Instrumental Music #2

Introduction. As we conclude our lesson, remember that a fundamental truth of religion is the submission of the will of man to the will of God. The requirement of submission to the will of God is characteristic of every age. God has regulated worship from the beginning of time and we will continue to examine a particular aspect of acceptable worship today (Genesis 4:3-4; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:4).

I. ***Continued Arguments For Instrumental Music***

A. "Instrumental music will be present in heaven."

1. Harps are mentioned in Revelation (5:8-9; 14:2-3; 15:2-3). But Revelation is a book of symbols (1:1). No one can prove that there ever was, is now, or ever will be a musical instrument in heaven.
2. Even if we grant this fact, it does not prove that it would be acceptable in the church, or else we must also have angels, infants, golden bowls of incense, a throne, etc.
3. Just as the rules for the past age of the Old Testament differ from the rules of the present New Testament age, so the rules for the future affairs of heaven differ from the rules of the present practices on earth.
   a) Jesus said there would be no marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30).
   b) Those who forbid marriage on earth are guilty of apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

B. "Playing an instrument is praising God with my natural talents."

1. The Jew, the pagan, and the Catholic could make the same argument for everything of an esthetic nature in their worship.
2. Suppose I have the gift of barbecue cooking. Could we use my barbecue for the Lord's supper? What about a talented dancer, animal trainer, or athlete?
3. God has never based religion upon natural principles. What is natural about baptism? Christians follow Christ, not their natural inclinations.
4. The Bible tells us to walk by faith not by sight. Faith does not belong in the realm of natural talents (Jeremiah 10:23).

C. "The Greek word *psallo* from which we have the translation 'make melody' in our English Bibles also means to accompany the singing with instrumental music."

1. If this is true, then instrumental music is commanded and is not a matter of choice if we are going to please God.
2. Also, everyone who sings would need his own instrument and do his own playing since the command is individual and personal.

a) The use of instruments under the law of Moses was confined to the male priests and Levites (2 Chronicles 5:11-12; 7:6; 29:25-26). If all Christians are priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10), then all must play an instrument in worship.
b) The words in the original language combined with the pronouns teach reciprocal action that takes place at the same time (cf. Luke 23:28). Each Christian simultaneously singing to one another in the assembly is the obvious action involved in the command (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

3. As many words change in definition over the years, *psallo* has been used in many ways: "To pluck the hair," "to twang a bowstring," "to twitch a carpenter's line," "to touch the chords of a musical instrument," "to sing with an instrument," and "to sing without an instrument."
4. *Psallo* is a verb, and verbs must always act upon nouns. When the equivalent word for *psallo* is used in the Old Testament (*zamar*), it always specifies the instrument, whether it be musical instruments or vocal singing (Psalm 18:49; 33:2; 98:5; 149:3).
   a) Literal circumcision was of the flesh made with hands (Ephesians 2:11). Spiritual circumcision is of the heart (Colossians 2:11).
   b) The difference between literal and spiritual circumcision is the difference between literal and spiritual "psalloing." Literal "psalloing" is plucking a literal object -- anything that can be plucked. Spiritual "psalloing" is the plucking of a spiritual object -- the heart in singing.
   c) Furthermore, virtually all our English translations and lexicons, written by men who were members of churches that use instruments, translated the word so as to not even give a hint of the use of instrumental music. This shows that *psallo* does not inherently include a musical instrument.
5. God specified the "instrument" to accompany our singing, just like He has specified the elements of the Lord's supper.
   a) He left out the mechanical instrument in the New Testament, just like He left out the passover lamb in the Lord's supper.
   b) To add instruments is to act without divine authority, just the same as if we added another element to the Lord's supper.

II. ***Historical Perspective Of Instrumental Music***

A. Although musical instruments were available in the first century (they were used in the worship of both the Jews and Greeks), the early church did not use them. Instrumental music was introduced into the worship of the church many centuries after its inception.

