



The Voice of Truth

A weekly publication of the
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March 29, 2009

Oh, You Offended Me! By Jimmy Pettigrew

In our society people are taught to get along with everybody. Don't rock the boat, don't stir up trouble, we should "agree to disagree." We are told that we shouldn't say anything that might offend someone in some way or another. That we shouldn't preach or teach anything that might offend someone either to our brethren or people in false religious groups. We don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, let us all just get along. Well, that might sound good, but what does the Bible say concerning this subject?

First, the Greek word for offend is *skandalizo*, and it means to stumble or to sin, or cause displeasure. Keep this meaning in mind as we go through this article. Now, let us look what the Bible says on this subject, "Oh, you offended me!"

Question, did Jesus Christ offend those He came in contract with? Yes He did! Why were they offended? Remember that the word offend means to stumble, to sin or cause displeasure. So, why were the people Jesus came in contract with caused displeasure, to sin, or stumble? Well, let us look at some examples.

In **Matthew 13:54ff**, Jesus departed for "His own country," which would have been Nazareth. Here, He taught in the synagogue, and the people were astonished at His abilities and His wisdom (**vs. 54**). He taught them (**from Luke's account 4:21**) that the Scripture which He had quoted was fulfilled in Him. The concept that Jesus might be more than merely one of them was unthinkable to the people of Nazareth. Hence, "they were offended in Him" (**Matt. 13:57**). Now what caused these people to be offended, what caused these people displeasure, to sin or stumble? The Truth! Jesus didn't offend them, cause them displeasure, to sin or to stumble, the Truth did! The Truth caused these people displeasure! The Truth caused these people to harden their hearts, the sin of unbelief! If these people had believed that the Scripture which He quoted was fulfilled in Him, then what would they have done? They would have done everything that Jesus had asked of them, but they did not believe. The Truth caused these people to stumble! They were pierced with the Truth, rebelled at Truth, and were offended because of Truth! The Truth causes displeasure in one's life because they don't want to change their life, or they don't want to except the Truth, so they sin, stumble because they don't do Truth (**Jas. 1:22-25**), they are deceiving themselves, fighting against God. So, what happens? They tell the person who told them the truth, "Oh, you offended me!" Well, how did I caused you displeasure, caused you to sin or to stumble? You have displeasure because you won't change, you deny the Truth. You sin because you won't accept the Truth on any given subject. If you were fully convince that God's Word is just exactly that, there wouldn't be any problem with any subject, you could mold your life to the teaching of the Truth. The sad thing about this is the fact that there are many unbelievers even in the church. You, yourself is where the fault lies. Sadly, many brethren hear something that offends them (something that causes them to wiggle or whisper in their seats!) they leave! They go to congregations where they can get their ears tickled and won't be offended anymore.

CONTINUED INSIDE...

Another example is found in **Matthew 15:1ff**. Jesus was teaching on the inconsistency of the Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem came to Jesus with a question. "Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread" (**Matt. 15:2**). Jesus said that they "transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition" (**vs. 3**). He called them "hypocrites" (**vs. 7**). He said to them "In vain they worship Me . . ." (**vs. 9**). We must realize that the Pharisees were standing there listening to Jesus when He said these things. And notice what the apostles said: "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (**vs. 12**). What offended these Pharisees? What caused them displeasure, to sin or stumble? The Truth! They were offended by the things He (Jesus) had said to them and about them. He exposed their disloyalty to God's law, called them "hypocrites" and pronounced their religion vain. Yes, they were offended! The apostles were more concerned with the feelings of a pack of wolves (Pharisees) than with Truth. They were worried more about projecting a favorable "image" in the eyes of the opinion-makers of the day than they were about pleasing God. They were actually suggesting that Jesus "tone down" His message so that it might not offend those men of repute from Jerusalem. Jesus' response to the disciples concerning the offended Pharisees is most instructive. Instead of running to the Pharisees saying, "Oh, I'm sorry for the Truth I had spoken!" "Please come back!" This is what many so-called brethren want us to do. Notice what Jesus said in response to what the apostles said: "But he answered and said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (**Matt. 15:13-14**). If they were going to be offended, then let it be so! "Let them alone," not in the way of ceasing to expose their errors, but in the sense of making no effort to appease them. If people become our enemies when we tell them the Truth (**Gal. 4:16**), it is because they do not love the Truth, they don't want to see the Truth, because they refuse to see it (**John 9:40-41**). Truth is truth; and most don't want to obey it. The reason the Pharisees were offended was because they knew what Jesus said was true. They couldn't deny it, and it made them mad. Truth is more important than hurting someone's feelings! Brethren, you can't stand for the Truth and never offend anyone at the same time. Jesus said, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (**Matt. 11:6**).

No Piano or Organ?

By Jonathan L. Perz

I often receive this question from visitors to our worship assembly: "I noticed you don't have a piano. Is there a belief concerning musical instruments?" Indeed, this is an understandable and expected question and it is often one of the first observations made by those who worship with us for the first time. The absence of a piano or organ stands out in stark contrast to what most have become accustomed to in today's religious world.

