

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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EXPEDIENCY

by Heath Rogers

In the previous article, we discussed the difference between general and specific authority. When God specifies something, everything else is automatically excluded. However, when God gives us a general command, we are free to choose how to fulfill that command. This is where the study of expediency must be applied.

An expediency is something that we use to help us carry out God's commands. The word expedient is defined as something *"characterized by suitability, practicality and efficiency in achieving a particular end: fit, proper, or advantageous under the circumstances."* God gives us general commands to assemble, worship by singing, partake of the Lord's Supper, teach the gospel, baptize believers, help needy saints, etc. The things we use to help us carry out these commands are authorized as expedients.

People have sought to justify a multitude of unauthorized things as expedients in the practice of religion. For some, the good that is done authorizes their use and there is no need to consider the matter any further. However, God has not given us a blank check with "expediency" written on it. General authority does not mean "do whatever you want." General commands must be fulfilled within the boundaries set forth in God's word. There are rules to using something as an expedient.

1. It must be lawful. *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any"* (1 Cor. 6:12, KJV). The matter of authority must be settled before expediency can be considered. We can't go beyond what is written in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9-11).

The Lord commands us to baptize believers for the remission of their sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). The use of a baptism helps us to lawfully fulfill this command. Substituting sprinkling for immersion may be convenient, but it completely changes the action of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12) and is an unlawful practice, not an expedient.

2. It can't be specified. Expediency involves the right of choice within what God has authorized. When God has specified there is no choice.

God told Noah to build an ark. He was free to use whatever tools he had available, but he was not free to choose the materials. God specified gopher wood, which excluded any other kind of wood (Gen. 6:14).

God has specified vocal singing in our worship (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Hymnals and pitch pipes can be used to help us carry out the command to sing. Using instrumental accompaniment completely changes the type of music that is being offered to God. A piano or organ can't be used as an expedient because God has specified singing.

3. It must edify. *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not"* (1 Cor. 10:23, KJV). To edify means to strengthen or build up. We are not allowed to do anything that will tear down and destroy one another's faith.

Peace and unity in the local church are important and must be maintained (Eph. 4:1-6), but never at the expense of God's will. When God has given a specific command, it must be obeyed, regardless of what brethren think. However, when God has given a general

command, we are free to choose how to best fulfill that command, but we are not free to choose ways that will threaten or destroy the unity of the local church.

4. It can't offend the conscience of a brother. *"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God"* (1 Cor. 10:32, KJV; see also Rom. 14:13-23). This is a rule that governs the exercise of our personal liberties, but also applies to a congregational use of an expediency. A method or practice becomes unlawful when it causes a weak brother to violate his conscience and believe he has sinned.

Conclusion: Matters regarding specific authority are easy to understand. The choices granted with general authority can pose problems. There are rules to follow in properly fulfilling God's commands. Sin and division in the body of Christ occur when unlawful practices are justified as expedients. It is important that we understand how to employ expedients in lawfully carrying out matters in general authority.

Look Unto Realms Above

A principle that is important to the teaching process is stated clearly by John Milton Gregory in his book, The Seven Laws of Teaching. Gregory says: "Since attention follows interest, it is folly to attempt to gain attention without first stimulating interest."

Remembering my high school days in study hall, I must agree with Gregory. I can recall 'reading' page after page in a book and being unable to remember a single idea from the book because my mind was on a basketball game to be played that night. The book didn't occupy my attention because I, at the time, wasn't interested in it.

This gets to the heart of the problem of brethren who don't study the word of God publicly or privately. They simply aren't interested. They are more interested in reading "Good Housekeeping," "Newsweek," "Reader's Digest," or "True Story" than in reading the Bible. They are more interested in seeing what's on TV than seeing what God has said. They are more interested in spending time with a hobby than in spending time with God.

The apostle Paul commended the Bereans for their nobility in studying the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). He told the Ephesians that they could understand the scriptures if they would read. He then exhorted them to be not foolish but understand God's will (Eph. 3:4; 5:17).

It's not likely, though, that we'll stimulate brethren to study God's word until we interest them in going to heaven. It may be that brethren in this country have it so good on earth that they don't think any more about going to heaven than I did about the book I was supposedly reading in study hall. That being true, it's no wonder the Bible doesn't occupy their attention. Brethren, we've simply got to wake to the fact that - 70 years and it's all over here. Then what? Until we set our hope on Christ and our affection on things above (1 John 3:3; Col. 3:1-4), the BOOK describing those things cannot possibly hold our attention.

by L. A. Stauffer

Least Objectionable Option?

At an assembly of the Presbyterian Church the delegates approved a "compromise policy statement" on the subject of abortion. It says: "The Presbyterian Church (USA) does not advocate abortion, but instead acknowledges circumstances in a sinful world that may make abortion the least objectionable of difficult options."

