
Words of Truth

It Cannot Be An Expedient If There Is Nothing To Expedite

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Many errors have occurred over the years in churches of Christ by misapplications of biblical authority. Now understand, you have those who have no regard for the authority of the Scriptures at all. These are not those whom we are going to discuss throughout this article. What we will be discussing involve those who rightly believe you must have book, chapter, and verse for everything you say and do (Matthew 28:20, Ephesians 5:10, and Colossians 3:17). They would rightly concur that it is wrong to add to or remove from the word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, II Samuel 7:1-7, Proverbs 30:5-6, Galatians 1:6-12, and Revelation 22:18-19). They err by misusing the Scriptures through their impure motives and/or ignorance (II Timothy 2:14-18 and II Peter 3:15-17).

To illustrate the point, consider how this applies with “brethren” assembling to partake of the Lord’s Supper. The reason most churches of Christ meet on the first day of the week is simple. The word of God shows an undeniable pattern of such (Acts 20:7-11 and I Corinthians 16:1-2). The reason you will find unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine in those assemblies is because the pattern is clear on that too (Matthew 26:17-29 and I Corinthians 11:23-26). On these instructions there is rarely disagreement. However, when you come to how to carry out those commands problems arise. Consider how the debates over “one cup”, the second offering of the Lord’s Supper, carrying the Lord’s Supper to those outside of the assembly, and an host of other issues all surround the matter of “expediency”.

The Absence Of The Instruction...

A congregation decides that they are going to take the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine to a sister in Christ who could not assemble with the brethren. They reason that all Christians should partake and this is an expedient means for this sister to partake. What they failed to ask is where is the command, example, or necessary inference to do as they are considering. The word of God gives us the information for every good work (II Timothy 3:16-17). Nowhere, at all, inside the pages of the New Testament do we find authority to have the Lord’s Supper outside of the assembling of the saints. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial to be done in communion with one another (I Corinthians 10:16-17). The “together” aspect of the Lord’s Supper is so significant that we are to wait for one another to partake (I Corinthians 11:33). The lack of authority, and the fact that we are to partake together, would keep any honest Christian from creating an unauthorized partaking of the Lord’s memorial. This is true regarding a make-up Lord’s Supper as well as a “to-go” order.

Consider another common abuse among churches of Christ in regard to singing as a lesson here too. In the New Testament we have authority to sing praises to God (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, I Corinthians 14:15, Hebrews 2:12, and James 5:13). Most will point out that this means we are not permitted to use mechanical instruments

of music because that would be an addition. They're right. However, many of those same congregations will then have a man lead songs and before he begins to sing he will use a pitch pipe. How is that not an addition? Are we commanded to sing with proper pitch? If you read every verse in the New Testament regarding singing you'll find no such command, example, or necessary inference? No Scripture in the New Testament instructs us about pitch, tune, etc. We are just told to sing and make melody in our hearts (Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16).

Some churches of Christ have erred by building multi-purpose buildings and "fellowship halls". They decide that they want to have meals, parties, and such as a congregation and that the building of a facility is an expedient for such. What they are missing is that there is no command, example, or necessary inference in the New Testament that shows the church is to assemble for social purposes. Such is the work of individual Christians in their homes or under their own means (Romans 12:13 and I Peter 4:9). The work of the church is spiritual (Romans 14:17). These churches have created a means to carry out a work that is not authorized.

When there is no instruction there cannot be a tool used to carry out an instruction that does not exist. When we are doing something God wants us to do and we can use something to expedite that instruction, such should be clear rather than questionable.

Carrying Out The Instruction In An Expedient Way Without Creating Another Doctrine

Paul was supposed to teach brethren as an Apostle of Jesus Christ (II Timothy 1:11). This would mean that he would have to do things like travel to see brethren (Romans 15:28-29 and Philippians 2:24). It would also mean he'd have to communicate in other manners when absent. Thus, he wrote letters (i.e. Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, etc.). To travel, he would have to use vessels of transportation (Acts 28:11). In writing to brethren, he needed items to write on and with (II Timothy 4:13). John specifically detailed ink and a pen (III John 1:13). A boat does not add anything to God's instruction. It is necessary if traveling through water. A pen and ink adds nothing to the instruction of teaching. They are not new doctrines. They are not new practices. They are not additions, but necessary aids. Also, you can use the Scriptures to show those aids. Try that with a pitch pipe, second serving of the Lord's Supper, fellowship hall, a singular special container to drink from, etc.

Another instruction we have is to assemble together as the local church. In fact, it is sinful not to (Hebrews 10:25). To assemble, we have to have a place where we can come together (I Corinthians 11:20 and I Corinthians 14:23). This can be a public place (Acts 5:42). This can be a home (Philemon 1:2). It can be a room in some public place (Acts 20:7-11). It does not have to be a house. We can see that because the church in Corinth, by implication, met somewhere public that was not someone's house (I Corinthians 11:22 and I Corinthians 11:34). It is necessary for the church to be able to worship and assemble for spiritual reasons to have such a place. It is that simple!

Conclusion

Brethren, we have to remind ourselves of these things on occasion (II Peter 3:1-2). We have to remember that we must walk carefully in what is right and be sure it is right before we do it (Romans 14:23 and I Thessalonians 5:21). Let's be sure to never create a tool to carry out a work that is not right in the sight of God.