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Lakeland Hills Leader

How Do We Arrive At Our Practices?

By Chuck Richardson

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9 NASB95]

The question posed in the headline of this article with the accompanying verse will be the basis for a series of articles I wish to write on our common practices and how we arrive at them beginning next week. We will presume we need authority for our practices and will only use the Bible and primarily the New Testament portion to determine our authorization. Likewise we will employ the logical rules of interpretation to decide our rights of practice. I intend this series to be more than the outline of the methodology.

I plan to dissect some of the most widely held practices of our faith, and how we would arrive at our authority. I believe our authority for practices need to be examined from time to time for three reasons. First, we need to always verify we're obeying the Lord's will if we indeed believe He has a will to obey. Second, we need to verify we're not practicing what our elders and peers practice simply because we have always done those things. If we're not discerning, then we are no better than those who have no regard for authority. Third, not only are we to desire to please God, but we need to be in harmony with one another to contend for a common faith. [Jude 3]

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The Object Of Saving Faith

By Robert F. Turner

Paul said, "I know WHOM I have believed, and am persuaded that HE is able to keep that which I have committed unto HIM against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12 (Caps mine, rft) Paul's faith was not in a system, but in the author of that system. The system was right, and obedience to the laws and commands of that system right, because it was God given through Christ. This is not said to suggest that the system is unimportant, but to distinguish between the author and the product. Further, no "man or plan" choice is under consideration here. One cannot truly accept Christ without accepting His teachings, nor can one consistently accept the teachings of Christ without accepting His divinity.

Philosophic Faith- Modernism is proud of its current "Christian Philosophy." Preachers and teachers "compare" the various systems of religion, (Buddhism, Taoism, and the like) and then urge the acceptance of "Christianity" because of its "superiority." (Naturally, this includes only that part of Christianity approved by the superior intellect of the teacher.) Intentionally, or otherwise, God is made subject to man, and in the final analysis such faith is in one's self, rather than in Him. Accepted on such a basis as this, "Christianity" becomes a human system with human limitations. Having been judged by man, its authority and power is limited to man's level--and can lift man no higher than this.

Sectarian Faith- But what of those who equate their own brand of orthodoxy with "Christianity"? "My church teaches this, so I'll hold to "this" to my dying day." Is such creedalism any better than the philosophy of the modernist? One puts his faith in current theology, another in the earlier creed makers, but neither really trust in Christ.

Names and Claims- And what of those who claim faith in Christ, but refuse to conform to the teachings of Christ? Calling one a Christian does not make a Christian and calling one's church "of Christ" does not make the church of Christ. Jesus said, "If a man loves me, he will keep my words." (Jn. 14:23) Note, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (2 Jn. 9)

Faith and Relationship- True obedient faith establishes fellowship between God and man, thru Jesus Christ. This relationship can exist as long, but only as long, as we walk in His truth. (1 Jn. 1:3-10) As servants of God, **our allegiance is to God**; not to church, not to creed, not to elders, not to preacher, not to friends, BUT TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST. This is the true saving faith, and without it there is no salvation. With such faith, the Lord's teachings are not "a" way, but "the way." The consequences, I fully believe, are what He would have them be, and of them I cannot be ashamed.

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Therefore, we have three ways to arrive at the authority and responsibility to practice the things God has revealed; command, divinely approved example, and necessary inference. Of these three the more easily identifiable one is command, but that will not diminish the authoritative nature of the other two. Furthermore, we may arrive at authority and responsibility by one or a combination of these three.

Likewise, we will discover primary authoritative practices have to govern the secondary instructions. If this is not clear now, it will be when I address the practice. I aim to stimulate our interest in wanting to please God, period! [2Corinthians 13:5] While I will not write this series with the scholarship it deserves, mainly because I'm not capable of such, I will introduce technical, but necessary language, to arrive at my conclusions. Remember Paul adjures, Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [1Thessalonians 5:19-23 NASB95] Therefore, I look forward to this examination with you and I hope we finish our task with the desire to show ourselves approved to God always. [2Timothy 2:15]