

Relating to Relevant Authority

by A.W. Tozer

God's authority is supreme and eternal, exercised through His word, which has the power to kill or make alive.

Duration: 38:41

Scripture: Proverbs 30:5, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 11:28, Luke 16:19-31, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power and authority of the word of God. He compares it to a beautiful invitation from God himself, not a decision made by religious leaders. The preacher encourages listeners to enter into a personal relationship with God through the word, promising forgiveness, guidance, and strength. He quotes several Bible verses that highlight God's mercy, the invitation to come to him for rest, and the promise of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Transcript

We've noted that there are certain authorities which are false and without foundation, and we rejected them. Now, with great satisfaction, I point tonight to the true religious authority, and I'm going to say that the supreme authority resides in God. And tonight, I want to point out that he exercises his authority through his word.

And next Sunday night, I want to show that he exercises his authority through his son. And these two sermons will be twins, that the supreme authority, God Almighty, exercises that supreme authority through his word and through his son. Now, I have stated something which I make no attempt to prove.

If it has to be proved, we might as well all go out and lie down and have it over with. Supreme authority resides in God. Now, this is emphatically declared both by the Old Testament and the New, and is the unanimous belief of Jews and Christians.

Now, God possesses supreme authority for certain reasons. He possesses supreme authority because of his eternity. You see, God was before all authorities.

I do not say that there are not authorities. I well know that there are. There are authorities, but God was before all authorities.

Lords and kings and emperors and potentates have certain authority. Kings and emperors and potentates have, certainly. But that authority is late in time, and their authority is borrowed from God, and therefore is

temporary.

And whatever is temporary can't be final and supreme. The old Persian poet wrote about a king called Jamshid. He said, They say the lion and the lizard keep the courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep, And Bahram, another great man, Persian, Bahram, that great hunter, Why the wild ass stamps o'er his head but cannot break his sleep.

That is a very sad and beautiful way of saying that even if you're King Jamshid, still there will be a day when the lion and the lizard will crawl and roar in the courts where you used to hold sway. And even if you're Bahram, the great hunter, there will be a day when the wild ass that you used to hunt will snort and stamp over the grave where you lie sleeping. The kings and the emperors and the presidents and ministers and potentates have a certain amount of authority, but it's late in time and it's temporary.

But God Almighty, being the eternal God, is before all authorities. And then there's another kind of authority, prophets and apostles and popes and bishops and religious sages. Now, if they are good, they borrowed their authority, and if they are bad, they usurped it.

They have it all right, nobody can doubt it. There are bishops and they have authority. They can say, don't you do so and so, and the little preacher doesn't dare do it.

And there are popes and there were apostles and there were prophets. Now, I say again, if they were good men, they borrowed their authority from God, and if they were bad men, they usurped it from God. So either way, they got it from God.

But they all had to surrender it and die. And that same man from whom I quoted a moment ago said, why all the saints and sages who discussed of the two worlds so wisely, they are thrust like foolish prophets forth. Their words to scorn are scattered, and their mouths are stuffed with dust.

There's nothing quite so final as dust in your mouth. No matter who he is or how great he is or how mighty he is, nothing can shut a man up. When Hitler died, he didn't mouth his floor stuff anymore, he was finished.

And when Mussolini died, he was done. No more balcony speeches, his words are scattered and his mouth is stuffed with dust. So that no matter who they are, whether they be of the civil world or whether they be of the religious world, I say that if they got their authority from God and he gave it to them and they recognize it, it's good.

If they've usurped it, it's bad. But in any case, they've got to surrender it and die. And everybody has to die.

Everybody knows it and nobody admits it. That's the oddest thing, and those who admit it don't live as if they were going to. But we're all just little boys that mother nature's going to put to bed one of these days.

You know how it is, the little fellow, he's keeged himself up with excitement and he wants to stay up, and the mother says, no, you've got to go to bed, junior. Junior says, oh, just an hour yet, mother. No, it's time now.

