

Rom. 14:19
So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32
And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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SPECIFIC AUTHORITY

by Jim Stauffer

Last week we discussed generic authority in this space. Today we go from one end of the spectrum to the other as we speak of specific authority.

One of the best examples of specific authority in all of Scripture is when God authorized Noah to build an ark. In **Genesis 6:14ff** God instructed him to build an ark. From last week's discussion we realize if God stopped here the materials and design of the ark would have been left to Noah. Be He did not stop here. He finished by telling Noah to make it of gopher wood and to cover it inside and out with pitch. He specified the length, width and height it was to be. He told Noah who and what animals to take on the ark.

We may encounter people who have authority over us who give specific instructions. We may even at times with their approval make suggestions for changes in their instructions. This is because they recognize their own imperfections and limitations. But when it comes to the God of heaven, the Creator of heaven and earth and all therein, we are not granted this privilege. Moses of the Old Testament said, "*You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.* (Deut. 4:2) The apostle Peter wrote in the New Testament, *Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

(1 Pet. 4:11) John wrote in his second epistle, *Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.*

(2 John 9) Any thought we may have of changing or making what we perceive as improvements to His instructions have been denied by the instruction itself.

There are many examples of men who without proper respect for God's commands did things their own

way and suffered the consequences. Consider the sons of Aaron, the High Priest. Nadab and Abihu used unauthorized fire described as strange fire. It was strange fire because it did not come from the authorized source (**Lev. 10:1,2**). There is the case of Uzza when King David decided to transport the ark of the Covenant on a new cart rather than the method authorized (**2 Chron. 13**). These are magic incidents where mortal life was lost because the specific authority of God was not respected and obeyed.

Today in the religious world men everywhere teach things not authorized by God. Churches practice work and worship that extends beyond the specific authority of God and Christ. We are told by the apostle Paul, *....Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.* (**Eph. 5:25-27**) We must admit the church cannot be holy and blameless if it violates the specific authority of the One who purchased it with His own blood (**Acts 20:28**).

Therefore, when churches teach differently than Christ taught on baptism for the remission of sins and to put on Christ, we know they are putting a blemish on what Jesus died to cleanse and make holy. And the same can be said when men choose to add musical instruments to the authorized melody of the heart that is specified in Scripture (**Eph. 5:19**).

They are truly those spoken of by Paul in the following passage. *....dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* (**2 Thess. 1:8**)

Learning to respect the authority of God is vital if we are to hear Him say in the judgment, *'.....Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'* (**Mat. 25:21**)

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Churches in the New Testament fulfilled their mission of preaching the gospel within the framework of the local church. It was only a matter of some thirty years from the giving of the Great Commission that Paul was able to say: *"If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister"* (Col. 1:23; Mk. 16:15-16). New Testament Christians taught the word of God and supported evangelists in their work (Acts 8:4; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Cor. 9:1-18; Phil. 4:14-16). In special emergencies we find that a church (es) helped other churches. Prompted by the famine in the land the disciples in Antioch sent aid to their brethren in Judaea. They chose their own messengers and sent the relief to the elders of the churches in Judaea (Acts 11:27-30). The text does not say that the elders in Jerusalem became the overseeing board for the disbursing of these funds! Churches in Macedonia and Achaia followed the same pattern as they collected funds, chose their own messengers, and sent relief to the poor saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-28; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9). These churches worked concurrently; they did the same work at the same time independently of each other. The need was real but it was also temporary. The church in Jerusalem did not receive the funds for the further promotion of some brotherhood project; no church received and sent at the same time. In regard to evangelism, churches cooperated in evangelism. Some of our liberal brethren do not like the term *liberal*. Just so, none of my acquaintance are *anti-cooperation*. Again, concurrent cooperation takes place as each local church according to its ability sends directly to the preacher in the field (Phil. 1:3-5; 4:14-16; 2 Cor. 11:8).

No one denies the need to do more in spreading the gospel; evangelism is an integral part of the mission of God (1 Tim. 3:15). The building up of the members must not be overlooked (Eph. 4:16). The physical needs of the members must be and should be met as the situation calls for such action (Acts 6:1-7). The monstrosity of Roman Catholicism grew out of a perversion of the simple organization of the local congregation. Paul warned about the possibility of this corruption in Acts 20:28-32. Brotherhood works create a big church-small church mentality as the work of the elders is expanded beyond the flock "among you". God's arrangement of local churches doing their own work under the oversight of elders is a guard against such apostasy. Where do elders have authority to oversee the work of any other flock?

RandyHarshbarger

A Very Serious Verse

I can imagine you as you read this title thinking, "Clee, aren't ALL verses of the Bible important?" Yes, you're right for Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4**, *"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."* By the same token some verses, because of their subject matter, must have the greater heed given to them. One of these verses is **Luke 7:30**, *"But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John."* (NAS95) The KJV is much more forceful, *"But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."* Here I think the old Bible our grandparents read is the better rendering making it clear that the Pharisees and lawyers were acting against themselves by not obeying the commands given by God through John to be baptized for the forgiveness of sin, **Mark 1:4**.

