must be of the Father. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. Jesus taught in Matt 7:21-23:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Our worship cannot be from the traditions of our families or from men. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. In Matt 15:3-9, Matthew recorded:

3 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah

was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain;

their teachings are but rules taught by men."

Our worship cannot be from what was done under the Old Testament. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. Paul wrote in Col 2:13-17:

He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. . . .16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. . . .

Our worship cannot be based on what we like or what makes us feel good. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. Paul continued in Col 2:20-23:

20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

### ***Study Questions from the Scripture***

1. 2 Tim 1:13: What is the pattern of sound teaching?
2. Rom 12:2: To what pattern are we not to conform? How can we test and approve what God's will is? Whose will is good, pleasing, and perfect?
3. Phil 3:17-19: Whose example are we to follow? By what pattern are we to live? What does Paul call those who do not live by this pattern?
4. Rom 6:17-18: What did the Romans obey? From what were they set free?
5. 2 Tim 3:16-17: What is God-breathed? For what do the scriptures equip us?
6. Eph 5:19: What music does Paul require?
7. Col 3:16: With what kind of music are we to teach and admonish one another?
8. Gen 4:2-7: What kind of sacrifice did God require? What did Cain offer? How did God look upon the sacrifice of Cain? What did God tell Cain that he would have to do to be accepted? What is crouching at the door?
9. Lev 10:1-2: What was wrong with the fire of used by Nadab and Abihu? What is unauthorized fire? How did they die?
10. Gen 6:13-14: What did God require Moses to use to make the Ark? Which part is a general command, and which part is a specific command?
11. Matt 7:21-23: Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? Can one prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles and still be lost?
12. Matt 15:3-9: May family traditions break the commands of God? What kind of worship results from rules taught by men?
13. Col 2:13-23: What happened to the Law of Moses? What must we no longer follow? Where is the reality of the Christian religion? What is the destiny of worldly practices?