

ESTABLISHING SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION:

1. The matter of Scriptural authority is basic to establish any practice (II Tim. 3:16,17; II Peter 1:3; Jude 3).
2. If the scriptures are not authoritative, then everyone is a law unto himself.
3. The scriptures must be the final court of appeal to settle all religious questions (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12; Jer. 6:16; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Mark 1:22).
4. Our world is filled with confusion, great disturbance and restlessness prevails on every hand.
5. Much of the confusion that prevails is due to a lack of respect for authority or a failure to accept any standard of authority.
6. In all phases of our life especially in the area of religion, one must not only recognize a standard of authority, but the source of that authority, because it is the source that makes it authoritative.

I. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY?

- A. Authority adheres in God almighty (Gen. 1:1; 2:16; 12:1-3; Ex. 3:6; Lev. 10:1,2; Isa. 1:2; John 13:3; John 12:49).
- B. God had a pattern of authority in the Old Testament.
 1. The word pattern is found 10 times in the Old Testament.
 - a. The word pattern is translated from three different Hebrew words.
 - b. The word most often translated pattern means “structure, mode of building; model, pattern after which anything is built; or the pattern of what has been built” (Joshua 22:28; Ex. 25:9,40; II Kings 16:10; I Chron. 28:11,12,18,19).
 - c. Another word translated pattern means “measure, structure, arrangement”(Ezek. 43:10).
 - d. Another word translated pattern means “sight, appearance, form” (Num. 8:4).
 2. God’s pattern of authority in the Old Testament was “according to.”
 - a. “According to” is found more than 550 times in the Old Testament.
 - 1) Noah did according to all that God commanded him (Gen. 6:22; 7:5).
 - 2) Israel did according to the word of Moses (Ex. 12:35,50; 17:1; 39:42).
 - 3) Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29:35).
 - 4) Moses was to do “according to” what God commanded him (Ex. 31:11; 40:16; Lev. 10:7).
 - 5) The passover was to be kept “according to” what God commanded (Num. 9:5,12).
 - 6) The children of Israel was to either remain camped or move “according to” God directions (Num. 9:20).
 - 7) Joshua was do according to what God commanded him (Josh. 1:8; 4:10).
 - 8) Elijah did “according to” the word of God (I Kings 17:1,5,15,16).
 - 9) Naaman did “according to” what God commanded him (II Kings 5:14).
 - 10) David was anointed king over Israel “according to” the word of God by Samuel (I Chron. 11:3,10).
 - 11) During the time of Ezra men put away the foreign women they had married “according to” the counsel of the Lord (Ezra 10:2,3).

- 12) Jonah did “according to” what God had commended him (Jonah 3:3).
 - 13) The children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded “according to the word of God” (I Chron. 15:15).
 - 14) The young prophet rebelled against the word of God (I Kings 13:11-26).
 - 15) Uzza was punished because he did not do “according to” the word of God (I Chron. 13:9-11).
- b. These things were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:10-12; Heb. 10:1; Gal. 3:19-26).

C. God has a pattern of authority in the New Testament.

1. Authority was delegated to Christ (John 3:35; Matt. 7:29; 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11; I Peter 3:22; Eph. 1:20-23; Acts 3:19-23).
2. Authority was delegated to Christ who in turn gave the apostles authority (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; Luke 10:16; John 13:20; Matt. 16:19; John 16:13; Heb. 2:1-4).
3. The apostles delegated authority to none (Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:21; I Cor. 4:9).
4. The word pattern is found three times in the New Testament (I Tim. 1:16; Titus 2:7; Heb. 8:5).

- a. One word which is translated pattern (tupos) two times (Titus 2:7; Heb. 8:5) is also translated example five times (I Cor. 10:11; Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1:7; I Peter 5:3), print two times (John 20:25), figure two times (Acts 7:43; Rom. 5:14; example two times (I Cor. 10:6; I Tim. 4:12), fashion (Acts 7:44), manner (Acts 23:25) and form (Rom. 6:17).