In time. And she said, I've made your bed up and so already now you'll go to bed. And he doesn't like it and he fights it until he can't keep his eyes open, and finally he crawls in, goes to bed over his own protest.

He doesn't want to go, and so it is mother nature. She has all her boys. Some of them are just plain people like you and me with no particular mark of distinction, maybe.

At least I haven't, and I assume not many of us have. But mother nature is looking after us all right, and then of course there are some who have the insignia of greatness. They wear on their shoulders or foreheads or somewhere proof that they've got some authority.

There they are playing with their toys, the king with his crown, you know, and the president with his constitution, and the bishop with his hat, and the cardinal with his red skull cap. They all want to play with their toys. Mother nature pays no attention to how important they are.

Mother nature says, go to bed, boy. And the pope said, no, no, I want to stay up a little while longer, mother. I want to make some more inane speeches and say, and have it quoted everywhere, things that everybody believes, such as, I like to see peace in all the world.

And then the headlines say, the pope says he wants to see peace in all the world, so he wants to see peace in all the world? Okay, all right, everybody does, but who doesn't? And yet because the pope says he likes to do that, you know, he couldn't be human and not like to say anything at all, just say it, and then have it in the headlines. That's fun. And he wants to stay up and play a while longer.

And, you know, bishops, they like to tell you, pastor, you go over here, and you go over here, and you go over here playing checkers over the board. And mother nature says, boy, go to bed. And he says, no, I want to stay up and move my men.

I'm playing with my men. I want to move, stay and move my men. And the Lord says, you've moved all the men you're moving.

Get off to bed now. So they all have to do it, you see. My contention is that anything that you can't keep can't be final.

You can have it for a little while, but not for very long. But the scripture says, Thou, Lord, in the beginning, now over against the transitory passing relative and tentative authority of prophets and apostles and kings and popes and emperors and bishops and presidents and all the rest, over against that there stand these awesome words. Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hand.

They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture thou shalt fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years fail not. Before the world, while God was, and when the worlds have burnt themselves out, God will be. Supreme authority lies in God.

I say, if I have to prove that, then we have no foundation at all. For our faith, for he that cometh to God must believe that God is. And God's other unique attributes which he cannot share.

You see, there are some attributes that God can share with his people, love and kindness and compassion and pity and holiness and righteousness. He can share them with his people, but there are some attributes that are so divine that God cannot share them. Self-existence is one, sovereignty is another, omniscience is another, and all wisdom is another.

These declare God to have all the authority that there is. And it would be great for us Christians if we would remember that. I saw a cartoon in one of the Toronto newspapers, I don't remember which one recently, of, or was it, but I saw it anyhow somewhere recently.

It couldn't have been this paper, no, they wouldn't dare do it. It was a religious magazine, and it showed Martin Luther standing up with great dignity, saying, I can do nothing else, here I stand. Then it showed a whole herd of little preachers all running toward Rome, saying, here we go.

Luther says, here I stand, and they say, here we go. And as they go, they're trapping the 95 theses under their feet. It's a cartoon, brother, fellow worker, and fellow sufferer.

I tell you, it's hard to stand and say, here I stand, but it's easy to follow the crowd. All you have to do is to keep the holy neck of the pastor just ahead of you in sight, keep right after him, pay no attention where he's going, say, here we go, and we have fun. Well, I say that self-existence, God Almighty is a sovereign God because he's self-existent, he's sovereign, he's omniscient, and he stands absolutely, and it would be great if we Protestants could remember that now, great in this awful hour if we could keep that in mind.

Now, how does God exercise his authority? He exercises his authority through his word, that's first, next week through his son. But I want to talk about his word. You know, you can buy them now for almost anything, and if you can't afford them, you get them forgiven to you.

So here they are, you know, these good books, and we forget how wonderful they are. In the book, it's called The Book of the Lord, The Good Word of God, The Holy Writings, The Law of the Lord, The Word of Christ, The Oracles of God, and The Word of Life, and The Word of Truth. These are descriptions of the word through which God utters his authority, and this word is said to be God-breathed and indestructible and eternal.

