

Music In Worship

One of the most disturbing trends I see among the beloved of God today is the two extremes we enter whenever we discuss *worship* and *music*. Local churches are either moving fully toward the *traditional* forms of music - the old but blessed songs like *Amazing Grace*, *Victory in Jesus*, *Power in the Blood*, and so forth - or else churches are departing from the *traditional* and moving toward the *contemporary* style of worship with its varied rhythm. Those in the *traditional camp* object to *contemporary* music because it sounds so similar to secular or non-religious music. They use Scriptural support like:

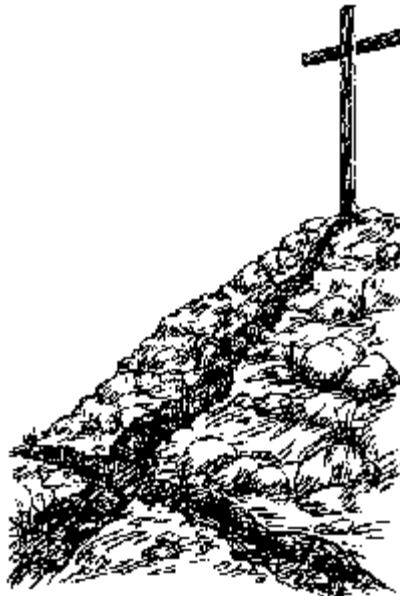
2 Corinthians 6:17, 18; 7:1^{KJV} "**Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;** and I will receive you, {18} And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.... Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

This is Biblically correct. The Christian must always remember that he is a product of God, created in Christ Jesus to do good works (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). We must remember that we are *strangers and foreigners* on this earth, teaching loving one another and spreading the Gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world (**Hebrews 11:3; 1 Peter 2:11; Matthew 28:19-20**). The Christian should strive to serve Jesus in all that he does,

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remembering that he is Christ's ambassador on earth (2 **Corinthians 5:20**). The *Protestant Christian* must be careful to consider church history, remembering how the church so blended with the world during Constantine's day until it and the Gospel message was perverted.

Those who favor *contemporary* styles of worship object to *traditional* forms of music because they consider such music out of date. Contemporary worshipers quote Biblical texts such as:

1 Corinthians 9:20-23 ^{KJV} "And **unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; {21} To them that are without law, as without law,** (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) **that I might gain them that are without law. {22} To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. {23} And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."**

showing that the Apostle preached the Gospel of Christ by compromising with others in ways that did not hinder his fellowship with Christ. It is true that there a number of so called *gray areas* in Christianity, areas where we can compromise with others so as to better reach them for Christ. Paul adhered to the Mosaic Law (though he was no longer under the Law - see **Galatians 3:24-25**) when he was preaching the Gospel to the Orthodox Jew. But when he approached the Gentile or non-Jewish person, he placed no emphasis on that old schoolmaster

we call the Law. However Paul never played the role of the hypocrite, shunning the Gentiles when the Jews were around and being friendly with the Gentiles when the Jews were gone. Peter fell into this type of hypocrisy, and Paul corrected him for it (**Galatians 2:12-17**). Those in the *contemporary camp* are also quick to point out that the songs the *traditionalists* love - Amazing Grace, Victory in Jesus, Power in the Blood, and the like - were themselves *contemporary* at the time of their writing. This is true! The *contemporary* songs of today will be, in just a few years, the *traditional* songs of tomorrow. The King James Version was greatly disliked when it first appeared, for the people preferred the *Geneva Bible*. The King James Version, produced in 1611, did not become more popular than the Geneva Bible until around 1649 (the end of the English Civil war). When Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) began to introduce music into the Church that emphasized the pipe organ, Pietists declared his innovations to be *the devil's music*. In time contemporary becomes traditional - but God's Church must be timeless.

What Is The Answer?

