

Bible Authority

God has promised to save man from the eternal consequences of sin (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8, 16; Col. 1:21-22). Instructions have been handed over by Jesus to the apostles and eventually to us through the inspired word of God (Jn. 16:14ff). These instructions are called truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, or the doctrine of Christ and they have the power to save man's soul (Rom. 1:16). Paul termed the gospel message, "*the word of this salvation*" (Acts 13:26). One quickly notices that in order to partake of eternal salvation man must be instructed (cf. Jn. 6:44-45). Said instructions, in fact, will determine whether we spend eternity with God or with the devil (cf. II Jn. 9-11). This being the case, God's instructions must be clear and understandable (Jn. 7:14-18; 8:31-32). God has commanded, "*whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*" (Col. 3:17).

We could end the lesson here and leave somewhat edified by these facts. The world we live in; however, is a place that is often spiritually guided by human reason as opposed to divine revelation. This was the problem with Judah (The Northern Kingdom; cf. Jer. 7:27-28) as is the problem with many today (I Cor. 2:12; II Cor. 1:12; 2:17; 4:5; Gal. 3:1-3; I Tim. 4:1-2). Many religious people do what they do because it seems to be a good work (i.e., pool church collected funds together with other churches to form an organization to do the work of the church [evangelizing and benevolent care of its needy]). This lesson shall therefore examine how the authority of God is established that an answer may be given to even the most difficult questions in life.

- I. **How do we establish Bible Authority regarding any issue (salvation, MDR, institutionalism.... etc.)?**
 - A. Passages such as Col. 3:17 demand that we do all things in accordance with the Word of God. God has laid down His law (the law of Christ) and we, as citizens of His kingdom, must follow His rules. We term this often "authority." Authority is the power of rule or government. To establish authority for any issue we must find law for its existence. If we cannot find law for its existence then it is termed unlawful or sin (I Jn. 3:4).
 - B. No matter how bad you or I may want a particular issue to be a part of the law of Christ, we must allow God's word to make the final determination. You and I must learn to separate our emotions and personal opinions from divine revelation when establishing authority lest we be guilty of perverting the word of God (Gal. 1:11-12).
 - C. We establish authority for any practice; therefore, by turning to God's word. Peter said, "*if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (I Pet. 4:11).
- II. **Consider the method of God's divine authority [Law]:**
 - A. **Direct statements** (A clear and direct command):
 1. **Generic commands** (a direct command has been given; however, the action is left to the individual's judgment).
 2. **Specific commands:** cf. above.
 - B. **Implication** (inference) (to derive by reasoning; conclude or judge from premises or evidences).
 - C. **Bible Examples** (another way authority is established is by example. If we find the apostles of Jesus Christ performing an action then we know that it is lawful [cf. Phil. 4:9]).
 - D. **Silence of the scriptures is binding:** Wednesday evening we studied about the introduction of missionary societies and the division that occurred between the 'Christian churches' and the 'churches of Christ' back in the mid 1800's. The Christian church point

of view (to establish authority for missionary societies) was that “the church is authorized to do anything except that which is specifically prohibited” (Passing The Torch; pg. 7).

1. Let us understand how silence of the scriptures works: When God gives a direct command, inference, or example, He does not have to give a thou shalt not for every human concocted scenario.
2. Example: Heb. 7:11-14; I Cor. 4:6

III. Attitude in controversy:

- A. Many become agitated and even hostile often when dealing with certain issues simply because they have not studied out the issue. They feel overwhelmed and have no idea where to begin to find Biblical answers to their concerns.
- B. The brethren in Galatia are a good example. Paul identifies their problem (Gal. 5:4), their mindset (Gal. 3:1-2) and their response (Gal. 4:16).
- C. The remedy: Study! (II Tim. 2:15). The Corinthian brethren had all sorts of problems with the issues of their day because they had not grown spiritually (cf. I Cor. 3:1).

Conclusion:

We are not endowed with spiritual gifts today. Someone once said that ‘what I now know I gained through perspiration whereas Paul received it by inspiration.’ To find answers to the questions you have will take time and study. Yes, we can ask others to give us answers; however, what if the answer they tell us is contrary to God’s law? How will I know that their answer is right with God’s word? The conclusion is simple. Study! Examine God’s commands, inference, examples, and silence and make a judgment based upon truth rather than ‘I think so’s.’