B. Even though we seem strange in our convictions for not using instrumental music, nearly every denomination once believed as we do. Most worshipers today do not realize that the church of which they are a member at one time opposed instrumental music in worship. Many well-known religious scholars vigorously protested their use.
   1. "The use of organs in churches is ascribed to Pope Vitalian (657-672 A.D.). Constantine Copronymos sent an organ with other presents to King Pepin of France in 767 A.D. Charlemagne received one as a present from the Caliph Haroun al Rashid, and had it put up in the cathedral of Aixla-Chapelle. The attitude of the churches toward the organ varies. It shared to some extent the fate of images except that it never was an object of worship. The Greek church disapproved the use of organs. The Latin church introduced it pretty generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that even in the Council of Trent a motion was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass" (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4, p. 4309).
   2. "In view of the controversies over the use of instrumental music in worship which have been so violent in the British and American Protestant churches, it is an interesting question whether instruments were employed by the primitive Christians. We know that instruments performed an important function in the Hebrew temple service and in the ceremonies of the Greeks. At this point, however, a break was made with all previous practice, and although the lyre and flute were sometimes employed by the Greek converts, as a general rule, the use of instruments in worship was condemned. Many of the fathers, speaking of religious song, make no mention of instruments; others like Clement of Alexandria and St. Chrysostom, refer to them only to denounce them" (Edwin Dickinson, *History of Music in the Western Church*, p. 54).
   3. "Our church does not use mechanical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize" (Thomas Aquinas, *Bingham's Antiquities*, Vol. II, p. 483).
   4. "Musical instruments, in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many of other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise, but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far from pleasing to Him" (John Calvin, *Commentary* on Psalm 33 and 1 Samuel 18:1-9).
   5. "David appears to have had a peculiarly tender remembrance of the singing of the pilgrims, and assuredly it is the most delightful part

of worship and that which comes nearest to the adoration of heaven. What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettinesses of a quartet, the refined niceties of a choir, or the blowing off of wind from inanimate bellows and pipes. We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it" (Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury Of David*, Comments on Psalm 42).

6. "Staunch old Baptists in former times would have as soon tolerated the Pope of Rome in their pulpits as an organ in their galleries. And yet the instrument has gradually found its way among them and their successors in church management, with nothing like the jars and difficulties which arose of old concerning the bass viol and smaller instruments of music" (David Benedict, *Fifty Years Among The Baptists*).
7. "It has been proved, by an appeal to historical facts, that the church, although lapsing more and more into defection from the truth and into the corruption of apostolic practice, had no instrumental music for twelve hundred years; and that the Calvinistic Reformed Church ejected it from its services as an element of Popery, even the Church of England having come very nigh to its extrusion from her worship. The historical argument, therefore, combines with the scriptural and the confessional to raise a solemn and powerful protest against its employment by the Presbyterian Church. It is heresy in the sphere of worship" (John Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, p. 179).
8. "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen" (John Wesley, *Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 684).
9. "The organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal" (Martin Luther).

III. ***Final Implications Of Instrumental Music***

A. Instrumental music transgresses and disrespects the authority of Christ by injecting something into Christian worship which the Lord and His apostles have not taught (2 John 9).
B. Instrumental music corrupts and makes our worship vain in the practice of that which God has not taught (Matthew 15:7-9).
C. Instrumental music creates dissension and division by being offensive to the conscience of many (1 Corinthians 10:28).
D. We cannot worship God in spirit and truth and use instrumental music for it is not a part of "all truth" revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (John 4:24; 16:13).

E. We cannot walk by faith and practice instrumental music, for it is not taught in the word of God and faith comes by God's word (Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7).
F. Instrumental music is not a part of the divine pattern and we corrupt the plan for God's house and therefore labor in vain when we use it (Hebrews 8:1-7; Psalm 127:1).

Conclusion. If the auto mechanic is instructed to do a "tune-up," that does not mean he is authorized to rebuild the transmission. If a physician authorizes a certain medication, the pharmacist is not at liberty to improvise. Each day, in different ways, we have to respect the limitations of authority. So it is with worship; we are authorized to sing, not to "play." Some respect the authority of the New Testament; others do not. They yield to the impulse of "will-worship" -- the practice of which embraces both what is "forbidden" and "unbidden." Such disobedience brings only condemnation.