



ENUMERATED POWERS

Jeff Sparks, Jasper, AL

The founders of our great nation knew that one person or group of persons should not have absolute power. To avoid this, they, through a written constitution, spelled out the powers for each of the three branches of our government: the executive, the legislative and the judicial. The legislative branch, our National Congress, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate, had a further restriction placed on it. In Article I, Section 8, the Constitution said that any action not specifically listed, or enumerated, as one of their powers would revert back to the States or to the individual citizens.

Our Creator and our God knows human nature. He reveals His guidance for our lives and our worship to Him through the Bible, the Christian's Constitution. The Bible teaches that we are not to add to or take away from its teachings (Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:5, 6 and Revelation 22:18, 19). We must not use human reasoning and knowledge to expand that which God has commanded. The Apostle Paul wrote about one of our elements of worship in Ephesians 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." One might reason that adding something to enhance the singing might be helpful. A piano might help the singers with the melody, a drum set might help with the rhythm, or a guitar may play a solo that is pleasant to hear. God did not authorize or enumerate these instruments as part of our worship. As an illustration think of the children's game "Simon Says." Imagine the game is being played in a room with a piano inside. If the moderator says "Simon says play the piano" the contestants must play the piano. If he then says "Simon says sing" and the children began playing the piano, they would be out because they did not do what

Simon said. Adding instruments to worship is of much more consequence than playing a child's game. It is not mistaking what "Simon Says," but is going beyond what God has authorized.

To go beyond what God's law says for us to do, like expanding the powers written in the Constitution, begins a slippery slope down the road toward certain disaster. One of the men who helped write the Constitution, Thomas Jefferson, understood that not abiding by the document as written, especially the enumerated powers clause, would destroy the checks and balances system necessary for his new nation to survive. His comments written in 1791 regarding the forming of a National Bank illustrate this. To draw comparisons to our adherence to the teachings of the Bible, the phrases in parenthesis have been added to Jefferson's statements.

To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specifically drawn (*by the Bible*) around the powers of (*the Church or individual Christians*) Congress, is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible to any definition.

It would reduce the whole instrument (*the Bible*) to a single phrase, that of instituting a Congress (*Church or individuals*) with power to do whatever would be for the good of the United States (*Church or individuals*) and, as they would be the sole judges of the good or evil, it would also be a power to do whatever evil they please.

Many of the practices in denominational worship and the forces that are set to bring about change in the Lord's Church come from outside the confines of the written word. We must remain true to the teachings of the Bible and understand that which is not authorized is prohibited.

EDITORIAL

APPRECIATING THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST

If one were to list all of the outstanding characteristics of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, no doubt that list would look rather impressive. We would have to include his compassion, his mercy, his longsuffering, his forgiving spirit, his courage, his faithfulness, and on and on the list would go. I imagine at or near the top of every list would be the humility of Jesus. It is almost impossible to consider the life and death of Jesus without contemplating his great humility. In issuing heaven's invitation, the Savior said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt.11:28-30). Meekness, lowliness of mind, humility—certainly these words are a fitting description of the life of our Lord. As we are allowed to see such in his life, we also see his humility in his death. Paul encourages all Christians: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil.2:5-8). An examination of the life of Jesus Christ will reveal a life of humble submission to the will of God, from his incarnation to his crucifixion.

We see the humility of Jesus in that though he was the Creator, he became as the creature. Though God was the Grand Architect in designing the Universe, Jesus was the builder of all things: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,

whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col.1:16). It was through the Word that God made the worlds (John 1:3; Eph.3:6; Heb.1:2). The great Creator of all things humbled himself and became as one of his own creatures! The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), and was made in the likeness of men (Phil.2:7). The Hebrews writer reminds us, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same..." (Heb.2:14). The omnipotent God took upon him all the weaknesses and frailties of human flesh. He could have chosen to bypass infancy, adolescence, and youth, and he could have been born into luxury and opulence, but instead he came into this world as a helpless babe in a feed trough! His very entrance into this world is a testament to the humility of Jesus.

