

Making Melody In Our Hearts

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Let's pray.

Father, we're thankful for Your Word. Father, we're thankful for Your glorious work of inspiration, and we thank You Holy Spirit, as the peculiar person of the Godhead who was involved in the inspiration. We thank You, Lord, for Your sweet providence in preserving Your Word, as You promised to our generation. And we thank You for causing it to be translated into our mother tongue. Blessed Holy Spirit, as Thou didst inspire the holy men of old, prophets and apostles, to bring down this Word, please illuminate the Word for us now, for it is Your particular office to guide Your people into all truth. So shed Your light upon this Word, and help us to understand it. Dear Lord, we're thankful that You've given us a heart that we desire to praise Thee. We're thankful that You gave us a new heart, that You put a song in our mouth, that You put a melody in our hearts, and we're thankful that You gave us the faculty of being able to praise Thee through song. And none of us here would claim to be professionals. We do have some in this congregation who are quite gifted and trained in the musical art. Some others of us have learned a good many of the tunes, having been in Your assembly since childhood, and had just an elementary amount of training. But Lord You have blessed Your people with the desire to praise You in song, and we're thankful that You've permitted us to mix our voices with the voices of the other saints this afternoon. We're thankful for this time of worship. Father, I pray now that You'd help me as I instruct Your people. I pray that Your Holy Spirit would help us. Please guide my thoughts. Please give me a good recollection of what I've studied in Your Word. Please help us all to be good hearers. Help us all to give attention as the Word goes forth. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

In Ephesians 5 in verse 19 we read,

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

The title of the message this evening is "Making Melody in Your Heart." What a joy to have a song put into our hearts by the regenerating grace of God. What a joy when the Holy Spirit has worked in us, and regenerated us, and we've been born again, and He's given us a new heart, and we can indeed do as this scripture says to sing and make

melody in our heart. And what a joy it is to mix our voices with other saints in corporate worship. What a joy that is. And what a blessing that the Lord gave us the faculties of our mouth, and our tongue, and our larynx, vocal cords, our lungs, everything of the way that the Lord has made us, so that we could sing praises unto Him. What a joy it is to mix our voices with our family in family worship. And what a joy to know that we shall at last join the heavenly choir to sing perfect praise to the Lord Jesus Christ in eternity. I love that saying in Pilgrim's Progress at the end of Book I when Christian and Hopeful cross the River of Death to go over into the Celestial City, and they take their place in that celestial choir, and they find that they knew the song, and they find that they knew the melody, and they were able to sing in a way that they never had before in praise to the Lord Jesus Christ and thanks for His saving grace that had delivered them there safely.

Christ sang with His disciples. We read that at the end of the first communion service. They sang a hymn, and they went out. Some of the scholars that have studied it think that they are pretty sure which of the Psalms it was that they sang on that occasion. That would have been a wonderful thing, wouldn't it, to have actually sung a song with Christ Himself, to be able to sing? Christ set us that example. He sang Himself, and sang with His disciples.

Paul and Silas sang when they were in prison in Philippi. You read that in Acts 16, when they were arrested and taken to prison for preaching the Gospel, they, at midnight, sang praises unto God. That could be a helpful evangelistic tool. That may have been one of the things that got the attention of the other prisoners, and particularly the jailor who was converted that night. No doubt, as he heard them singing praises, he was made more aware of the fact that these were preachers of the Gospel and heralds of the Gospel of Christ, and it prompted him to ask his notable question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And to hear the glorious answer, "You don't do anything. You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But they were singing there in prison.

Now, my message today concerns this delightful duty to sing praise to God. I want to preach this afternoon about this part of our worship of singing, and, I'm going to tell you up front, this message is prompted by a question from a recent visitor to our assembly. We've had a recent visitor in our assembly that has questioned specifically why we do not have the mechanical instrument in our assembly and actually, I wanted to preach on this for a while. I think I mentioned it at Fellowship Table several months ago that I intended sometime in the near future to preach on this, and my brother's question has prompted me to get busy and make some preparations to bring this message for you this afternoon. I have wanted to preach on this subject, not to convince you, per se, because we've all been in agreement on this since we came together as an assembly. It's one of the things that we saw from the very beginning that we were like-minded in, and so, this message is not to convince any of you. I know all of you are already convinced that the way we would conduct our worship here is in lines with scriptural order, and nobody in this assembly is going to be wanting to know when we are going to be setting aside some money to buy a piano or anything like that. That's not my reason for it, but rather I do want to increase our understanding, and there is something about having our pastor preach on a subject from the pulpit that reinforces what we already believe. We also want the younger

members of this assembly and our unconverted children to have biblical knowledge concerning this and know why we do things the way we do, and we want all of us to be able to answer those that have questions, and answer critiques if we have them, and to be able to give biblical reasons for our practice.

