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The Class Issue

Gordon Teel

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The Class Issue

Gordon Teel

INTRODUCTION

The following tract contains a sermon which was preached to a group of the anti-class brethren here in Pasadena, Texas.

So many of the brethren have repeatedly asked me to have the sermon printed that I have finally decided to do so. The sermon was taken down on a wire recorder and is substantially the same as when preached. A few non-essential matters have been left out to make it a little shorter as it required over one hour and a half to deliver it.

We commend this tract to all of the anti-class brethren for their honest and prayerful consideration.

BIBLE TEACHING IN CLASSES

We are indeed grateful for the presence of all of our visitors this evening. For those, perhaps, who do not know how this occasion came about, we might say just a few words to bring you up to date. Last Sunday afternoon five men of this congregation talked to five of the Main Street congregation concerning some of the differences between us regarding Bible classes. This past Tuesday evening the evangelist who has been holding a meeting there, Brother Leland Knight, preached on this subject and quite a number of us attended that service. As they received us graciously, in all courtesy, we asked if we would manifest the same friendliness and the same

courtesy, would they come and hear the other side of the issue and they graciously consented to do so, and that is why we are assembled here tonight.

Let us read two passages of Scripture as an introduction to this lesson, First, a word from Jude, the third verse: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the Saints." Now, the opening of Acts 17, verses one to four: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; and Paul, as his custom was, went into unto them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, who, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ." I would like to emphasize the words, "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." That is what we want to do here tonight. We all, of course, believe that the New Testament is our authority in things religious. We likewise, of course, are exceedingly conscious of the differences that are found among people who claim to take the New Testament as their final authority.

But, if there is anything taught concerning our relationship with each other, it is that in spite of our differences we should manifest love and patience toward one another. In a passage that I emphasize over and over again to my brethren, the apostle Paul in writing to Timothy said, "The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will." (II Tim. 2:24-26.) If there is a passage which we preachers often break, I suppose that we forget that one the most readily. Many times in the, shall I say, warmth of controversy, we forget that commandment. But is one transgression worse than another? If a person in contending for the "old paths," loses the

Christian spirit, he has wasted his time, because he is in danger of losing his soul while contending for the "old paths."

Many people are very proud of their doctrinal orthodoxy but they are exceedingly lacking in the proper Christian attitudes toward others who may differ with them. Much of the discord found among church members today is not so much in what has been said but in the way that those things were spoken. One man can say the same thing as another, yet one will be listened to patiently and the other will stir up violent opposition. We know, of course, that such wrong attitudes are forbidden. I hope that, making allowance for human infirmity, the right attitude will be manifested here tonight.

As far as our respective groups are concerned, there is no subject which is more important than this one, at least for the moment, because this matter separates the two groups. As an illustration of the harm that is being done, and I speak kindly, when the Main Street congregation was started some one year ago, I think, an ad in the local paper stated that the Church of Christ was buying some property and starting a church. The ad did not say that another congregation was being started, as we stated in our ad when we started the new congregation at South Shaver some two months ago, but it was so stated as to leave all other churches completely out of existence. Many people phoned me to ask, "Have you had a division? How can you get your hundreds of people in that little building? What happened to you people?" I had to tell them that nothing had happened to my people, that nothing happened to his congregation, that it had no connection and no relationship at all with the Shaw Street church. This occurrence gave the denominationalists an opportunity to talk about division and so you can see the importance of this study.

We, of course, will concede that there is only one thing that permits division and that is Truth. To be perfectly honest, I believe that you believe that you have the truth and that we do not. I am not questioning your sincerity or your honesty, neither am I imputing motives about which I know nothing. As far as I know, and I have no other way of knowing, each individual at

the Main Street congregation is as sincere as anyone here, and until I am convinced that that is not so, I will believe it. I have always followed the practice that an individual should be presumed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty. Some people can always tell you why certain people do certain things, but many times I cannot. I do not know. As the apostle Paul said, "Who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him?" (I Cor. 2:11.) Because this is so, we are absolutely forbidden to judge in this field. A number of brethren who plead for orthodoxy should plead for this orthodoxy also.

Now, I am talking tonight about what we do, and so, in just a word, I want you to know what we do so that you can know what we are talking about. On Sunday morning, we assemble at 10:50 exactly as you do, and for the same purpose. On Sunday evening we assemble as you do for the same purpose. Again on Wednesday evening we assemble as you do and again for the same purpose. So far, we are alike. But, in addition, we have at 9:45, preceding our assembly of the church, Bible classes for every age, some nineteen classes. In addition to these classes, we have other classes on Sunday evening preceding the regular worship service. We have a class for teen-age youngsters on Monday evening which meets in a home. We have a class for women on Tuesday morning, and a class for men on Tuesday evening. Now here is where we differ. Here you believe that we have departed from the faith. You differ with us over these other groups which we have for the purpose of teaching the Word of God.

How are our classes carried on? What is our procedure? I mentioned that we come here at 9:45 on Sunday morning and go directly to our class rooms. We do not slink in; we just walk in. We do not come through the back door, we come through the front. We go directly to the classes because we want to use all the time for Bible study and not use a good deal of it for something else which we deem at that hour not so important. We have no other organization but elders and deacons. The elders from among themselves selected one elder to be especially responsible for the smooth func-

tioning of the classes as far as materials and other things were concerned. But these classes are under all of the elders. Everyone of the elders supervise everything that is done. One says, "Well, he is a superintendent, then." Yes, we can call him that because that is the meaning of the word "bishop." A bishop is one who superintends, one who directs, according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon. If that is what the word means, there is nothing wrong in calling him that.