People professing Christianity today practice many things that seem right in their own eyes (**Prov. 14:12**), but lack any foundation in New Testament teaching (**John 12:48**). Like the practices of infant baptism or Sabbath keeping, the use of musical instruments is absent from the worship of the first century church. It was not until much later that the usage of instruments became associated with Christian worship.

In the New Testament, there are thirteen passages that deal with music. They are as follows: **Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; 13:15; Jas. 5:13; Rev. 5:8; 14:2; 15:2; 18:22**. With the exception of the passages in **Revelation** (which we will address shortly), all of these passages expressly and exclusively testify that singing is the only mode of musical worship used in Scripture by first century Christians, thereby making it the only mode authorized for use by twenty-first century Christians.

For example, Paul wrote, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (**Col. 3:16**). Notice, the Christians in Colossae were commanded to sing, not play. By playing, we are adding to (i.e. transgressing, going beyond) the clear and simple instruction to sing (read **2 John 9** and **Rev. 22:18-19**).

In another place, Paul wrote, “...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...” (**Eph. 5:19**). In this context, the Spirit goes so far as to specify which organ the melody is to be made on—our heart, not the keyboard. Therefore, we change the direct command of the Spirit when we “sing... making the melody on the piano.”

Additionally, in both of these contexts, the purpose of this music is clear—teaching. We are supposed to be “teaching and admonishing one another,” not entertaining one another. We are supposed to be “speaking to one another,” not playing to one another. Hence, Paul’s instruction to “sing with the spirit and ...also sing with the understanding” (**1 Cor. 14:15**) makes complete sense.

Likewise, James instructs, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms” (**Jas. 5:13**). Notice, we are to sing psalms, not play them. Consider also the words of the Hebrew writer, who wrote by inspiration, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (**Heb. 13:15**). It is the fruit of our lips that praises God, not that of the instrument. The New Testament reveals singing was the mode of musical worship used by first century Christians. Therefore, this is what we should use today if we are imitating them (**1 Thess. 2:14**)!

These contexts establish positive authority for singing in our worship (read **Col. 3:17**; **1 Pet. 3:15**; **4:11**). The question remains, is there positive authority for the use of instrumental music in worship in the New Testament? Thus, we need to address four passages in Revelation, which reference the harp in the same context as singing. These are used by some as “positive authority” for instrumental music in worship.

Before looking at these contexts, we must remember one thing about the book of Revelation—it is symbolic in nature (**Rev. 1:1** – “signified”). Therefore, it is not all to be taken literally. While some of it is quite literal, much of what John writes is apocalyptic in nature and cannot be taken literally without leaving us with some very poor conclusions to defend.

In **Revelation 5:8**, John tells us that each of the creatures and the twenty-four elders have a harp. The next verse tells us “they sang a new song....” Hence, some have concluded that they were playing and singing here. However, this assumes that the harps are literal. John also talks about bowls of incense being the prayers of the saints. Since the bowls are figurative, can we subjectively take the harps to be literal? Furthermore, this context will prove more than its advocates are willing to prove. For example, if the harps are literal, why don’t we use harps in our worship? Who said we could substitute a piano or an organ in place of the harps?

In **Revelation 14:2-3**, John is hearing the voice of God’s people singing a new song. John tells us in **verse 2** that he hears a voice from heaven —“like the voice of many waters” and “like the voice of loud thunder.” There are some variations on how the next clause is translated, but the New American Standard Bible, which relies on a larger variety of original manuscripts, translates it, “and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.” This seems to harmonize with the context, as John appears to be describing the power, volume and beauty of this singing he is hearing from heaven. This is proven in the fact that John is using similes (descriptive statements using the words like or as) to accomplish this. He is not saying that the singers were playing on harps. He is saying this is what it sounds like.

Furthermore, the scenes in this context, and in the next (**Rev. 15:2**) are taking place in

heaven, not on earth. Hence, even if the harps are literal, we are talking about worship in the age to come, not in this age. The beings engaging in this worship are celestial beings, not physical. If we take them as physical beings, then we must assume that only 144,000 virgin males will be participating in such worship, as the context limits such worship solely to them (see **Rev. 14:3-4**). These conclusions are impossible to overcome.

In **Revelation 18:22**, the context is dealing with the fall of Babylon, not with any type of worship to God. It suggests that no more joyous (or even warlike) sounds shall be heard in that place anymore. Babylon was to be destroyed.

Therefore, we conclude that there is no positive authority for instrumental music in worship, but there is positive authority for singing in worship. This is why we do not use a piano or an organ in our services and why we sing acappella hymns in our praise to God. It is a matter of conviction, not preference. It is simply a matter of the faith (**Eph. 4:5; Jude 3**).

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Which Is Worse?

A child afraid of the dark?

OR

An adult afraid of the light?

(See: **Mark 10:15; John 3:20; Romans 13:12**)

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - **Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3**

Believe - **Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24**

Repent - **Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30**

Confess the Lord - **Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21**

Be Baptized - **Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - **Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**