I want to start by saying that in this message, we're not trying to start a fight with anybody. We fellowship with other assemblies that do use the mechanical instruments in their worship, and we're not throwing rocks at them, and we're not criticizing them, and we're not declaring them out of order or anything foolish like that, and we're not setting up lines of fellowship strictly on whether or not we have a musical instrument in the assembly or not. In connection with that I have to point out that the people known as, who call themselves, Church of Christ, we know them as Campbellites, followers of Alexander Campbell, they sing a capella, like we do here. We're not trying to establish fellowship with them. Those people do not have the Gospel. They do not preach the Gospel, at least from what I've ever heard on the radio, or read any of their writings, or ones I've talked to. I'm not going to say all of them, because I haven't met all of them. There may be some local assembly out there under that name and in that connection that preaches the Gospel, I don't know. But the ones that I know generally teach baptismal regeneration, salvation by works, falling from grace, and they're just rank Arminians or Pelagians, and we'll leave it to the Lord whether any of them are Christians, we'll leave that to the Lord.

So, what I'm making my point in starting out today is that we're not drawing lines of fellowship over whether or not an assembly does everything just exactly like we do. We seek our fellowship first of all on the lines of the Gospel, who preaches the Gospel, and who is faithful in declaring Christ, and preaching, "Thus saith the Lord," and who is faithful in practical matters and in teaching the Lord's people not only justification but sanctification; teaching not only free grace, but teaching how those that are saved by free grace ought to live. We establish our lines of fellowship along that way. We also will say that we hope no one will break fellowship with us, because we refuse to bring pianos, violins, guitars, banjos, or saxaphones, or other instruments into the corporate worship of the church. So we just say that we wish to order our own local assembly by, "Thus saith the Lord," and we believe we are acting accordingly by the disuse of mechanical instruments. We believe we are acting according to "Thus saith the Lord." If other assemblies feel like they're acting within Scripture, and they're preaching the Gospel, then we love them and embrace them, and we fellowship with them. And in case some of my dear brethren who use the musical instrument happen to hear this message by CD or other ways that we're heard on the internet, then, brethren, we're not picking a fight with you. We just ask you that you leave us to our conscience as we do you to yours.

So with that little bit of background here, my first point here this evening is to look at the text that we have begun with here, because I do want to begin with a positive note. There is going to be much in the message this afternoon that will be of a negative note. I'd always rather preach positive if I can, although there is much biblical warrant for preaching negatively, preaching against that which is wrong, and that there is just as much "Thus not saith the Lord" as there is "Thus saith the Lord" that has to be preached.

But I do want to begin this afternoon with a positive note and I'm looking at Ephesians 5:19, and, again, the name of our message is "Making Melody In Our Hearts." And the text says, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

So let's notice first of all that we have a command to sing. We have a command to sing. Singing is not something that we do just because we like to sing, just because some of us do have musical talents, and some of you do. Notice I didn't say us, but some of you do have much musical talent. In fact, the brother who asked me this question recently phrased the question this way, "Do you disuse the piano out of conviction or out of convenience?" This is what my answer was, I said, "Actually, we have some accomplished musicians in our congregation. That if we did use the instrument we could do quite well with that." So some have a talent for singing, but it's not just for that that we sing. We have a command to sing, but I will say that it is a command with which Christians joyfully comply. Singing is a command that Christians joyfully comply with. In Psalm 40:3 we read, "He hath put a new song in my mouth." And He has. The Lord gave us a new heart, and He put a song in our mouth, and He's given His people a new nature that they joyfully obey this command to praise Him in song.

My dear brother from a Muskogee, Oklahoma that's been an under shepherd of my soul with John Ashwood, he has over the years preached and taught his people to make their children sing. He did that with his own children, and it's hard to argue with somebody that's had the success in bringing up his children like the Ashwood's have, and that's kind of been a church rule in that church is that children aren't allowed to just sit there, the unconverted children, the young children, they're not allowed to just sit there with their mouths shut and not participate in the singing. The fruits of a thing are a good test of it, and the fruits have proved well in Brother John's teaching in that. I've come to the point I just about agree with him. Back in my younger days I used to feel when the Lord dealt with our children with His grace, and they began to experience regeneration, then they would want to sing and wouldn't have to be made to. But again, the fruits of a thing, the proof is in the pudding, and we see much good fruit there, so I think that that's probably the best policy that we do require and not let our children just sit there and keep their mouths shut while we're singing, even if they're not converted yet. Thankfully, I didn't have to do much in that regard. Brenda was already training Daniel in that regard when we married, and I didn't have to do much. In a nutshell, she already had him off to a good start, and so I didn't have to do much in that regard.

But the Lord's people enjoy this command. They love to praise God. It's something that just flows out of their hearts that when they hear the truth being sung, when Christ is being praised, they want to join in with that. So we have a command to sing. A positive command. It's not something that men thought up. It's not something that we have in the church just because we enjoy good music, or because we enjoy good lyrics, or because we enjoy good melody or harmony, or because we're trying to show our talents. I have to make this comment. Sometimes people have said, "Well, we sing in church, because we're supposed to use our talents for the Lord." Well, that's true to a degree, but singing corporately together with the Lord's people is much more than just using our talents. In

fact, a person may not have much musical "talent," but he still, if he's a Christian, wants to sing and praise the Lord, and he ought to do so.