Now, in the word we have that unique thing. I want you to hear this. I never read this anywhere, that is, I'm not quoting now, mouthing what I've read in a book except the book of God, but I'm telling you that this book of the Lord, the uttered word of God, is that unique thing that always ought to be spelled out in capitals.

It is different from and above and transcendent beyond all others of its kind, uncompromising, authoritative, awesome and eternal. And it's through this word that God exercises his supreme self-bestowed authority, for he never took his authority from men. The Lord never kneeled and had someone touch his shoulder with a sword and say, Sovereign God, because nobody can bestow sovereignty upon the Sovereign God.

Any sovereignty or any temporary sovereignty anybody has is bestowed, I repeat, by God. Now, the words that I speak unto you say, Jesus, the same shall judge you in the last day. Is it any wonder, then, that the prophet says, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord? God's uttered word.

This is what we have here, and it is through God's uttered word that he exercises his authority. He utters this himself forth. It's the nature of God to express himself, and so he utters himself forth, and what he utters originates in the mind of an infinite creator, but it comes to the mind of a finite creature.

Now, there are some people so ponderously intellectual that this bothers them, but it doesn't bother me at all. I believe that the infinite God can speak to finite man. I don't believe that there's any uncrossable bridge when the infinite creator determines that he's going to utter forth his authoritative word to finite man.

I believe that he can do it, and in this uttered word is sovereign authority with the power of life and death. Now, that's not too strong an expression, because the scripture declares it to be so, that the gospel is the word of life unto life, and death unto death. And I say that the day will be when every t will be crossed, and every i will be dotted, and there will not be one iota of God's mighty word which will not come to pass.

There is a beautiful expression, I think I've quoted once before, taken not from the sacred scriptures, but from that which is very close in that it is a reflection. It bears the same relation to the holy, inspired, unique thing that a good devotional book bears to the New Testament. I refer to the Wisdom of Solomon, and there he says this about the word of God, Thine almighty word leaped down from heaven out of the royal throne as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction.

I marked that in my puckerful bible when I read it. When I read it, I marked it, Thine almighty word leaped down from heaven, for it dramatizes the way the word came to men. And it was from the royal throne, the throne that never was built because it was always there, the throne upon which sits the mighty and the almighty God.

And this word comes down like a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why I don't like to see men tinker with the word of God. That is why I do not like to see editors and annotators and translators who, in irreverence and carelessness and sometimes for money, make up books.

This almighty word leaped down from the royal throne, and I've got to be careful because it's that unique thing. It's the will of God revealed to me. It is God uttering forth his sovereign authority through printed words that I can get hold of.

But these words are said to be lively and dynamic and creative, and when God spoke, it was done, and when he commanded, it stood forth. And creation came by his word, I have said before, but it can't be repeated too often, that we should never think of God as getting down on his knees and working on a piece of clay like a potter. Oh, that is beautiful figure.

But the fact is, God spoke back in the first chapters of Genesis, and God said, Let there be light, and there was light, and God said, Let the earth bring forth, and it brought forth. And whatever God said happened, and God speaks, and there will be a day when we will see that every word that God speaks will come to pass, that this almighty word that leaped down from heaven out of the royal throne as a fierce man of war was filled with life and dynamic and creative power. And God is creating the truth, for creating men through the truth, creating new men through the truth.

And the day will be when Jesus Christ will call all the nations before him, and he will do it by his word. Now, God's word is both our terror and our hope. God's word both kills and makes alive, I repeat.

If we engage it in faith and humility and obedience, it gives life and it cleanses and feeds and defends. If we oppose it in unbelief or ignore it or resist it, it will accuse us to God who gave it, for it is the living word of God, like a fierce man of war coming with great power. And you and I dare not resist it, and we dare not argue it down.