Now let us notice some points of agreement between us. It is always good to see first where we are agreed instead of where we disagree because a lot of times we find that we are closer than we previously thought. Firstly, you say, "We are against everything that the New Testament does not authorize." We say, "Amen." But, we believe that we must know how the New Testament authorizes anything.

We believe in speaking where the Bible speaks and of being silent where it is silent. But, we do not want to quit speaking until the New Testament quits speaking. We do not care to be silent about something that the New Testament clearly reveals. You say, "We are pleading for a return to the old paths." We are doing the same thing. However, we do not desire to return as far back as that Scripture would take us because it is found in the Old Testament, and such a return would take us back to Moses and the Law. I believe that we should be careful in using "accomodated expressions." You know, it would be far better and far more reasonable to say "Let us go along with the Bible." When I say "Go along with it." I am simply saying this: that the truths of God's word are so deep, so profound, they are so high and so wide, that no man ever sees the FULL significance of the Book in every matter. We are going forward to the complete understanding of its truths. It would be better to say "Let us go along with it" because people get the idea that we are always turned backward. But, why turn backward? Here is the Bible and it is the Bible for our age as well as for all ages. What do we mean by "back"? Some people say, "Back to the first century." But, we don't necessarily care to do that. Some churches in the first century were just as

wrong as are some of the churches today. The church at Corinth was pretty well filled with both moral and doctrinal evils. The churches of Asia had both moral and doctrinal faults. So, why say "Back to anything"? Let us say, "Let us go to the Bible and see what it teaches on this subject."

We are agreed on the assembly and its restrictions and directions. What we do in this assembly is what you do on Main Street. There is no difference. So we are submitting exactly to the directions and to the restrictions laid down for the assembly. No man can contradict that. Our practice is identical with yours as far as the assembly is concerned.

Now, let us notice some points of disagreement between us: Firstly, you say that there are only two institutions for the teaching of God's word; the church, meaning the assembly, and the home, meaning the family. According to you. "These are the two institutions given by God for teaching, and there are none others." Let us define some terms: First, the church: In Matthew 16:16 Jesus says, ". . . upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." We know that there He was talking about his spiritual body, His kingdom, which would not be restricted to any one locality, but the church which would be everywhere. In First Corinthians 1:2 we find the word "church" used in reference to the church at one city, "the church of God which is at Corinth." In Acts 9:31 (American Standard Version) we read, ". . . the church in Judea and Samaria and Galilee." The "church" in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, but it was the church in these three sections of Palestine. In I Corinthians 14 we find the "church" used in its most restricted sense, the assembly. We want to notice these scriptures carefully so turn with me in your Bibles to that chapter and the twenty-third verse. Let us read together: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" The twenty-sixth verse reads, ". . . when you come together . . ." This is its most restricted use in the

New Testament; when "The whole church be assembled together."

I want to show you how this word "Church" is used when it does not have a religious significance. Turn with me to Acts 19 and verse 32. We find here that Paul had some trouble with a mob-spirit and it was said of the crowd "some therefore cried one thing and some another because the assembly was confused and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." The "assembly" here is the word that is translated "church" in the New Testament. We know, of course, that originally the word that has been translated "church" had no religious meaning at all. It referred to the calling out of the citizens in a Greek free city-state. In such a city, the town clerk would call them together, that was the "assembly," that was the "ecclesia," that was the "church." So, from its non-religious use, we learn that such a group of people assembled in one place, in one group, at one time, constituted the "assembly." They were one group, not several groups in one geographical place.

We find one other use of the word "church" in Acts 14:27. The apostle Paul came to Antioch and we read, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles." Notice, it says "when" they gathered the church "together." But, it was the church before they gathered it together. It was the church dispersed at Antioch. Get that meaning because it is very important. Now, the church exists "assembled" or "un-assembled." It can exist only in those two states. Certainly, it is not necessary to tell you that the church is not the building. The church is made up of people; the church meets in the building, but is not, itself, the building. You believe, as we do, that being in Christ and being in the church are identical. Paul says in Galatians 3:27 that we are baptized into Christ. In I Corinthians 12:13 we learn that we are baptized into one body, the church; so when we are baptized into Christ, we are in his spiritual body, the church. We believe that the New Testament clearly teaches this truth, and, as a consequence, we teach that an individual cannot be saved outside the church, be-

cause, if he could, he could be saved outside of Christ. On the basis of this truth, let us reason together for a moment. If being in Christ is also to be in the church, then you are always in the church, brethren. When the church is dismissed, it does not cease to be the church. The church at Antioch had to be "gathered together." As long as you are in Christ, my brethren, you are in the church.

When we turn to the Corinthian letter, we find that Paul found fornication in the church at Corinth. But, you know and I know that the fornication did not take place in the assembly. Litigation, or brother going to law with brother, was also found in the church, but not in the assembly. It happened in the church "unassembled." If the whole church being come together (the Revised Version uses the word "assembled") into one place makes the "assembly," and it does, then the failure of the whole church to be assembled into one place would result in it being un-assembled. From that there is no appeal. Notice, that it cannot exist in both forms at one and the same time. It is either assembled or un-assembled. Now, I Corinthians 14 speaks of the church in its assembled form as I have already showed you. The reading is, "If the whole church be come together in one place." I submit to you, brethren, that every restriction in reference to women in I Corinthians 14, has to do only with the assembled state of the church when the church is come together into one place.

Now, for a question: Does I Corinthians 14 "bind" the church to do "all" of its teaching in its "assembled" form? Does this chapter teach that this is the way that it "must" teach? Now, brethren, if I understand you, you say that there are only two institutions, the assembly and the home, for the teaching of God's word. Does this chapter, I Corinthians 14, "bind" the church to do all of its teaching in its "assembled" form? If so, it should have said "must" do it. It says "if" the church, or "when" the church comes together, its service must be ordered according to the restrictions laid down. "If" or "when" it comes "together," these restrictions apply.