I think of an example that I will share here that illustrates my point that I'm talking about. Elder Tim C. who is now in the church at Huntsville, Alabama, Heritage Church there with Brother Mike Stewart, but he used to be over at Grace Chapel with Brother Z. And of course, Brother C. is a very accomplished musician himself. He taught music in school, and he teaches singing in schools, and churches, and he's a very good song leader and all that sort of thing. They had a member in Grace Chapel church that had no musical talent. I don't know if they were tone deaf, or what it was, but this particular person never could carry a tune, never could harmonize. Their voice was always just out of joint with everybody else's. Brother Tim said one time, I think he said it even while he was preaching maybe, and he pointed to that person, everybody knew that person, he knew it himself, you know, it wasn't anything to be ashamed of or anything, Brother Tim says, "I'd rather listen to you sing than anybody in this church, because you sing with such enthusiasm, and it's evident from the expression on your face that you love the Lord and you're praising Him." And I think he made a good point there. That's what our text is saying here when it says, "making melody in your heart."

On the other hand, I'm laying positive ground now before I come to the negative part of why we don't use musical instruments, but on the other hand you can take an unconverted, unregenerate devil, like Elvis Presley, as far as we know he's been in hell since the late 1970's sometime. I remember when it came on the radio when he died even though some of you think he's still alive somewhere, but it's apparent that the man was lost. There was no fruits that he was a Christian, but he made a few albums of Gospel songs, and I've actually heard him sing "How Great Thou Art" with such musical talent that it would, as one person said, "Make the hair stand up on your arm." But he had a graceless person, but that's not making melody in your heart, you see. The command to sing is a command that the Lord's people enjoy obeying. They enjoy singing and praising Christ. They enjoy singing with other saints.

But then secondly, let us consider what we are to sing. And perhaps we'll work all of this out as a series one of these days, and look, and do some word studies, and go into more details on it, but just briefly looking at our beginning text, we look to see what we are to sing, and we are to sing Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. We're not to sing ballads. We're not to sing patriotic songs. Nothing wrong with that in its proper place. Fourth of July is right around the corner, and when people sing "God Bless America," or "America the Beautiful," "The Star Spangled Banner," all of those things are wonderful songs and patriotic songs, as long as they don't sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," but these good patriotic songs, they're real good in their place, but they're not praising Christ. They're not hymns per se. A couple of songs may have some religious Christian sentiment in them, but I make it a point here that our singing in the church is to be Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. It's not to be ballads, or patriotic songs, or folk songs, or any of that sort of thing. We're to sing Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

I do want to make a note here since what we're dealing with would come under the general category of what we call the "regulative principle of worship." That is that our worship is regulated by the specific commands of Scripture or by clear precedents that we see in Scripture.

There are some who disuse the mechanical instrument and hold to the regulative principle who say that we're to sing Psalms only. Psalms only. And I studied that out one time. I was very sympathetic to that teaching, and I still sympathize with it some, but I want to tell you just real quickly this afternoon why I came to the conviction that we can use hymns of human composition. Generally speaking, when we sing the Psalms in English, in many places they don't always sing them exactly the way they're written in the Psalm. Now we sing them that way here. The ones that we sing, we sing them from the Scripture, sometimes with repetitions and different order maybe in which they come as a Psalm. But usually when they are set to English rhyme and meter, usually it's not exactly the way it is in Scripture. So that is one of the things that got me to thinking about whether or not we should limit it to Psalms only, and then the other conclusion I came to was that singing is similar to preaching, and I'm going to come to that in just a minute. Singing is similar to preaching in that it's a conveying of the truth, and as long as the hymns that we sing are teaching the truth, then I believe that it's in accord with Ephesians 5:19.

Again, these things need to be worked out in more detail in further messages later. I'm just giving you some of the highlights of it, but we see what we're to sing, but then we see the purpose of singing. For that we turn to a parallel passage in Colossians 3:16 where we read, "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." So the purpose of singing is similar to the purpose of preaching. It is to teach the truth. And when we sing a hymn like, "Grace 'Tis a Charming Sound," that teaches us the truth. This is the reason we ought to be careful what hymns we sing, and what hymnbooks we use. We need to be very careful about those things, because we want to be careful to sing the truth, just as we preach the truth.

So the purpose of singing not only is worship and praise, but to teach and admonish one another, and then we see how we're to sing. We're to sing making melody in our hearts with grace in our hearts, and I've already used the illustration, but I'll repeat it, that an unregenerate person might have a beautiful voice, and have much musical talent, and much musical training, but yet the unconverted person cannot make melody in his heart and sing with grace in his heart. God's people can do that, and they are to do it.

Next, I want to say we ought to sing congregationally. I see nothing in the Scriptures to give us any command or a precedent to have solos, to have quartets, to have choirs. I see none of that in the Scriptures, particularly in the New Testament. One of the occasions that we have of singing in the New Testament is when the Lord sang in the upper room at the conclusion of the first Communion service with His disciples, and they sang together. They sang a hymn. Jesus didn't say, "Ya'll be quiet, and I'll sing for you." I don't think this is too speculative or presumptive, but I imagine our Lord probably could sing well. He was a perfect man, so is that not a reasonable assumption? He was the Prince of

Preachers. Everything He did was perfect. I believe He could have sung and did sing well. I believe He would have been good at singing, but He didn't say, "Ya'll be quiet, and I'll sing you a solo." He didn't ask Peter, James, and John to sing a trio. None of that. They sang together. The Scriptural precedence is that the Lord's people sang congregationally, that they sang together.

