

Biblical Authority

Introduction:

- A. One day while Jesus was teaching in the temple, the chief priests, scribes and elders asked Him, "...by what authority are You doing these things?" (Lk. 20:2). These men had not given Him permission to do the things He was doing, so they were questioning whether He had the right to do them. They recognized the need for authority.
- B. It used to be that brethren were constantly referring to God's word while teaching. In questioning some practice, they would ask for "Book, Chapter and Verse." That was before the term "dialogue" became so popular. Error was often exposed or challenged openly. Such was what Isaiah did in Isa. 8:20, when he said, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."
- C. Without Bible authority, the identity of God's people on earth is lost. And if our identity is lost, our hope for a home in heaven is in vain.

I. *The Need For Authority*

- A. Standards keep everyone on the same track.
 - 1. National Bureau of Standards, Atomic and Cesium clocks, Dictionaries, etc.
 - 2. All these set standards so everyone understands alike
- B. Standards provide a common basis and understanding for man's social good.
- C. God provides guidance for man's spiritual good in the form of law, precepts and commandment, because man is not capable of charting his own course - Jer 10:23; Prov 16:25

II. *The New Testament Is Christ's Will As Taught By The Apostles*

- A. Some say all we need are the words of Jesus
 - 1. They are right, but in the sense they mean
 - a. Jesus always taught the truth always
 - b. But He didn't teach ALL the truth during His personal ministry
 - 2. So, we need what the apostles taught also

- B. Apostles guided by the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascension into heaven - Jn. 16:7-14; Jn. 14:26
- C. The word of God was given to them - Jn. 17:8-14
- D. They were given the keys to the kingdom - Matt. 16:9; 18:18
 - 1. The key was a symbol of authority - Isa. 22:22 (speaking of Christ)
 - 2. According to Jewish usage, binding meant to forbid it. To loose meant to permit or allow.
 - 3. Some have therefore decided the apostles had authority to make law
 - a. This is not true
 - b. They were only carrying out heavens decisions; not heaven ratifying their decision
 - 4. Matt. 16:19 translated literally would read, "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall have been being bound in heaven and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall have been being loose in heaven."
 - 5. This gives the idea they were only authorizing things heaven had already authorized

III. *Ways Authority Is Taught In The Bible*

- A. Direct Command or Precept
 - 1. "You shall not murder" - Ex. 20:13; Rom. 13:9
 - 2. "Repent and be baptized" - Acts 2:38
- B. Approved Example - Acts 20:7; Phil 3:17; 4:9
 - 1. There are some examples not approved by God - Gal. 2:11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13
 - 2. That's why we say it must be approved
- C. Necessary Inference or Implication or Logical Conclusion
 - 1. Something that is not expressly stated or specifically exemplified, yet it is necessarily implied or inferred by the clear import and meaning of the language used (couldn't miss the point) - Acts 8:38
 - 2. But not all inferences or conclusions are necessary
 - a. Some infer infant baptism from the household baptisms of Acts 16:15 and 16:33
 - b. Some read of "love feasts" in Jude 12 and infer kitchens and banquet facilities

IV. *Kinds Of Authority*

A. General

1. Webster defines general as "pertaining to, affecting, or applicable to, each and all of a class, kind, or order; as a general law. Not limited to a precise import or application; not specific."
2. This type of authority would include anything necessary to carry out the command, example or inference.

B. Specific

1. This is defined as "precisely formulated or restricted; specifying; explicit; as a specific statement" according to Webster.
2. In other words, specific authority is very restrictive in nature. It limits to a specific class, kind, or order.

C. The law of exclusion

1. This principle is used and understood in every field of study.
2. It allows us to understand that to specify one thing eliminates the need to specify others not wanted.
3. Black's Law Dictionary says, "The inclusion of one is the exclusion of another. The certain designation of one person is an absolute exclusion of all others."

D. Expediencies

1. Only things that are lawful can be expedient - 1 Cor 10:23; 6:12
2. It cannot be specific. If something is specified, there is no room for expedients.
3. It must edify - 1 Cor 10:23-33; 14:26
4. It must not offend (cause to stumble) another - 1 Cor 10:32; 8:7-13
5. It must not be an addition to or substitution for God's word - Deut 12:32; Prov 30:6; Rev 22:18

V. *When The Bible Does Not Say*

A. The most common question asked whenever God has not spoken or authorized a certain thing is "Why can't we?"

1. Basic error is presumptiveness and disrespect for truth

2. The nature of this desire is that if we can do the thing not mentioned in the Bible, then we can do not only the few things God has mentioned, but also the thousands of things He has not mentioned.
- B. But we need to ask ourselves what God's answer to the meaning of His silence is. Therefore, let us go to the Bible and ask Him.
1. Silence does not authorize any action. Only God's revealed word does that - Heb 7:14
 2. The fact there is no instruction does not give us the right to speak - Acts 15:24

Conclusion:

- A. If we are to remain pleasing to God, we must observe the authority of Jesus Christ and not that of man.
- B. When we have specific command from God, it automatically excludes doing anything else. Just because it doesn't say we cannot do something does not give us authority to change what God's word does tell us and go ahead and do whatever we might want.
- C. If God has specified something to be done, but did not specify how, we are free to choose whatever method is appropriate at the time.
- D. If we have no direct statement (command), or approved apostolic example, or a necessarily implied conclusion, we have no business doing something.
- E. If we have been practicing things or advocating things just because the Bible "doesn't say we can't," we need to turn from those sinful practices and come to God in obedience to His "revealed" word.