We see the humility of Jesus in that though he is a Prince, he lived as a pauper. Isaiah declared him to be "the Prince of peace" (Isa.9:6). Luke records, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32). In the Revelation, John describes Jesus as the "prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev.1:5). He is King of kings, and Lord of lords (1 Tim.6:15; Rev.17:14; 19:16). In spite of his royal lineage, he lived as a refugee. He who created the world and all things therein had no place to lay his head (Matt.8:20). Even in death, the owner of all things had to be buried in a borrowed tomb (Matt.27:57-60). Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sums up so well these thoughts when he wrote, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor.8:9). The life that our Savior lived is further proof of his humility.

We see the humility of Jesus in that though he is the Redeemer, he was rejected. Jesus paid the purchase price so that man might be freed from the

shackles of sin. Through his shed blood, Jesus has redeemed those out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation (Rev.5:9). He gave himself for us, to redeem us from iniquity (Titus 2:14). No price but the blood of Jesus was sufficient to pay the price for our sins (1 Pet.1:18-19). The precious lamb of God, holy and without blemish, was offered for the sins of the world (John 1:29). We would expect more gratitude for and toward him who gave his life for our sins, but the Redeemer became the Rejected. He came unto his own, and his own would not receive him (John 1:11). He is the cornerstone of our salvation, but was rejected of the builders (Matt.21:42). Surely, he should have been held in honor and reverence, but alas, he found no honor among his own people (Mark 6:4). Isaiah painted a vivid portrait of man's rejection of God's anointed when he wrote, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa.53:3). Can you imagine that we as weak and sinful creatures would have the audacity to treat our Redeemer as though he were too shameful to look upon? He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us (2 Cor.5:21). In giving his life a ransom for our sins, we see the depths of the humility of our Lord.

We see the humility of Jesus in that though he is the Savior, he became the Suffering Servant. His mission in coming to this world was to save man from his sins (Luke 19:10). The very name he was given was to remind us of this very fact (Matt.1:21). The Scriptures testify to the fact that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). The humility of our Lord led him to humble himself, and come in the form of a servant. He came not to be served, but to serve (Matt.20:28; Luke 22:27). He got on his knees, girded himself with a towel, and washed the feet of his own followers so that we might have an example of humble service to one another (John 13:14-15). As great an example as he was in his life, there is no greater example of the humility of Jesus than what he exhibited in his death. In all of the proceedings surrounding his death—the mocking, the scourging, being spat upon, being slapped in the face, being compelled to bear his own instrument of death up Calvary's hill, and the horrible shame and pain of the crucifixion itself—he

opened not his mouth. Isaiah prophesied in the long ago that "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa.53:7). Peter tells us that when Jesus was reviled, he did not retaliate in kind (1 Pet.2:23). He endured the horrible proceedings of Calvary so that we might have the forgiveness of our sins, and live in hope of eternal life (Heb.12:2). Though he could have called twelve legions of angels to free him from his agonizing fate (Matt.26:53), he humbly submitted himself to the will of the Father for the good of mankind. In his suffering and death, we see the magnitude of the humility of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope that in some small way these thoughts have caused us to gain a greater appreciation for the humility of Jesus. From his entrance into this world, through the course of his sinless life, and to the giving of his life on the cross, we see a life characterized by meekness and humility. May our lives reflect this same humility toward God and our fellow man, so that God might be glorified, and we might be exalted!

WOT

FREE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

If you would like to study the Bible in the privacy of your own home and at your own pace, enroll in a free Bible correspondence course. All materials are free of charge, and you are under no obligation to continue the study. Brother Hap Johnson will be glad to get you started in study of God's word today. Request your free study by writing to the church office at the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ, 1501 Sixth Avenue, Jasper, Alabama, 35501. You may also call us at (205) 384-6446. You may also visit us at www.sixthavenuechurch.org, and under the "resources" tab, request your free Bible study course.

FAITH

Robert Notgrass, Belle, MO

Faith is the basis on which our hope of eternal salvation is grounded. Yet, many people are still struggling about how exactly faith works. So many have misunderstood and others have searched for the answers so much, they have themselves all but weakened their faith. Therefore, we want to notice how faith is produced, what real faith can accomplish and some things that weaken faith.

