

THE FOREST HILL NEWS

Published weekly by the Forest Hill church of Christ

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Forest Hill Church of Christ

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VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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WHO IS MY BROTHER? (Part Two)

Barry M. Grider

In last week's article, attention was given to the question, "Who is my brother?" One who has obeyed the gospel of Christ through faith, repentance, confession and baptism, and who has done so with the full understanding that he is entering the Lord's one true church, having "obeyed from the heart" (Rom. 6:17), is now part of the family of God and the brotherhood that is found in Christ Jesus. He, therefore, is entitled to all the rights and privileges that belong to the "sons of God" (Rom. 8:14-17; cf. 2 Pet. 1:4).

Yet, the Bible clearly establishes the fact that one can "fall from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Simon, who previously used sorcery, sought to purchase the gift of the Holy Ghost with money. When rebuked by Peter, he repented and asked the apostle to pray on his behalf that he might be restored (Acts 8:18-24). Paul spoke of Hymenaeus and Alexander who made "shipwreck of faith" (1 Tim. 1:19,20). Paul's co-worker, Demas, forsook him "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10).

What ought to be our attitude toward a brother who has gone astray? Obviously, because he is a member of our spiritual family, we love him and should seek his restoration. Paul wrote, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). However, if a loving appeal is rejected, and a stern rebuke is rebuffed, faithful brethren must follow the apostle Paul's directive, "Now we command you, brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Concerning the fornicator in Corinth, Paul said, "with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). Despite the withdrawal of fellowship, does the individual stop being my brother? Paul continues in his epistle to the Thessalonians,

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 Thess. 3:14,15)

Notice, even though the brother has been noted, and even though there is no more association, save for admonishment, he is still a brother. Some among us today refuse to call some who have apostatized, brethren. At what point, may I ask, is an individual who has strayed doctrinally, no longer my brother? Some contend, "But he no longer abides in the truth." That is not the question. What about the brother who refuses to attend the assembly or keep his life morally pure, when does he stop being my brother? The scriptures teach that those who go astray are erring brethren. Such they will be until they are restored.

Yes, some have abandoned the faith and will not return. Most do not care if we call them brother or not. However, God still loves the apostate and considers him his lost child (cf. Luke 15:11-24). He stands ready to forgive and restore. The lost child of our Heavenly Father is our lost brother. Likewise, our attitude toward the lost brother must be like that of our Heavenly Father.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE AUTHORIZE?

Matthew Martin

Ask ten different religious people from ten denominations why they do what they do and they will probably give you ten different answers. One of the greatest problems that face the religious world today is that no one knows why they do what they do in religion. Even in the Lord's church there are those who cannot answer the simple question, "Why?" Why do we worship on the first day of the week? Why do we not use mechanical instruments in worship? Why do we not have women preachers?

To answer those questions, and others like it, ask a question of your own: How does the Bible authorize? Some will laugh at such a question. In the 1500's two European reformers had very different opinions on that subject. Martin Luther said that he would do only what the Bible did not specifically *condemn* him to do. Another reformer, Huldreich Zwingli, a Swiss Reformer, said he would do only what the Bible specifically *authorized* him to do. The difference: Luther could do anything as long as the Bible was silent on the issue. Zwingli, though, would do nothing, unless the Bible told him what to do. Sadly, Luther's approach to the Scriptures won the day and has shaped the mindset of Protestant Denominationalism ever since. Zwingli had the more accurate approach to the scriptures though, doing only what the Bible authorized, but his ideas never caught on. So how does the Bible authorize? It does so in three simple areas: Direct command, example, and implication. If the Bible does not speak on a subject in one of those three areas, then it is not authorized.

THE BIBLE AUTHORIZES BY DIRECT COMMAND

This is perhaps the most basic of the three areas. If the Bible says to do it, you do it, if it says not to do it, you simply do not do it. There is no room for debate. Consider for an example, the command Paul gave in Eph. 6:1, "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." This is a direct command. Now, if you follow Luther's idea of how to study the Bible, then, since Paul did not say it was wrong not to obey your parents, you could. Obviously that's ridiculous. Paul gave a direct command and that was all he needed to say on the subject.

THE BIBLE AUTHORIZES BY EXAMPLE

The Bible does not always spell out everything Christians are to do. We can, however, know certain things based on the actions of Bible characters. Nowhere does the Bible directly command Christians to assemble on the first day of the week. We can

read, however, of examples of Christians doing just that. With a little common sense we can know whether they were doing it because they were supposed to, or whether it was incidental.

For example, Acts 20:7-8 records that the Christians "on the first day of the week" and met "in the upper room." Now in these two verses we have two actions being taken. One, the Christians met on the first day of the week. Two, the Christians met in an upper room. Which example is binding? Well we have other examples of Christians performing acts of worship on the first day of the week, such as giving (I Cor. 16:2), but not in an upper room. A little common sense will tell you that their meeting in the upper room was incidental, but their meeting on the first day of the week was not. How do we know we are to meet on the first day of the week? We know by a binding example.

THE BIBLE AUTHORIZES BY IMPLICATION

Sometimes a particular passage does not tell every small detail about what is going on. Sometimes the Bible gives little detail on sometimes we might see as a huge event. Genesis 1:16 illustrates that point. Here, after going into detail about God's creation of the world, the Bible simply says "and He made the stars also." To us that is a big thing, to God it was not relevant to what He wanted to convey.

Consider the conversion account of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8). The Bible gives record of his belief and confession of Christ (v37) and of his baptism into Christ (verse 38) but it does not say that he repented. Does that mean he did not repent? No. Only that, for some reason, it was not stated. But we know you cannot be saved without repentance (Luke 13:3), so one can *imply* that he did so based on other passages.

If people could grasp the basic understanding of how the Bible authorizes then there would be a lot less to be divided over. Just because the Bible does not say it, that does not authorize a person to do it. That is why, as the old preachers used to say, we do not have chicken and biscuits for the Lord's Supper. The Bible did not say we couldn't, but it didn't say we could either. That is also the reason why we do not have female preachers, or worship with mechanical instruments. The Bible didn't say we couldn't. But it didn't say we could either. The next time you want to do something in religion, ask yourself: Was it authorized directly by a command? Do I have an example of it being done? Was it implied to have been done in the text? If the answers are no, no, and no, then don't do it, just do what the Bible says to do.