Is there a simple answer to the *traditional* versus *contemporary* music question? No, there isn't. But there's never been a simple answer to the gray areas in Christianity. You see, the Christian is not under the Law of Moses, but he is under the Law of the Spirit. The Christian is a *supernatural creation of God* indwelt by God the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:2-3 ^{KJV} "This only would I learn of you,

Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? {3} Are ye so foolish? **having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"**

Romans 8:2^{KJV} "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

We who are Christians are not supposed to be controlled by the flesh, that old sin nature, but we are supposed to be controlled by the Holy Spirit of God:

Romans 8:4^{KJV} "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Galatians 5:18^{KJV} "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

How does the Christian *determine* whether what is leading him is *Spirit* driven or *devilish*? There are many spirits in the world, many religions, many ways - and yet only one True Way to God. We must recognize that the Holy Bible is the standard by which we *try the spirits*:

1 John 4:1-3^{KJV} "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. {2} Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: {3} And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and

this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

Ephesians 6:17^{KJV} "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

1 Thessalonians 2:13^{KJV} "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Hebrews 4:12^{KJV} "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

2 Timothy 3:16-17^{NASB} "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

The Scripture provides *training in righteousness*. So if you want to understand what is right according to God, you must compare your ideas of rightness - not with experience, but with the teachings of God's Holy Word.

So What Does The Scripture Say About Musical Instruments?

In ancient Israel the Lord ordered that two *trumpets* be made (chatsotsorah {pronounced khats-o-tser-aw'}) to call the people to *worship* or to *break camp* (**Numbers 10:2-10**). These trumpets were used more to *signal* the camp rather than to worship God. Certain holy days were announced with the blowing of trumpets (**Numbers 29:1**). When King David ordered that the Ark of God be moved from Kirjathjearim to Jerusalem, the Ark was accompanied with:

1 Chronicles 13:8 ^{KJV} "And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets."

not only trumpets, but with singing, **harps** (or the lyre, kinnowr {pronounced kin-nore'}), **psalteries** (stringed instruments, harps, guitars - nebel {pronounced nay'-bel}), **timbrels** (tambourines, toph {pronounced tofe}), and **cymbals** (metsleth {pronounced mets-ay'-leth}). Though a servant died because of David's method of transporting the Ark (using a cart instead of the carrying poles, which God ordered - see **1 Chronicles 13:10**), there is no evidence that God was displeased with the musical selection. If you note these instruments you will find that some are *wind instruments* (trumpets), others *string instruments* (harps, psalteries), and yet others *percussion instruments* (timbrels, cymbals). When the Ark was later and properly moved as God so ordered:

1 Chronicles 15:15-16 ^{KJV} "And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD. {16} And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy."

King David ordered that the Levites be divided up into groups who would lead praise music. As the Ark entered Jerusalem

1 Chronicles 15:28 ^{KJV} "Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps."

it was accompanied with *wind, stringed, and percussion instruments*. The only person who objected to the entire process appears to be Michal, David's wife (**1 Chronicles 15:29**). When the Ark of the covenant was brought into the Temple of God in Solomon's day (**2 Chronicles 5:7**) the worship services included

2 Chronicles 5:12-14 ^{KJV} "Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with 8

them an **hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:**) {13} It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when **they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music**, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; {14} So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

singers, along with those who played *percussion* (cymbals), *wind* (trumpets), and *stringed* instruments (psalteries and harps). God showed His support of this celebration by filling the Temple with the *shekinah* glory of God - the glory of God so filled the Temple that the priests could not make sacrifice. Is this the only time that Israel used music in their relationship with God? No. Israel often used music in worship. When they swore allegiance to God under the reign of King Asa, they did so using *wind* instruments (**2 Chronicles 15:14**). When Israel defeated the Ammonites and the Moabites under King Jehoshaphat (**2 Chronicles 20:28**) they marched back into Jerusalem playing *stringed* and *wind* instruments. When the evil King Ahaz passed away and the good King Hezekiah began to reign in Israel, the first thing he did was order that the Temple of God be cleansed of all the evil that Ahaz had inflicted on it (**2 Chronicles 29:2**). What Hezekiah did was considered *right in the eyes of God* according to the Scripture.

2 Chronicles 29:26-28 ^{KJV} "And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the **priests with the trumpets**. {27} And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. {28} **And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.**"

As burnt offering was made to cleanse the Temple the *instruments of David* were played - which, if you remember, included *stringed*, *percussion*, and *wind* instruments - until the offering was finished.

Psalms 98:4-6 ^{KJV} "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: **make a loud noise**, and rejoice, and **sing praise**. {5} Sing unto the LORD with the harp; **with the harp**, and the voice of a psalm. {6} **With trumpets and sound of cornet** make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King."

