

## GENERAL AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. In a previous lesson we learned that the Bible authorizes, directs or teaches us through precept (commands or direct statements), approved examples, and necessary implications or inferences.
2. We learned that if we have one or more of these for what we believe, teach and practice, we, therefore, have divine authority for it.
3. Now we must learn that:
  - a. Bible authority is of two kinds or comes within two realms.
    - (1) It either comes within the realm of generic or general authority (which includes).
    - (2) Or it comes within the realm of specific authority (which excludes).
  - b. A distinction must be made between general authority and specific authority if we are to understand and properly apply Bible authority.
4. In this lesson we will learn how to define and scripturally apply both general and specific authority and will examine several Biblical examples which illustrate these two kinds of authority.

### II. DISCUSSION

#### A. GENERAL OR GENERIC AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY DEFINED.

1. First, we define general authority.
  - a. The word **general** defined: “Pertaining to, affecting, or applicable to, each and all of a class, kind, or order; as a general law. Not limited to a precise import or application; not specific.” -- Webster.
  - b. Therefore, general authority includes anything, method, or means of execution or the doing of that which comes within the class or order of the precept, example or thing commanded.
  - c. Concerning generic or general authority remember this: **IT IS INCLUSIVE!**
  - d. Simple example: “Son go to the store and get me a can of vegetables.”
2. Next, we define specific authority.
  - a. The word **specific** defined: “Precisely formulated or restricted; specifying; explicit; as a specific statement.” – Webster.

- b. Therefore, specific authority **excludes** everything, method, or means of execution in the same order or class which is not particularly specified in the precept, example, or thing commanded.
  - c. Concerning specific authority remember this: **IT IS EXCLUSIVE!**
  - d. Simple example: “Son go to the store and get me a can of French Style green beans.”
3. It is vitally important that we understand that a distinction must be made between general authority and specific authority.
- a. A practice or an action may be authorized by generic or general authority which is not authorized by specific authority, or is not specified, or specifically mentioned.
  - b. Failing to recognize and apply this, many reject certain practices which are authorized; such as: a baptistery; Bible class literature; separate Bible classes; individual communion cups; church owned meeting house.
  - c. Also, failing to understand general and specific authority many say, “If it is not specifically forbidden, it is allowed.”
    - (1) These seek to justify such things as: Mech. Instr. Music in worship; eating the Lord’s Supper on Thursday night; collection at any and all services any day of the week, etc.

**B. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY ILLUSTRATED BY BOTH O.T. AND N.T. EXAMPLES.**

1. Before doing that we offer a brief word about **EXPEDIENCY**, with a much more detail study of the subject in a subsequent lesson.
- a. There is no such thing as a N.T. Law of Expediency.
  - b. Expediency is not a law.
  - c. Paul said: 1Cor.10:23.
    - (1) Obviously, it means only the things that are lawful can be expedient.
    - (2) But some things that are lawful are not always expedient.
  - d. Therefore, to prove that anything is expedient, it must first be proved to be lawful.
  - e. Examples:

- (1) Assembly of the saints is authorized, the meetinghouse is expedient.
  - (2) The Lord's Supper is authorized, individual communion cups are expedient.
  - (3) Baptism is authorized, the baptistery is expedient.
  - (4) Giving is authorized, collection plates or baskets are expedient.
  - (5) Singing is authorized, song books and tuning forks, and voice parts are expedient.
- f. Just because something "works" it is not necessarily expedient.
2. Usually O.T. examples and illustrations will be readily understood. They will provide the basis for understanding the teaching of the N.T.
  3. We study the following examples from both the O.T. and the N.T. in chart form in order to help understand both **General** and **SPECIFIC** authority and to better understand how to make the distinction between these two kinds of Bible authority.
  4. Thus we offer charts #1, #2, and #3 in that order.