The Authority of the Scripture Concerning Worship

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We have always been a people who made the Word of God our authority in religion. However, since there are signs in our brotherhood of drifting from this mooring, let us express two propositions regarding why God's Word, revealed in the Bible must be our sole authority in worship.

Proposition One: All Else Is Rejected as Authority

First, the church cannot be our authority for it did not give us the truth. Rather, truth gave us the church. The church must support the truth and be the pillar and ground of it. Paul wrote to Timothy: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Second, we reject denominations and ecclesiastical bodies as authority. They are not from heaven, but from man (Mat. 21:25). They are evil plants the Lord wants rooted up (Mat. 15:13).

Third, we reject human reason as authority. God has made it foolish (1 Cor. 1:18-31), so the way of man is not in himself (Jer. 10:23). Under this category we would place traditions of men (Mat. 15:7-9), human philosophy (Col. 2:8), secret knowledge (1 Tim. 6:20-21), and all men as an authority. Men can be false teachers (2 John 9-11; 1 John 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 3-4).

Fourth, we reject angels (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 11:13-15), and human experiences (Mat. 24:24; 2 Cor. 3:13) as authority concerning worship. It is possible for us to be deceived, especially in the realm of human experience.

Proposition Two: Why Scripture Is Our Sole Authority

First, only it is the Word of God (Deut. 8:3; 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). No other book, than the Bible, can stand tests intended to discredit this claim.

Second, it is in the Bible that God exercises His authority (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thes. 2:1-3; John 14:16-18; John 14:26; John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). God had authority and delegated it to the Son (Heb. 1:1-3). The Son put it in men (2 Cor. 5:20), and they wrote it down (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thes. 2:1-3).

Thus, third, the Bible claims to be an authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Thes. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:5). As a church, we dare not sail off the map of God’s Word.

Fourth, Jesus appealed to Scripture as the final authority to settle religious concerns (Mat. 22:28-33; Mat. 19:4-5; John 10:35-36). The apostles did the same, quoting Old Testament passages to authenticate their teaching.

Like the Hebrews writer, time fails if we try to tell all. Scripture is our authority for it is reliable; it will judge us; and, it is indestructible. It will convert us (Psa. 19:7), guide us (Psa. 73:24), cleanse us (John 15:3), save us (James 1:21), sanctify us (John 17:17), edify us (Acts 20:32), and work in us (1 Thes. 2:13). What else could we ask? So may we continue to hold it up as our sole authority in Christianity.

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The Glorious Gospel of Christ

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Gospel is translated from the Greek euangelion, and it means: “glad or joyful tidings, good message, good news.” Indeed, the Gospel is good news (Rom. 10:15). It is the God-given duty of the Lord’s church to proclaim it to a lost and dying world (Mark 16:15-16). And, as wonderful as the Gospel is, the soul who refuses to obey it will not be saved, but eternally destroyed (2 Thes. 1:7-9). Now, let us consider why it is such good news, and why it is so urgent for us to obey and teach it.

“As cold waters to a thirsty soul,So is good news from a far country” (Prov. 25:25). The good news of God, the Gospel, was brought down from heaven to earth by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12). Inspired men have recorded this message for us in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Man is lost and condemned without the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). To downcast man, lost in sin, hungering and thirsting for salvation—the Gospel has come!

If we really appreciated the Gospel of Christ, then we will be willing to: (a) suffer for it, like Paul (2 Tim. 1:8-9); (b) sacrifice for its proclamation, and realize that carnal things are very small in comparison to the spiritual blessings brought forth by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:11-18; Eph. 1:3-7; 3:8); (c) “be fellowhelpers to the truth” (3 John 8); (d) be “fellowlabourers” in the Gospel (Phil. 1:17); (f) spread the Gospel message ourselves (Acts 8:4; Prov. 11:30); (g) help others to be trained to preach and teach it (2 Tim. 2:2). *In the Lord’s church today, we urgently need to have a greater love and devotion to the “glorious gospel of the blessed God”* (1 Tim. 1:11), which is the “glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Why Is the Gospel Such Good News?

1. *The Gospel is good news because it tells man of the Savior who came to earth to save him* (Luke 2:10-12; 19:10). As the song says: "Why Did My Savior Come To Earth…Because He Loves Me So" (1 John 4:8-10; Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 5:6-11; Rev. 1:5). In the Gospel we learn about: "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20b). A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord.

The Gospel announces: "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Man, under the condemnation of sin, has a Savior who loves him, and who shed his precious blood to save him and wash away his sins (Mat. 1:21; Rev. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:19). Man does not have to be lost in hell (Rom. 5:8-9). Now that is truly good news!

2. *The Gospel is for all people* (Rom. 1:16; Acts 15:7). Jesus commanded His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Indeed, Christ "by the grace of God" tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

3. *The Gospel is good news because it is the "gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us" (cf. Tit. 2:11-12). Because of God's grace, man has the privilege of being taught the Gospel of Christ. Moreover, the Gospel is the message of God's grace, and the grace of God has made the Gospel possible. By it we have access to God's grace (Tit. 2:11-12; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1-2; 10:17; Tit. 3:4-7; 1 Cor. 15:1).

4. *The Gospel is good news because by it we are begotten by God—we become His children* (1 Cor. 4:15; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). When one obeys the Gospel of Christ, he is begotten by God and born into His house, the church of Christ—the kingdom

of God (1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13-14). As physical children are begotten by their fathers, God's children have been begotten by His seed, the Word of God (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23). What a privilege to be a child of God (John 1:12-13)! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1).

5. *The Gospel is of God. It is the "gospel of God"* (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thes. 2:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 4:17). It is from God—not men! Inspired men received it from God; they did not receive it from man (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 2:6-16). Unlike the teachings and inventions of man, it is perfect and eternal (Eph. 1:13; John 8:32; Tit. 1:14; Mat. 15:9; 15:13; 2 John 9; 1 Pet. 1:25; Rev. 14:6). "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thes. 2:13).

6. *Christ's Gospel is good news because it tells man of heaven and makes the hope of heaven possible* (Col. 1:5). Yet, we must be stedfast and faithful, and be not moved away from the Gospel hope if we are to reach Heaven.

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel… And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gos- pel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:3-5, 21-23).

7. *The Gospel of Christ brings peace. It is the "gospel of peace"* (Eph. 6:15; Rom. 10:15). By the Gospel, God has made

peace between Jew and Gentile, and between Himself and man (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). Because of the Gospel, man is able to have his sins remitted by the blood of Christ, and therefore have access to God the Father (Eph. 2:13-18). "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). By the Gospel "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), which the world cannot provide! (John 14:27; 16:33).

8. *We are called unto God by the Gospel, and by it we are able to obtain "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thes. 2:14). "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). Thus, the Gospel is the only means by which God calls men to Him. Thus, we can understand why God wants all men to hear the Gospel of Christ (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). What are we doing about it?

9. *The Gospel of Christ is good news because it is "the power of God unto salva tion to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2). Our "Saviour Jesus Christ…hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10), "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). It informs man that to be saved, he must: hear and believe the Gospel (Acts 2:38; 15:7; Rom. 10:14-17); repent (Acts 2:38; 17:30); confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10); and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Having put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4), one must remain faithful (Rev. 2:10; John 8:31-32; 14:15, 21-24; 1 John 1:7). The sacrifice of Christ has made Gospel preaching possible (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:2; Eph. 2:13; 3:8)! How great it is!

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