And then, we're to sing with a human voice from a melodious heart, not with pianos, organs, guitars, violins, banjos, drums, or saxophones. I list all of these, but you could name off other things. So that is my positive presentation that ought to be more, but it's not a full exposition certainly of Ephesians 5:19, but a good positive beginning for our subject matter this afternoon. So having first of all having laid down these positive principles of a joyful command to sing and some of how we are to sing, let us consider now under our second head that the principle to be laid down concerning our practice in worship is that our practice is regulated by the Word of God. And now we're coming to the negative part of this message, and the rest of this is going to be pretty much in that negative of showing why we do not use the mechanical instruments in our worship. And we lay down as a beginning principle in that that our worship is to be regulated by the Word of God. We have no liberty to incorporate a practice simply because we may like it. We don't have any liberty just to say, "Well, I really enjoy that particular young lady's piano playing. She just does such a good job, and I think we ought to have a piano."

I remember a church that I was around for a while that was supposed to believe in the regulative principle of Worship. They didn't have the piano, but they had a lot of other things that the Scripture's don't command, for instance, they had a choir. They didn't exactly call it that, but that's what it was. And almost every Sunday the pastor would ask a certain group to get up and sing a special. I think he kind of sensed, one of the times that I was visiting there, I think he kind of sensed that I didn't like that that much, and afterwards he felt compelled to explain to me why he did that. He said, "Brother Floyd," he said, "I know that's a little unusual in our connection of churches, but," he said, "we just have so much talent in this church, and I just got to the point I felt we were wasting all that talent, and I felt like we ought to have a choir, and we ought to have these folks that can sing well sing for us." Well, that is not the reason that we have a practice, not because we like something, not because we like somebody's voice, or like their abilities, or anything. We must regulate our worship by the commands and precedents of the Word of God.

The beginning point would be the Second Commandment. Let's turn to the Second Commandment and at some point we will do a complete exposition of the Ten Commandments. But look at the Second Commandment which is found in verses 4, 5, and 6 of Exodus 20. In Exodus 20 in verses 4, 5, and 6, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Now, if you read what most of the good expositors have said in teaching on the Ten

Commandments, and I would include men like John Calvin, men like R. J. Rushdoony, other good men who have dealt extensively with the Law of God, you will find that they generally look at the Commandments this way: that the First Commandment tells us, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and the principle of that is that, "Thou shalt worship none but God," and then, they build on that. There is much that you can build onto that. There is none that we're to worship. We're to worship none but God. But then the Second Commandment goes much deeper than just the making of graven images. The principle of the Second Commandment is that God is to be worshipped only in the way that He has prescribed. That is the heart and the soul of the Second Commandment, that just as we have no liberty to worship any other God, we have no liberty to worship God in a way that He has not prescribed. So that's our beginning point.

Then, going on to the New Testament in Matthew 28:19-20, the Lord Jesus gave His Great Commission to His disciples, and He said, "Go ye into all the world, and teach them whatsoever things I have commanded you." What are we to teach? Our preferences? Or what Christ commanded? Jesus said, "You are to go and teach what I have commanded." And so, we see from the Second Commandment in the Old Testament and from the Great Commission in the New Testament, we see that we are to regulate our worship by the specific commands of God and that we are to worship God in only the way that He has prescribed.

Now, reading through the New Testament, we find that God has required we publicly worship Him by preaching the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel is an integral part of the worship of the church. A brother asked me not too long ago about the eldership and one of the things that we see about the eldership is that the elder must be apt to teach. Why? Because preaching is an integral part of the assembly of the saints and of corporate worship. And all through the book of Acts we read that when the church got together there was preaching. That's what was going on, and that's what Christ has commanded us to continue to do. We're commanded to worship God through preaching. While we're gathered together, and I'm up here behind the pulpit preaching, we are worshipping God together. We're hearing His Gospel together. Our souls are being fed, and we're being taught to look upward to God. Our faith is being strengthened, and we're worshipping God through the preaching of the Gospel. That's the reason we need to behave ourselves with good manners while the preacher is preaching. That's the reason we need to sit up straight and listen. That's the reason we need to not be doing anything that would distract. We need to be giving our attention, because that's part of worship. I'm not up here to put on a show for people. I'm not up here with just a running monologue to entertain people or because I like to hear myself talk. I'm here because the Lord has called me to preach, and because the Lord's people have said that they recognize that, and they want me to teach them and preach to them. So, we're commanded to worship Him through preaching. And He's commanded us, as we just saw, to worship Him through singing. And of course, there is the reading of the Word, prayer, the administration of the ordinances, and the fellowship of the saints.

So we have a clear command for these things. We have clear precedents for them in the Scriptures. We read just this morning in the beginning here, we read two specific

commands, Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 where we are clearly commanded to sing, but on the other hand, we must say that we find no command to play on an instrument. We do not find that anywhere in the New Testament. Now, I know that when I say that, somebody will say, "Well, what about the Old Testament?" And I'm going to come to that before I sit down, so just hold the question on that. We will come to that before we sit down. But we find no command or precedent in the New Testament where the early church had or used mechanical instruments. So the absence of command or clear precedent on the use of the instrument is enough reason for not using the instrument.

