
Words of Truth

Local Society Has A Role In Discussing Scriptural Authority

By: Brian A. Yeager

The Scriptures are our source of authority (Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4, John 6:63, Colossians 3:16-17, I Thessalonians 4:1-2, II Timothy 3:15-17, and II John 1:9). Within the Scriptures, we find that we learn what pleases God by the Lord stating what He expects to be done (Luke 10:25-37). In the Scriptures we see how to please God by learning from approved examples left to follow (I Corinthians 11:1). In the Scriptures we also learn by discerning things that are implied (Matthew 22:23-33). We have to carefully handle these things as we study the word of God (II Timothy 2:14-18 and II Peter 3:15-18). We have to make sure that, even when something is authorized by instruction, approved example, or inescapable implications; that our authorized actions are expedient, edifying, and to God's glory (I Corinthians 10:23-33).

Our Lord is the final authority in all things (Matthew 28:18-20). We can never allow someone to supersede the Scriptures (I Corinthians 4:6). Even a perversion of something Scriptural is called "another doctrine" (Galatians 1:6-9). It has always been wrong to add or remove from the word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:5-6, and Revelation 22:18-19).

Within the boundaries stated above, we have to also consider how that our local society impacts what is expedient and/or edifying. For example, if the local society is one of poverty; how expedient or edifying would it be for one brother in the congregation to drive a \$100,000.00 SUV? Would that not potentially create unnecessary issues among the saints (James 2:1-13)? Can you reason as to how certain Biblical studies could create discord among those saints (i.e. Matthew 19:16-30, Acts 20:33-35, II Corinthians 8:1-9:13, Galatians 2:10, etc.)? Let's take a look at something Paul wrote for our study in this article.

All Things To All Men Within The Boundaries Of What Is Authorized

Consider the following which will serve as our text of study from here forward in this article: *"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might*

gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:16-27).

The text above is clearly about how Paul used his liberties to the furtherance of the preaching of the Gospel. He was not using his liberties to satisfy fleshly desires (Galatians 5:13). To understand what he meant above, consider how that sometimes he would go and teach in communities wherein there were Jews practicing customs taught under the Law of Moses. Paul had the authorized liberty to esteem one day above another (Romans 14:5-6). So, there were times wherein Paul would use that liberty to the furtherance of the Gospel. Times such as when he would travel back to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16 and I Corinthians 16:8).

When the Apostle Paul came to Jerusalem there were concerns that he had taught to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. So, in a failed attempt to silence these concerns, Paul practiced a Jewish custom in taking on a vow (Acts 21:17-36). He didn't practice idolatry. He didn't worship in error. He didn't violate anything the Lord desired of him.

When Paul came into Gentile communities, he was presented with opportunities to dine with Gentiles (Acts 16:25-34). Certainly, situations could arise from such that would cause Jewish individuals to be concerned. Paul, as he taught, managed these situations wherein he knew that all meats were lawful to eat (I Timothy 4:1-5), but all things were not expedient or edifying (I Corinthians 8:1-13). Thus, he could be like the Greeks, Jews, Barbarians, etc.; without compromising the truth.

Conclusion

We have to be aware of the areas we visit and live in so that we do not allow our liberties in Christ to become a stumbling block to those around us. While we can never compromise the truth (Proverbs 23:23 and I John 2:3-6), we can use our liberties to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18). In these areas of our lives, society does have an impact on what we are authorized to say and do. We must exercise ourselves to practice our faith while living above reproach (I Peter 2:5-4:19).