Some very prominent servants of the Lord were severely punished when they went beyond God's specific instructions for honoring Him. Mod-Bible readers are familiar with what happened to Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1); to Moses (Exodus 32:4-30), to David (II Chronicles 15:2-15), and to Uzzah (II Chronicles 26:16-21) when each of them added something to God's orders for worship. Perhaps we should see God's confirmation of this principle in the awful judgments visited on the Jewish people kept up the practice of God's worship in the same way that the Israelites did. They were defended by God, just as the Hebrews were. The reason for that is that musical instruments were part of God's worship service. Without the use of music, the worship would be incomplete. We believe that both what and how we sing are essential elements of formal worship which Jesus authorized.

WHERE STATED?

In “the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life,” we find the principle stated and recognized in a number of places. For example, the writer of Hebrews (8:4-5) calls attention to God's specific instructions to Moses for building the Ark and the Tabernacle: “See that you make them according to the pattern for them, which I have shown you.” God elaborates on the instructions about sacrifices given in Exodus 29:1-38. “Whether I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from what I command you.” (Deuteronomy 12:2-32)

HOW CONFIRMED?

Some very prominent servants of the Lord were severely punished when they went beyond God's specific instructions. For example, Nadab and Abihu, Moses, David, and Uzzah. However, we believe that the principle of avoiding musical instruments for worship was laid down by God and is essential for spiritual worship.

WHAT PRINCIPLE?

It is the principle that musical instruments should not be used in worship. This principle is stated in the Bible and is confirmed by the actions of prominent servants of the Lord.

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We conclude from this God-ordered procedure that His people should still be singing “praises with gladness” but no longer accompanied by blood sacrifices and musical instruments. Now that Jesus once for all has “offered Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God” and has poured out His Spirit on all flesh, why should we presume upon God’s kindness and forbearance (Romans 2:4).

Don’t Psalms God gave for worship invite us to use harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets? Yes, and they also urge us to bring burnt offerings and sacrifices. We do all of these things when we offer the groanings of the Holy Spirit which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26), and when we trust the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

Isn’t heaven a place of harps? Why doesn’t God approve their use on earth? The Revelation is a picture book, and the harps mentioned there (5:8; 14:2; 15:2) are no more models for a worship service on earth than are the viols of incense (5:8), or than are New Jerusalem’s foundations of precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of gold (21:19-21).

Weren’t instruments used in the Jewish synagogues before and during Christ’s days on earth, and also in the early Christian churches modeled after the synagogues? The Bible says nothing to suggest musical instruments in the synagogues, and some scholars insist there never were any there. But, even if there were, we cannot assume that they were authorized by God, who didn’t approve of many other things the Jews introduced into His worship.

Doesn’t organ music create a mood that is especially appropriate for worship? Musical therapists classify organ music as soothing. Is that an appropriate preparation for the “joyful noise” God requires? Even more important, the thing to consider in worship is not what pleases us, but what makes us feel good. Isn’t there someone a cappella congregational singing that sounds so bad it can’t possibly be honoring to Christ?

Some of it certainly hurts human ears. But if a piano or an organ only covers up bad sounds, or fills in where there’s silence, the Lord isn’t deceived. Sincerity is no substitute for poor singing, but neither is beautiful music a substitute for grace in the heart.

“Let us sing psalms to Him with grace!” (Psalms 96:2)