Analyze the statement for a moment. It is one of the finest examples of "situation ethics" mentality that you may ever see. These folks admit that abortion is wrong, but then argue that in some situations there may be no acceptable alternative. In other words, there are simply some instances when a person cannot do right. There are times when you must choose between the "lesser of two evils".

God's word denies this concept completely. There is never a justifiable reason to do wrong. **1 Corinthian 10:13** says: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* If you need more proof, consider all the faithful servants of God throughout the centuries of time. Think of Noah, Moses, Elijah, and others who endured difficult and trying times, yet

remained loyal to God. Early Christians suffered intense persecution but were steadfast in their service to the Lord. The ultimate example is Jesus who *“did no sin”* and *“left us an example that ye should follow in his steps”* (1 Peter 2:21,22).

And so, the Presbyterians have missed it. But, be careful about judging them without first looking at your own life. Christians too often excuse their spiritual neglect by using similar reasoning. (“I know I should be more faithful in attendance, but I’ve been so busy at work...”, or “I know what I did was wrong, but I just couldn’t help it under the circumstances.. .”) Wrong is always wrong. Faithfulness to God requires making right choices - and it is never a matter of choosing “the least objectionable option”.

by Greg Gwin

A Portrait of Obedience

The writer of Hebrews states clearly the value of obedience to God and Christ. *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,* (Hebrews 5:8–9)

In that regard the Scriptures provide for us many examples of those who faithfully followed His instruction. There are a couple of texts in the Scriptures we can notice that place a great emphasis on the reverence demanded for God’s word. In the **4th Chapter of Romans**, Paul explains the necessity of belief in what God says. He tells of Abraham who was justified by his faith when he trusted the Lord concerning the son he would have in his old age. Scripture complements this story with another example from the life of Abraham **James Chapter 2**. Here Abraham faithfully follows God’s command to offer that son of promise as a sacrifice. James tells us this demonstrated his faith. He acted according to his belief in God. (see Heb. 11:17-19)

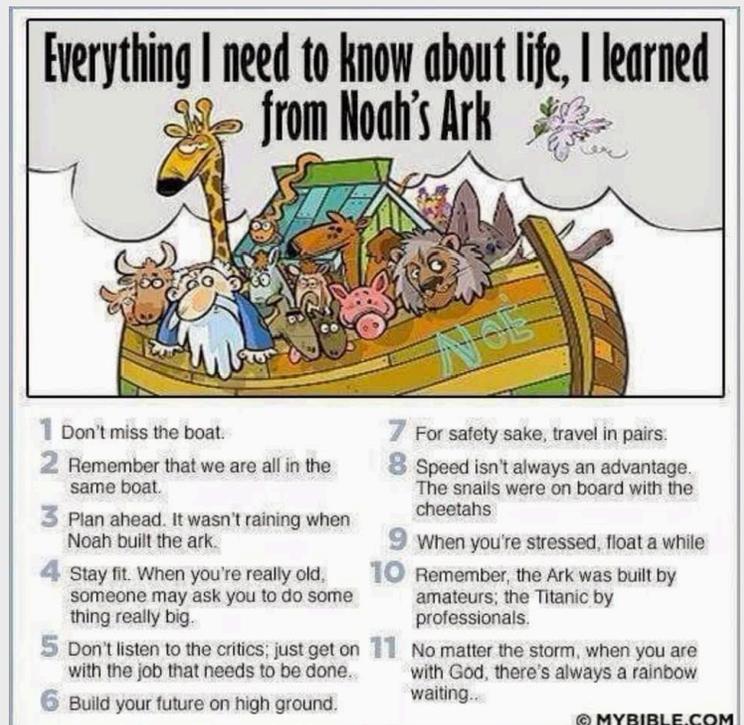
When Jesus was teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, He reassured the Israelites, *....until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke will pass from the law until it all is accomplished* - (Matthew 5:18). Later following His discussion in which He foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem He said, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.* (Matthew 24:35). Jesus came to finish the

Law of Moses and did so (**Colossians 2:14**), but not until it was all fulfilled. Now He promises His word under this New Covenant, the New Testament, will last forever. There will be no replacement for it.

What we learn is His word will accomplish its purpose as spoken by the prophet, Isaiah many years before the Lord walked the earth (**Isaiah 55:11**).

As we try to sum up our thoughts, we then must truly believe the word of God if we are to obey it like Abraham did. And if our hope is to receive the crown of life Paul says is promised to the faithful, we will obey it since Jesus is the One Who will judge such obedience and determine the salvation of the souls of all men (**2 Corinthians 5:10**).

Jim Stauffer



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We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.

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.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

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Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

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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