Some would suggest that we may practice anything not specifically prohibited. And by the way, if you go back to the sixteenth century, if you go back to that era, the time of the Reformers and following, you will find that there was a debate between the Anglicans and the Puritans over these issues and the Anglicans held what was called the normative principle, whereas the Puritans held to the regulative principle. So the Anglicans taught the normative principle is that we can do anything that the Scriptures don't prohibit. And so, they used the vestments, and they used the things like lifting up the elements of the bread and the wine as emblems of adoration, and that sort of thing, and the things that they did in the Anglican service, the vestments that the priests wore, and all that sort of thing. They said that they could do that because it wasn't prohibited. The Puritans said, "We will not do that, because it is not commanded in the Scriptures." So, they call that the regulative principle. But what I want to point out to you is that if we allow anything not prohibited, can you not see what excesses such reasonings may lead to? And I'll have more to say about that under another head, but the reasoning that we can do anything not prohibited has led to much of the mess that we see in the modern day church. When we step over the boundary, if you allow one thing in your assembly that is not commanded by Scripture or that you have a clear precedent, then you've opened the floodgates for anything that people decide that they want to do, that they decide is their preference or things that they like. So, we've laid that down, the regulative principle. We have no liberty to worship God in any way except which He has commanded, and we find no command in the New Testament to play on any kind of an instrument, but we do have the command to sing with the human voice and make melody in our hearts with grace in our hearts.

And then the next consideration is the spiritual nature of our worship. The Lord said in John 4:24 that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The worship of the Lord's people is a spiritual endeavor, not a fleshly one. What we're involved in this afternoon, we're involved in a spiritual activity. It's not a fleshly work. It's not a fleshly endeavor. John 6:63, the Lord said, "The flesh profiteth nothing; it is the Spirit which quickeneth." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," we read in 1 Corinthians 2:14. But on the other hand, the two verses we looked at in the beginning, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, tell us to make melody in the heart singing with grace in the heart. The mechanical instrument is just that. It is mechanical. The mechanical instrument cannot make melody in the heart. The mechanical instrument cannot sing with grace in the heart. An unregenerate man cannot make melody in his heart. He can only make melody with his natural faculties, but the

Lord's people, with a heart renewed of grace and a new song put in their mouth, they can praise God in a way that's acceptable unto Him, and our worship is to be kept on the spiritual level. That which is fleshly, and that which encourages the flesh, and that which is simply pleasing to the ear, those are not the things that are conducive to spiritual worship.

John MacArthur got off a good one. I'm sure they use instruments in his congregation, but he got off a good one that lays down a good principle. A few years ago, he was talking about the excesses the modern church is going into. He was warning against that, and he made this statement, he said, "Here at our church I never want the unregenerate to feel comfortable here. We want everything here to be for the spiritual man. We want everything here to be for those that have a spiritual nature." And so it is. We want nothing in our assembly which is simply pleasing to the flesh and certainly, mechanical instruments can be that. Mechanical instruments can be used to induce unregenerate people to enjoy the atmosphere and all that sort of thing. We're not trying to create an atmosphere. We're endeavoring to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

Fourthly, there is the consideration of keeping the church separate from the world, and keeping it free from that which tends to the entertainment of the fleshly nature. The singing of the Lord's people in a corporate capacity, like we are today, is not for our entertainment. Now, there are some of you that have beautiful voices, and I'm usually singing pretty loud, but sometimes I intentionally tone down my voice, so I can hear your voices. Some of you have very beautiful voices, and I enjoy hearing you sing. But my enjoyment is mainly from believing that you are singing praise to the Lord. That's the reason that I tone my voice down sometimes so I can hear you, because I want to hear my voice mixing in with yours. The purpose of church singing is not to entertain people, and, again, that's the reason it's to be congregational and not to be half the church is a choir singing to the others. And by the way, have you ever noticed in places where they have a choir that the congregation sings less and less. The congregation generally gets to the point where they sit back and listen to the choir, and many people sitting in the pews say, "Well, I don't have any training or ability in singing, so I need to be quiet and listen to those that have the training and the ability." No, no. You have a heart for God if you're regenerate, if you're a believer, if you're saved, praise the Lord! We're not about the business of entertainment.

Now, the modern professing church has gotten to the point that there's almost no Gospel. In some cases, clearly, none at all, and nothing but loud noise playing on all kinds of instruments, including electric guitars, having puppet shows, having liturgical dance, having Super Bowl Sundays, having pony rides, anything to attract the masses and try to keep them coming. But it is our conviction that a strict adherence to the regulative principle of Scripture will keep us from going further into the worldly methods. Now, again, I say here that you have to draw the line somewhere. Now, we have good brethren, there are good sound churches where they use the piano, but their pastor would never allow a guitar, especially an electric guitar, or the drums, or a saxophone, or any of that, or a banjo, or whatever else people decide they want to bring into the church but, you see, once you've given up the principle of the regulative principle of Worship, once you've

said that church music becomes a matter of taste, discretion, and preference, then you have given up the principle.

