

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:14-17 NKJ

Love binds people together. This begins with our love for God: “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Love is seen in God for “God is love” (1 John 4:16). He is also just and holy (Romans 3:26; 1 Peter 1:16). The many attributes of God are His in perfection. We have the responsibility to understand His attributes and grow in each to be like Him. When Jesus was speaking of loving all, even our enemies, He said “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). While we can never be sinless like God, we can become more and more like Him. That love for God extends to our love for one another and brings harmony as Paul noted in the text to the left. See 1 John 3-5 for more details on love, and Paul’s words of 1 Corinthians 13 for specific traits of love. It is a challenge we are called to develop within ourselves. John wrote, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

The peace of Christ. When we obey the Lord we are at peace with God because our sins are washed away and our fellowship with Him is restored. We are His children! See Ephesians 2:4-22 and

Galatians 4:1-7. We are called in one body and in that body we are unified as we serve Him. There were divisions in the early church which were reprovved and condemned by the inspired writers (Galatians 1:6-10; 2 Peter 2). When we all strive to obey God we will find ourselves unified, being of the same mind, the same judgment and speaking the same things (1 Corinthians 1:10). Where there is division, one or more are not minding the things of God. Let us be bold to refocus on God’s will! Remember, we are to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. We are to hear, to know and to do. See Matthew 7:21-27.

In association with ‘the word’ dwelling in us we are to engage in the action of singing. Each one is instructed to sing. Singing is to teach and admonish one another through the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. That which we sing, then, should be according to God’s truth. We cannot sing error and fulfill this instruction. The action is ‘singing’. Since God specifies singing we are to avoid music which is not singing and which does not teach and admonish. The instrument cannot do either, so it is excluded by the Lord. Words which do not communicate and sounds which do not instruct are to be avoided because they too do not teach and admonish. The instruction to sing is also given by Paul in Ephesians 5:19 with an emphasis of making melody with the heart. The heart is the instrument to use in singing and it is the only instrument authorized by the Lord. Many dismiss this as being picky and narrow minded. However, look closely at this subject. Instruments were specifically commanded by the Lord in the old law (2 Chronicles 29:25) but are not authorized in the new law. History shows that the early church did not use mechanical instruments of music with spiritual songs, and they were not used in ‘churches’ for hundreds of years. The mechanical instrument of music is not ordained of God and is sinful. We must refrain from its use. Remember, whatever we do we are to do in the name of the Lord, by His authority (see text above). For that reason, we are to sing and never add a musical element which does not teach and admonish. We are to sing with the spirit and the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15).