**Authority of God**

**Generic & Specific Authority**

Past studies have emphasized that the inspired scriptures (the New Testament) is the Christian’s only standard of faith and practice in religion. We also have learned that the Bible is not written in the format of an athletic rule book, but rather it is a collection of direct teachings and historical accounts of approved activity of first century Christians. In this way, the Holy Spirit has instructed us by telling us what God wants and showing us the right way to please him through the examples of others. Finally, we noticed that there are, at times, conclusions and inferences that are unavoidable based on what is explicitly stated. In these cases, God expects us to use the intelligence with which He has blessed us and to take those necessary conclusions seriously.

**Generic Authority**

There are times when God authorizes a general category of actions and expects us to choose from within that authorized group based on expediency. We can illustrate this principle by considering God’s instructions regarding prayer.

General Authority for Prayer

1 Tim. 2:8 says, “Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.” We know that the phrase “lifting up holy hands” is not an injunction to assume a particular body position, but rather a poetic way of emphasizing a commitment to godly living to accompany our prayer life. We know this because there are approved examples of prayer in other positions (Luke 18:13). The general command to pray authorizes any number of particulars. These would include standing, sitting, kneeling, or lying prostrate. Also included would be having the names of people to pray for memorized or written down. The command to pray would include indoors or outdoors. We can pray publicly or privately. The general command to pray requires that we make some decisions based on the circumstances and expediency.

Specific Authority Associated with Prayer

The only activity authorized in this passage is prayer. In fact, the New Testament as a whole authorizes a limited number of activities related to our worship to God.

* Prayer (1 Thess. 5:17)
* Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
* Preaching / Teaching (Acts 20:7)
* Lord’s Supper\* (Luke 22:19-20; Acts 20:7)
* Giving\* (1 Cor. 16:1-2) \*1st day of the week only

These acts of worship have been specifically authorized by God. This excludes any activities we might think of that were not specified. If I send my grandson for a loaf of bread, the only thing he is authorized to buy is a loaf of bread. Col. 3:17 says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus…” Everything we do should be by His authority. Someone might suggest burning incense while we pray. Burning incense is not a method of praying, it is an activity other than praying and we have no authority from Jesus for it.

General Authority requires us to choose from among the various activities that are included in the general command. ***Anyone binding where God has not bound is a LAW MAKER*.**

Specific Authority excludes any activities other than those that have been specified. ***Anyone loosing where God has not loosed is a LAW BREAKER.***