I well remember in the church I went to when I was a little boy, they had the piano in that church, and it had been there for a long time. It had already gotten to be a tradition by the time I came along, but I remember when I was, I think, a teenager some folks wanted to bring the guitar into the church, and boy, the old folks threw a fit over that. The guitar is associated with juke joints, and the guitar is associated with country music, and with rock and roll music, and we don't want to get guitar in here. You see, the young folks, they asked the question, "Well, what's the difference in that and the piano?" Indeed, we may ask, "What is the difference?" We may ask, and it may come down simply to a matter of the pastor, of the elders, of the deacons, or of the majority of the church, it may come down to simply what the preference is. But if we go strictly by the regulative principle, then we don't run that risk of a future generation saying, "Well, daddy said it was alright to have a piano, and he said it was alright to have musical instruments. Why not have a guitar?" And then somebody will say, "Well, my daughter is quite talented with the piano." And somebody else says, "Well, my son is quite talented with the saxophone." And somebody else says, "Well, my son is quite talented with a banjo."

So, you see what excesses the modern church has gone to. And this is the reason they have what they call contemporary worship, and rock music, and all the junk that they have going on, because they're trying to entertain people. They're not involved in spiritual worship. They're not involved in keeping the church separate from the world, but they're bringing the world into the church, and trying to entertain the world, and trying to keep goats hemmed in rather than shepherding sheep. That's just what it amounts to. Entertaining the flesh rather than feeding the spirit. We're trying to build a church here that will outlast us. We hope our children, and our grandchildren, and others will be added, and we hope that they'll be a witness for the Lord until the Lord returns in this place, and we believe that laying the foundation stone of the regulative principle of worship will be a foundation lock for our children and our grandchildren.

Now, my next point this afternoon is I want to point out to you that in disusing the mechanical instrument, we have the best men in church history on our side. And I'm going to spend a little time, and I hope this will not bore you, but I want to spend a little time with some selected quotes from some good men, and some of the best of men. We are in their footsteps when we disuse the mechanical instruments, and we're not insinuating that these men are in any way infallible, but we are saying that the men we're going to quote from were men who loved Christ, were men who faithfully preached the Gospel, were men who were useful in their own generation, and were men who had much spiritual wisdom, and we neglect their counsel and their teachings to our own peril. It will do us well to listen to such good men. So now, the first quote I want to give you is from John Gill, my favorite expositor. I'm going to read to you now, and as I come to this part now, these men are going to answer for me the question that is raised sometimes on: what about the instruments that we use in the Old Testament? What about the Psalms that talk about praising God on cymbals, and praising God on instruments of ten strings, and what

about those? These men and some of their quotes will answer some of those questions for you, although I will have some of my own comments on that before I sit down.

John Gill in book III of his "Body and Divinity" in chapter 7, as he deals with the methods of corporate worship, what is to be involved in worship, he goes through reading the Word, prayer, preaching, and singing. Now, as I read this, what I want you to keep in mind is he is actually answering the question, there were some in his day, in fact, the Baptists in an earlier generation had disused public singing. Now, there were different reasons for that. Some people say it was because they were being persecuted and having to worship in secret a lot, and they didn't sing. They quit singing, because they didn't want to attract public notice. Others, some of the Baptists, said that they didn't believe in indiscriminate singing between the regenerate and the unregenerate. Different reasons they gave for it. John Gill is partly answering the question that if the musical instruments of the Old Testament had been discontinued, why not the singing itself? He's answering that question along with stating why the church is to sing. This is his quote, "It is absurd that David's Psalms were sung formerly with musical instruments as the harp, timbrel, and cymbal, and organs, and why not with these now? If these are to be disused, why not singing itself? I answer. These are not essential to singing, and so may be laid aside and that continued. It was usual to burn incense at the time of prayer, typical of Christ's mediation and then the acceptance of prayer through it. That is now disused, but prayer, being a moral duty, still remains." Do you see that? He draws a wonderful comparison there. So the musical instruments accompanied the singing in the same way the incense accompanied the prayer. The incense has been disused, but the prayer continues. The instrument has been disused, but the singing continues, because it's a moral duty, he says, and a duty for the Lord's people. "The above instruments were used only when the church was in its infant state and wanted showy, gaudy, and pompous, or pleasing to children. And as an ancient writer observes," and I believe the man's name was Autor that he includes here, "these," that is musical instruments, "were fit for babes," this is what he calls the Old Testament saints, babes. "These were fit for babes, but in the churches under the Gospel dispensation, which is more manly, the use of these fit for babes is taken away and bare or plain singing is left. As for organs, of which mention is made in Psalm 150, the word there signifies another kind of instrument than those now in use, and these were first introduced by Pope of Rome, Vitalianus, and that in the seventh century and not before."