Psalms 150 ^{KJV} "Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. {2} Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. {3} **Praise him with the sound of the trumpet**: praise him with the psaltery and harp. {4} Praise him with the **timbrel and dance**: praise him with **stringed instruments and organs**. {5} Praise him upon the **loud cymbals**: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. {6} Let every

thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."

God's Word encourages the believer to praise God with not only the voice, but also with a variety of instruments. When we look at the Scripture we see that God is praised **loudly, and in His sanctuary**. This cannot refer to the heavens, but is a command to the people of God to praise Him in the place He has established - the Temple, or the Church house. In praising God we are commanded to use *stringed, percussion, and wind* instruments. In Scripture we find the following instruments:

instrument listed (KJV)	frequency listed
cymbal(s) (percussion instrument)	17 times
trumpet, trumpeteers, trumpets (wind)	118 times
stringed instruments	3 times
harped, harps, harping, harpers	54 times
organ, organs (wind instrument)	3 times
timbrel, timbrels (percussion instrument)	10 times
psalteries, psaltery (stringed instrument)	27 times
cornet, cornets (wind instrument)	9 times
listing total	241 times

Can we, *using God's Word*, show that God does not like the use of *wind, stringed, and percussion* instruments? No, for these instruments are used extensively

throughout God's Israel, and often with His expressed commendation. It would be easier to support the *Church of Christ's* strange notion of *no music* in the Church (for I can see no specific reference to the **piano in the Scripture**) than it is to make the blanket declaration that certain instruments are banned from worship. Israel used a variety of instruments. The Psalms frequently *command* us to use these instruments in worship of God. God has not changed (**Malachi 3:6**), nor will He ever change (**James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8**). God has provided us a Great Salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. The believer is free to worship God as the Lord leads.

What Restricts Christian Behavior

At this point the *contemporary* worshiper is probably saying, "Aha! I knew it! We can worship this way, and God endorses it". But let's not be too hasty. Yes, you are allowed, *mechanically speaking*, to worship in a loud and varied manner. But as Christians we are still under the Law of the Spirit and the Law of Love:

Galatians 5:14-16 ^{KJV} "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. {15} But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. {16} This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."**

Romans 13:8-10 ^{KJV} "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for **he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. {9} For this, Thou shalt not commit**

adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. {10} **Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."**

Christians are supposed to be *Spirit filled* people, people who walk following the leading of the Spirit of God and the Law of Love. The Law of Love dictates that I regard you before I regard me. The Law of Love, like water, seeks its own level. The Law of Love asks, "What is best for the *rest of the Body*, the Church, not "what is best for ME". The Law of Love seeks to avoid confusion, knowing that God is not the Author of confusion (1 **Corinthians 14:33**), and knowing that confusion *leads to evil* (**James 3:16**). Division in the Church renders the Church ineffective in winning souls for Christ:

1 Corinthians 1:10 ^{KJV} "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there **be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."**

The mature believer is commanded to:

Romans 12:10 ^{NASB} "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; **give preference to one another in honor;**"

prefer the other believer over himself. This is a strange

concept in the *purpose driven, me first* Church of today, but it is Biblical regardless as to how one may *feel*. It is true that there will *always* be believers who "church hop" from one place to another because they selfishly are seeking their own way. It is also equally true that God expects the *mature believer* to nourish the younger believer, compromising in ways that do NOT negate Scriptural teaching, while at the same time displaying the sacrificial attitude that our Lord Jesus taught.

A Good Illustration

The best illustration we can find in the Scripture that closely relates to the *contemporary versus traditional* debate is found in Romans 14. The Roman Church had a mixture of well to do and poor believers in its congregation. The Roman Church was also located in proximity to one of the many Roman pagan temples of that day. After an animal was sacrificed on a pagan altar the temple often turned the meat over to the local marketplace to sell it. Since the meat was good, but previously offered to idols, many people refused to eat this meat. But there were a number of poor Christians in the Church who found this meat to be *nourishing*, and hard to turn down. So they purchased that meat to eat it. But the well off Roman Christians chastised these poorer believers for eating meat sacrificed to idols - and confusion came to the Church.