Paul, in his wonderful letter to the Christians who were at Rome, told them that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Therefore, God needed to present His word to us so that it would produce faith. His evidence was this, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31). Many sit and argue about the Bible in this fashion or in that way. I agree there is much disputing of God's Holy Word. But, I believe that so many have forgotten that the primary reason why God had His word penned for mankind was to produce faith when it was heard. And, we know this is how faith is developed. Have you ever had faith in anyone you thought was dishonest? Surely not! Is God honest? We must know that to have faith in an individual, we must not only trust him, but believe that he has the ability to do what he says he will do. Rest assured, God is able to do what He promises to do.

If we have real faith that is brought forth from hearing the word of God, it will draw us, the sinner, to the knowledge of God's unfailing and unceasing love. It causes us to believe in Christ as God's Son and that He is the Savior of the world. It will cause us to change or to shift ourselves into a new position so that we will obey the gospel of Christ, which is God's power to save man (Colossians 1:18). It will cause us to let our lives be directed by the gospel as we faithfully serve God in our lives. And, we will put all our trust in God, faithfully serving Him, having the hope of everlasting heaven burning within our hearts. As the Hebrews writer wrote concerning those who were looking upward toward God, "But now they desire a better

country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16). It is this hope of heaven that serves as an anchor for the soul so that we are secure and stable as we go through the world. Thus, this hope of heaven is the source of our strength and comfort even when we are faced with ongoing trials and frustrating tribulations.

Now, faulty reasoning will weaken faith. When we take our thoughts off of heaven and set them aside because of some defect in our reasoning, faith is rejected. The wise man says to trust in God, for this is the only safe course. We must know that man cannot direct his steps (Jeremiah 10:23). We are dependent upon God. Yet, when doubt is in the mind of an individual, it will weaken faith. This is why the Lord rebuked the apostles on a few occasions because they lacked in faith and were afraid. Make no mistake, when faith and love is perfected, there will be no fear. Do not be like the one talent man in Matthew 25 who was afraid and did not use that which his master had entrusted to him. Do not be like those mentioned in Revelation 21:8, where it lists the fearful among those who will be lost. Worrying is a sure sign that one's faith is weak. However, Jesus assures us that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all the necessities of life will be provided (Matthew 6). The problem of so many is that they do not have enough faith to believe these truths. So many worry about worldly matters. But may we all study our Bibles and follow the apostle Paul's example who enjoyed peace of mind because he had learned to trust God and rest upon the Lord's promises.

WOT

WHAT IS MAN?

Levi Sides, Jasper, AL

“What is man?” This question is raised and answered in Psalm 8. The question is not abstract and academic. It is not simply a question lying in an ancient Jewish hymn of no concern to us today. It is a question of *who* we are, and of *why* we are. The question and its answer are vital to our identity and to our security.

“Know thyself” was the counsel given by ancient philosophers. To know ourselves is not enough, but we are not equipped to live effectively and peacefully until we do come to some adequate measure of self-understanding.

The eighth psalm has an important contribution to make to our self-understanding. This psalm is a hymn which reaches a height of majesty seldom realized by finite man. In one hundred sixty-six words, there is a development of thought from the grandeur of God’s throne in Heaven to the lowest beasts of the earth. Man is pictured at the center of God’s creation. Please read it now from your Bible.

MAN IS A CREATURE ENVIRONED BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The eighth psalm opens and closes with the same words: “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth” (Psalm 8:1, 9). The Hebrew word which is translated “excellent” may also be rendered as “glorious”, “powerful”, and “delightful”. God’s name often stands in Scripture for His presence. These verses could read: “O Lord, our Lord, how glorious-powerful-delightful is your presence in all the earth!”

Is this not a comforting thought? God never absent from the earth. The universe did not happen by accident, nor does it proceed without purpose. Man is never an orphan. God is everywhere present as the Creator, the Giver, and the Sustainer of life (Psalm 139:7-12). He has not and will not abandon the work of His hands.

But is this really a comforting thought? Not if our lives are being spent in denial of God and in revolt against Him. Just as there is always a refuge for trust, so there is never an escape from judgment. To those who “Trust and Obey” Him, God’s presence is a great comfort. To those who rebel against Him,

God’s presence is a great menace. But whether we are comforted or menaced, the presence of God is our environment.