In the verse previous we read that even the publicans were willing to obey John's command, *"When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John."* (Luke 7:29) What the Pharisees and Lawyers did by refusing to obey the command of God given through John was to destroy their only hope of salvation!

Now, isn't the obvious question: Don't we do the same thing today when we refuse to obey the commands given by God in the New Testament document? Most certainly! Many preachers give impassioned arguments against baptism but they don't change the simple statement of Jesus *"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."* (Mark 16:16)

Cleveland R. Reddinger Jr.

The Right Church

Robert F. Turner

A brother told me his friend asked if the church of which he was a member was the **true church**. The brother is an honest, conscientious man, and he said he couldn't tell his friend the church of which he was a member was perfect. He knew, and the friend knew, they had problems and imperfections. So he told the friend it was the **nearest thing** to "right" of which he knew. Is this the best approach?

The "nearest thing to right" says I know what is "right," but either I can not find — perhaps believe there does not exist — one that measures up; or, I am willing to settle for some less than what I know should be. Perhaps some of our readers believe he should have said he was a member of the church of Christ and that

is the "true church." He **could** have said it; and launched into the time of its establishment, its name, its government and the other characteristics usually used for identification. But his Querist referred to the local church of that community, and was smart enough to know that proving the features of the 1st. century church is not proving this local church qualifies.

I suggested he discuss the church of the N.T. records from **two** angles: the IDEAL, or that perfect church one might envision by studying what is approved and disapproved of God. Then, point out that the actual congregations of the 1st. century were not perfectly aligned with this ideal. In fact, we learn what Christ desired by seeing their errors corrected, as well as by approved examples, etc. Then, drive this home.

Anything short of a sincere, all-out endeavor to be and do what Christ wants us to be and do, is not good enough. Tell your friend you have done what you believe God's word teaches one must do to become a child of God. And you are in fellowship with other like children, who are endeavoring to work and worship as God's word directs. Ask him to examine your faith and practices in the light of God's word. If you can show him you welcome constructive criticism, will correct any errors he might find, are ever cognizant of weakness and need to improve, and are praying for forgiveness and strength to do better — brother, you have shown him the "right" church. If you can't stand such a test, perhaps you will CHANGE THE SUBJECT!!

Closest Convictions

John 12:42-43 says: *"Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."* From its beginning, the cause of Christ has suffered because of disciples with closet convictions; the kind of men who know and believe the truth but will not stand up for it. Consider, for example, these influential rulers of our text. Potentially, their worth to the cause of their un-confessed Christ was immeasurable; effectively, however, they contributed absolutely nothing. Worse, their influence remained where they did, as must always be the case. What a testimonial to the tremendous swaying power of cowardice and pride! It keeps them among those whom they oppose and puts them in opposition to their own faith and convictions. "But after all", they may have reasoned, "We do have our standing in the community to think about." And, besides, how could we ever explain to our friends of the synagogue circle about what we really believe? Why, what would they think?" So goes people-pleasing religion.

And so stay the people-pleasers in religion --- in their "synagogues" of compromise and out of God's kingdom.

But most of them do not see their "going along" as being all that serious, let alone as jeopardizing salvation. For example, it is not unusual to meet denominationalists who freely admit certain unscriptural practices espoused by their church, but will not speak out against them. They know and believe certain Bible truths, but will not practice them, for fear....? Now, what is the essential difference between these and the elders of our text?

Is it less honorable to deny Christ than His word? The false idea that men can honor Christ while ignoring, perverting and desecrating His doctrine is of the devil! *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"* (**John 12:48**). Man's part in gaining a right standing with God lies in his knowing, believing, and obeying of gospel truth (**John 6:45; 8:32; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:17; James 1:21-22**). Every right relationship with God is a truth determined relationship! All that God requires of man and all that man can ever do to please and glorify God is made known in His word (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 John 9**). He who shuns it, compromises it, or adds to it reflects on the God who gave it (**1 Thessalonians 4:13**), whether Jew, denominationalist or Christian.

In recent years, many members of the church of Christ have "awakened" to find themselves in "synagogues" of liberalism. They share the dilemma of the rulers to some extent. "Shall we speak out and risk being put out --- or shall we go along to get along?" May God help them to see the seriousness and importance of standing up for the Lord by standing for His truth. To continue "going along" is to continue violating conscience and fellowshiping error. Friend, your influence is where you are. Demonstrate your allegiance to Christ and His truth while you can! Stand!

Dan Shipley; Taken from the Lincoln Bible Reader

Roger Staubach who led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in '71 admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Even though Roger considered coach Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team.

Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory."

Source Unknown.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10