God spoke to these people and said:

Romans 14:1-4 ^{NASB} "Now **accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment**

on his opinions. {2} **One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.** {3} **Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.** {4} **Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand."**

First, the brother who is *weaker in the faith than you* should be accepted as he is - a brother in Christ. The Bible does not specifically forbid the eating this type of meat. If you eat the sacrificed meat, but *eat it in faith, with your heart on Christ*, there is no sin here. As the Scripture says:

Romans 14:23 ^{KJV} "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for **whatsoever is not of faith is sin."**

The Bible plainly asks, "**who are you**" to judge God's servant? The Scripture does not specifically condemn the practice, it is a *gray area*, so stop bringing divisions into the Body over such a trivial matter. God will judge that fellow-Christian. The greater purpose of the Church is that God be glorified:

Romans 15:6 ^{KJV} "That ye may with **one mind and one mouth glorify God**, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

in *one accord*, that God be worshipped *with one mind and one mouth*. When the Church is in *one accord*

mighty things happen. When the Church is in *one accord* many people are led to accept Christ as Savior (**Acts 2:1, 41**). When the Church is in *one accord* believers are blessed in the midst of suffering (**Acts 2:46-47**), and the Church continues to grow. When the Church is in *one accord* people are blessed in wonderful ways (**Acts 5:12**). When the Church is in *one accord* then it sends out ministers, preaching the Gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world (**Acts 15:25**).

Philippians 2:2-5 ^{KJV} "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be **likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.** {3} **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.** {4} **Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.** {5} **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:"**

When the Church is in *one accord* it imitates Jesus Christ, and binds itself with God Almighty and with one another in likemindedness. Satan seeks to drive the Church in a direction that brings *confusion* and *every evil work*. This is not what Jesus Christ shed His precious Blood for. This is not what our precious Savior wanted when He prayed:

John 17:11 ^{KJV} "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

When Christians argue over foolish things, fussing and fighting to see who's going to be the "big dog", the world snickers, demons giggle, and Satan is satisfied beyond measure. When the Church fights over the foolish a lost and dying world continues to be lost and dying. New Age religion moves into the vacuum, and people walk away from the Christ of the Scripture (**John 14:6**) in favor of something entirely a product of their imagination. Is there a simple answer to the question of music in the Church? As I said before, no, there isn't. We cannot pin it down to a "yes, use *contemporary* music", or a "yes, use *traditional* music". The question is not **what type of music to use in the Church**, but rather the question is **Do I love my brother the way that Christ commands?** The *mature believer* is willing to give or to compromise *certain viewpoints* insofar as the Scripture does not forbid the behavior.

For instance I, quite frankly, cannot stand the group "Toby Mack". To me this psychedelic light show is a mixture of poorly written trash music that has absolutely - in my opinion, mind you - no spiritual value. It is pure bilge! At least, it is to me. Yet not too long ago I attended a concert where two groups - Toby Mack and Third Day - played. As much as I disliked Toby Mack (if you have about an hour I can tell you why I dislike the music), I found that Third Day was highly enjoyable. Toby Mack screamed and did gymnastics standing on top of flashing light boxes. Third Day took all the garbage off the stage and sang praises unto God. Toby Mack played several songs clearly lifted from old Rock and Roll tunes. Third Day played all original music expressing a heart devoted to Christ. Toby Mack

sounded like a train wreck, only worse. Third Day was loud, but beautiful, because many of their songs are tied to the Holy Scripture. Which performing artist did the youth group I was accompanying like better? I was amazed to find out they liked Toby Mack!

What's the *bottom line* here? It's this. We all have different tastes, because God made us individually. Because I do not like a thing - for instance, I do not like oysters on the half shell - does not make that thing sinful. Within the Church we are given the Law of the Spirit and the Law of Love to live by. The Apostle said:

1 Corinthians 8:10-13 (KJV) "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; {11} And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? {12} But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. {13} Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The stronger brother should be careful to avoid offending the weaker brother in matters that are not clearly delineated in Scripture. Which position is the *stronger* brother, the *traditional* or the *contemporary*? You decide! But whatever decision you make you need to understand that the Church is designed by Christ to *work in one accord glorifying God*. Whether weak or strong, both sides are called to give a little so that

harmony can be reached. You may not like Toby Mack - and I understand that - but for the sake of Love you may need to sit quietly and listen. Do not allow Satan to get the upper hand in the Church. Too many precious lives have been lost to eternal damnation because of unwinnable arguments over foolish traditions. Christians are called to a higher standard of life.

