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# ESTABLISHING BIBLE AUTHORITY

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## QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does it mean to "establish authority"?
- 2) Do we have to have Bible authority for every single thing done in our lives – even our private lives?
- 3) How can we know that 2 Tim 3:16-17 includes more than simply the OT scriptures?
- 4) Everything taught in the Bible is taught in one of two ways – what two ways?
- 5) Implication is not ... (what)?
- 6) Does silence forbid or permit?
- 7) Is the NT silent about church buildings?
- 8) What is the "Explicit-Only" doctrine and is it correct?

## INTRODUCTION

**Authority** – *"the right to command and enforce obedience or administer punishment"*

Authority comes in two forms:

- Primary authority
- Delegated authority

## PRIMARY AUTHORITY

- 1) **God the Father constitutes primary authority.**

### **1 Corinthians 11:3**

<sup>3</sup> But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

There is no one above God. He answers to no one.

## **DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

Since God has all authority, He can, if He wants to, delegate (give) some of that authority to someone else. That's what He did.

### **2) Jesus has delegated authority.**

#### **Matthew 28:18**

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

**"has been given"** = *"has been delegated."*

Who gave (delegated) this authority to Him? The Father!

#### **Matthew 11:27**

<sup>27</sup> All things have been **delivered to Me by My Father**, ...

Since Jesus has all authority, He can, if He wants to, delegate (give) some of that authority to someone else. That's what He did.

### **3) The apostles have delegated authority.**

#### **Matthew 16:18-19**

<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> And **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

**"keys"** – symbolize authority.

**"will be bound ... will be loosed"** – perfect, passive, participles: *"shall already have been bound ... shall already have been loosed."* (cf. ESV footnote).

**NOTE:** They were not making laws. **They were revealing** and enforcing laws previously made in heaven.

## **AMBASSADORS**

Jesus, then, was an official representative of the Father's authority (Jn 14:9).

The apostles were official representatives of Jesus' authority:

### **2 Corinthians 5:20**

<sup>20</sup> Now then, **we** [apostles] **are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were pleading through us: **we** implore **you** on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

I've heard brethren use this verse to teach that all Christians are ambassador's for Christ. That's not true.

Do you see the difference between the **"we"** and the **"you"**?

- The **"you"** are the Corinthians.
- The **"we"** are the apostles.

### **1 John 4:6**

<sup>6</sup> **We** [apostles] are of God. **He** who knows God hears **us**; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Again, there are two groups here: **"We"** and **"he."** The **"we"** are the apostles.

## ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY

Our study is entitled "***establishing authority.***"

This means for everything we teach or practice we must "***establish***" the fact that we have authority for doing it.

### **Colossians 3:17**

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all** in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

**"whatever"** – "*everything or anything*" (American Heritage)

**"in word"** – things we say or teach

**"in deed"** – things we do or practice

**"do all"** – every single thing that is said or practiced

**"in the name of the Lord Jesus"** – i.e. by the authority of Jesus. (cf. Acts 4:7, 10, 12)

To have authority from Jesus means:

- Either Jesus Himself authorized it
- Or the apostles authorized it.

## WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Furthermore, this authorization must be in written form.

***"Get it in writing,"*** the lawyer always says. This is true in regard to spiritual matters also.

No one may say:

- "I feel the Lord is leading me to do a certain thing" – as though **feelings** and premonitions authorized anything.
- "Jesus told me to do a certain thing" – as though Jesus were still **revealing** things today.

No. The authorization from Jesus or His apostles must be in written form – in the NT scriptures.

### **John 16:13**

<sup>13</sup> [Jesus said to His apostles] when He, **the Spirit of truth**, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

- **If** the Spirit would reveal "all truth" to the apostles,
- **And if** the apostles wrote down all which the Spirit revealed
- **And if** that revelation was preserved,
- **Then** there would be no further need for revelation.

## **1) Peter confirmed all truth was revealed:**

### **2 Peter 1:3**

<sup>3</sup> as His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

The writings of the apostles contain:

- **All things which pertain to LIFE** – i.e. one's personal, private life as he relates to other humans.
- **All things which pertain to GODLINESS** – i.e. one's religious duties toward God.

The writings of the apostles contain revelation concerning our private lives – not just the corporate functions of the church.

## **2) Paul confirmed all truth was revealed and WRITTEN down in scripture form:**

## **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**"all scripture"** – some argue this refers only to OT scriptures and not NT. Here's how the argument goes:

## **2 Timothy 3:15**

<sup>15</sup> and that **from childhood** you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ↓

- Here are "Holy Scriptures" which Timothy knew as a child growing up.
- The NT scriptures were not written when Timothy was a child.
- Therefore, the "scripture" mentioned in vv16-17 cannot include NT scriptures.

It is true that the "*Holy Scriptures*" in v15 refer to the OT scriptures only. But the word "*scriptures*" in v16 includes more than just the OT. In v16 Paul begins to speak about "**ALL scripture**" – the OT + NT.

