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DO WE SPEAK WHERE THE BIBLE SPEAKS?

Barry Fike

The old phrase, "We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent," is one in which many Christians take great pride. But is it still a valid plea? Are our views concerning spiritual matters a result of our research, or has it simply been handed down to us by our forefathers? Does your constant study and prayer life continue to change your views, ideas, and opinions on a variety of topics? Over the last few years, many of my views have been completely changed—for instance, my view on Christian participation in war. Others, concerning the giving of the Holy Spirit, evangelism, the laying on of hands, unity, and many more, have either been slightly altered or added to in great detail.

The reason this change was necessary was that my knowledge of these subjects had been shallow. I was forced by honesty and a love for truth to allow my ideas and traditions to be changed by God's Word. David Lipscomb said,

Water that is never stirred becomes stagnant and fetid. The mind that is never stirred with adverse thoughts, who's habits of

thought have conclusions that are never called into question or disturbed, become stale, commonplace, and ineffective. The faith of such persons lack vigor and enterprise.

You may be saying to yourself, "This guy can't decide on anything in relation to his faith. It sounds as if he constantly turns toward whichever way the wind is blowing." I can assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. My problem, though, is the realization that while we may say that we speak where the Bible speaks ("we" meaning those in the "churches of Christ") the fact is that in many areas we do not!

When I read about a "church of Christ" preacher, position, college, paper, etc. I cringe! We have made a denominational name out of a description found *only* in Romans 16:16. Attaching a certain doctrine to a name, which sectarian ideas are centered around, is wrong. This is not speaking where the Bible speaks.

I read recently that someone questioned whether Christians could meet in homes, with the elders' permission, instead of together on Wednesday night. Paul spoke of home churches

in Romans 16:5 and in 1 Corinthians 16:19, didn't he? We must be careful to speak where the Bible speaks.

Where do we read in scripture the Lord's body being divided into different congregations in one city? Where does it say there were separate groups of elders, within one city, that made decisions for separate groups of Christians? When Paul went to the city of Ephesus, which congregation did the elders come from? Is it possible that they were elders over all the Christians that were in that city? Let's speak where the Bible speaks!

I could go on and on with many other examples of areas in which we need desperately to speak where the Bible speaks! It is time to red the ground that has been untouched for years if the Restoration movement is to continue. It is heart warming to see so many of my brethren beginning to get out of traditional molds of thinking and redigging concepts that have remained unchallenged for years. To these brethren—I salute you and your efforts! We need to realize that if we truly are to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent, we must study with an open mind.

/Barry Fike—Rockford, IL.