Should we be careful as to what type of music enters our worship services? Certainly! Music that has no basis in Scripture should be avoided. Even saying this, though, few believers know that "**Battle Hymn of the Republic**", was written by **Julia W. Howe**, who was a self-professed *Unitarian* and a *Transcendentalist* - a form of New Age religion. The Unitarian believes that all men will be saved regardless as to faith or lack of faith in Christ. The Transcendentalist believes that all people are indwelt or inspired by "The Divine Soul which also inspires all men". In short, Howe was not what you would call a Christian in the orthodox definition of the word - and most of us would call her a *heretic*. The **hymnals** most Christians use in Church have songs from Lutherans, Unitarians, Baptist, Anglicans, Methodists, Pentecostals - nearly every group of people you can imagine. The minister of music or the pastor of every Church needs to carefully screen the music we sing in worship, lest we find ourselves singing something that brings NO glory to God. This caveat applies to both *traditional* as well as *conservative* worshipers.

If You Are Offended

If you are offended, if you are either staunchly *traditionalist* or staunchly *contemporary* in your worship styles, then

Romans 3:4 ^{KJV} "God forbid: yea, **let God be true, but every man a liar**; as it is written, **That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.**"

The Church that Jesus died for was never commanded to fight and fuss over foolish things. We are called to be in one accord, telling all nations about the Jesus Who richly saves all who believe. This is our Father's business, and this is the business we need to get back to. We are called to

1 Thessalonians 5:21 ^{KJV} "**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.**"

2 Timothy 1:13 ^{KJV} "**Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**"

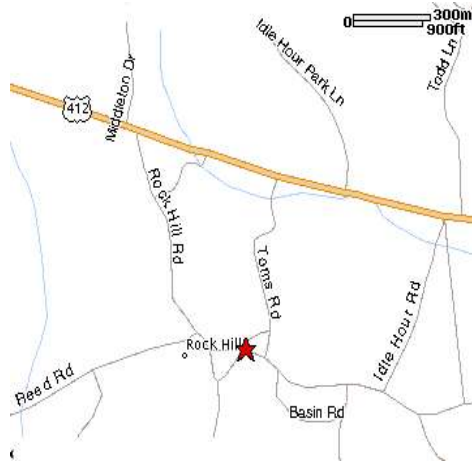
test all things by the Law of Love and the Word of God. The mature believer is called - not to be enslaved by his body and his desires - but to master both body and soul, submitting it to Jesus Christ for love's sake. We hold fast to Jesus Christ,

Hebrews 10:23-24 ^{KJV} "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) {24} And let us **consider one another to**

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provoke unto love and to good works:"

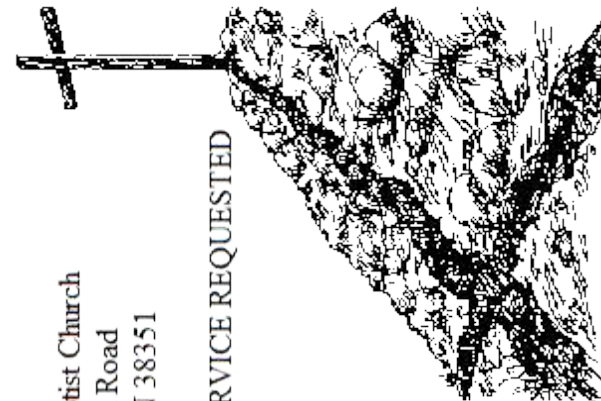
while provoking one another to love and good works. The Church that Christ died for must cease bickering and dividing over foolishness, and return to love and support of each member in Christlike fashion. If we do not do this I guarantee you that Satan will use the ensuing arguments to purchase the souls of your children, your grandchildren, your friends, your neighbors, and all whom you hold dear.



Rock Hill Baptist Church is located between Parsons and Lexington, Tennessee, on Highway 412. Look for our sign! We have services on Wednesdays (Adult, Youth, and children's Bible studies) at 7:00 PM, Sundays at 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Rock Hill is a

family oriented Bible believing Church - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Our Pastor, Brother David Buffaloe, will answer any questions you have about our Church if you contact him at 731-845-6104, or through his website at bibleteacher.org; or e-mail him by writing webmaster@bibleteacher.org

Rock Hill is an independent Church affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and is a regular contributor to missions through the Cooperative Program.



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