That's John Gill. Gill's my favorite expositor, now my favorite preacher, Spurgeon. So, I hope all the followers of Spurgeon will pay attention to this, those who may hear me by the internet or other means. Spurgeon did not allow the mechanical instrument in his church. They did not use the organ, or the piano, or any musical instruments in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. I will quote here from Spurgeon in a sermon against Puseyite idolatry. Pusey was a Church of England minister, and he was a modernist in his day. He was bringing in all sorts of things to attract the masses and so forth, and Spurgeon preached a sermon against that and in this sermon he has this quote, "I like an organ as a matter of musical taste." So, this is something I should have said in the introduction. This would be a good point for us to put in. We're certainly not preaching against the playing of the piano at home, or in other settings. We're not saying there is anything sinful about

musical instruments, per se. We're not saying that at all. We enjoy those, and I enjoy listening to people that are talented in playing on the instruments, but we are talking about the corporate worship of the church. So, Spurgeon says, "I like an organ as a matter of musical taste, but, my brethren, I feel that these are times when we must stand out against even allowable things, lest going one step, we should go another." You see, Spurgeon saw the danger. If you let one thing in that is not commanded, there is the danger of going another step, and another, and another until you have what we do have now in the modern day church of just a big show instead of spiritual worship.

And now, I want to read you an anecdote about Spurgeon from Ian Murray's biography of Spurgeon concerning his view of the musical instruments. "When William Cuff was minister at Providence Chapel, Hackney, one of the college conference meetings was held there. The president presided and in the course of his speech he pointed to the organ and said, 'I look upon that as an innovation, and if I were here, I should want it to be an outovation.'" This is Spurgeon speaking now. He looked at the organ and said, "'If I were here, I should want it to be an outovation, and then we would have an ovation over its departure. I was once asked to open an organ, I suppose the people wanted me to preach in connection with the introduction of the new instrument. I said that I was quite willing to open it as Simple Simon opened his mother's bellows to see where the wind came from, but I could not take any other part in the ceremony.' Once preaching at a chapel in the country Mr. Spurgeon gave out Isaac Watts's version of Psalm 91, 'he that hath made his refuge God, shall find a most secure abode,' and then added, 'we'll sing it to the tune "Refuge.'" We're familiar with that tune here by the way, and every time we have another hymn we sing to that tune. Spurgeon said, "We'll sing to the tune of 'Refuge.'" He was preaching at a country church, visiting there. And "the organist leaned over the gallery and whispered to the preacher, 'It's not in our tune book, sir.' 'Then it ought to be,' answered Spurgeon. 'No tune book is complete unless "Refuge" is in it.' And turning to the congregation he said, 'The last time I was here, you praised God for yourselves, but now you have a machine to do the praising for you. In fact, if it can't play "Refuge," we'll have it all the same, and I'll start it myself.'"

That was Mr. Spurgeon, just a little bit of his views on the mechanical instruments. Now, I want to read for you from Dr. R. L. Dabney. And the first one I want to read is Dabney's account of his visit to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. After the War Between the States, Mr. Dabney had opportunity to travel to England for the first time, and he has a little essay that he wrote here on a visit to Spurgeon's church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and then a visit to the Anglicans at Westminster Abbey, and he makes a comparison between the two which would delight you to read. And we'll not read what he says about the Abbey, but I'm going to read here what he says about the Tabernacle. He says, "At precisely at eleven o'clock Mr. Spurgeon hobbled into his platform betraying by his gait and by his leaning upon every object along his way the infirmity in which he has suffered, a species of rheumatism in his feet. It is unpleasant to see that his enforced inactivity has increased his corpulency. Otherwise, he is the same figure with which engravings have made the Christian world acquainted with a beard covering his massive chin, but without a grey hair, and with his natural force not abated, nor his eye dimmed. After an instant of silent worship, he began his prayer of invocation which was much

longer than ours. Then followed a hymn sung by the whole mighty throng like the voices of many waters with no instrument of any kind and no guidance save that of a purely nonprofessional preceptor." That means a song leader, the preceptor. So, that was just a little bit of his visit. One of the things that he noted and enjoyed about his visit to Spurgeon's church.

But then, R. L. Dabney actually wrote several essays on why we shouldn't use musical instruments. This one was actually written in defense of his brother in the Presbyterian Church, Gerardo. Dr. John L. Gerardo who was pastor over in South Carolina, and he had written against the use of instruments in the public worship and had had some criticize him, and Dr. Dabney wrote actually to defend Gerardo and to express his agreement with him. And here I'm just going to read a few selected quotes. And he makes this point that God is to be worshipped only in the ways appointed in His Word. That's one of the things that he lays down as a general principle. He goes on and says, "When the advocates of innovation quote such words as those as of the Psalmist, 'Praise the Lord with the harp' and so forth, these shallow reasoners are reminded that the same sort of plea would draw back human priests and bloody sacrifices into our Christian churches." Of course, that's the answer to why they were allowed in the Old Testament, because they were part of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonies of the Old Testament. "These Psalms exclaim with the same emphasis, 'Bind your sacrifice with cords even to the horns of the altar.'" And they do. And I'll also add, for instance, in some of those same Psalms, it says, not only "Praise the Lord on the organ and the harp," but to "Praise Him with dance." And most of my brethren who use the piano certainly don't let people dance in their churches. So, we would not use those as our commands. Dabney adds that the church is not a nation. He draws the difference between Israel as a theocracy and the Church as a spiritual nation. "The Church now is not a nation, but purely a spiritual kingdom which is not of this world. Hence, there is no longer room in our worship for the horns, harps, and organs any more than for swords and stonings in our government or human kings and high priests in her institutions." Very good.

