

The Bulwark

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TICKLING THE IVORIES (part two)

"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19)

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16)

Seen above are two passages of scripture that serve as the benchmark for the type of music that God has authorized. A simple reading of the passages, minus any former bias should serve to clearly identify what it is that God desires. However a problem arises when one tries to squeeze more out of what is exclusively set forth.

The argument that is proffered for something more than acapella singing centers around the Greek word "*psallo*". But what needs to be kept in mind is the sentence structure as well as the definition of "*psallo*". In the Greek lexicons, which are considered as being reputable by Bible scholars of the day, show the developmental aspects of the language. They note the meaning of the word during that particular time, which in this case is the first century. Nearly all lexicons show that the word "*psallo*" means to "sing a hymn" or "to celebrate the praises of God in song". In no place is there even implied to the slightest degree the use of some sort of mechanical instrument of music.

That is not to say there is no reference to an instrument at all. The instrument referred to is the heart. The individual who is engaged in singing songs of praise is vocalizing what fills the heart. To in essence pluck at one's own heart strings. Something so simple and direct that unless due to physical impairment, all of us can perform. Now stop and think, IF it were referring to any

other instrument other than the heart and brought forth by the voice; it would demand that each one of us learn to play an instrument in order to accompany self in the singing.



The operative of the passages in both Ephesians and Colossians is found in the individual using the voice in order to teach and admonish. Again think back to the sentence structure of these verses, and one can see that this holds true. Likewise it blends together perfectly with the definition of the word "*psallo*" as it was used in the first century. Moreover, it would appear that this understanding regarding the type of music used in worship during the first century was practiced for centuries upon centuries.

Justin Martyr (100ad-165ad) is quoted as having written with respect to the type of music present in worship, "...but only the use of plain song". A full reading of what he wrote would reveal that it was thought the addition of musical instruments was "childish". Yet another voice from history, that being Augustine (345ad), who wrote, "...musical instruments were not used..." Fredrick Louis Ritter, in his book HISTORY OF MUSIC FROM THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE PRESENT TIME writes on page twenty-eight, "We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part of the religious devotion of the first Christian congregations. It was, however, purely vocal."

Paul in 1Corinthians, chapter fourteen writes in verse fifteen, "*What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.*" One would also be wise to consider James 5:13 and Romans 15:9. In part three more from the voice of history will be seen as well as noted "theologians". (wbe)