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ANTI, LIBERAL or SIMPLY A CHRISTIAN? (4)

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In article 1 we saw how labels can be used properly & also used improperly. In article 2 we have reviewed attempts to justify musical instruments in worship, as well as organizational perversions (the missionary society & sponsoring church arrangement) which change local organization to a more centralized organization. In article 3 we considered the role of the church and of individuals relating to widows & orphans, eating, socializing, entertaining, etc. The above issues are ones where brethren ADDED to God's word. Let us now consider some examples where brethren have SUBTRACTED from God's word by binding their opinions.

Among churches of Christ, there are some brethren who say it is sinful to have Bible classes. If all they were saying is that it is sinful to have a "Sunday School Organization" - with it's own treasury and directors, as an appendage of the church, then I would agree. But some have gone beyond this, to forbidding what God allows.

God commands the church to be the pillar & support of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15). This is a general command that necessitates that we support the truth. Just as the command to assemble (Heb. 10:25) necessitates a place to assemble; and the command to sing (Eph. 5:19) authorizes the use of song books; so also being the pillar & support of Truth authorizes us to be involved in activities that are focused on teaching Truth.

Of course the command for the church to teach Truth is balanced by other principles. As noted previously, the church is not authorized to get involved in social activities, for these belong to the realm of the individual & not the mission of the church (1 Cor. 11:34). So, the teaching activities that 1 Tim. 3:15 authorizes are not going to be "Basketball teams for Christ" or such like. And the church is only authorized to raise funds by freewill offerings in its assemblies on Sundays (1 Cor. 16:1-3); so we are not to go into business, buying & selling things, for the purpose of "supporting the gospel". It is NOT the work of the church to sell cookies, have fund raisers, car washes, solicit funds from other congregations, sell literature, etc. Some mistakenly think that the command to teach means we can do it any way we wish to - but we do NOT have liberty to violate any other principles of God.

So, what are things we can do that are classified as teaching, but that do not violate other principles of God? Local bulletins, Gospel Meetings, hosting religious debates, radio programs, cable TV programs, newspaper

articles, Bible classes, as well as a number of other activities are all activities designed to **teach** the Bible. They are not fund raisers. Their aim is not entertainment. Their purpose is not social. All of these activities are focused on **teaching Truth**. Of course, people can turn anything, even permissible activities into foolishness. We are not talking about getting the church involved in a TV program that somehow violates other principles of God. But in and of itself, preaching by way of TV is not a sin any more than teaching by way of Bible classes on Sunday is a sin.

It is significant to note that the brethren who oppose Bible classes, will yet recognize generic authority for other things. They call Bible classes sinful, but have newspaper ads, teach by radio & use local bulletins. How is it that these are authorized, but actually meeting with people to study the Bible at the church building is not authorized? It really seems that some brethren have not learned well the difference between Generic authority and their personal opinion. It is one thing for an individual to prefer not to have classes. They can even keep their children from it, if they so choose. But to say that God forbids it, is to bind where God has not bound. God has given general authority to teach, and there are many things we can do that fulfill that without violating other principles.

Consider even further, that there is even authority for **simultaneous preaching**. Peter and 11 other apostles were preaching at the same time to some 3000 assembled people in Acts 2:14ff. They did this in different languages, according as each group was able to understand. So, we have a specific example of teaching & addressing **multiple groups according to their ability**. Why on earth, then, would we ever forbid teaching multiple groups according to ability? Yes, we are required to assemble as a congregation on the first day of the week. But clearly this does not mean we cannot **also** use a bulletin on Sunday, a radio program, or Bible classes, or teaching different groups according to their abilities. Of course, all things must be done decently & in order (1 Cor. 14:33, 40) and for the purpose of edification (14:26). God is not the author of confusion. So what ever we decide to do must maintain the goal of teaching & be done in a way that is orderly.