I know people who believe part of it and don't believe the other part of it, and they say, If it inspires me, it's inspired, and if it doesn't inspire me, it is simply old history and tradition. I believe that this is God's unique thing, the uttered word of the living God, and when we get into the meaning of it and know what God is

uttering forth, I repeat that it has power to kill those who resist, and it has power to make alive those who believe. The arm of the Lord goes forth, but who has believed? I'll report unto whom is that arm revealed.

Unbelief will paralyze the arm for the man who is fulfilled with unbelief, while that same arm, long from being paralyzed, is working for the salvation of men. Here we are in Toronto, a highly civilized city, a city mainly of Scots and English and Irish extraction, with some German and some other of the Anglo-Saxon, and a sprinkling of other peoples of the world, but a city that has a reputation all over this continent and all over the world as being a religious city. You know, they say it's the city of banks and churches.

Toronto, the good. You know you can walk up and down these streets and you can see as much sin as you see in the Olaga Valley. Not the same kind, quite, but sin.

Have you thought of how over yonder, in that Pyramid Mountain or some other location there, in that Stone Age culture, God has found these people? For a long time, they thought these people wouldn't be converted at all. They thought nobody there even knew the word for God or ever knew there was a God. When the missionaries first went there, they said, We come to you preaching God, your Creator.

And they said, We're not created, we came up out of the river. Their tradition had it they just came up out of the river. They were too busy killing each other to sit down and ask who made the river.

And then they began to preach the word. And some of our men, a plain fellow, a friend of mine, a plain fellow that the little girl said about me, Dr. Tozer, isn't much to look at, but he's nice. Well, a girl in the congregation here, I mean a little tiny little girl.

Well, this fellow was a man not much to look at either, but he went to work on a language that had never been reduced to writing, had no grammar, and had no lexicon, no dictionary, no list of words, nothing. And he sat around for the hour, and he cupped his ear and got them to talk, and then listened carefully to the various shades of sound, and then put the word down. That's how they got the word money, that's how they got the word journey, that's how they got the word ilaga, that's how they got the other words that they didn't take there.

They got them there by listening, and then they began to preach the gospel of Jesus. And God at last, after all these thousands of years, uttered forth his sovereign word in the guttural language of all the subhuman donkeys. And now they have believed Jesus Christ and are converted, and are walking in the light the best they know it.

And instead of the filthy sex songs of the days gone by, they're now singing the best they can. They know nothing about music, they know nothing. The words these musicians toss all around, and you're familiar with, and I've been familiar with, they know nothing about them.

They sing simply by imitating what they hear. They're singing now the songs of Zion, the living, mighty word of God. It's a strong word, it's a unique thing, there's power in it.

And when I believe it, and I engage it, and it engages me, something happens, the Eternal God does an eternal act. Now, I say that God's authoritative word sounds in warning and in invitation. You'll go to your Bible and you will hear God say such a word as, The soul that sinneth shall die, and the sinner shall be cast into hell, and all the nations that forget God, and he shall be cut off from his people.

And except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God, and except he repent, he shall likewise perish. And not everybody that says, Lord, Lord, shall be saved, but he that doeth the will of my Father, and the homeowner, and the adulterer, and the unbeliever, and he that loveth and maketh a lie, shall be cast into the lake of fire, for there's weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Those are the awful words of God.

He's speaking forth this unique thing, this authoritative utterance. Now, nobody dares touch that. Nobody dares rise and say, but let us explain this in the light of what Plato said.

I don't care what Plato said. Plato I have read for half a century, I think, or close to, not that long, 40 years. I have read Plato off and on, but I don't care what Plato says.

When God says, The soul that sinneth shall die, let Plato kneel before the authoritative word of God, the unique, the awful thing God has spoken in his authority through his word. And let no Pope rise and say, We'll explain that in the light of what Father so-and-so said. Let Father so-and-so be still, his mouth will soon be stopped with dust.