Now, let us define this word "home." My home is composed of myself, my wife and four children. Your

home is composed of whoever belongs there, not of anyone who comes in for a visit. They are not a part of the home. They may be guests in the home but they are not a part of the home. Only your own family makes up your home. As you know, the church can meet in your house and, if that happens, the "assembly" would be in your house. You will find the proof of this in Romans 16:5 and I Corinthians 16:19. The "church" in the house of Aquila and Priscilla is referred to in both places. The church met in their house, so it was the "assembly." In that sense, a woman would find that she could not speak in her own house, at least, during the service. Let us keep clearly before our minds just what the home is. The home is not composed of everyone who happens to come to our house. Guests or visitors in your house are not a part of your home.

Now, are these two institutions, the church "assembled" and the home, meaning your family, the only two groups that can lawfully teach God's word? Here, brethren, is the issue. I want to read a few passages of Scripture. I will tell you why I am reading them in just a moment, but turn first to Luke 10:17-23. I would be very happy for you to check these Scriptures in your Bibles. We are here to study this matter, and we are not trying to run anything over you, to pervert, twist, or garble the Scriptures. We are willing for every one of these things to be brought under the searchlight of criticism by the keenest minds that you have and the most astute biblical students that you may have. We want you to read with us carefully, soberly, and prayerfully. Let us now read Luke 10:17-23: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven, and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and under-

standing and has revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." Notice that word "privately." Here, Jesus felt the need of teaching at least one group something that he wasn't willing to teach to everyone else. That is as far as I am using that passage.

Now turn to Mark 7:14. Here is the reading: "And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one of you, and understand." Now let us read the seventeenth verse: "And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable." Jesus taught the multitudes, but there were some things that he taught the disciples that he didn't teach to the multitudes. He taught them "privately" as Luke says. In Matthew 23:1 we read: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to his disciples, saying—the context of this reading continues through the entire twenty-third chapter and when we come to the first verse of the twenty-fourth chapter we read: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying . . ." Notice the words, "the disciples came unto Him 'privately,' saying." Now there is no point in arguing against the fact that Jesus did teach privately to groups which were not the multitude because it plainly says so in so many words. In Matthew 20:17 we read: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the apostles apart in the way and said unto them." Here Jesus took the apostles apart from the multitude and taught them something that he didnt care to teach to the multitudes, at that moment. Do you ask "What is the proof here?" Simply this, that Jesus did some special teaching to groups separate and

apart from the multitudes. When you analyze his teaching, you will find that nearly everything that Jesus taught was taught to small groups and some of the richest teachings were taught to individuals. Most of his teaching was not to the multitudes at all.

Elders
Now how did the first century church teach? Turn with me to Acts 20. First we will read the seventeenth verse: "And from Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." Paul is at Miletus. He calls the elders from Ephesus to meet him there. Unless I misunderstood the brethren both last Sunday afternoon and last Tuesday night, it was stated specifically and dogmatically that an individual who looked for a group separate and apart from the assembly or the home was looking for something imaginary and purely fanciful. I did not misunderstand as I have it in my notes word for word. The statement was made that an individual who looks for group teaching, a group separate and apart from the assembly or the home is looking for something purely imaginary or fanciful. I wish that all of you brethren would look at this passage in Acts 20. This group did not make up the assembly as per I Corinthians 14. It was a "part" of the church at Ephesus, but only a part. It was not the home. You may say, "Well, if that would prove anything it would prove but one class." Well, just suppose that it does just teach one. If it did, brethren, would you have fellowship with us in part of our class work? We have only one class on Monday evening. No other class is held at that time. We have one on Tuesday morning, a wonderful class of ladies, and none other at that time. We have a training class for men on Tuesday night, and no other at that time. Now, brethren, if Paul could take from a church a group of men which was not the assembly or the home, to teach them, why could not someone else in the church take another group apart at the same time? Will someone tell me what would be wrong with it? You may say, "There is no Scripture for it." There is Scripture for "one," brethren. What was this group? You know that it was not the assembly. You also know that it was not the home. Then, it is a group between the two. Name it what you will, class or group, it does not make any difference. It is just between the

one and the other. The very thing that you said could not be found.

I trust, brothers and sisters, that you will be patient tonight. I do not think that you are in a hurry. I am not. Your souls and mine may depend upon this issue. If you are in a hurry, you are not a good Christian. If you are not willing to study this issue hour after hour, day after day, even month after month, until you completely exhaust the Scriptures on the subject, you are not a good Christian. I have studied this issue before, brethren, but to be sure I was right I have gone back and reviewed everything that I have ever studied on the subject. I have been up until after midnight for three nights and today I sat for seven hours without food while I reviewed the issue. I did not do this to disprove your position, but to make sure that I understood what the Scriptures taught, at least, as far as I was able to understand. I want to build upon a "thus saith the Lord" and that is why I am asking you to reason with me step by step.

Now, let us read Acts 21:8, 9: "And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven, and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." Question: To whom did these virgins prophesy? It has been said, and I am sure that the brethren are sincere in believing it, that they prophesied in the home. I deny it, brethren, just as firmly as you claim it. To whom did they prophesy? Whom did they teach? Phillip, their father, the prophet? Their husbands? They had none. Their children? They had none. Whom did they teach, brethren? You say, "Well, they didn't teach in the assembly?" We are agreed. They couldn't. That is where the restriction regarding women is found, but if they could not teach in the assembly, and they had no family to teach, where did they teach and whom? It would have to be a group which was not the assembly and not the home.