MAN IS A CREATURE DWARFED BY THE IMMENSITY OF SPACE

The Psalmist wrote by the inspiration of God, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3-4). When people are measured against space, moon, and stars, how *tiny, fragile, and insignificant* they seem to be! The immensity of space may humble us, but it should not humiliate us. The Creator is *our* Father!

MAN IS A CREATURE INTENDED FOR LORDSHIP AND STEWARDSHIP

Over the earth, man is lord. “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and has crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep...oxen...beasts...fowl...fish and whatsoever pasceth through the paths of the sea” (Psalm 8:5-8; Hebrews 2:6-9).

But while man is lord over the earth, he is steward under God. His glory and honor are given to him, and he is thus compelled to acknowledge the Giver as his Lord, and himself as a steward.

Man’s glory may become his ruin. He may seek to rule as God, not for God. He may disavow his stewardship and strive for absolute lordship. He may try to be god over his own life, and over his world. This was Adam’s sin and fall. Indeed, this is the essence of sin, anyone’s sin. Sin is the refusal to be a steward, the attempt to gain unlimited dominion over one’s life.

PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father, how excellent is your name! And how wretched are our lives when we try to usurp that name as our own! Help us to know our place and do Your will, as lords over the earth but stewards under God. In Christ’s name. Amen. *WOT*

WHEN FORGIVENESS IS IMPOSSIBLE

Todd Clippard, Hamilton, AL

The title of this article may seem a bit radical, but it is nonetheless a biblical concept. At least five situations exist wherein it is impossible to extend forgiveness to those who sin and commit trespasses against the Lord and his people. It is impossible to forgive when there is . . .

No Redemption – Hebrews 9 is a marvelous text detailing the great design and demonstration of God's plan to redeem man from sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission (v 22), but it was not possible for the blood of animals to secure the forgiveness of man's sin (Heb 10:4). Hebrews 9:11-15 reveals the sacrifice of Jesus also worked backward to those who sinned under the previous covenant. God forever solved our need for redemption, "having obtained eternal redemption for us" through the blood of Jesus (Heb 9:12, cf vv 13-28).

No Recognition – Man cannot be forgiven of sins he refuses to recognize. David learned this lesson in 2 Samuel 11-12. After his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, David took Bathsheba into his own house, "but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (11:27). It was not until Nathan was sent to rebuke David that the king recognized the error of his ways, saying, "I have sinned against the Lord" (12:13). Similarly, Jesus commands that if our brother sins against us, rebuke him (Luke 17:3). The purpose of rebuke is to bring an awareness of sins to the offending party. Luke 17:3 also introduces the next condition of forgiveness.

No Repentance – "If thy brother sin against thee, rebuke him. **And if he repent, forgive him.**" Perhaps no other aspect of forgiveness is more misunderstood than this. In our societal rush to appear loving and non-condemnatory, we toss around forgiveness without giving a moment's thought to whether or not the perpetrator even *desires* forgiveness. Jewish writer Dennis Prager noted this following the school shooting in West Paducah, KY: "The bodies of the three teenage girls shot dead last December by a fellow student at an American high school were not yet cold before some of their school

mates hung up a sign announcing, "We forgive you, Mike! They were referring to Michael Carneal, the 14-year-old killer."

This type of automatic forgiveness is not only wrong, it is grossly offensive. Who do these "forgivers" think they are? Such reminds me of the "unity meetings" between the self-appointed representatives of the Christian Church and churches of Christ. I remember how angry it made me to hear Max Lucado, Jeff Walling, and other apostates apologizing to the leaders of the Christian Church for the "divisive spirit" held by those of us who refuse to fellowship those who use or accept use of the instrument. Faithful brethren were not the source of division! The division was caused by those who idolized the instrument, choosing fellowship with the piano over fellowship with brethren who insist on a "thus saith the Lord."

Brethren who refuse to repent when brought to a recognition of their sin must be dealt with according to Matthew 18:15-20. Unbiased brethren must be brought in as witnesses to establish every word. If the brother is still unrepentant, the church is to be involved in order to bring about repentance. And if he will not hear the church, he must be disfellowshipped. We can no more forgive the unrepentant than can the Lord. Repentance is set forth in Scripture as requisite for forgiveness (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 3:19). If God will not forgive the unrepentant, who are we to extend forgiveness to the same?

