

The Old Paths

Volume 12, Issue 37

November 13, 2005

“Things Authorized But Not Specified”

Jarrod Jacobs

Christ and His word hold a special place in the lives of Christians. In fact, He must hold “first place” in our lives! Regardless of the subject, we must recognize that Christ is our King (I Tim. 6:15), He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18), and therefore we are subject to Him in everything (Matt. 28:18). Seeing that this is the case, we must also recognize that His word has authority over us. This word will never pass away (Matt. 24:35), it is powerful (Heb. 4:12), and is given to us so that we might know what pleases God!

How To Establish Bible Authority

As we study God’s precious word, it becomes apparent to the Bible student that Jesus has a plan by which we can establish authority (permission) for all we do and say (Col. 3:17). The apostles understood this fact, and in Acts 15 determined that physical circumcision had no place in God’s plan for salvation. They did this, not by “voting,” or by some consensus method, but by going to the Scriptures, and determining by necessary implication (Acts 15:7-11), apostolic approved example (Acts 15:12), and by the Lord’s command (Acts 15:16-18) that physical circumcision, which was practiced under the Law of Moses, has no bearing on one’s salvation today (Acts 15:19-20).

Based upon these same princi-

ples of command, example, and necessary implication, we have also found authority for our practices, whether it be things done “individually,” or things done as a church. If we cannot find authority in the Scriptures for what we practice, then, put simply, it is NOT a “good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17)!

Two Extremes To Avoid

Having said these things, we sometimes find folks who try to justify an act by saying, “God didn’t say not to ...”. In such cases, we direct them to Hebrews 7:12-14; I Peter 4:11, and other passages which make it clear that we cannot reason based upon the silence of God. When God is silent, we also must be silent and not act!

Unfortunately, we sometimes find folks who go to the opposite extreme by saying that unless God SPECIFICALLY told us to do something, we cannot do it. Yet, this is not true, either. Imagine how large a book the Bible would be if we had to have God specifically tell us everything we could and could not do! No friends, God expects us to use our brains, and reason as we learn His will. He has made it clear how we can and do establish Bible authority, and sometimes, we find God not giving specific, but general authority (permission) to us.

Things Authorized, But Not Specified

Christ expects us to be teaching His will to others (Matt. 28:19; II Tim. 2:2, 4:21 etc.). In this, He has been specific, telling us to “preach the word.” However, the “how” of

teaching has been left up to us! For example, in teaching the gospel, we may use papers, an overhead chart(s), a notebook, a laptop computer, radio, television, or a website, etc., to aid in the study. In so doing, we have not perverted Bible teaching, but simply used certain “aids” in the study. If someone brings a creed book or manual into a Bible study, then they have added another element to the teaching and have sinned. They have not aided the study. When we sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), God did not specifically tell us to use songbooks. Yet songbooks, copied sheets, our memory, etc., aid us in the singing of the songs. Adding a mechanical instrument is not an “aid,” but an addition not allowed in the New Testament. Furthermore, we see that when we partake of the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s day, as the apostolic example reveals (Acts 2:42, 20:7), we will need containers of some sort with which to pass the bread and fruit of the vine. God did not specify the number of containers, type of containers, etc., but we understand that such is a necessity in order to obey Christ’s will in remembering Him through this observance (I Cor. 11:24-25). Other examples can be given, but these are enough for us to understand that there can be things authorized of God, though they were not specified by Him.

Things Not Authorized At All

The problem we face today is when folks try to justify certain practices, calling them “aids,” when they have not first found Bible authority for what they are doing. For example, no church has the Scriptural right to build and maintain gyms (multi-purpose rooms), kitchens, “fellowship-halls” and the like. The reason we know this is because God has not given the church authority

to engage in recreation. Had God done so, a gym and those other things would be OK. These things “aid” nothing relative to the worship or work of the church (Eph. 4:12). There is nothing that has been authorized which necessitates the church building a gym, kitchen, etc., so we need to leave those things alone. The Lord’s church has no business with those works. Sometimes people justify the things they enjoy by saying, “Whatever the individual can do, the church can do.” Nothing could be further from the truth! While I recognize that there are times when an individual’s responsibility and the local church’s responsibility overlaps (ex: teaching, prayers, godly works, etc.), God makes a clear distinction between the individual and the church! (ex: I Tim. 5:16; Matt. 18:15-17) Folks are asking for problems when they get excited about doing an activity, call it a “good work,” (regardless of whether or not the Bible has) and then say in essence, “Let the church do it!” This must never be our attitude! Remember, authority must be established first, and only then can we speak about things being “good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Conclusion

In all things (Col. 3:17), let us find the authority first, so we know what is a true “aid.”

Ways That Seem Right

Mike Davis, Bedford, IN

“**T**here is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12, 16:25). The

importance of this reality was vital enough the Spirit had Solomon write it twice! Still, many choose to direct their own steps thinking they can do as they please regarding salvation (Jer. 10:23).

How often we see souls who once knew the way of righteousness only to leave the righteous path (II Pet. 2:21-22). In this same passage, Peter declares that it would have been better had such souls never known the way of righteousness. Imagine that! Any Bible student realizes that without knowledge of the truth (i.e., way of righteousness) the soul is lost (II Thess. 1:7-9). Any Bible student knows God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4). God is not willing that any perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). Obviously, “knowledge” of this way means obedience to its commandments (I Jn. 2:3). Yet, to know it (i.e., having obeyed it) and departing from it, leaves no choice but the “ways of death.” It would be better, says Peter, to have died in the flesh having never known the way of righteousness! How eternally horrid the death of the soul who departs from the faith they once obeyed!

Then muse as well concerning those who claim to be Christians, but conduct their lives without authority from Christ for their words and deeds (Col. 3:17). “But it seems

so right to do this,” they reply. “It sounds so good,” they defend! Yes, it may seem right - but can they prove it right? (I Thess. 5:21) “Well, surely God understands ...” Really? Since when did man become the counselor or advisor to God? (Rom. 11:34) It is not God that has need of understanding us. It is us who must learn to understand Him! He isn’t going to change His word (Jn. 12:48) and all our “seems right” to us will not convince Him to do otherwise!

This, dear reader, it behooves us who desire Heaven to make sure of the way! Jesus says He is the way (Jn. 14:6). We can’t alter that way in any fashion or by any amount of our reasoning to the contrary! If we love Him as we say we do, we will obey Him (Jn. 14:15). “But I think” is the same “seems right to me” attitude that nearly ruined the hope of Naaman (II Kings 5). We need to return to “the scripture says” mindset! We need to understand it is not “our church” but His (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

I muse on the sacredness of His divine word and its unerring counsel for my soul. Strength for the day, comfort from the trials, blessings for faithful service, and promise of eternity - all from His word! What more could we ask of Him who loved us so? (Jn. 3:16) How dare any soul to think he, as man, would ever conceive a better plan, or a better way?

Add Our Website To Your “Favorites” List:
www.southside-churchofchrist.com



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.

Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

MEETING TIMES:

Sunday Morning Bible Study _____ **9:30 am**
Sunday Morning Worship _____ **10:20 am**
Sunday Evening Worship _____ **6:00 pm**
Wednesday Evening Bible Study _____ **7:00 pm**

Our call-in radio program is on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs

Elders: Paul Dubois & Jeff Lankford

Phone: (270) 683-5386

Website address: www.southside-churchofchrist.com (Updated weekly!)