



with legalism allowed. If we teach or practice a circumcision as a test of fellowship, as a mark of the church, or as a salvation issue, we are required to “keep the whole law.”

Guin next observes correctly that circumcision preceded Mosaic Law, but we must also recognize its connection to Mosaic Law. What else can Paul mean by “the whole law?” Circumcision was never an element of the Law of Christ. Guin here clearly characterizes opposition to the instrument as a type of “circumcision as a test of fellowship.” What law would that leave one obligated to follow in “whole?” Guin does acknowledge that...

Those with a genuine faith will seek to do God’s will and won’t live in rebellion...

Agreed, but we must ask “rebellion” to what? If salvation by faith just means “believing” what constitutes rebellion? Scripture teaches that it defines rebellion and obedience (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Would I not be in rebellion if I practiced that which God had not authorized?

Guin draws his conclusion from Galatians 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumci-

sion nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Guin uses the English Standard Version, which puts it “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but ONLY faith working through love” (emphasis mine). He explains:

How could Paul speak more plainly? Hope comes “by faith.” The only thing that “counts for anything” is “faith working through love.”

That’s a little different than Paul puts it. The original text doesn’t say “only.” Just as Ephesians 2:8 doesn’t say “through faith *only*.” Yes, faith working through love is the heart of the gospel, but can we take this to the extreme? Can I murder someone *in faith* because I felt I was acting *through love*? Of course not! But why? Because Scripture defines love, just as Scripture defines faith. What is love for God? Jesus said, “If you love Me you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Guin’s final quote comes from Galatians 6:15, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.” Amen. But what is involved in being a “new creation?” Guin says:

In Galatians, therefore, Paul shows us a better hermeneutic. Rather than picking apart the many biblical passages about circumcision and debating endlessly whether it’s still a command, Paul tells us to ask: Is it about faith in Jesus? Is it about love for our neighbor? Is it about being transformed to be like Jesus?

Alright, if we can do this with instrumental music, to what else can we apply this “better hermeneutic?” What other things (that the Lord has said nothing about) can I add to worship? Shall we dance in worship? Shall we have wrestling matches? Where do we draw the line? Why is it so hard to imagine that if God was pleased with something in the First Century, He can be pleased with it now? I suppose I just don’t understand. Guin explains:

You see, the very notion that whether the instruments are right or wrong might depend on silences or the writings of Clement of Alexandria utterly misunderstands the nature of the gospel. The gospel is simply not about such things.

Mr. Guin, the only way that you or I can know anything about “the nature of the gospel” is by what has been revealed in Scripture. How I wish that we all could simply be content with that revelation, in the humble realization that the God who loved us so much that He sent His Son to die for us, has given us His word, “...that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Following that pattern isn’t legalism it is “faith working through love.”



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OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

December 26
2010

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



New Wineskins on Galatians and the Instrument

By Kyle Pope

New Wineskins, an online magazine published by the more liberal-minded of our institutional brethren, devoted its September/October 2010 issue to the topic of instrumental music in worship. One article, written by Jay Guin, an elder at the University Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa Alabama, entitled “On God’s Salvation, Galatians, and the Instrument” raised some important issues that should be addressed in our understanding of this issue and the biblical doctrine of salvation by faith.

Guin begins with the assertion that our debate really has been misguided. He writes:

It’s really about *who God is and his eternal plan for his people*. Did God send Jesus to save us to worship *a cappella*? Or did he have entirely different purposes in mind?

That’s the question.

This is an interesting assertion. Guin in essence, acknowledges that how one interprets this issue is a reflection of a broader view of the very nature of God and the gospel itself. I agree. Whatever conclusion one draws we can’t minimize it to say it is only about a minor aspect of service to God. On the contrary, our view of God and the gospel affects how we determine this issue.

From this assertion Guin goes further to address the conception of a God who would “damn over a piano.” He writes:

Once you envision a God who damns over such things, there’s really no end to the rules that your God might damn you over.

Guin’s description that our capacity to “envision” certain things about God, determines the reality of who God is, is interesting. I would hope that he means by that, that we shape a *vision* of God from what is revealed in Scripture. This is how we know Him—by what He reveals about Himself. As such, we can “envision” a God of such tender mercy so as to forgive a persecutor like Paul (1 Tim. 1:15), an adul-

terer like David (2 Sam. 12:13), or a coward like Jonah (Jon. 2:7-10). Yet we are also forced to “envision” a God who expects such absolute obedience so as to destroy Nadab and Abihu for offering profane fire (Lev. 10:1-2), Uzzah for reaching out to steady the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:6-7), and the house of Jeroboam for establishing elements of worship to God which He never commanded (1 Kings 14:7-16). If Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, or Jeroboam had *envisioned* a God who would not damn over such things, it would not have changed the fact that He did. We know Him by what He has revealed about Himself.

Before moving to consider Galatians, Guin charges those who would divide over the instru-



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ment with sin. Charging that concern for scriptural authority for the instrument is the same as a son failing to follow his father’s instructions to mow the yard because he is pondering if he is permitted to listen to an iPod while mowing, Guin quotes Luke 6:43-44—“each tree is known by its own fruit.” He then concludes:

Rather than seeking to justify a body of teaching that has led to sin, that is, division upon division — we should instead re-investigate the scriptures to see what God truly calls us to be.

