

Scriptural Authority

When I think of the subject of scriptural authority, I am reminded of the good saying, "Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." Although this statement is not in the Bible per se, the concept is imminently scriptural. Yet how can we really hold to this concept? The answer lies in a proper understanding and appreciation of authority. Every facet of our lives revolves around authority. Authority is the right to command or direct and enforce obedience or administer punishment. The laws of the land that we live by carry the weight of authority. To authorize is "to empower to act, or direct by authority." The centurion demonstrated his astute understanding of authority when he stated, "*For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it*" (Matthew 8:9).

The manner in which authority is determined is a logical manner. God is not illogical, and thus, the ways in which He establishes rules for us to live are not illogical. We are going to notice how God logically develops His authority in the New Testament and in so doing, we will use the example of attending worship services. First, there is the command. Hebrews 10:25 says, "*Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.*" God cannot be pleased without us assembling publicly. This certainly does not exclude in any way private worship to God, but we cannot please Him unless we assemble together in public. Second, there is the example. James 2:2 says, "... *if there should come into your assembly ...*" In 1 Corinthians 14, we have a pattern of a public assembly. Acts 20:7 demonstrates that early Christians "*came together.*" So, we have an approved example to follow. Third, there is necessary inference. James 2:2 mandates an assembly, but not the time or place -- it may be in the morning, afternoon or evening. The place may be under a tree or in a home, but there must be a place -- it is "necessary" to carry out the command. Without it, the command cannot be kept.

All authority is either generic or specific in nature. Generic authority is merely "general" in nature while specific is "certain" or "sure" in nature. A good example of this would be the command to go and "*preach the gospel to every creature ...*" (Mark 16:15). There are no stipulations about how to "go." We may wish to go by foot, boat, car or airplane. How we go does not change the command nor the intention of the command. A good example of specific authority would be the command of "baptism." The word means to "immerse." So, without saying so in so many words, "baptism" is a very cer-

tain and sure method of being completely immersed. "Sprinkling" and "pouring" would be excluded using this interpretive method.

The student of God, the disciple of Christ, will accept what is taught when it is pointed out to him or her in truth, godliness, kindness and wisdom. God's word is simple and if I miss the mark (the meaning of sin), it is no one's fault but my own. God bless us all in this study of sound doctrine.

Kyle Campbell