Now, turn to Acts 2:17 and let us read: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see

visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." I agree with Brother Knight that that prediction was not completely fulfilled on that day. But, the passage raises a question: God says through the prophet Joel that these women would prophesy. Now where did they do it? Well, here is one passage in Acts 21:9 which shows the fulfillment of the prophesy in Joel. These women did speak for God, and by the power of God. Now, Where? When? How? You say, "Through the family." I can't find one iota of proof that the gift of prophesy was ever given for the home. Maybe some of you brethren can. If you can enlighten me, you show me after the service. I have not been able to find one iota of proof that prophesy was ever given for any home function whatever. Paul does not say so. He says that prophesying edifieth the church (I Cor. 14:4). There is not one word, there is not an allusion, that says prophesy was ever given for the home. If you believe differently, it is up to you to enlighten me, because I can't find it. I find it only with reference to the teaching function of the church. You ask, "Is it restricted to the assembly?" Oh, no. I have already proved that the church is the church whether it is assembled or non-assembled, so if she cannot function in this teaching in the assembly she must function somewhere else separate and apart from the home. There is no escape from this conclusion. All right, let us turn to I Corinthians 11:4, 5. "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven." Notice that the same word is used in reference to both men and women. Now we are agreed that this woman cannot prophesy in the assembly because in the fourteenth chapter she is forbidden to do so, but Paul is giving directions regarding her dress when she does do it. Now, brethren, do you believe that the apostle Paul by inspiration required a woman to be veiled in her home? Do you believe that? If so, every time that your wife teaches or prays in her home she would have to put on her veil. You will not accept that, will you? Do you believe that he is giving directions regarding her dress at home? I do

not. You say, "Well, it is not the assembly?" Then it must be a group separate and apart from the assembly.

Turn now to Titus 2:1-5. I realize that I am moving slowly, but, brethren, I want to move slowly. This is a little slower than I normally preach, but I am not trying to put something over on you. I want you to get what I say. You might say, "I just didn't get that point." Well, I am trying to see that you hear the point whether you believe it or not. Now let us read the passage from Titus: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine; that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." You brethren say that this refers to the home. Look at it, brethren. Look at it, and let's not read something into it. It is as bad to add to, as to take from, the Word. There is not one word in that passage that says that the teaching of those elderly women has to be done in her home. It says, "Elderly women, teach the younger women." Where? You say "in the home." That's assumption, brethren. It doesn't say so. Notice, it is not a family function, either. It doesn't say, "elderly women, teach your daughters." It says, "elderly women, teach the younger women." You are determined that this teaching is "home" teaching. It might be a group in the home, but I have shown you that the church can be in the house. Now, get the point. Here is the issue: It does not say that this teaching is to be done in the home, even though this passage is quoted over and over again to prove that very thing. You say, "This refers to 'domestic' duties." Domestic duties? Is that what this passage teaches? Not if I can read. "Teach the younger women to be sober." Is that necessarily a domestic matter? Verse six says, "teach the young men to be sober-minded," the same thing. Notice; they are to teach them to love their husbands, love their children, be discreet, chaste, virtuous. What would you use to teach that?

Wouldn't you use the Bible? What else could you use? "Good." What kind of book would you use to teach women to be good? Wouldn't you use the Bible? If an elderly woman taught a younger woman to do these things without using the Bible, her teaching would have very little weight. It would be just her ideas, her opinions. The only way that she could teach these things successfully would be to take up the Bible, and then she would have a Bible class in her home, because they are young women, not her family. Get it. It doesn't say how many, it doesn't say where. It just says, "elderly women teach the younger women." Now a question: Can an elderly sister invite a group of young women to come to her home at a definite hour each day or week to study the Bible in order to know God's will in reference to them? Can she? If so, would it be the home? They do not belong there. We have shown that the home is composed of the family and that is all. What would be the difference if this group of young women were taught in a class room on Sunday morning? What would be the difference between the four walls of my living room and the four walls of any class room we have in this building? Will someone tell me? It becomes wrong because of these four walls? How do these four walls make it wrong? One is just as private as the other. It is just as must separated from the assembly as the other, except for geographical closeness, and no man is going to contend that geographical closeness has anything to do with it. Or, do you? Because you are near does not mean that you are assembled at all. If one woman could do this, what could keep every other elderly woman in the church from doing it? For purposes of illustration, let's select a large church, say, of a thousand members or more. There would be many elderly women in such a church. If an elderly woman in each section of town wanted to start a class for the young women in her section, would it be wrong? If one has the right, they all have the right. We believe that, for convenience sake, we can build classrooms for such women and have them teach at the same time. What is wrong in such an arrangement brethren?

Does one of your women have the right to invite a number of women into her home for a Bible class? It wouldn't be her home. The group would only be meeting there. Brethren, it is never good to evade an issue. I want to ask you something because I am perplexed. We were told last Sunday afternoon that you women could not invite women into your home to teach them the Bible. I have it down here in my notes, word for word. It was stated that you could not have a definite hour or a definite period to teach them, but that the teaching would have to be incidental. Yes, I have the very word down here, and so do four other men who were with me when the statement was made. Do you know why that position is taken? It has to be, because if one woman can have a class in her home to which she invites people from outside her family, and if she has the class at a definite hour with a definite number of women, her class is organized. And here, brethren, is the crux of the matter. You brethren seemingly confuse two things. You assume that if a work is "organized" that it is thereby an "organization." We deny it. We take pride in saying that our work is "organized." Our class work is "organized," but it is organized under the elders. There is no other organization here but elders and deacons. We are supposed to do everything in order. We are supposed to have some system in our work. You are forced to this "incidental" position because if one of you women can invite a definite number of women to come to your home at a definite hour each day or week, your class work would be organized, it would be a regular work. That is why Brother Knight said that the class could not be regular. If it were, then it would be organized. That is all that we have here. We have a definite hour, a definite teacher and pupils. So if one woman in the church could do it, all you women in the church could do it. If the elders want to make it convenient for them, they can build classrooms and the women can go right on doing the same thing.