We must take this very seriously! I agree that Jesus condemns division (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 3:3), but Jesus also condemns adding to His word (Rev. 22:18-19), and failing to abide in Christ’s teachings (2 John 9). We strive to call men out of division unto unity on what the word of God teaches. We can only do that if we set aside our preferences, wishes, and traditions in religious matters. We can only do this if we will be content to do what New Testament Christians did, and that alone. We should “re-investigate the Scriptures to see what God truly calls us to be”—and then we must accept (and be content with) what we find there.

Guin begins his consideration of Galatians with a quote from Galatians 2:3-5 that describes Paul’s refusal to circumcise Titus when he went to Jerusalem. Guin observes, regarding this decision:

It would have been much easier just to submit to their scruples and have Titus and other Gentile converts circumcised. It would have kept peace in the church. In a sense, it would have produced unity. It would have ended the controversy!

With this, Guin shows us the thrust of the application he intends to make of Galatians to the question of instrumental music in worship. He will argue that New Testament teaching on circumcision serves as a pattern for how we should view the question of the instrument. However, we must note at the onset some significant differences:

1. Circumcision is a matter that God has addressed directly.

He has revealed that Gentiles need not be circumcised (Acts 15:23-29), the blessing of forgiveness is not only for the circumcised (Rom. 4:7-10), yet it is not better or worse if one is circumcised (cf. Timothy’s circumcision Acts 16:3). What God has revealed about music in worship to God is the command to sing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

2. Binding circumcision reflected reliance upon the Mosaic Law.

The focus of Paul’s argument will be that if circumcision is bound it makes one “a debtor to keep the whole law” (Gal. 5:3). This is why Paul refused to yield to such falsehood, because it constituted a rejection of the Law of Christ—the gospel. In contrast, the use of the instrument would reflect a return to Mosaic (or at least Davidic) practice. It is not found in the gospel.

3. Those who were binding circumcision are identified by the Holy Spirit as “false brethren.”

We are not left to wonder how the Lord viewed those who bound circumcision—they were—“false brethren” (Gal. 2:4). In contrast, the Lord has not revealed his view of those who reject the instrument (nor for that matter those who accept it). If circumcision is a pattern for our treatment of the issue of instrumental music, are those (like myself) who reject it “false brethren?” Must we conclude that God will “damn for *not using the piano*” as He would *damn* those who bound circumcision?

Guin goes on to quote the first verses which record Paul’s rebuke of Peter for separating himself from the Gentile Christians (2:11-14). Guin comments that Peter...

...stood condemned because he drew the lines of fellowship too narrowly — so he could get along with brothers with scruples. Think about that one long and hard. Did someone suggest there is safety in withdrawing from those who don’t honor our scruples? That we should break fellowship just to be sure of our salvation? It doesn’t work that way!

The issue is more than just “lines of fellowship,” it is Christ vs.

Moses! Peter was not “straightforward about the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14a). *In what way?* He was binding the Law of Moses on Gentiles but not following it himself (2:14b). It is at this point that I fear Guin confuses “works of the law” with works of obedience. After quoting 2:16, “...a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified,” Guin asserts:

Faith justifies, and works do not. If we submit to those who teach a works-based gospel, we affirm their teaching, and that contradicts “the truth of the gospel.” It’s not an option.

Our objective is to “re-investigate Scripture.” We find here that one is justified “by faith in Jesus Christ.” Agreed. Yet, we have battled for years with a denominational world that would define faith as simply *mental assent*. Our Baptist friends would argue this admirably. But we must acknowledge when we “re-investigate Scripture” that Bible faith is not so subjective. Bible faith comes from the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Bible faith must be accompanied by the courage of confession (John 12:42-43). In fact Scripture will affirm that there must be “obedience to the faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) because (as was true of Abraham) “by works faith was made perfect” (James 2:22). In this sense Abraham was “justified by works” (James 2:21). Will we allow our investigation of Scripture to shape our view of God in our definition of faith?

Unfortunately, Guin seems to define faith exactly the way most denominationalists do:

It’s believing “in Jesus Christ.” The faith Paul preaches is not a systematic theology. It’s what we confess just before we’re baptized. The faith of a 12-year old coming to Jesus, confessed in a sentence, is enough. You don’t have to take two semesters of hermeneutics or church history to have faith.

I would agree that the babe in Christ need not understand all “meat” to be able to obey the gospel (cf. Heb. 5:14). I would also agree that the gospel is not a “systematic theology”—Paul taught the “simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). However, the very realization that leads us to argue that “believing” must move us to baptism (Mark 16:16) or confession (Rom 10:10) in order to constitute saving faith, compels us to obedience in all things (including worship in song). These are works which demonstrate faith. These are works of obedience. None of them merit our salvation, but they are our duty to perform (Luke 17:10).

Guin does not accept that “works of the law” refers to Mosaic Law, and jumps to Galatians 5:1-4—“I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law” (5:3). He comments:

Yes, a Christian can fall from grace. One way to do it is to defeat the gospel by insisting on salvation by some means other than faith in Jesus. There is no compromise