



The Reflector

Published and edited monthly in the interest of calling people back to the Bible
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January 2016

The Binding Nature of Apostolically Approved Examples

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In my early preaching days, the institutional issue was red hot and at the center of much of the discussions was when and if New Testament examples are binding. Are the examples of congregational cooperation in benevolence and evangelism binding on churches today? Are we limited to those examples in our practice as local churches? So, we are not surprised that this phase of the issue comes up again and again. We seem to now be in a period of heightened discussion of this matter again due to several young preachers' questioning the validity of binding examples of what the early church did, under the direction of the apostles, on Christians today. Specifically we have seen articles questioning our right to insist that the first day of the week is the only day for eating the Lord's Supper and to "judge" others for not doing so. In some cases the discussions have gone beyond merely questioning to a dogmatic stance that we cannot bind such examples today. They even suggest at times that the old method of establishing authority by command (or direct statement), example and necessary inference is something that brethren just grabbed out of the air and passed it on by tradition.

Before we tackle the binding nature of examples, just a few words about the necessity of using reasoning and logic to establish authority. Some of those who seek to free us from examples strongly suggest that we have no right to bind upon others conclusions that we reach from the use of logic. This is absolute nonsense and the height of inconsistency. There is not a single matter of faith that we practice today that we did not deduce (through reasoning) that it was intended for us today, though originally

written to and about first century Christians.

Reasoning from the scriptures is an old and *necessary* way of arriving at the truth in spiritual matters: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days **reasoned** with them out of the scriptures," (Acts 17:2). "And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and **reasoned** with the Jews." (Acts 18:19).

Those who speak so disparagingly of binding our reasoned conclusions on others are themselves binding their conclusions. They have read the data (New Testament) and concluded that most, if not all, examples cannot be bound on us today. How did they come to that position? Through reasoning, as flawed as it may be, but reasoning none the less. Then they seek to bind their conclusion that examples are not binding on us today. That is what I meant by "the height of inconsistency." So, we both use reasoning and logic to reach conclusions that we urge other folks to follow. We both have the same data as the starting point of our reasoning. It is up to those who reject our conclusions to show the flaw in our reasoning and it is up to us to show the flaw in their reasoning. But, neither of us can dismiss a matter on the basis that the position was reached by a reasoning or logical process.

As to the data to be considered in our reasoning process, notice Philippians 4:9: "*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*" They were told to "do," not only what they had heard (instructions), but also what they had seen (examples) in him, an apostle. There can be no

reasonable doubt that what they had seen (examples) was to be included in that which they were to do. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that the New Testament revelation was intended to be obeyed throughout the Christian age. In the giving of the great commission, all the Lord's commands were to be observed until "*the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:20) And there were the "traditions received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6; cf. 2:15). ("Tradition" is from "*paradosis*" which according to Vine means "a handing down or on.") Those who received these apostolic "traditions" or teaching were to hand them down to others who were to hand them on to others: "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*" (2 Timothy 2:2) So, the New Testament writings are authoritative throughout the Christian dispensation.

There are things the apostles did that does not constitute an example that all must follow. Paul made tents. No one I know contends that all preachers must make tents. Likewise there are express apostolic *commands* that were not to be obeyed by all for all time. Paul instructed the Corinthians to "*follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*" (1 Corinthians 14:1) This is in the form of a command, but not intended for all Christians for all time. So, whether it is in the form of a command or example one still has to determine if reading it in the New Testament means that it is binding on all for all time. So, the question becomes, not only "When are examples binding?" but also "When are commands or express statements binding?"

So, we have all this data in the New Testament and since we are told to do as the apostles taught and did, yet all agree that some things written were not meant for universal practice, how do we determine what is binding on us today? Do we arbitrarily and subjectively decide what is binding and not? Or, do we consider it all binding (both command and examples) *unless* there is compelling evidence in the scriptures that it is an incidental matter and/or it was only intended for a particular time and place? All we can do is to gather all the information on a particular subject from the biblical data and sift through it to

logically determine what is binding on all Christians.

Given what the Bible says about observing all things commanded and about what we have seen in an apostle "do", we begin with the premise that all things revealed are on the table for observance today. Then we eliminate those things that have compelling evidence that they do not belong on the table.

