

ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY

Through the years Gods people have been identified by their love for Him and their respect for His authority. In teaching others, emphasis was placed upon the means by which God communicates His will to us through His word. That will, it was noted, is set forth by a direct command or statement, or by an approved example, or by a necessary inference or conclusion.

In recent years such teaching has come under attack and ridicule. An example of such ridicule appears in an article appearing in the July, 1993 issue of "The Examiner", a paper edited by Charles Holt. The writer, in the title of his article, asked the question, "Direct Command, Approved Example, Necessary Inference: Whose Invention?"

The writer set forth the idea held by many that such an appeal to establishing authority is just some idea a man (or men) originated and that making such an appeal ignores the fact that we are under a system of faith as opposed to a system of law. He makes the same mistake made by so many in thinking that grace and faith exclude a demand for authority for all we teach and practice and that the demand for direct command, approved example or necessary inference is just some human invention unknown to God.

When we appeal to such means of establishing authority we are following the same rules of communication used in every area of life and those used by Jesus and the apostles.

Direct Command: In Mark 16:15 Jesus commanded His disciples to, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel.*" A direct command easily understood by His disciples.

The apostle Paul does the same in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 when he commanded the Thessalonians to withdraw from those who walk disorderly.

Example: Jesus communicated His will to His disciples by setting the proper example. Peter tells us that He left "*us an example, that ye should follow his steps*" (1 Peter 2:21). When Jesus washed the disciples feet He told them that He had "*given you an example*" (John 13:15).

The apostle Paul called upon the Philippians to do the things they had heard and seen in him (Philippians 4:9). He wanted others to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Necessary Inference: Jesus, to teach the Saducees the truth concerning the resurrection, quoted the scripture in which God declares, "*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*" (Matthew 22:32. Since all three were dead at the time and, as Jesus declared, God is the God of the living, Jesus expected them to reach a necessary conclusion, i.e., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living though they had already tasted of physical death.

The Hebrew writer uses the same method of teaching when he states that Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and the law of Moses said nothing about priests from this tribe. The necessary conclusion? The priesthood being changed necessitated a change in law (Hebrews 7:12-14).

Men may reject or ridicule our appeal for authority, but when we make an appeal for direct command, approved example or necessary inference for all we teach and practice we are following the example of Jesus and the apostles. To act without authority puts us in the company of those Jesus describes in Matthew 7:23, "*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

✍ James Hahn