Do you women have the right to invite youngsters in your community to come in and study the Bible with you? Only if it's "incidental." I am using the word that your preacher used. It was a shocking use of the word.

Do you know what "incidental" means? It means that it is "minor, secondary, something you didn't intend to do." That is what it means. Now the only way that you can teach such a group is just "incidentally." You can't have a definite procedure. If you have, you have an "organized" work, and that just must not be. If one teacher can organize her work, then all can. When I organize my work, does it become an organization? If I didn't organize my work, I would never get anything done. In my own work, I have definite hours and days for specific tasks. I have organized work, but I am no organization. She may organize her Bible teaching, but that will not make an organization.

More than anything else the other Sunday, this matter of "organization" was brought up. You men said, "You have another organization." Oh, no, we do not. Name the officers. The missionary societies were brought in as parallels to what we are doing. I can name the officers of the missionary societies and they are separate and apart from any officers of any congregation. They are not parallel at all. We do not have an organization here separate from and different from the elders and deacons. We do have our work organized under the elders and we take pride in it. Brethren, I would like to see you really get down to missionary work and then you would see your way of doing things begin to bog down. Our missionary work throughout the world is growing. Do you know how most of the work is carried on? Brother Ochoa, a converted ex-priest, was here last week to tell of his proposed work among the Spanish-speaking peoples of New York. Do you know how much of the work is carried on? By having definite classes each week throughout the section where he is working. That is the way that he does it. The work is organized. The work is carried on in most of the mission fields in the same way. I just came back from Mexico, and I submit to you, brethren, that without that organized work, you cannot grow.

Brethren, I would speak to you now from my very heart. You are not growing with your methods. I have never seen a group of more consecrated or dedicated people than you are at the Main Street congregation.

Not only that, you are self-sacrificing, you are loving, you are friendly, and you are FAILING. Why, brethren? Is it not because you are holding to a theory that is not from God? A man may say, 'Numbers do not prove anything right.' I know that. They don't prove truthfulness, but they do prove this: That God's methods work. Always. We have had more baptisms this year than you have members. Do you know how we do it? We organize our work. Let me show you where you have failed. You, by your methods, do not have the access to people that we have. You say, Well, we teach our children in our homes." That is a wonderful thing. So do we. But we have countless youngsters in this building on Sunday morning whose parents are nothing religiously. Now, Brother Knight said, and I am sure that he is sincere in it. We have no responsibility in teaching the youngsters on the outside." Now that is what he said, brethren, I have it in my notes. He said, They are safe. Our responsibility is to sinners only." Those are his words. In other words, brethren, let a little child grow up, get degraded, corrupt, and be a diabolical sinner, and then your responsibility comes alive. Our goes deeper than that. We would rather save a child before it becomes corrupt. If you do not have a responsibility to the child, do you have a responsibility to the father and mother? We are reaching many people in this church, by, as the Scriptures say, letting a child lead them. We have one boy here who was not a member of the church. He started coming here, obeyed the Gospel, and then led his mother, his sister, his brother-in-law and others to the truth. One young man became a channel of blessing to those near him. You can't do such on the scale that we do, because you do not have the access to those on the outside that we do through the Bible classes. That is why we are growing, brethren. You may say, "You are letting down the bars." I challenge any man at Main Street to name something in the New Testament that I am not teaching right here. I not only teach it, but I teach it just as thoroughly as you do.

I am saying, brethren, that your work is not successful; it is not growing. There must be a reason why your consecration, your dedication, prayer, self-sacrifice, and

your money which you give, brings forth as little results as the proverbial mountain that travailed and brought forth a mouse. You work so hard, and you gain so little fruitage. You never grow much, because you do not have the contacts by your method. You cannot fulfill the law of God without classes. You have tried to put classes in the realm of expediency and I deny that they are in that realm. I say that the Great Commission of the Lord cannot be fulfilled without classes. The apostle Paul could not fulfill his mission without group teaching. I am saying that you elderly women in the Main Street congregation cannot fulfill Titus 2 without the class arrangement. It may be in your house. We are not talking about that. I am talking about the arrangement. We say that if it can be done in your house, it can be done in this building because geographical nearness has nothing whatsoever to do with it.

Now, how does the Bible speak? We say, usually, by command, example, and necessary inference. Where do biblical rules come from? Did you ever think about it? The Bible, itself, does not mention them. Where do they come from? They have come from godly men who have studied the Bible down the years and who have come to the conclusion as to how the Bible speaks. Most people say that it teaches in these three ways: By example, by commandment, and by necessary inference. Now, I wish to ask a question. Listen carefully. Where did the Jews get the synagogue? I am not talking now about what went on in the synagogue. I am simply asking how they got the authority for it? There is no commandment in the Old Testament regarding it. There is no example in the Old Testament regarding it. There is nothing from which you could necessarily infer it. You may say, "Perhaps it was not right." Well, let's look at it. Jesus taught in it; the apostles taught in it, and not once did they criticise it or condemn it. In fact, Jesus at one time spoke of it as being habitual with Him to teach in the synagogue. Here are his words: "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." (John 18:20.)

Notice his words, "I ever taught in the synagogue." He certainly did not go there to criticise it.