**PROOF:** The "*all scripture*" of vv16-17 makes a man "*complete*" and "*thoroughly furnished*" in "*every good work*."

If I can find one "*good work*" in the NT which is not contained in the OT, I will have shown vv16-17 includes more than just OT scriptures.

**The Lord's supper** is a good work which was not recorded in OT scripture (1 Cor 11:23-26).

Therefore, the "*scriptures*" mentioned in 2 Tim 3:16-17 includes more than simply OT scriptures.

## **APPLICATION**

If these scriptures "*thoroughly equip*" the man of God "*for every good work*" – he needs nothing else.

- If the man of God needs **more revelation** as to what constitutes "good" work, then 2 Tim 3:17 is wrong.

- If the man of God needs **extra help from the Holy Spirit** in order to perform the good work, then he is not "thoroughly equipped."

Furthermore, these scriptures are profitable for:

**"doctrine"** – what we teach. This corresponds with *"whatever you do **in word** or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Col 3:17).

**"instruction in righteousness"** – what we do and practice. This corresponds with *"whatever you do in word or **deed**, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Col 3:17).

Not only do the scriptures thoroughly equip the man of God, they keep him on track:

**"reproof"** – a harsh admonishment when one *intentionally* does wrong.

**"correction"** – a gentle admonishment when he *unintentionally* does wrong.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Here's the bottom line: ***For something to be authorized there must be a scripture teaching it (period).***

- After all the logic is used ⇒ we have to have a scripture.
- After all the statistics about all the millions of people who are practicing something ⇒ we have to have a scripture.
- After all the warnings of how we will isolate ourselves if we continue down the radical road ⇒ we have to have a scripture.
- After all the recounting of the goodness and devotion of grandpa and grandma ⇒ we have to have a scripture.
- **There must be a scripture authorizing everything we do in our private lives and in our religious lives.**

## EXPLICIT – IMPLICIT

Everything the Bible teaches is taught in one of two ways:

- **Explicitly**
- **Implicitly**

1) **Explicit** – *"fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied"* (American Heritage)

### **1 Timothy 4:1**

<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit **expressly says** that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

Explicit means I can find a NT passage that says word for word what I'm doing.

2) **Implicit** – *"implied or understood though not directly expressed"* (American Heritage)

### **Mark 12:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

In the burning bush passage God taught two things indirectly:

- That Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive – though their bodies are dead.
- That there will be a resurrection from the dead.

God did not explicitly say any of these things in that passage. He *implied* them.

**NOTE:** To *"establish authority"* I must be able to point to a scripture where (a) Jesus or (b) apostles either explicitly or implicitly authorized what I'm doing or teaching.



***If the scriptures are silent*** about what I'm teaching or doing, I am forbidden to teach or do that thing because ***silence does not authorize***.

Passages which teach silence forbids:

- Gen 4:4-5
- Lev 10:1-2
- Dt 4:2
- Dt 29:29
- 1 Ch 13
- Prov 30:6
- Mt 15:9
- 1 Cor 4:6
- Gal 1:8-9
- Acts 15:24
- Rom 10:17 ⇒ in connection with 2 Cor 5:7
- Heb 1:5, 13
- Heb 7:14
- 2 Jn 9-11
- Rev 22:18-19

## **IMPLICATION IS NOT SILENCE**

An important concept to focus on is: ***Implication is not silence***.

When God implied Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still alive and that they would resurrect, ***He was not being silent about these matters***.

Alexander Campbell:

"... nothing can be rationally inferred from any verse in the Bible that is not in it; and whatever can be logically deduced from any sentence in the Book, is as much the revelation of God as anything clearly expressed in it."

(Christianity Restored, 69)

In other words, when God implies something, whatever is implied is as much His word as anything explicitly stated.

This explains why Jesus was incredulous with the Sadducees for not knowing about the resurrection in the "burning bush passage" (Mk 12).

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**EXAMPLE:** *When God commanded Noah to build an ark* (Gen 6), He implied any tools necessary to carry out the command. He was not silent about:

- Some type of measuring device.
- Some sort of wood-cutting device.
- Some sort of wood-hauling device.
- Some sort of device which would nail or cement or bind the wood together (nails, rope, wood dowels).
- Some sort of brush or mop to apply the pitch (tar).

All of these tools were authorized, but they were not authorized explicitly. They were authorized implicitly.

We can say, then, that God was not silent about tools for building the ark.

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When God implies something, He is not being silent. This is an important point.

Some brethren are saying this:

"The preachers are saying **individual cups** are wrong and **instrumental music** is wrong because the Bible is silent about them, but then they turn around and say we can have a **church building** and **songbooks** and a thousand other things which the Bible is also silent about. How can they condemn cups and instrumental music and Bible classes because of silence, but then accept church buildings, songbooks and other things?"