No Restitution – When one is brought to a recognition of sin and is genuinely penitent he will, to the best of his ability, seek to repair the damages caused by his transgression. When David was infuriated at the story Nathan told him, David invoked the Jewish law of restitution (2 Sam 12:1-6; Ex 22:1). In Luke 19 we see a similar attitude on the part of Zacchaeus. After meeting the Lord in Jericho he said, "half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8).

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life. No man can be said to have genuinely repented who will not do his best to reverse and/or repair the consequences of his transgression. In Matthew 3:8 John the Baptizer commanded the Pharisees to "bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." Paul said the same before Agrippa when he said his message to the Gentiles was to "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).

An old but effective illustration of the fruit of repentance is that of what is required when one repents of stealing. Can the thief repent and keep the stolen goods? Also, if one repents of telling a lie, can he allow that lie to continue without attempting to set the matter straight? Restitution where possible is vital to receiving forgiveness.

No Reciprocity. As a gun owner and possessor of a concealed weapons permit, the laws of reciprocity are important to me. I want other states to recognize my right to carry as I travel and I want Alabama to recognize the same from other states. Positively speaking, reciprocity refers to a in-kind exchange with others for mutual benefit. Reciprocity is the very essence of the "Golden Rule" (Matt 7:12).

Matthew 6:14-15 teaches us that reciprocity in forgiveness is necessary if one would enjoy the privilege of forgiveness: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Too many Christians fail to understand the eternal consequence when they fail to forgive. The text is clear, if I fail to extend forgiveness in even **one** matter, I forfeit the privilege of forgiveness of **ALL** my sins!

Contrary to popular thinking and present culture, there are times when it is impossible to forgive. But Christians should pursue the God-given plan for forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4) and should always be ready to forgive, but only when the Divinely-given conditions are met.

COME NOW, BELIEVE AND OBEY GOD

Eva Nell Brown Naramore

Come now believe and obey God,
The soul will never die.
This promise he has made to all;
We'll see him by and by.

This mortal body, which is clay,
Returns to mother earth,
But God gave us a living soul,
The seal of life from birth.

With faith that works to change the heart,
And moves us to repent;
Confess his name and be baptized,
Gives peace that's heaven sent.

We must obey, with faith and pray,
To be safe in his fold.
In Christ our Lord there's life with peace,
For every living soul.

His word shall never pass away,
It's what we need to learn.
To you who have not obeyed yet,
To him you need to turn.

If you believe in God, come now;
Somewhere we will live on,
In peace or in eternal pain;
Too late when time is gone.

A babe in Christ to work and pray,
And with his word grow strong;
With love for others lost in sin,
And praise to God in song.

O peace, sweet peace, when we believe
In God and do his will.
A spring of water for our thirst,
That nothing else can fill.

ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: What should the church do about the increasing sin of homosexuality?

ANSWER: The church must take a courageous and intelligent stand on this vital moral issue and thus halt the erosion of morality in our communities, country and world. What should the church do? First, the church must condemn the sin of homosexuality! To stand and condemn homosexuality in all its forms as a perversion of the divine order is not a symptom of homophobia, heartless prejudice or narrow-minded bigotry. It is to stand on the side of righteousness and truth and to obey the One who said, "Be ye Holy, for I am Holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). Second, the church must convert the homosexual. In evangelizing homosexuals, the church must be careful to warn them, as any other sinners, of the danger they face if they do not repent (i.e., change) of their rebellious lifestyle. The Scriptures are unwavering in pronouncing that unconverted homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; Rev 21:27; 22:15). Third, the church must confront error. The church of the present is following in the steps of the apostolic church when it contends for truth by opposing those who would teach that homosexuality is a lifestyle fully acceptable to God (Jude 3). Fourth, the church must cleanse itself. The solution to the problem of homosexuals in the church is not dialogue or toleration, but disfellowship and separation (1 Cor. 5:1-13). The words of the apostle Paul are a fitting conclusion to this debate on homosexuality: Eph 5:6, 8, 11-12 – read and meditate thereupon. For the church, God is the ONLY one to please.

—Mark N. Posey
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The words of *Truth*

Patrick Morrison, editor

The Words of Truth

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