And so let everybody keep still while God Almighty speaks, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord, hear, ye heavens, and give ear over, for the Lord God has spoken. But it's also a word in invitation. Ah, the beautiful invitation for the word of God.

Somebody asked me to write out a lot of texts for her. She said, I want to win souls, and I want texts that I may win souls. I'm a girl here in the congregation.

Well, I got her a list of texts and gave them to her. What all, what beautiful texts. I didn't give them all, of course, but a few that she could use.

And what beautiful invitation, this great God Almighty. This is not the result of a group of religious people meeting together and having a board meeting and deciding that they're to say it. No, no, no.

God Almighty said it. He spoke it out of heaven. It leaped down as a strong man in the night and filled the earth with the sound of his voice.

And God says, if you will turn unto the Lord, that he will have mercy upon you. And the word of the Lord says, come unto me, all ye that are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And the word of the Lord says, if thou shalt believe in thine heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

And it says, it is by faith we are saved and not by works. And it says that God is a forgiving God, and if we will come to him, God will forgive our sins. And if we will believe him, God will cleanse our iniquities.

It says that here. And it's the authoritative voice talking. It needs no editing, no interpreting, no explaining.

It only needs to be released. When they wired Spurgeon, come and give a series of ten lectures in defense of the Bible, he wired back, I won't come. The Bible needs no defense.

Turn it loose, and like a lion it will defend itself. I believe that, and I believe that we need nobody defending the word of God. We only need to preach it.

We are on our haunches now, fighting a rear-guard action before the neo-Orthodoxes and before the existentialists and before the World Council of Churches and before the new idea of a monolithic church with Poppa at the top. We are on our haunches now, but I say I pay no attention to any of them. The great God Almighty has spoken, and when he has spoken, let the world be silent and listen, for God has said it, and God will fulfill it, fulfill all his warnings, and fulfill all his invitations.

Back there in the book of Luke, or on there in the book of Luke, there's that terrible, awesome passage of where the rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, and he seeth Lazarus and Abraham's bosom. If I went in for sensational topics, I would advertise that I was going to preach on the evangelist in hell. Of course, a lot of people would come to hear that sermon, but I won't do it.

But there was an evangelist in hell one time, for this man, the rich man who fared sumptuously, had suddenly stopped faring sumptuously, and he was now in hell begging for a drop of water for his tongue. He didn't get it, but he became an evangelist, and he said, Abraham, if you won't help me, please help my five brothers, for I have five brothers back home who are not believers, and if you will send Lazarus, maybe he can save them, maybe they'll repent. Abraham said, no, you can't cross over.

But he pleaded like an evangelist, and he said, please, Abraham, won't you send them to my five brothers? I neglected them while I lived, now I want to help them. Send him, please, for if somebody rises from the dead, they'll hear him. And Abraham answered, if they will not hear the word, they will not believe the one rose from the dead.

And if you have it in your heart to resist this unique thing, this uttered voice of the Almighty God, this authority that commands and invites, then if we had a graveyard rise and everybody in it back to the founding fathers rose and came out and began to talk, your heart would still be high. For the scripture says, if they will not hear the word, they will not hear the dead when they rise. Brother and sister, God has made our future, our destiny, our fate, if you like, our hope and our grief for all the world, and all the countless centuries and eons yet ahead.

God has made it and tied it up with this book, this word of God. Some people come to me and they ask me for what they should read, and I have a text for women. Mostly the Bible is written in the masculine gender, and the women just say, well, that means mankind, and they kind of say that means me.

But in the 54th of Isaiah, this is written for women here. Beautiful! I don't know why I should pick it unless the Spirit might be leading. But he says, For a small moment thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, as a wife of youth when thou wast rejected, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. And all the parliaments of the world, with all their wisdom, can't say anything that is meant so much to the human race as these words.

