

# What God Says

**Introduction.** Every facet of our lives revolves around authority. Authority is the right to command or direct, and enforce obedience or administer punishment. American laws carry the weight of authority. To authorize anything is to empower action.

In Matthew 21:23, the chief priests and elders recognized a need and a source of authority. And in divine affairs, all authority exists in God (Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:10).

The issue of authority is the fundamental one between religious groups. In an appeal to be what God wants, we depend on authority. Paul told us in Ephesians 3:3-5 that what he wrote we would be able to read, understand, and know what to do. But people say, "That's just your interpretation." But that is a cop out for people who do not want to learn and accept what God says. And this goes beyond just finding agreement among religious people; it is the ultimate way we determine right from wrong.

## ***I. God Gave Christ Absolute Authority In The Church***

- A. He is God's lawgiver to His people today (Acts 3:22-25; Hebrews 1:1).
- B. "All authority" has been given into His hands (Matthew 28:18). This includes all matters which are legislative, executive, and judicial.
- C. He is "head over all things to the church which is His body" (Ephesians 1:19-23).
  - 1. Man can act in the church only by His authority.
    - a) The head controls the body.
    - b) The church is an absolute monarchy with Christ as King.
  - 2. Christians must seek to walk in Him (Colossians 2:6-10).

## ***II. Christ Gave Binding And Loosing Authority To His Apostles***

- A. The results of human authority.
  - 1. Human authority makes worship vain (Matthew 15:8-9).
  - 2. Human authority will be rooted up (Matthew 15:13).
  - 3. Human teachers are blind guides of the blind (Matthew 15:14).
    - a) Jesus respected and kept the law of God but did not keep what was bound by the traditions of the elders — washing hands (Matthew 15:1).
    - b) Jesus condemned the Jewish elders for presuming to release men from what the law of God bound (15:4-6).
- B. Heaven respects only the authority of Christ through the apostles (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). All obligations and all liberty in the church is prescribed by apostolic authority. No man has any right to go beyond in either direction.
- C. Proper respect for the authority of Christ can be shown only by respecting the authority of the apostles (John 13:20; 20:22-23; 1 John 4:6).

## ***III. The Apostles Used This Authority To Write The New Testament***

- A. The scriptures are perfect and complete, therefore sufficient (2 Timothy 3:13-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3).
- B. We are forbidden to go beyond these writings (1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:6-8; 2 John 9).
- C. We are exhorted to follow the apostolic pattern (Matthew 28:20; 1 Corinthians 4:16-17; Philippians 3:16-19; 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:14).

#### **IV. How To Establish Bible Authority**

- A. Tell — a direct statement revealing a positive or negative command in the scriptures. If you were to tell your son or daughter to pick up their toys, you have given them a direct command.
  - 1. The observance of the Lord's Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). Paul received it from the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23).
  - 2. This constituted a direct command. Commands can either be positive, such as this one, or they can be negative (Colossians 3:9).
- B. Show — the practice of the church in the New Testament under apostolic guidance and which the apostles had received from the Lord and therefore by divine appointment. It is a description of what someone did, and God must have intended to teach us something by examples in view of the amount and variety of them (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11).
  - 1. The time of the Lord's Supper observance: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Paul had received this memorial institution from the Lord and knew therefore when the Lord wanted it to be observed. He remained in Troas for seven days — obviously waiting for the day when the saints assembled (Acts 20:6).
  - 2. This shows that the Lord's Supper was observed in the New Testament church only on the first day of the week — the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10).
- C. Imply — neither expressly stated nor specifically exemplified yet is strongly suggested by the clear import and meaning of the language used. Several instances in the scriptures say that the disciples "reasoned from the scriptures" that Jesus was the Christ. That required drawing of premises from Old Testament passages and relating them to Jesus to show He was the fulfillment. All fulfillment of prophecy depends on understanding necessary inferences.
  - 1. The frequency of the Lord's Supper observance: "The first day of the week to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Compare this to Exodus 20:8, which says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." If the "sabbath day to keep it holy" means every every sabbath, then "The first day of the week to break bread" means every "first day," as regularly as it comes.
  - 2. This is the "unavoidable implication of the clear import and meaning of the language used." There is no other way of determining how often this memorial supper is to be observed.
- D. All of this is nothing but common sense. This is not "church of Christ tradition." We all use these methods everyday on ordinary matters.

