

We're Coming To You!

David Halbrook

In Acts 16, Paul, Silas, and Timothy went to a riverside where people gathered and spoke to some of them about truth. Likewise, next week people will be gathering at the fair grounds of Independence County, so we're going to be there and hope to speak with some of them, including you!

Do you have a question you've wanted to ask us? Do you have a comment you've wanted to tell us? Stop by our booth and ask or tell us your response to our articles. We will be offering free CDs and tracts on various Bible subjects, such as "When will God save me?" "What's wrong with playing songs to God?," "Why is modest dress a big deal?," "Why I Left the Baptist Church." These are always available to you, but this will be a convenient time for you to pick one up, compare what you read with the Bible, and then come back and discuss it with us.

Jesus came to earth, gave His life, arose, and provided the gospel to guide all men to heaven. Each week, we spread that message in these articles. Next week, please stop by our booth at the fair, introduce yourself, and let's see what we can learn together from God's word.

Editor's Note: Every year, our fair booth provides many opportunities. Here, the community can see that we are not merely sitting at our building waiting for them to come to us but out "seeking the lost." It is an opportunity for someone who is diligently seeking God to find Him through us. It is an opportunity for you to *redeem the time* (Col. 4:5). It is an opportunity to teach your children that finding the lost is your family's job (not just "the preacher's"). This is not the only way to serve God this week, but it has as much potential for good as anything you will do this week. (Our *Arkansas Weekly* article invites readers to see us there)

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Please check the lists of various assignments and work needing volunteers..

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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What Is Wrong With Playing Songs?

David Halbrook

Worship is one of the oldest activities of humans. For thousands of years, most humans have regularly made time to acknowledge that what they have is given to them by a higher being, usually called God. Some of the more unusual ways some people have worshiped is by drinking blood or sacrificing humans. Some of the more usual ways people have worshiped is by burning animals, singing, or praying. It is worth asking "Did the true God accept all kinds of worship?" and "Why did people worship in these ways?" Then you should ask "Does the true God accept my worship?" and "Why do I worship the way I do?". This article is going to ask these questions and apply them to the practice of worshiping God by playing songs on organs, pianos, guitars, drums, etc. The Bible will provide the answers we need.

Today, does the true God accept worship involving playing songs?

Jesus taught that worship, which once was in some ways limited to the temple in Jerusalem, could be offered in any place. He also said that God is seeking worship that is offered in spirit and truth (John 4:21, 23). Notice that since God is seeking worship and worship is offered to Him, we must be sure that He is pleased with the worship we offer.

We know that God is pleased with songs that are sung to Him for the apostle Paul sang to God and taught Christians to sing to Him (Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19). In 1 Corinthians 14:15, 26 it is clear that when the church gathered, they were singing. Paul's life and words prove that God accepts singing. Other verses that show us the use of vocal music by Christians for worship include Colossians 3:16 and James 5:13. Singing is the only type of music that we read Christians offering to God in both private and public worship.

We can probably all agree that God accepts worship involving singing songs to Him. But does God accept songs that are played to Him? At one time He did. When

we read the Old Testament it is clear that God accepted songs that were played, but the Old Testament is equally clear that God also accepted animal sacrifices, burning incense, and burning food and drink offerings in addition to worship by playing musical instruments. Israel knew that God accepted worship in these ways because God's law to them proved it. But ask yourself "Am I trying to please God today by following God's instructions to Israel?" We learn what God accepts today by studying and following the New Testament which is the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). This is where I find what kind of marriage, speech, attitude, and worship God accepts today. Because we cannot find Christians playing songs or being taught to play songs to God, the only conclusion is that like burning incense, circumcision, and burnt offerings of animals or food, some things were only accepted by God during the time of the old law. Paul called this law "a tutor" and then said "But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Gal. 3:23-26).

Why do you worship God by playing songs?

We might ask the ancient Mayans "Why did you worship by making children a sacrifice?". Also, we all must ask ourselves why we worship the way we do. Here are a few reasons people today often give for worshiping God by playing songs—

1) *"The book of Psalms is full of examples and instruction to play songs to the Lord."* This is true. For example Psalm 149:3 says "sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp." Verses 6-9 also say to praise God with "a two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron." This psalm is written by and for people under Moses' law—are you following this law today? (Gal. 3:26-29)

2) *"The New Testament does not say that instrumental music is wrong, so God must still accept it today."* This is a *huge* point. If you limit your ideas of sin only to the things God has specifically forbidden in the New Testament then would the following things be wrong: spreading grape jelly on the bread of the Lord's Supper, mixing apple juice with the grape juice of the Lord's Supper, or practicing polygamy? In these cases God has shown us what He approves of (unleavened bread, grape juice, one man and one woman in marriage). Anything other than these things is wrong, isn't it? Through Christ and the apostles, God showed that He approved of Christians singing to Him, but unless He shows us that playing to Him is right, we cannot assume it is right. Yes, in some verses God gives a list of sins, but none of those verses is a complete list of all sins. For example, Paul ends the list of "the works of the flesh" by saying "...and the like" (Gal. 5:21) showing that he was not naming

every single sin. Offering God worship by playing songs to Him makes us guilty of adding to the plan of worship He revealed in the New Testament.

If you worship God by playing songs for a different reason, what is your reason? We would be interested in hearing it.

Conclusion

If you have read this article, you likely are interested in pleasing God, and we are glad that you have that goal. This is our goal also. Because worship is God's idea for man, and not man's own invention, we must learn God's plan for worship. We must remain within the limits God has revealed, and neither add to, nor subtract from them. Give thanks to God with the fruit of your lips and know He will be pleased (Heb. 13:15).

"This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus." 2 Timothy 1:15-18

It is both heartbreaking and inspirational to read these words from Paul's final epistle to young Timothy. How sad that those from Asia, evidently ashamed of Paul's imprisonment, would turn away from a man who had given himself so tirelessly on behalf of others. Remember that it was in Asia where he had "fought with beasts" (1 Cor. 15:32). On the other hand, how inspirational to read of Onesiphorus zealously searching for Paul and bringing refreshment to him.

Who are we more like? When brothers and sisters suffer for the cause of Christ are we Phygellus or Onesiphorus? Are we embarrassed to be associated with those under attack for standing for the truth or do we unashamedly seek to encourage them? Could this be the determining factor as to whether or not we receive mercy in that Day?

One more thought. If, like Paul, we are hurt by a Phygellus or Hermogenes, does it blind us to the kindness of an Onesiphorus? May God help us all not to become so embittered by brethren who disappoint us that we are blind to the good brethren who stand with us for the truth's sake.

[John R. Gibson 01/25/14 - *Christian Living*; An assortment of brief notes previously published on Facebook.]