

TWO TYPES OF AUTHORITY (Matthew 28:18-20)

I. General or generic authority.

- A. There are times in which God has given commands He wants His children to carry out and has done so in a general way.
- B. One great way to understand this is to simply look at the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20.
- C. There are two commands here that have generic authority.
 - 1. By the way, just because it is generic does not mean it can be dismissed as unimportant.
 - 2. A command with generic authority is authoritative as one that is specific in nature.
 - 3. The two commands with generic authority are go and teach.
- D. There are a multitude of ways to go aren't there?
 - 1. God did not say walk into all the world, but simply go.
 - 2. If He had said walk, then that is all we would have authority to do.
 - 3. Generally speaking, we can go by ship, foot, animal, car, internet, phone, video, mail or other ways.
 - 4. We have the general authority to do all those things.
 - 5. Any way we can go that does not violate any other command of God is a valid fulfillment of this command.
 - 6. The details are left to us.
- E. The other command, teach, does have a specific command about what is to be taught: the gospel.
 - 1. I'm not to go into the world and teach some other doctrine.
 - 2. However, I can teach the gospel in any way I choose that is biblical because the command to teach is a generic or general one.
 - 3. I can teach in a class setting, home setting, via internet, from the pulpit, through correspondence, over the phone or any other legitimate biblical way to teach the gospel.
- F. Now, that the basis of understanding is there, we need to understand that it is general authority that allows for us to meet in a building paid for by the church, or what we call a church building.
 - 1. You won't find a command anywhere in scripture that says, "Thou shalt build a church building in which to assemble."
 - 2. First, notice Ephesians 4:11-12.
 - a. You might say, that has nothing to do with a building and specifically you'd be right.
 - b. This verse is part of the mission of the church: edification of the saints, or equipping of the saints.
 - 3. Now notice Hebrews 10:25.
 - a. Here's the verse to teach you can't miss church.
 - b. It teaches that, but it teaches us that we are to be assembling with one another.
 - 4. The equipping of the saints is done by assembling together of the

- saints.
- 5. We need a place to assemble.
- 6. Some assembled on the river bank, some assembled in catacombs underneath Rome or other cities, some assembled in homes.
- 7. It gives us the authority to have a building.
- 8. We have a command to equip and to assemble which are both generic in terms of where these are to be done, thus we have authority for a church building.
- G. We need to know how to apply that thinking of general authority to commands of God.

II. **Specific authority.**

- A. Specific means just what you think it means: a pointed statement which has no room for personal interpretation..
- B. Go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:16).
 - 1. There is no room to interpret where we are to go.
 - 2. There is no room to interpret what we are to preach.
 - 3. How we go and how we preach or teach, yes.
 - 4. Where we go and what we preach, no.
 - 5. It is very specific.
- C. What we are to do when we teach them has no wiggle room either, it is very specific.
 - 1. Matthew 28:19-20.
 - 2. We are to baptize them.
 - 3. Not vote on them or any other such foolishness, but baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- D. If we are to deviate from the specific command, we have sinned.
- E. Such was the case with Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2).
- F. Naaman the leper was given a specific command (2 Kings 5).
- G. When it comes to what one must do to be saved, the New Testament is specific.
- H. When it comes to what God wants in worship to Him, the New Testament is specific.
 - 1. We will get into these things in more detail in later sermons.
 - 2. However, even in the specific things God wants, there is generic authority for doing them in the order we choose.
 - 3. God specified what He wants, but not the order in which it must be done.
- I. God did not leave everything up to us and when we act as if He did, we are sinning.

III. **A danger we must avoid.**

- A. We could spend a lot of time on dangers I guess, but there is one big one we must avoid.
- B. The temptation of making a generic command specific must be avoided.
- C. There is a generic command to teach.

1. Based on this, brethren have adopted the use of Bible classes on the Lord's Day and during a midweek service.
 2. Some have said that since things are to be done decently and in order and not more than one person is to speak at a time, as found in 1 Corinthians 14, bible classes going on at the same time are sinful.
 3. They have taken a generic command to teach and brought specificity to it.
 4. Bible classes are not worship services so 1 Corinthians 14 does not apply to Bible classes.
- D. If someone were to stipulate only one way to go into all the world, they would be sinning.
- E. Look at the commands God gave Noah to build an ark.
1. God was specific about it being an ark, the size, the number of doors and other things.
 2. God was specific in that he wanted rooms in it but He was not specific in the number of rooms.
 3. That was left up to Noah's good sense.
 4. God was specific that there was to be a door but nowhere do we read the size of that door.
 5. It was left up to Noah.
 6. If someone came along and said the door had to be fifteen feet wide and 20 feet tall, he would be making a general command specific and binding that which God had not bound on Noah.
 7. If someone said you have to have 12 rooms, no more no less, they would have been making a general command specific.
- F. We must make sure we understand also that it is sinful to take change a specific command of God.
1. In a sense we may say that it is sinful to generalize a specific command.
 2. However, we really aren't making it general, we are simply changing a specific command which we have no right or authority to do.