#### **V. General And Specific Authority**

- A. All authority is either general, which includes any thing, method, or means of execution that comes within the class or order of the precept, example or thing commanded; or specific, which excludes every thing, method, or means of execution in the same order or class which is not particularly specified in the precept, example, or thing commanded.
  - 1. General authority illustrated:
    - a) Matthew 28:19 says "Go." We are left with the means to go. We can walk, ride in a train or car, fly in an airplane, or sail on a ship.

- b) Matthew 28:19 says “Teach.” We can teach in private or in public. We can teach in a class setting if we so desire.
  - c) Hebrews 10:25 commands us to not forsake the assembly. Christians must assemble to be pleasing to God. However, we can choose to assemble in someone’s home, this building, or in place which we rent.
  - d) Ephesians 5:19 says “Sing.” We can sing using song books or we can sing by memory. We can sing the same part or we can harmonize parts.
2. Specific authority illustrated:
- a) God told Noah to build an ark of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14). Gopher wood excluded walnut, pine, spruce, oak, and all other kinds of wood.
  - b) Numbers 19:2 commands the use of an unblemished red heifer. A red heifer excluded sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and every other kind of heifer.
  - c) Ephesians 5:19 says “Sing.” This excludes every other “kind” of music. Instrumental music is excluded by the fact that God specified “sing” and that does not include “playing” an instrument.
  - d) The Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23). The unleavened loaf and fruit of the vine excludes every other element. The first day of the week excludes every other day.
- B. From these examples, one can see that general authority includes while specific authority excludes.

## ***VI. The Silence Of The Scriptures***

- A. While the phrase “the silence of the scriptures” cannot be found in the Bible, the principle definitely exists. No matter what period of time a person might have lived, or which law he might have been under, God always expected him to observe the boundaries of His word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).
- B. This principle has sometimes been called “the law of exclusion.” When we go to a restaurant, we do not have to tell the waiter what not to bring to us. Likewise, when God specifies what we are to do, His specific order excludes all other actions that fall into the same category. There are a lot of good examples to demonstrate this principle.
  - 1. Acts 15:5, 24 — When some in the early church presumed to add to the doctrine of Christ, the apostles rejected it. Even apostolic silence excluded any additions.
  - 2. Hebrews 1:5 — God never said this to any angel, therefore God’s silence proves Jesus to be superior to the angels.
  - 3. Hebrews 7:14 — The priesthood was for the Levites without eliminating the other tribes. This excluded Jesus from being a High Priest on the earth.

## ***VII. False Standards Of Authority***

- A. Man has always wanted to substitute his will for God’s will and establish his authority over God’s authority.
- B. Man builds his religious convictions and practices on several false standards:
  - 1. Parents.
    - a) Many are what they are and believe what they do for no other reason than that is the way they were raised.

- b) Saul had to forsake the religion of his parents (Galatians 1:14) and Jesus stated that we must love God more than our parents (Matthew 10:37).
- 2. Feelings.
  - a) Many put their trust in some physical feeling which may be expressed by the saying, "My religion is better felt than told."
  - b) But feelings have to do with our physical nature while our salvation has to do with our spiritual nature. Feelings can be deceptive (Proverbs 28:26).
- 3. Creeds.
  - a) These are manuals, disciplines, catechisms, etc., that are supposed to summarize and explain what the New Testament teaches.
  - b) Even though these may be honest attempts to explain Bible teaching, they invariably go beyond the New Testament or contain less than the New Testament (Revelation 22:18-19).
- 4. History.
  - a) Brethren are going back through the generations to establish the premise that if a brother during the restoration period ever believed or taught a false doctrine, we then have the right to do it as well.
  - b) This has been used as it relates to fellowship despite doctrinal differences such as divorce and remarriage or one's belief on the creation account. But we cannot follow a multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2).
- 5. Inconsistency.
  - a) Many brethren are also now using this standard by which to establish authority. It states that if I can find where you are inconsistent, it then gives me license to follow my inconsistency as well.
  - b) However, if it is found that I am inconsistent, then all it proves is that I must change as well (Galatians 2:11-14).

**Conclusion.** We have to avoid two extremes in consideration of divine authority. One position is taken by the anti-Bible class brethren who contend that in order for a thing to be scriptural it must be specifically authorized. On this basis they reject the class system of teaching. The other extreme is taken by the "digressive" members of the Christian Church who contend that in order for something to be wrong it must be specifically condemned. Both are wrong. One binds where God has not bound and the other looses where God has bound.