As the Lord's Supper, we put all the New Testament teaching on the Supper – commands, statements and examples – on the table. We have commands to do it (1 Cor. 11:24; Lk. 22:19). We have the command to do it when the church is together in "one place." (1 Cor. 11:20). We are commanded to do it periodically ("as oft ye do it") in memory of Christ (1 Cor. 11:25). We have an example of it being done on the first day of the week in an upper room, with apostolic approval. (Acts 20:7). Now, unless there is compelling evidence elsewhere in God's revelation that somehow modifies these commands and this example we are bound by them. There is no evidence any of the commands mentioned are not to be binding for all times and places throughout the dispensation, but to the contrary. As to the example there is no evidence that any other day that the first day of the week is authorized. Now as to the "upper room," if there is no compelling evidence that any other kind of place is authorized, then rather than eliminate the first day of the week, we need to get busy and build some upper room additions to our meeting places. But there is compelling evidence elsewhere that the place was incidental to the meeting. Jesus made it clear that in His dispensation that public worship to God is not tied to a particular place, but could be done anywhere. (John 4:20-23). The Jerusalem church that "continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Act 2:42), did so in the "temple" (v. 46) more specifically on "Solomon's porch" of the temple (Acts 3:11; 5:12). Later some churches met in private homes (1 Cor. 16:19). This should be enough evidence to show that the *meeting place* for the church is incidental. Now where is the compelling evidence that the *meeting day* to break bread is incidental? So, until someone comes up with such evidence we will have to leave it on the table.

In view of this evidence from what is revealed, it

would be presumptuous of us to arbitrarily, without presenting compelling evidence, loose the first day for assembling for the Lord's Supper – it would be just as presumptuous of us to arbitrarily bind the upper room in view of the evidence that the place of worship was incidental. ■

“What Does Satan Ask Of Us?”

Jarrold Jacobs

Satan is very cunning (Gen. 3:1). He continues to prowl this earth, looking for souls to destroy (I Pet. 5:8). The Bible describes him as a very violent being, and one who is filled with hatred, malice, lies, etc. He has waged war against God and Christ for millennia. Therefore, he tries to destroy mankind, God's creation, as a by-product of this war. We are “collateral damage” in Satan's war with God! Among other things, he places temptations before us because he knows that when we yield to his temptations, this leads to sin, and sin results in spiritual death (Jas. 1:14-15; Isa. 59:1-2).

How does Satan tempt men? He tempts us through the lusts of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life (I Jn. 2:15-17; Gen. 3:6; Matt. 4:1-11). To follow Satan means spiritual death. The Bible describes this as being cast from God and to burn in the lake of fire for eternity (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 25:31-46). Such descriptions ought to scare us and cause us to turn to God who truly loves us and wants us in Heaven with Him one day (II Pet. 3:9; Rev. 21:6-7).

At the same time, part of his cunning and trickery is that he really does not ask that much of us while we are upon this earth. Thus, we have no idea that the “ease,” and “freedom” we think we have is costing us our very souls (II Pet. 2:19)! Think about it! What does Satan really ask of us? Truly, it is not a lot. The way to destruction is described by Christ as the “broad way” because it is the easy way (Matt. 7:13-14)! Satan's appeal is in the fact he asks so little of us!

What do I mean by this? For example, I mean that Satan does not demand our full allegiance. He just doesn't want our allegiance to God! He is pleased if we would choose the “god of our choice,” or as many

gods as we like, so long as it is not Jehovah! He does not demand worship (though there are Satan-worshippers). He just does not want us worshipping God! “Worship as you please, or don't worship at all,” Satan says, just do not worship God “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

The mantra of this world that says, “Do you as please” and “If it feels good, do it” is truly the mantra of Satan. He does not ask much of us at all, does he? So long as we remain ignorant of God's will (see: Hosea 4:6), Satan is well-pleased. He is satisfied with us living as we please, choosing to act, dress, talk, and think in any manner we like. He just does not want us thinking as Philippians 4:8-9 describes. He does not want us living as I Peter 3:1-6 and other passages say.

