

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

February

12

2023

## GENERAL AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY

Heath Rogers

Previous articles in this series have set forth the need for authority in religious matters, the proper source of authority, and how to establish what God has authorized. This article will consider an important distinction that must be made in understanding what has been authorized by God. We will study the difference between general and specific authority.

The meaning of these words clarifies what we are studying. General is defined as "of, for, or from the whole or all; not particular; not specific; not precise." General authority includes any method, thing, or means that would fulfill a command or approved example. Specific means "limiting or limited; precisely formulated or restricted; definite; explicit." Specific authority excludes every method, thing, or means that is not specified in a command or approved example. In short, general authority includes while specific authority excludes.

We reason this way about things in our everyday lives. For instance, if you take your car to a mechanic and say, "fix my car," you have authorized him to do anything he has to do to get your car running. If you say to him, "fix the starter," you have specified what he must do. He is not authorized to do anything else. We shouldn't be surprised to find that God has communicated His will to us in the same way.

### Examples of General Authority

When Jesus commissioned His apostles, He told them to "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). The command to "go" was a general command that could be obeyed any number of ways. The apostles could walk, ride an animal, ride a chariot, or sail in a boat. Any manner they chose would be approved by God.

The wisdom of God's use of general authority is seen in

the fact that it accommodates improvements in technology. Today, we can "go" by riding in a car, bus, train, or a plane. If Jesus had said His disciples were to walk in their efforts to take the gospel to the world, we would be limited to only that mode of transportation today.

Jesus told His apostles to teach the disciples to observe all things He had commanded them (Matt. 28:20). This teaching was done in various ways. Paul taught publicly and privately (Acts 20:20). He engaged opponents in public debate (Acts 15:1-2) and sent handwritten letters to churches and individuals. Today, the Lord's church can utilize technology such as the internet, radio, television, newspapers, or mass mailings. We can hand out Bible tracts to neighbors, share audio CDs of sermons with relatives, or conduct a live Bible study online with someone in another country. Since the Lord did not specify the exact teaching method, we are free to utilize the most effective method at our disposal.

### Examples of Specific Authority

The Great Commission also gives us an example of specific authority. The apostles were told to "*preach the gospel*" (Mark 16:15). They were not allowed to go and make political speeches, share the popular philosophies of the day, or entertain the masses with stories and folklore. They were to preach the gospel. That command automatically excluded every other message they could share.

Today, the Lord's church is free to utilize many of the teaching methods or formats available, but we must use them to only teach the word of God.

The church is only authorized to take up a collection on Sunday. This is the day that was specified with Paul's instruction to the church in Corinth. "*Now concerning*

*the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2).* We do not take up a collection on any other day of the week because God has specified Sunday.

We do not use instrumental music in our worship because we are only authorized to sing. *"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19, see also 1 Cor. 14:15; Col. 3:16).*

When the New Testament specifies singing (vocal or a cappella music) that excludes any other kind of music.

Common sense allows us to understand when someone is being specific with us. We must use this same common sense to understand when the Bible is using general authority or specific authority.

## Let's not say it was God

**Chuck Bartlett**

We are told in the book of James that God does not tempt anyone (**James 1:13**). This is a very important principle to keep in mind. It is commonly said by religious people "that God put this, or that in front of me to strengthen me." We know that God does not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist (**I Cor. 10:13**). The James passage goes further and explains that our God does not tempt us at all.

Are we to conclude that if a person is mugged, or robbed, that the Lord did this to help the victim's faith? Certainly not. Things that happen to mankind can come as a result of bad choices, freak accidents, wickedness or just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Consider those in **Luke 13:4**.

No matter what happens in our lives, Satan is working on us (**I Pet. 5:8**). As our adversary, he can even tempt us when nothing bad has happened. We can become complacent or take blessings for granted and become unthankful. The burden is on us to avoid these pitfalls.

When challenges arise and are overcome, Christians might be tempted to say, "God knew what I needed and put that before me." The Bible states otherwise. Look at Paul's thorn in the flesh as recorded in **II Corinthians 12**. Paul said that this affliction was given to him, so he

would not exalt himself above measure (**verse 7**). But notice in that verse, the apostle stated it was a messenger of Satan. God did not send this affliction. Nor did God take it away. Paul used this as an opportunity to lean on the Lord (**verses 8-10**).

The faithful do not need their Father to tempt them in order to grow. Our God allows the devil to tempt. God's people will either allow it to strengthen them (**James 1:2-3**) or allow it to cause them to stumble. Because we are being tempted with so many things daily, there is no question that God will provide a way of escape whatever we face.

The next time you are faced with temptation and triumph over it, recognize that you succeeded, because you leaned on the Lord. May we all walk by faith.

