

Seeking The Old Paths #2
Or
The Nature Of Authority

Introduction:

- A. In our last lesson we looked at the various ways authority can be established. We learned that authority is only established by direct command, approved example, or necessary inference.
- B. But in these three areas, we must also make a distinction between the nature of the authority that is given in each case.

I. *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.
 - a. 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."
 - b. A will specifies who is to inherit one property, not those who are not to receive it.
 - c. A deed specifies the property owned. It does not specify all the property not owned.

D. Expediencies.

- 1. Only things that are lawful can be expedient - 1 Cor 10:23; 1 Cor 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; 1 Cor 14:26
- 4. It must not offend (cause to stumble) another - 1 Cor 10:32; 1 Cor 8:7-13
- 5. It must not be an addition to or substitution for God's word

II. *Examples of authority*

A. General

- 1. Noah (Gen. 6:14).
 - a. May use whatever tools necessary to build an ark.
 - b. Saw, hammer, chisel, etc.
- 2. Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).
 - a. Go
 - 1) General
 - 2) May use whatever means we deem appropriate to go.
 - b. Teach
 - 1) Once again general
 - 2) May use whatever means we desire.
 - a) Radio
 - b) Television
 - c) Home classes
 - d) Classes at the building

- c. Baptize
 - 1) Both specific and general
 - 2) Places such as Acts 8:38, Rom. 6:4-9 and Col. 2:12 show us baptism is a burial in water.
 - 3) But the command doesn't specify a place, therefore, we may use any place that has a suitable amount of water.
- 3. Assemble (Heb. 10:25).
 - a. Tells us to do so, but doesn't specify where.
 - b. May use house, rented building, owned building, etc.
- B. Specific
 - 1. Noah (Gen 6:14)
 - a. Ark - no other kind of vessel would do
 - b. Gopherwood - no other wood might be used
 - 2. Passover (Ex. 12:1ff)
 - a. Lamb - couldn't use goat
 - b. Without blemish - couldn't use cull of flock
 - c. 1 year old - not old and sickly
 - d. Male - a ewe (female) would not do
 - e. To be done on 14th day of 1st month - did not have to specify other time would not do
 - 3. Sing - did not have to specify could not use mechanical instrument

Conclusion:

- A. 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.
- B. If God's laws specified something to be done, but did not specify how, we are free to choose whatever method is appropriate at the time.