Then J. L. Dagg. I don't know if you're familiar with Dagg. He was one of the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was a Virginian, and he was a very faithful man and faithful minister. On page 245 of his manual of Church Order he says, "Instrumental music formed a part of the temple worship, but is nowhere commanded in the New Testament, and it is less adapted to the more spiritual service of the present dispensation."

And then a brother that we don't quote that much, because we don't agree with him on the so called free offer of the Gospel, but Andrew Fuller. And while we disagree with him on some minor points, he was a good man, and a man who was faithful to his age, and a man who ought to be read and considered, even if you don't agree with everything he says. But he was opposed to the use of musical instruments, and we find this beginning at page 515 of Volume III in Sprinkle's publication of Fuller's works. This quote is from a letter or a treatise that he wrote, actually, in answer to someone who had spoken out for it, and so it's argumentative or debating against him. He says, "Whether the hymns we sing be a discretionary concomitant of worship or not, this cannot be said of instrumental music." He said, "The hymns we sing, there may be some discretion in them." There may be, but not

in the instrument itself. He said, "I cannot forbear remarking the great similarity between your reasoning and that," notice he's writing to somebody who's reasoning for the instrument, he says, "I cannot forbear remarking the great similarity between your reasoning and that of Episcopalians in favor of certain ceremonies to which the Puritans objected. They did not pretend that they were obligatory," the Episcopalians did not pretend these things were obligatory, "but merely lawful. That they had been of divine authority under the former dispensation and were now matters of discretion. If this were indeed the case, and they had followed the example of an apostle, they would have relinquished them when they proved an occasion of offense. I conclude with reminding you that on the principle of discretionary worship you may introduce the dance, and commence Welsh jumpers, the surplice, and become Episcopalians, and even the mitre, and shake hands with his holiness. I doubt not but your discretion will keep you from these things; but, if there be no bar but discretion, I do not know what right you have to censure them in others."

Those are a few selected quotes from some good men and ones that we ought to heed. I think they all make good sense, make good points, and we could include in those names William Gadsby, the compiler of our hymnal, J. H. Thornwell, another one of the great old school Presbyterians. We could even include John Wesley, by the way. I don't have his quote before me, but you'll even be interested to know that John Wesley did not allow the musical instrument in the church. He once said when asked if he would allow the organ, he said, "I don't mind as long it's not seen or heard." So, even Wesley, the great Arminian Methodist was opposed to it.

Finally, for today, I want to give some purely practical points. I hope these don't hurt anybody's feelings that may hear them. I know it won't in our assembly, but our messages go outside these walls, and I hope I don't hurt anybody's feelings, but I'm just going to make some practical points here. In most assemblies, not all of them, but in most assemblies that I've been in, the pianist or the organist is a woman. In most of the assemblies, it's that way. This makes the woman some kind of a leader in the worship, whatever you say about it. And I didn't bring this quote with me, but there is an interesting quote from Martin Lloyd Jones's book on preaching and preachers and he was talking about this very thing, and in the particular section he was saying, "I won't at this point say we shouldn't have instruments," but the way he said it you could tell that that's probably what he really believed because he was really old school. He said that the organ could be of a great detriment to a preacher, and he talked about what he called "the tyranny of the organist." And I've seen that. I've seen that where the woman who played the piano or the organ really took over and in many cases where the woman plays the piano, she sits in a prominent position; she sets the tone, and mood, and atmosphere of the worship of the church by how loud or fast she plays the instrument and in some cases, even select the hymns to be sung and gives her list to the song leader. And that, I find very against the Scriptural principal of women learning in silence. Now, you can make an argument if it's a man playing the instrument, but still the man can become a tyrant in the worship and take over the worship. I don't know how many times I've been aggravated, because I've led singing in churches where they have a piano, and I've been aggravated many a time when I was trying to lead singing, and the pianist was determined they were

going to play the speed they wanted to, rather than the speed I wanted to lead. So those are the sorts of purely practical things that ought to be kept in mind.

Another practical point: the church is often limited in the hymns they may sing by the ability and the expertise of the pianist. In some cases, I've even seen singing cancelled, because they didn't have a pianist there and the people, well, I guess they didn't know you could sing without a pianist. So, they said, "Well, we don't have a piano player, so we can't have singing today." No, no. Do it like the Scriptures say. Do it like Spurgeon did. Do it like our forefathers did in days gone by.

Making melody in your hearts. Making melody in your hearts not with mechanical instruments. Keeping our worship spiritual. Keeping our church separate from the world. Growing a boundary of the principle of only obeying, only practicing what God has commanded in His Word, what we see is clearly commanded, or the clear precedents for it and this is a safe ground for the church. It keeps the church from going into the excesses of the so called modern worship and the so called entertainment and business they have going on today. May the Lord bless us here to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Let's stand for a final hymn and for a benediction.