1) What does the word (tupos) pattern mean?

2) Thayer says this word pattern (tupos) [5179] means “1. The mark of a stroke or blow; print...2. a figure formed by a blow or impression; hence univ. a figure, image...3. form...manner of writing...4. example...the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made...a dissuasive example, pattern of warning...”

3) W. E. Vine defines this word (tupos) as “...a form or mould, Rom. 6:17...an ensample, pattern, Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5, ‘pattern;’ in an ethical sense, 1 Cor. 10:6; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7;...’pattern;’ 1 Pet. 5:3; in a doctrinal sense, a type, Rom. 5:14...” “The representation or pattern of anything...’form’ in Rom. 6:17, ‘that form (or mould) of teaching whereunto ye were delivered,’ ...The Gospel is the mould; those whoa re obedient to its teachings become conformed to Christ, whom it presents.”

4) A.T. Robertson says this word (tupos) means “The pattern...The very word used in Ex. 25:40 and quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:44...the tabernacle was to be patterned after the heavenly model.”

- b. Another word which is translated pattern (hupod’eigma) one time (Heb. 9:23) is also translated example four times (John 13:15; Heb. 4:11; 8:5; James 5:10) and ensample one time (II Peter 2:6).

1) What does the word (hupod’eigma) [5262] pattern mean?

2) Thayer says this word means “a. A sign suggestive of anything, delineation of a thing, representation, figure, copy...b. an example...”

3) W.E. Vine defines this word as “that which is shown (from hupo, under, and deiknumi, to show), hence, (a) a figure, copy, Heb. 8:5...(b) an example, whether for imitation, John 13:15; Jas. 5:10, or for warning,

Heb. 4:11; 2 Pet. 2:6...”

- c. Another word which is translated pattern (hupotup'osis) one time (I Tim. 1:16) is also translated form one time (II Tim. 1:13).
 - 1) What does the word (hupotup'osis) [5296] pattern mean?
 - 2) Thayer says this word means “a. An outline, sketch, brief and summary exposition...b. an example, pattern...for an example of those who should hereafter believe...”
 - 3) W. E. Vine defines this word as “an outline, sketch,...to delineate, is used metaphorically to denote a pattern, an example...”
- d. There is another word (hupogrammos) translated example (I Peter 2:21) that we need to consider.
 - 1) Thayer says this word means “1. A writing – copy, including all the letters of the alphabet, given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw them:...2. an example set before one: 1 Pet. 2:21).
 - 2) W.E. Vine defines this word as “an under-writing...hence, a writing-copy, an example, 1 Pet. 2:21, said of what Christ left for believers, by His sufferings (not expiatory, but exemplary), that they might ‘follow His steps.’”

D. God’s pattern in the New Testament is “according to.”

1. Today scriptural authority is in writing and therefore, we cannot go beyond what is written (I Cor. 4:6).
2. “According to” is found some 127 times in the New Testament (Luke 2:22,39; 23:56; John 18:31; Acts 7:44; 13:23; Rom. 1:1-4; 2:2; 2:16; 8:27; 10:2; 15:5; 16:25; II Tim. 2:8; I Cor. 3:10; II Thess. 1:12; I Cor. 15:3,4; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:10,11; 3:20; I Tim. 1:11; 6:3; II Tim. 1:8; Titus 1:1-3).

II. HOW IS ONE TO RECOGNIZE SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY?

A. There are three methods in which one may recognize God’s authority!

1. Explicit Statements (direct statement, commands [specific or generic, general]).
2. Implicit Statements
3. Approved/Binding Examples

B. What is an explicit statement?

1. This is often a direct statement (Gen. 1:1; 2:16).
2. A general command is one that authorizes the performance of an act without giving specific instructions as to the manner in which it is to be done.
3. A specific command is one in which God tells us what to do and how to do it.
4. It is explicitly stated (1) do not go beyond what is written (I Cor. 4:6), (2) it is the word that Christ spoke that will judge us (John 12:48), and (3) the dead are going to be judged by what is written (Rev. 20:12). If this is the case, and inspiration says it is, then I should never concern myself about that which is not written as that is not going to judge me!
5. Cain and Abel are examples of how commands (Gen. 4).
 - a. Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God (Gen. 4:1).
 - b. Why was Cain’s sacrifice rejected and Abel’s accepted?
 - 1) God told them specifically to offer an animal, but if God had merely said offer a sacrifice, Cain’s would have been acceptable.
 - 2) Cain did not do what God said in the manner He authorized.