The important point: **IMPLICATION IS NOT SILENCE.**

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**EXAMPLE:** *When God commanded the church to assemble* (1 Cor 11:33), He **implied** anything necessary to carry out the command. He included the building.

- The church building is authorized as a permission.
  - We are permitted to build a building or rent one if we choose.
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## SIX POSSIBILITIES

Every action men can perform falls into one of six categories:

### 1) Explicitly REQUIRED

#### **Acts 2:38**

<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here is an *explicit* requirement.

### 2) Explicitly PERMITTED

#### **Romans 14:5**

<sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

Here is an *explicit* permission. A man does not have to esteem one day above another, but is permitted to do so.

### 3) Explicitly PROHIBITED

#### **1 Corinthians 14:34-35**

<sup>34</sup> Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. <sup>35</sup> And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Here is an *explicit* prohibition.

### 4) Implicitly REQUIRED

### **Exodus 20:8**

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

This passage implicitly required keeping **every** Sabbath day holy. (cf. Num 15:32-36).

In the same way, Acts 20:7 implies communion is to be observed **every** first day of the week.

## **5) Implicitly PERMITTED**

### **Ephesians 4:28**

<sup>28</sup> Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather **let him labor, working with his hands what is good**, that he may have something to give him who has need.

This passage ***implicitly permits*** a man to be a mechanic, a carpenter, a computer programmer or any other occupation which is considered "*good*."

No one is required to be a mechanic, but they are permitted (authorized).

**Q:** Is there Bible authorization to program computers?

**A:** Yes – Eph 4:28.

## **6) Implicitly PROHIBITED**

### **Matthew 5:44**

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

While this passage explicitly requires certain things (love for enemies), it also implicitly prohibits things. It ***implicitly prohibits*** anything that is hateful toward an enemy (killing).

So, while there is no passage which explicitly say, "*Do not join the military and kill the enemies of your country*," this passage ***implicitly prohibits*** such.

## **THE "EXPLICIT-ONLY" DOCTRINE**

There is a false doctrine called the **explicit-only doctrine** which states that only those things which are explicitly stated are required.

The entire area of implicit teaching is rejected **because it requires human reasoning** and human reasoning at its very best is flawed – so the argument states.

Thomas Campbell:

"... although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word, yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the Church. Hence, it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the Church's confession."

(<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-2ND.HTM#Page25>)

F. L. Lemley:

Since all inferences are of human origin, unless we want to hold on to human patterns we should discard necessary inference as poor pattern material.

(Warren, When Is Example Binding?, 91)

Any time a process of human reasoning or deduction has to intervene between the word and a conclusion, the conclusion is human and not divine, and therefore cannot be (even when true) a part of the New Testament pattern.

(*ibid.*, 90)

Only those examples that are objects of direct command are binding on us.

(*ibid.*, 91)

**Q:** How did F. L. Lemley and Thomas Campbell reach their conclusions that implicit teachings are not binding?

**A:** They used reasoning and drew inferences!

In other words, they had to use human reasoning themselves to reach the conclusion that we are **forbidden** to bind laws which require human reasoning!

**\*\*\* If the explicit-only doctrine is true, then most of the Bible becomes irrelevant because none of its commands were explicitly directed to anyone living today. \*\*\***

**NOTE:** Jesus' rebuke of the Sadducees in Mk 12 clearly demonstrates the explicit-only doctrine is false. The implicit teachings of the scripture are just as binding as the explicit teachings.

## CONCLUSION

To emphasize the importance of "*establishing authority*" I close by recounting an event which occurred in the days of Ezra.

In Ezra's day, the building of the temple was stopped by the enemies of the Jews. But thru the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, the Jews were encouraged to resume the work.

### **Ezra 5:3**

<sup>3</sup> At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to them: "Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?"

In other words, they wanted the Jews to "*establish their authority*" – to prove they had the right to rebuild the temple.

A letter was sent to Darius the King and part of it said this:

### **Ezra 5:17**

<sup>17</sup> Now therefore, if it seems good to the king, **let a search be made** in the king's treasure house, which is there in Babylon, **whether it is so that a decree was issued** by King Cyrus to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send us his pleasure concerning this matter.

Establishing authority was so important that a search was ordered to see if any command could be found which authorized this.

### **Ezra 6:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Then King Darius issued a decree, and **a search was made** in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. <sup>2</sup> And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, **a scroll was found, and in it a record was written** thus:

Authority was established.

Listen to the ending of the original decree:

**Ezra 6:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> Also I issue a decree that **whoever alters this edict**, let a timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this. <sup>12</sup> And may the God who causes His name to dwell there destroy any king or people who put their hand to **alter** it, or to destroy this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently.

Here is authority with a vengeance!

- No one had the right to alter the decree.
- Men were obligated to obey the decree.
- A record of the decree was kept.
- Diligent searching thru the scroll to find authority.
- Once the authority was found, the command was obeyed.

We should handle the word of God with as much reverence as these Persians revered the edicts of King Cyrus and King Darius.