The Jew was commanded to teach his children. See Deut. 6:6-9. I am commanded to do the same. (Eph. 6:4.) The Jew believed that he had permission to teach the Bible—the Old Testament was the Bible to him—in some other way than in the home. So, he established the synagogue for this teaching. Remember, I am not talking about what went on within the synagogue but simply where did they get the authority for the synagogue itself? How did they arrive at authority for the synagogue without a command, an example, or a necessary inference? I'll tell you. It was a matter of permission. They were commanded to teach their children. The synagogue method was one way of doing it. God didn't forbid that way; therefore, they believed that it was right and the fact that Jesus and his disciples taught in this synagogue shows that their reasoning was sound. He condemned the Jews whenever a departure was found, but he didn't condemn them for this.

Jesus said, "Go teach." He said, "Go." How? He didn't say "how." Here we are in the field of permission. It is not necessarily inferred that you fly in a plane, go in an automobile, or go by ship. When he said "go" and did not limit man's going by any specific mode of transportation, man was left up to his own devising. He was "permitted" to go any way that he might choose. He was commanded to "get there." The "way" was left up to him.

Jesus said, "Go, teach.." Now let us reason a little. The Jews were commanded to "teach." They established the synagogue to "help" them teach. You may say, "Well, Jesus taught in the "assembly" only." We are not discussing what they did there, but I might say a word which is not related to my main argument. Suppose Jesus did teach in the "assembly" only, would you brethren do what He did. The synagogue did have classes in it. The Jews say that there was a class for every twenty-five boys. Would you come to this assembly and fellowship us and just not have anything to do with the classes and also refrain from criticising us for the classes. If He taught only in the "assembly" that is exactly what He did.

Think about it. He did. Would you go that far with your Lord?

Now back to our main argument. In general commands of action, where the act can be done several ways, you need only permission. We get our class teaching just as they got the synagogue. They were commanded to "teach." We are commanded to do the same. They used the synagogue. We use the class. If it was right for the Jew, why is it wrong for me?

Here is another point which I would like for you to consider: The synagogue did not start until a thousand years after the giving of the Law. Let us think about this, because people talk about Bible classes starting too late. I've showed them in the first century church, but here is the point: Suppose they had not started for thousands of years after the giving of the New Will, would that make them wrong? The synagogue did not start for a thousand years after the giving of the Law. Too late to be Mosaical? Too late to be devine? Oh, no! They decided to have that way of teaching in addition to other ways. So, if a person could prove that Lipscomb or someone else started Bible classes in this century (as it was tried the other night what would it prove? What would such reasoning prove in reference to the synagogue? Nothing. It would not prove that they had no authority for them. Many denominational members make the same charge concerning the church itself, not the classes. They say that Alexander Campbell started the church. "It started too late." But, we can go to the New Testament and find it. Suppose that you prove that certain men in the United States did start Bible classes, what would you prove? Brethren, just what would you prove? Because, you can jump right back over the centuries and find them in the first century church, as you find the church itself. You may say, "But, you can't find 'your' order." Who said that we could? I have never seen the point in arguing that. How could you find this assembly, and then have classes near it, if you can't find the building itself? Brethren, you can't find the building; how could you find classes in it? You have the same problem that we do. How do you get the authority for your building? You use Hebrews 10:25 do you not? You

say that the building is necessarily inferred in the command to "assemble" do you not? I deny that there is any such "necessary" inference in the passage. The first century Christians did not see the "necessary" inference, because they did not own church buildings. Why did not they see this? They could think as well as we. I say that it is no "necessary" inference; it is just a permission. You can if you want to do so, as you can walk, ride, or fly to fulfill the command to "go." You can meet in your home. I called your attention to the fact that they did this in the first century. You may say that we are too big to meet in a house. You can divide up and start little churches all over the place. Does the church "have" to be a certain size?

I want to ask another question: What rule of biblical interpretation do you use in arriving at the conclusion that singing schools are scriptural? You have them. What Scripture do you use in proving them to be scriptural? Command? Example? You say that you obtain the authority from the command to "sing" as found in passages such as Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19? Conceded. Brethren, if I had a blackboard up here (I meant to, but forgot it) I would put Bible classes on one line and singing schools on another. When you gave a Scripture to authorize your singing schools, I would put a like Scripture on the other line to authorize Bible classes. There is the challenge.

Here is an interesting point concerning your singing schools: You do not believe that such a gathering constitutes the "assembly" because you permit your women to ask questions in such gatherings. Sometimes you say that such a school is not church work but is something on the order of a "literary" society. If that is so, you would be condemned for supporting a literary society or scientific teaching out of the treasury. No, it is a church work; you are right about it. Church work—but, your women talk in it.

Now, just a few words concerning women teachers: Corinth had women who prophesied. The women there had restrictions placed on them regarding dress when they prayed or prophesied. When did they do this prophesying? They were restricted in the assembly,

when the whole church was come together. They were to be silent and ask their husbands at home. You may say that prophesying is not teaching. Perhaps I had better read the definition: "Prophesying is declaring a thing which can be known only by devine revelation, to break forth in sudden discourse or impulse by divine counsel, or under the like promptings to TEACH, reprove, admonish, comfort others." Thayer. He uses I Cor. 11:4, 5 as an example of the last definition. If you say that those women did not "teach," you deny the language in which the New Testament is written. We believe that they "taught." To "prophesy" is to "teach," and, as I mentioned, the gift of prophesy was a gift given to the church and not to the home. The exercise of this gift was in the "church" and not in the "home." We necessarily infer that these women spoke in some other kind of meeting than when the whole church was come together in one place. Where was it, when was it, how was it?