## He who has ears to hear let him...

You will find the Parable of the Sower in **Matthew 13:1-9**. Jesus ends the parable with these words: *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* He says that because many hear the words of God but do not listen and consider in a way that brings His message home and to heart. In other words, Jesus is saying, if you can hear God's word, listen to it and allow it to affect and change you!

Do not dismiss the word of God, do not ignore it and do not forget it. In **Matthew 13:10-16**, Jesus explains that people have done that very thing through all the ages. The prophet Isaiah said: *"Hearing you will hear and shall not understand. And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull, Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."*

The point of the parable is that the soil (heart) in which the word of God is sown will determine whether or not the word of God brings the good fruit. (Note Jesus' interpretation of the parable in **Matthew 13:18-23**.)

After Jesus describes the soil and its success or failure, He commands: *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* Do you have a good heart that allows your eyes to see and ears to hear what God has given us: seed to produce eternal life? If not, then change and truly hear what God has said.

**Don Bunting**

## ***He Being Dead Yet Speaketh***

Concerning Abel, the Hebrew writer said, *“he being dead yet speaketh”* (11:4). This, of course, is a reference to the fact that Abel’s example of faith and obedience continued to serve as a lesson to others long, long after his death – continuing even to those of us living today.

While none of us will ever attain to the reputation of Abel, it is still true that our example – for good or bad – will endure after we are dead. Think about that for a moment: what will your life, your work, your service to God say about you when you are dead and gone? Here are some possible outcomes – some things your example might ‘say’ after your death:

- ‘He never really put God first in his life. For him, it was all about his work, his career, the accumulation of material things. When he died he had a huge bank account, lots of investments, a big house, etc. But, as they say, you can’t take it with you . . .’

- ‘She was all about appearances. She spent lots of time and money making sure that she had the latest fashions and the best of accessories. She really looked nice. But, you know, in the end she only wore one dress to her funeral . . .’

- ‘He loved to hunt and fish, to go camping, play golf, etc. He had all the top-of-the-line equipment. And, oh yes, he’d frequently miss worship services to engage in his recreational pursuits – even got his golf ‘handicap’ down in the single digits. But, I heard they sold all of his gear for pennies-on-the-dollar when he was gone . . .’

- ‘She didn’t like it when the preacher delivered strong doctrinal sermons from the pulpit. Her constant complaint was that this sort of preaching would ‘drive folks away.’ Sad to say, but none of the folks she was so concerned about offending even showed up at her funeral.’

We could go on, but you get the point. Is this how you want to be remembered after your death? It would be far better if it were said:

- ‘He loved God, and his life showed it. He would forego anything in order to put the Lord first. Career, money, possessions, recreation, the admiration of worldly minded people, etc. – none of that compared in importance to serving faithfully in Christ’s kingdom. He

sure set a great example, and he will not soon be forgotten.’

*by Greg Gwin*

## **THE EXALTATION OF MEN**

How have those who claim to be worshipping the God of heaven Who revealed His mind to mankind (1 Cor. 2:10-13) in order that we might be turned from sinful ways to obedience to His word (Acts 26:16-18), come to the conclusion that religious leaders should be elevated above the membership.

Jesus taught the exact opposite of this when he spoke to His disciples in **Matthew 23:8-12**, *“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. “But the greatest among you shall be your servant. “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.* Can we not see the stark difference in what Jesus said and the common practice of calling men, Reverend, Holy Reverend, Father, Holy Father, etc.?

There was the occasion when Peter was sent to teach Cornelius and his household the gospel. When Cornelius met Peter the Scripture tells us he fell at the feet of Peter. Peter told him, *...Stand up; I too am just a man.* (Acts 10:26).

Another lesson the Scriptures give us concerning this topic is in **1 Peter 2:4,5**, *And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

The real teaching of the Scriptures is there is no clergy and laity as some would have us believe. We are all clergy in that we are each to worship Him in Spirit and truth with no partiality shown to any man (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11).

*Jim Stauffer*

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

**Elders**

**Ron Peck**

**Jim Stauffer**

**Deacons**

**Bill Miller**

**Troy Armstrong**

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[facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist/](https://facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist/)

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### NEWS AND NOTES:

#### THOSE IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

ALMA BAUMGARTNER, DENESE GORING, BROOKLYN BOYER, TRACY RICHARDSON, MATT BASSFORD, WAYNE MOODY, DAVID AND JOANNE BECKLEY, KEN KLING, MARK WALKER, PAT MFCLOUD, JAN PATRICK IS IN O.P. REGIONAL HOSPITAL, JORDAN SHOUSE, FRED A WALKER

Bible Classes: Sunday Morning **James**  
- Jim Stauffer

Wednesday Evening: **Joshua, Judges, Ruth** - Bill Miller

Sunday Sermon: **The Heart of a Disciple**



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10