- 3) Abel's sacrifice was offered by faith (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17).
- 6. God told Noah to build the ark (Gen. 6).
 - a. Within this command is a specific command.
 - 1) The kind of wood is specifically stated.
 - 2) The size is specifically stated.
 - 3) It was specifically stated that it would have one door and one window.
 - b. Within this command is a generic/general command.
 - 1) The tools to be used is not specifically stated, therefore, the tools needed could be used.
 - 2) Noah was not told where to get the wood.
 - 3) Could Noah use others to help?
- 7. Jesus said, "go ye..." (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - a. Who is to go?
 - b. Where are we to go
 - c. How is one to go?
 - 1) He did not give specific instructions as to how one was to go.
 - 2) If Jesus had said, "Walk into all the world," that would have been specific.
 - 3) Then, the only acceptable way to go would have been to walk.
 - d. The directives of "go," "teach," and "baptize" are all part of the great commission – two are generic and one is specific.
 - e. We choose the method and means of how to go and the method of teaching.
 - f. Baptism is specific. Baptism is an immersion in water for the remission of sins.
 - g. The where of baptism is general/generic. Baptism can take place in any water that is deep enough to immerse someone. That means a river, pool, baptistry, etc.

C. What is an implicit statement?

- 1. Brethren often speak of "inference," but inference relates to implication. Inference deals with correct reasoning, but correct reasoning in this context is in regard to what God has implied.
- 2. When an action, fact, or teaching is absolutely demanded by the Biblical information at hand – without being specifically stated – then that action, that fact, or that teaching is a matter of implication.
- 3. Implication is not mere assertion, personal interpretation, or wishful thinking.
- 4. Material implication is a logical relationship among terms of a proposition in which one derives or ascertains or deduces the truth which lies inherently in the terms of the explicit propositions.
- 5. In other words implication is an indirect means of communicating.
- 6. An example of an implicit statement is Mark 16:16.
 - a. No where did God ever say Larry Power you believe and be baptized. The Bible does say "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..."
 - b. It is implied that Larry Powers is part of the he in that statement.
 - c. I know that is true as God implied it in this statement.
 - d. It is authorized because God has implied it, not because I have accurately reasoned it.
- 7. Another example is Lot going down into Egypt with Abram (Gen.12:10).
 - a. Does the Bible say that Lot went down into Egypt with Abram? NO!

- b. Lot traveled with Abram from Ur to Canaan (Gen. 12:5) and then Lot is said to have gone up out of Egypt with Abram (Gen. 13:1).
- 8. There are items that are implicitly forbidden.
 - a. The Bible does not say “thou shalt not” wear short-shorts, dance, smoke, take drugs, drink, etc.
 - b. The Bible does implicitly teach by principle and precept that such is sin.
- 9. How can one read (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5,6; Jer. 26:2; Lev. 10:1,2; Matt. 4:1-11; Acts 15:24; Heb. 7:14; II John 9-11) without a realization that there are some things implicitly forbidden?