Let us notice I Tim. 2:12: "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Now, let us notice what this passage says, and not what we "think" that it says. Now, is there a period after "I suffer not a woman to teach"? Is there a period after that? If there is, she can't teach at all, at any time, anywhere, under any conditions. If you don't believe that, what do you believe about it? Do you believe like I do that it is a parallel passage with I Cor. 14:34—a woman can't teach in the "assembly." Here is a running translation of Dr. James Macknight of that passage. Dr. Macknight's translation of the apostolic epistles was incorporated into Alexander Campbell's "Living Oracles." Campbell regarded him as one of the best Bible scholars in the world. Here is Macknight's free translation of I Tim. 2:12: "For I do not allow a woman to teach in the public assembly, nor in any manner to usurp authority over the man, for I enjoin them in all public assemblies to be silent." To me, that is exactly what the passage says. Incidentally, that must be your interpretation because that is your practice. You do not permit her to teach in the assembly, but you do permit her to teach

elsewhere; so, you do not believe that there is a period after "teach." They are not to teach in the church when the church is gathered together to make the "assembly."

Do you women realize that you first carried the Gospel to men? After the resurrection, the women were told to go to the disciples and tell them that Jesus was risen from the dead. You may say, "Well, that was not a class." Brethren, it was teaching, or I do not know the word. Their message may have been very short, but so was the message of Jonah to the Ninevites. It was no less wonderful for its brevity. Women were last at the cross and first at the tomb. They were the first evangelists of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And yet they can't teach? I don't believe it. Jesus sent them by commandment of an angel to tell the disciples that He was risen from the dead. If it was not teaching, it must have been preaching because the essence and substance of the Gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

In John the fourth chapter we read of Jesus and His meeting with the woman of Samaria. After talking with her for some time, He sends her into the city to get her husband. She tells the people of Jesus and many of them came back with her. The Scripture says that "many of the people believed in Jesus because of the saying of the woman." It is true that they said, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves," but they believed first because of her words concerning Jesus. Here we find where a woman taught men. She brought a whole crowd of people with her. She brought so many that Jesus said, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Yes, she had harvested souls for the Lord.

You women may teach anywhere but in the assembly and where your teaching would be usurping authority over men, and God help those who put restraints and limitations upon your fervency, your love and your power. That is exactly where you are sitting now. You cannot fulfill the duties placed upon you as long as you hold this anti-class theory. You say, "Well, I can teach a class in my home"? I have showed you that you can

not. According to your men, you can't have a class in your house if it meets at a regular hour with a definite number of pupils. The only teaching that you can do there must be "incidental" to something else. Five of us heard that very statement made last Sunday afternoon. That is the position that many of your brethren hold. We say that such a position will hinder the proclamation of the Gospel by every one.

Regarding my position, I am just as fervent as your preacher was the other night when he discussed his position. I am being firm tonight, but not harsh. There is no ill-will in my heart for any of you. I love all of you. I enjoyed being with you the other night. I enjoyed your singing, your fellowship, your hospitality, and I thought what a wonderful thing it would be if all who name the name of Christ could be together forever.

Some of you have said that we disfellowshipped you. We have never done so. Several of our members have visited with you when you had special Meetings. We have gone there far more than you have come here. We have not shunned you even once. When you talk about fellowship, brethren, the shoe fits on the other foot. Who is disfellowshipping whom? And over what reasons?

Brethren, is there any need for special teaching in the church? Separate and apart from the assembly? Your position says that there is not. Is there any need for special teaching, teaching that the class arrangement facilitates? On Sunday morning in that room right over there, I have twenty people who are being instructed in the art of teaching the Bible. Each six months, I have twenty different men and women who come to that room to study with me. It would take forever to teach them what I teach them in that room in a short period of time. I teach them regarding Christian evidences, biblical interpretation, how to teach, etc. It would take me years to get over the same teaching in the assembly because I have so many other problems to solve for the members there. I try to solve their immediate spiritual problems there, but in the classroom I try to solve their teaching problems.

On Tuesday evening, I have a class for men. Some

of these men are studying to be preachers and several can already preach acceptably.

We have a class for teen-agers on Monday evening. You may say that it is not needed. We believe that it is. We believe that they need some guidance and counsel from people who are specially instructed in that field, in addition to what they receive in the home.

What help are you giving to people who come to your congregation who are still babes in Christ? Many times, they know no more Bible than their youngsters. How can they teach at home? They don't know what to teach. Many of the things that they would teach would be wrong. For such people, we have something extra. We have women who are trained to teach their youngsters. What do you have?

Do you believe in having Bible classes from house to house? I have shown that some of you brethren believe that such would be wrong. You might have a class "accidentally," but not on purpose, at definite hours, with a definite number of students. Do you at Main Street have one class at any time separate and apart from your assembly or your family? Do you have even one? Do you elderly women have a group of young women that you teach? If not, why do you not fulfill the Scripture? How do you teach these young women? You had better do it. You are commanded to do it, but are you doing it? When are you doing it? Don't say that it is being done in your home; it is not your home. "Elder women, teach the younger women." Many people say that the issue is a multiplicity of classes. I have a good friend who was withdrawn from by your group because he had one class in his home. That is right. A friend of mine, from your group, who had one class in his home, at a definite time, with a definite number of pupils, and you withdrew from him. You would have to do so, brethren. Your brother said the other day that the teaching had to be "incidental." It could not be regular, with a definite number of students, and a specific teacher, because then the class would be "organized." He didn't say that its being organized was what was wrong with it, but that is why it can't be regular with a specific teacher teaching a specific number of students.