All of the congresses, all they do down in Washington in the course of one whole century, can't add up to as much as is in these words. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

There it is, there's your hope, there's your hiding place, there's your rock, there is your future, there's your glory, there's your hope. So God is speaking authoritatively. Nobody has any right to come in and say, I don't believe that.

All right, go your way. The word of the living God still sounds through the world, destroying what it doesn't redeem. And in that awful day, when God shakes all that can be shaken, that living, vibrant, awesome, awful, powerful, eternal word will destroy all that it can't redeem.

I, for my part, want to be on the side of the redeemed. Bless God, I want to be on the side of the redeemed. Among the poorest and the poorest, God knows.

But you think, well, I talk very boldly, you know, and people think that I have no troubles. But listen to me. I many times get down on my knees here in this 54th of Isaiah, and I let the unique things speak to my heart.

I let the awful word talk to me, and I hear that word say in a voice that goes clear to the depths of my being. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me. For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee.

I have sworn it. The great God, who didn't need to swear anything, swore by himself that he would not be wroth with me nor rebuke me. And in my own room I put my name in there, and repeated all my three names.

I repeat them, and then I put Senior on, for the Holy Ghost will know I don't mean my son, named after me. I hope he gets in, too. He is in, but I am saying it for myself.

For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. Do you want to know when they can take away the kindness of God from the people that seek him? Do you want to know when they can remove the covenant of God's saving grace from the man that trusts him? It is when the mountains, the mountains are no more, and then it cannot be, for God says he will not remove that mercy, for the mercy of God remains eternal and forever and forever. These are the words of God.

My dear man and woman, you don't dare resist. You don't dare neglect. You don't dare put it off.

You don't dare say, when the better time comes, you don't dare do it. You've got to say now is the time. Now, I believe this authority, this authority.

I don't go to priests and pastors and bishops and doctors. I go to God and to his Son, Jesus Christ. Any man can enter that rent veil, and if you will enter, God will bless you tonight.

He'll forgive your sins. He'll be a husband to you. He will be a father to you.

He will be a brother to you. He will wash what needs to be washed. He will purge what needs a deeper washing.

He will give you strength and courage and faith. He'll give you a little heaven, all your own, a portable heaven to go to heaven in. This he will do, for God has spoken.

The authoritative, sovereign God has spoken. Father, we pray thee, bless this effort to tell how great thou art, and how great thy word is, and how beautiful it is, how winsome, and how terrible. O Lord, no man can do it, but we try to do it.

Take our little fish and little bread and break it and divide it, O Lord. For we've only been a boy, but handing thee a little wicker basket with a few little pieces of food, not enough for all. O Lord, break it and give it to the rest.

While our heads are bowed and we're in an attitude, we hope, an attitude of reverent prayer, would there be some that would say to me, Mr. Tozer, I'm not saved and I want to be. I'm not a true Christian. I know I'm not.

Or maybe you would say, I'm bothered by that passage, not everyone that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter. I've said, Lord, Lord, these many years, but I'm not sure myself. Maybe you're a Christian, and you say, I know I was born anew, but I also know that other things intervene, and now I'm not where I ought to be, not what I ought to be, and I want you to pray for me, that I'll be restored to the grace of God, fully restored.

Anybody for any reason, and some I haven't covered, but say before you conclude your prayer, would you remember me? Let's just do the old-fashioned, yes, God bless you, I see your hand up, and who else? Who else? Say, yes, I see her back there, sister, and you back there. Who else? Anybody else? Now, Lord, for these who raise their hands, we would ask thy blessing. Lord, whatever they need, give it to them.

If they need what they don't want, make them want what they need. And if they want what they don't need and shouldn't have, change their wants to fit their needs, and give them by grace, O mighty God, what they need the most. Now we pray thee, send us out from here tonight to a busy, dangerous world, with every breaking headline more perilous than the one before.

O Lord, send us out, we pray thee, into the place we call civilization, into society, with complete trust that these are God's words, they can be trusted, and that as we believe them, they'll be fulfilled for us, and in us, and through us. Amen.

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