Yes, Satan will tempt us and try to lead us astray and into Hell itself (Jas. 1:14-15). Yet, Satan does not ask a lot of us as a people. Satan is not threatened by folks who act like the majority of the world in our dress and speech, those who “play church,” and dabble in God's word. He is satisfied when we do not pray. He wants to convince us that we are on the right track if we are convinced that being a “good person,” having done “more good things than bad,” is sufficient for salvation in Heaven! If we do those things, we are walking right into Satan's snare! Sadly, there are many people today blissfully walking the “broad way” that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14)!

No, Satan does not ask much of us. He does not necessarily want full allegiance. He does not ask us to be faithful to him. He does not demand worship. This is the way he operates (I Pet. 5:8). Yet, at the end of this life, what will be required of us will be more than we are prepared to pay! ■

Time Is of the Essence

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

“*Time is of the essence*” is a legal phrase in contracts that binds one to a time frame and if it is not met the contract may be canceled. In this article we are not using it in a technical legal sense, but as a reminder that as we live for Christ that time is of the essence – it is of essence that we use our time wisely.

Paul twice admonishes, “redeeming the time.”

(Eph. 5:16; Col 4:5). Redeeming is from *exagorazo*, which Strong says means, “to buy up, i.e. ransom; figuratively, to rescue from loss (improve opportunity).” The New American Standard Bible renders, “*redeeming the time*,” in the two verses mentioned respectively, “*making the most of your time*” and “*making the most of the opportunity*.”

No two lives nor careers are identical. So, no model of time management can be expected to fit everyone. As a Christian, I have a variety of areas of responsibilities. Each is time and energy consuming. So, I have to take the scriptural mandate that I make the most of my time and tailor it to my peculiar situation. No matter what my situation, I only have the same number of hours per day as everyone else. Unlike money, I cannot literally save time up. I can only spend it.

While I may not be able to work out the wisest use of *your* time, given *your* peculiar state of affairs, there are some general observations that all of us as Christians, even preachers, can use.

1. Don't let your life revolve around an inflexible schedule. Ridged schedules may seem to be efficient, but they are generally not wise. Things come up that must be attended to. If you live tied hind-bound to a schedule, it will affect your attention in dealing with whatever interrupts your preset routine. This is why, as a local preacher for well over fifty years, I have never agreed to work with a church that wanted to tie me to a schedule – office hours, days off, etc. A tip for churches securing a local preacher. If you have not vetted the preacher enough to know that he is not lazy or if you do not have confidence enough in him to believe that he will use his time wisely, without your looking over his shoulder, then you should get another man.

2. Don't let yourself become one dimensional in the use of your time. While one has to set priorities on the use of his time, he has to be careful that the highest priority things on his list do not demand *all* of his attention. As important as it is for a man to make a living to “provide for his own,” or for a woman to be a good housekeeper as a huge part of her being a “keeper at home,” there are other things that also need attention. Also, it is hard to

think of anything that should have a higher priority than “church work.” Yet, there are other things besides “church work” that need our attention.

Since, I know more about preacher's families than any other kind, permit me to offer a little free advice – especially to younger married preachers. Don't get so busy accepting preaching invitations or “furthering your career,” as some erroneously view preaching, that you do not have time for your family. Some have become so busy “saving souls” that they have lost their families. Your wife needs your undivided attention often, so do your children. They need your leadership in spiritual activities at home to be sure, but they also need your time and attention in other aspects of life on earth.

Speaking of one dimensional. Local preachers need to balance their time with proper attention to public and private preaching/teaching. Some may be naturally better at one over the other, but they need to work at balancing “pulpit work” and “personal work.” Also watch about being “on the go” all the time, doing these two kinds of preaching/teaching, along with civic activities to be a good neighbor in the community, until your time for the much study and meditation on the word of God that you are professing to preach is pushed to the bottom of your to-do list.

3. Don't buy into the “quality time” time myth. In recent years, as two income households have evolved, a device called “quality time” has come into vogue. A workaholic, civic minded husband/father has little time left after work and club meetings for wife and children. A working mother has little time for family. They sooth their consciences with spending far less time than really needed telling themselves that the few moments they do spend is “quality time.” They plan “meaningful activities” to engage in with the family member to make it “quality time.”

True quality time with loved ones does not come in little snippets of time packed with “meaningful activities,” but in longer unrushed, and even unstructured, time where there can be true natural interaction between people who love each other - whether it be husband and wife or parent and child.