Is it God's truth about women that they may teach? Then, why is it unscriptural and wrong for the elders who have the oversight of the whole congregation, who are to see to the growth of the church, to appoint definite times for those women to teach and make provision that they have a private room for that teaching, as private as any in their own house? What is sinful about that? We would like to know. The proof that you seemingly demand is this: "Where can you find people in the first century meeting in different rooms in one building?" As I mentioned, finding such proof would necessitate finding a building and you can't find the building itself in the New Testament, unless you want to use the temple at Jerusalem where the first disciples met. You are looking for something that you do not need. Paul said that he taught the Ephesians "publically and from house to house." You say that the last part refers to the family. You can't prove that. Paul would not be a part of the family. It would be more than the family. In Acts 13 we read that there were many prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. Now, if Paul could teach publically and from house to house, and as we find a number of teachers there in Antioch, could each of these men teach from house to house and have classes at the same time during the week, or could only one of them function at a time? If they could have classes during the week, why would it be wrong to have them on Sunday morning at the same time? If all of them could do it during the week, they would have a multiplicity of classes. Would it be wrong to do the same thing in one building at the same time?

You disagree, as I have said, at least some of you do, with the multiplicity of classes. What about our other classes which happen one at a time? I have shown you one in Acts 20, I do not need to show you any more.

Now, brethren, if these things are so, and I believe that they are, with all of my soul, we are not asking that you come here, or to South Shaver, where we started the other congregation. If these things are right, do them where you are. Let's have three congregations, united in the faith, going forward in the same direction for the same purpose. If there are those who believe that these

things are so, and find that they are not permitted to do them where they are, such people will have to have fellowship with those who do so believe.

If you desire to have fellowship with a group that believes that a woman can teach deliberately, specifically, and on purpose, anywhere except in the assembly, or where she would be usurping authority over men; with a group who are even more true to the old paths than those who so emphatically claim it; with a group who are growing because they are working God's plan for them, then we ask you brethren to come to us, if you can't work as a unit where you are.

I was reminded today of a woman who went into a store and asked for a compass. The man said the only compass that they had was one for drawing circles and not the one for going places. My final word, brethren, is that your theory is just for drawing circles. You are not going anywhere. How many large churches do you have? Oh, I know that the argument is made that numbers do not prove anything, but while agreeing that numbers do not prove truth, I also must state that God's methods work. Your way is not working. There must be something wrong with your methods, your arrangements. There must be something wrong with your theory, because you are not lacking in anything else that I can see. I don't see any less fervency, or devotion, or self-sacrifice, or love on your part than I find among any of my brethren. In fact, I find more of it in some of you than in some of mine. Then, what is lacking, brethren? In spite of all your friendliness, your warmth, your hospitality, your courtesy, what do you get?

We are not asking you to make any decision tonight. You should consider these things carefully. No man should move until he knows what he is doing and why. If you find that these things are wrong, you show me wherein.

This week, we have heard it said that we are "heretics." I want to ask you a question, brethren. Have any of your leaders ever come to our elders to admonish them regarding their so-called heresy? No, you haven't talked to a one of them. You have not talked to me. You have believed me wrong, called me a heretic, think I'm

going to hell, because that is what a heretic is, one bound for hell, but have done nothing about it. One of your brethren said the other day, "But, we still call you brethren." Yes, "Brother Heretic." Not one of you has cared enough about my soul to come to talk to me. You dodge me like I'm the plague, like I can't even be taught. Brethren, if you loved my soul, what do you mean? The Book says "reject after the first and second admonition." You haven't admonished me once. I could have died this year, and according to you, I would have gone to hell.

Now, brethren, it's your position, not mine. I don't believe that you are heretics. I believe that you are Christians so tied up with a theory that you can't work. I believe that your failure is "not doing." I believe that you are trying desperately to do God's will, but you are so hedged in that you can't. If I'm wrong, prove me wrong, brethren. I can be taught. I have changed my position a number of times regarding things in the Bible, when I have been proved wrong. But if I change in this, you will have to prove me wrong.

You ask us to be united. For what? For helplessness, impotency, and failure? You have been out on Main for about a year and have grown very little. We have grown, overflowed, started another congregation, and our building is full again. You ask us to come to you. I ask again, For what, brethren? Unity is for the propagation of the faith, for success in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but you cannot spread it as long as you hold to your theory regarding teaching.

Brethren, there has been no ill will in my heart tonight. I think that you know that. I love you as much as I love these people here. As I said in my beginning text, I want to reason only. I have no desire to discuss the matter with a man so prejudiced, biased, and bent that he cannot or will not reason. It would be just a waste of time and effort on my part. You might be dissatisfied tonight because your preacher spoke first, and I second. Such could not be helped. You were in a Meeting; we were not. He preached on it and we wanted to hear your side of the issue. We did not come out there to argue; I think that you know that. I believe that I am just as sincere as your Brother Knight. If you are dissatisfied, if

you will ask him to represent you, this congregation will ask me to represent them. I will not debate with some men because they cannot reason, or will not. All that they can do is to get abusive when under pressure. I do not intend to give such men a sounding board for their prejudices and ill-will. I don't think that Brother Knight is that kind. That is why I will debate the issue with him.

If this debate materializes, I will endeavor to the best of my ability to be courteous and to stick entirely to the issue. I believe that he and I are the logical men to debate the issue here as he has already held two Meetings for you here and represented you last Sunday afternoon. I know that you believe in him thoroughly, and that you believe that he will be able to hold up his side of the argument. So, if you would like for the discussion to happen, talk the matter over with Brother Knight. If the discussion takes one night, two nights, a week or a month, we do not mind. We care enough about unity to pay any price that can be paid.

We appreciated your coming here and hope that you will return. We invite you back if you desire to come. The door is always open. You can fellowship us if you want to do so. Even if you are persuaded tonight, I think that you should take a little time to think carefully through the issue, pray about it and then do what is right. Let intelligent conviction be the root of impulse and then it won't wither away.

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