

SPIRITUAL SONGS OUTSIDE THE ASSEMBLY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In past lessons we have established scriptural authority for singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in our assemblies in worship of God; that the kind of music authorized when worshipping God is acappella – singing only, not accompanied with the playing of mechanical instruments of music.
2. When we consider the fact that all N.T. passages which speak of music in connection with worship of God speak of, authorize or command singing: Mt.26:30; Mk.14:26; Ac.16:25; Rom.15:9; 1Cor.14:15; Eph.5:19; Col.3:16; Heb.2:11,12; 13:15; Jas.5:13.
3. Also, when we consider the fact that we are restricted by God's word in what we are to believe, teach and practice, being forbidden to add to, diminish from, substitute for, or go beyond what is written: Deut.4:2; 1Cor.4:6; 1Pet.4:11; 2Jno.9; Rev.22:18,19.
4. Then we must consider the fact that in singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs we are conforming to God's expressed will in worship of Him. But to sing and play psalms, hymns and spiritual songs we would be in violation of God's expressed will.
5. All of us agree we are limited to singing only in our local church assemblies. But what about outside the local church assembly, or in the home, or in secular settings for entertainment purposes?
6. Many times I have been asked the following question or its equivalent: "Is it wrong to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs accompanied with mechanical instruments of music outside the assembly, such as in the home, or in a secular setting, or wrong to sing along with such on the radio, or TV, or with a band of some sort?"
7. The proper question for any discussion of this subject is simply this: Is it scriptural (i.e., is it authorized in the scriptures) for Christians to use mechanical instruments of music when they sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs outside the local church assemblies; such as: at home, in private, in secular settings for entertainment purposes?

8. Thus our topic: Spiritual Songs Outside The Assembly.

II. DISCUSSION

A. APPEALING TO THE EMOTIONS, NO MATTER HOW STRONG, IS NOT THE ANSWER. OUR APPEAL MUST BE TO THE SCRIPTURES AND SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY.

1. Consider 1Cor.10:31.
 - a. Whatever we do must be done to “the glory of God.”
 - b. We are required to honor God in all of life’s activities.
 - c. This is the grand principle which the Christian should always use to regulate the decisions and activities of his life: “Will this act glorify God?”
 - d. Consider and compare 1Pet.4:16 and the name in which we are to “glorify God” as individuals. See Ac.11:26.
 - (1) The name “Christian” is the name God has authorized us to wear as individuals.
 - (2) That’s the name in which we glorify him. Wearing some other name never glorifies him.
 - (3) Singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in worship of him is how God decreed that we honor and praise him, not by singing and playing!
2. Consider Col.3:17.
 - a. Therefore, **All** that we do (in word or deed) must be done “in the name of” i.e., “in recognition of the authority of” (sometimes combined with the thought of relying or resting on) the name of the Lord Jesus...” – Vine,III,100. Strong, 3686, fig. “authority”
 - b. We have no right to say and or do things either in or out of the assemblies that Jesus Christ, who has all authority in heaven and earth (Mt.28:18), has not authorized.
 - c. Question: Has he authorized us to sing and play psalms, hymns and spiritual songs at home, in private, or in secular settings outside the assembly? If so, where is that authority found in the N.T.?

B. WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE INVOLVED IN THE STUDY OF THIS QUESTION?

1. It is not whether or not mechanical instruments of music may be used in the home or in other secular settings, any more than beef steak and cool aid or milk may be put on our table at home
2. It is not whether or not we like or enjoy mechanical instrumental music of various kinds and use them for entertainment purposes.
3. It is not that mechanical instrumental music is sinful within and of itself.
4. It is not a matter of mere personal choice or preference.
5. It is a question of what God has authorized us to do. It is a question as to what pleases God when singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs that involve him in the very thoughts and words used!
6. We have apostolic approved examples of and thus authority for individual Christians singing praises to God outside the assembly.
 - a. The example of Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi, Ac.16:25.
 - (1) Paul and Silas “prayed, and sang praises unto God” as individuals outside the assembly; but they did not “pray, sing and play” in praising God.
 - b. We have the example of Jas.5:13 clearly authorizing individuals to sing psalms outside the assembly.
 - (1) There is no way we can justly read “sing and play psalms” into that text.
 - (2) Thus we have clear authority in Jas.5:13 for the one, but not for the other.
 - (3) Remember: We are forbidden to add to, diminish from, substitute for, or go beyond what is written!
7. According to Jno.4:23,24 our worship of God (whether public or private) must be “in spirit and in truth.”
 - a. This must be worship by singing since to worship God in “truth” is governed by all the passages that say “sing,” not one of which authorizes “play.”
8. But if someone says, which I have known them to do, “It is not worship when we do it at home or in private or in a secular setting.” We must ask them, “What is it then, since you are obviously using God’s name in such psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, even while doing it at such times and places?”

- a. Are we allowed to use both God's name and such spiritual songs in a secular way or profane way or for entertainment outside the assembly but not in the assembly?
- b. What makes it right in the one case and wrong in the other?

C. WHERE IS THE BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR SINGING AND PLAYING PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS AT HOME, IN PRIVATE, OR IN A SECULAR SETTING?

1. Where is the N.T. precept (a command or statement) that authorizes both singing and playing such music since it of necessity involves both the thoughts and the name of God? I repeat. Where is the N.T. precept that authorizes it?
2. Where is the N.T. approved apostolic example that authorizes both singing and playing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs at home, in private, or in secular settings, for such music of necessity involves both the thoughts and the name of God? Again, I repeat. Where is the N.T. apostolic approved example that authorizes both singing and playing such music at home or in secular settings?
3. Where in the N.T. is the necessary implications that authorizes it?
4. Since there is neither precept, apostolic approved example, nor necessary implication authorizing it, there is no divine authority for it! Therefore, the practice of it is without divine authority and sinful!

III. CONCLUSION

1. If we are not worshipping God when outside the assembly we are singing and playing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs which, of necessity, have to do with God's name and other thoughts of God, what are we doing?
 - a. Are we merely being entertained and entertaining others?

- b. Do we have the scriptural right to use “the Lord’s songs”; that is, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, in such a way and for such purposes?
2. Can we act by faith and do such things since “faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of God,” (Rom.10:17), and there is nothing to be found in the word of God authorizing both singing and playing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs at any time, anywhere, for any purpose?
3. Can we not see that to practice this is to go beyond “the doctrine of Christ”? 2Jno.9 reveals how serious this is!
4. Our answer to the question we have been asked about the practice of singing and playing spiritual songs outside the assembly is an emphatic “Yes! It is wrong!” Who can believe the N.T. and answer otherwise?