The Significance of PSALLO

By

Jay Lockhart

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This discussion on this topic will eventually center upon the meaning of the Greek word psallo as it is used in the New Testament.

Psallo is found five times in the New Testament

Romans 15:9—“And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: For this reason I will confess to you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

II Samuel 22:50—“”Therefore I will give thanks to you, O Lord among the Gentiles and sing praises to your name.”

I Corinthians 14:15—“What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit and I will also sing with the understanding.”

Ephesians 5:19—“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

James 5:13—“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”

THAYER’S LEXICON DEFINITION OF PSALLO:

1. To pluck off;
2. To cause to vibrate by touching, to twang, to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate; and absolutely to play on a stringed instrument to play the harp, etc.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

Thayer along with other scholars recognized that psallo referred only to singing.

Foy E. Wallace stated that Psallo in the OT was used when referring to use with the harp. While in the NT it is referred to use with the heart.

It should be pointed out that for nearly a thousand years after the death of Christ the early Christians as well as the “Church Fathers,” recognized that the only music ordained by God was singing.

Questions to Ponder about the Instrumental Music argument:

1. Did Christ, the apostles, and any inspired writer of the NT, authorize the use of instrumental music in the worship of the Church? NO.
2. Did the first century church use instrumental music? NO
3. Did the NT say we should not use instruments? NO
4. Did Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 give instructions for what to do in the worship assembly of the church or are these passages speaking of something else. YES they gave instruction. We are to teach and admonish one another. How could the playing of instruments do this?
5. What is the instrument in Ephesians 5:19? The Heart
6. If we are to use instruments in worship, does that mean everyone would have to use an instrument? YES
7. If it is a command to make a melody in your heart unto the Lord, and psallo means play, then we are commanded to play the instrument, it would not be optional.
8. Singing is a specific command. In the OT Noah had to make the ark out of gopher wood. The Israelites were told to offer lambs. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire.

John 4:24—“God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him, must worship in spirit and truth.”