Frequently, those who bind the "no Bible class" position, also bind the "no women teachers" position as well. But again, this is where we need to discern between Revealed Truth and personal opinion. God's word teaches that there is a definite distinction between the role of men & the role of women. We all agree that men are given the role of leadership in the home (Eph. 5:22-33). Also, in teaching, God requires that women take a quieter & submissive role when men are present. First Timothy 2:11-12 says that women are not permitted to teach or have authority over men in teaching. Some misunderstand this to be absolute silence, perhaps because the KJV uses the word "silence". But the word used here is more appropriately translated "quietness" as the ASV expresses it. The point is that while women take a submissive & quieter role when men are present, that does NOT mean absolute silence; nor does it mean that women can never teach.

Second Tim. 2:2 says "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful **men**, who shall be able to **teach others also**." The word "men" is the word "anthropos", mankind, human beings. It is **not** referring to "males" only,

but to "people". Thus the text actually says to commit the word of God to faithful PEOPLE who will teach others also. This includes women.

While women are not to teach OVER a man, this does not mean women cannot teach men at all (Acts 18:2, 24-28). And it does not mean that women cannot teach women (Titus 2:3-4) or children. It is really very sad to see how brethren allow opinions to destroy & handicap the body of Christ. Are we not warned against using our opinions as the standard by which to measure our brethren (Rom. 14; Jas. 4:11-12; 5:9)?

Again, if women could not teach or speak, then to whom did the daughters of Philip prophesy (Acts 21:9)? Again, this is not saying they did so OVER men. But obviously God granted them the inspired ability to teach.

Again, the same brethren who forbid women teaching classes of children or women, will yet require a women to publicly confess Christ before baptism. And they permit women to sing with the congregation. Know we not that singing is also teaching (Col. 3:16)? The key in all this is that women are not to usurp the authority of the man. This means that men should be leading & women respecting that; but that does not mean women are never to speak or teach.

Regrettably, such opinions as noted above create division and give opportunity for others to blaspheme. If we could just set aside opinion, and walk by what God has said, forbidding what God forbids & allowing what God allows, then we would be united in Truth and at peace in Christ.

As noted previously, there are brethren on the "liberal" side who do not see that they are loosing where God has bound, and brethren on the other side who do not see that they are binding where God has loosed. Interestingly, our "liberal" brethren tend to lump us into one broad category with those who bind the no bible class & no women teachers positions. But, this is where labels break down and are not accurate; for we do not bind those opinions, anymore than we go along with centralization & social gospel practices. We are simply Christians. We want to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. We will forbid what God forbids & allow what God allows.

In coming articles, we will (Lord willing) address the one cup position, located preachers and those who forbid the Sunday evening Lord Supper.

May God richly bless you unto a full understanding of His grace, being filled with knowledge & wisdom, and the love & dedication to carry it out so as to be pleasing unto Him.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Men's & Ladies Classes** - Every 2nd Sun. @ 5pm.
- **Home Bible Study** – Sat., Nov. 25.
- **Business Meeting** – Sun. Nov. 26 @ 5pm.
- **GM in Knoxville** - Doug Hill, Nov. 17-19, 2006.
- **GM** - Jeff Smith, April 15-20, 2007.
- **GM** - R. McPherson, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - TBA April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

PRAY FOR

Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Rose Taylor, Dorris Williams, Robert England, Johanna Fletcher, Ed Williams, Joe Smith (cancer), Lydia Poe, Mike Tenpenny (back), Thelma Klein, . Also, **Sierra Frasier (arm), Reba Jones (Dorris Williams' niece), Jackie Tindle (cancer, relative of the Sims), Holly Jernigan (Joyce Gardner's niece), John Ross Key (Mary Cox's son), Marci Miller (Alisa Fletcher's mother), Ocia Bell Jones (Doris William's mother), Ruth Williams (Betty England's niece), Pauline Hickey, Nanny Witaker, Dylan Roberts (grandson of Marilyn's friend); Kitty Mahan.**

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