D. What is an approved/binding example?

1. It has well been said that the question ought not to be asked, “When is an example binding,” because if an account of action is an example, then it is binding.
2. The right question is “When does an account of action constitute an example?”
3. The dictionary’s definition of the word example is that which is to be followed or imitated: a pattern.
4. There are some things that are binding (and thus examples) in the sense that they must be done (these are demanded; there nothing optional – these facts being made clear by due consideration of the totality of the Bible teaching on the subject at hand).
5. Some things are binding (and are thus examples) in the sense that they may be done (these are authorized; they may be done, but they may be left undone).
6. We are commanded to observe the Lord’s supper (I Cor. 11:24,25). We are instructed (by precept and by example) to observe it on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). There is no option here.
7. We are commanded to go (Matt. 28:18-20). Paul went by ship.
8. Whether an example is binding in the sense that it must be done, or in the sense that it may be done has to be determined by due consideration of the totality of the Bible teaching on the point at hand.
9. It should be pointed out that an example does not exclude.
 - a. We have an example of Paul going by boat, but that does not exclude going by car or plane, etc.
 - b. Acts 20:7 authorizes the observance of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week. The point which makes it sinful to observe the Lord’s supper on Thursday or any other day of the week is the fact that there is no authority for it.
 - c. Several verses show ones obligation to sing in worship. The thing which makes it wrong to use mechanical instruments, solos and/or choirs is the fact that there is no authority for it.
10. Determining when the account of an action constitutes an example requires (1) application of the principles of Biblical Hermeneutics, (2) application of the principles of Logic, and (3) due consideration of the totality of the Bible teaching with regard to the subject at hand.

E. What about expediency?

1. There is no expediency where there is no obligation.
2. Expediency requires human judgment. If God specifies the obligation, but does not specify the details with regard to how the obligation is to be met, then we are authorized to involve human judgment.

3. Expediency is that which expedites.
4. There is a difference in an expedient and an addition.
 - a. Anything which is not authorized by the Bible, but nonetheless employed, is an addition.
 - b. An aid is an expedient authorized by the Bible.
5. The song book is an aid, an expedient, to help us sing. Mechanical instruments of music is an addition, therefore not authorized.
6. The realm of expediency is far reaching in application. But one must remember the ends do not justify the means. If the means of doing something is sinful then the end results is sinful no matter good or well meaning.
7. Many examples could be given as expediencies: (church buildings, baptistries, Bible classes, singing school, song books, song leaders, singing an invitation song, using individual communion cups, etc.

F. What about the silence of the Scriptures?

1. Some are presently attempting to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship based upon the silence of the Scriptures. They mean by this that the New Testament does not say not to use them, therefore, it is authorized to be used.
2. The Bible authorizes by What It Says – Not By What It Does Not Say.
3. What happened at Jericho is a great lesson concerning the silence of the Scriptures (Joshua 6).
 - a. God specifically commanded shouting.
 - b. God specifically commanded when the shouting was to take place.
 - c. Joshua commanded the people according to the Word of God (Joshua 6:6-10).
 - d. The people were to shout after the priest bearing the ark and the seven trumpets were sounded then the people were to shout.
 - e. This did authorize the people to shout at some other time, or making any noise at some other time, or making just any kind of noise.

G. There are ways God does not authorize:

1. Upon the basis of my personal likes and dislikes;
2. Upon the basis of what pleases me;
3. Upon the basis of erroneous conclusions which I may reach;
4. Upon the basis of my opinion or the opinions of others;
5. Upon the basis of what is popular;
6. Upon the basis of what some well-known and highly respected person teaches or may have taught;
7. Upon the basis of human traditions;
8. Upon the basis of my inability to “see any harm in it;”
9. Upon the basis of long standing practices.
10. Upon the basis of the silence of the Scriptures.

H. God will not tolerate that which is not authorized.

1. The Bible often uses the word “strange” in the sense of that which is not acceptable because it is not authorized.
2. Nadab and Abihu “offered strange fire before the Lord” (Lev. 10:1,2).
 - a. What made the fire strange?

b. It was from a source from which God had not commanded them (Lev. 10:1).

c. What was the result of this sin (Lev. 10:2)?

3. King Solomon married “strange women” – women whom God had not authorized him to marry (I Kings 11).
4. This same kind of sin was a great problem in the days of Nehemiah (Neh. 13:27).
5. Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them had gone after strange flesh (Jude 7).
6. We are warned not to be carried about with strange doctrines (Heb. 13:9).