

The Authority of Words



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Trivial Communication

Jesus said that all disobedience subsequent division from God started from within people--their thoughts, emotions, communication, and actions. Humanity initially became separated the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by one bad decision to rebel and think, feel, say, and do something contrary to God's stated will. This behavior not only caused the original breach between mankind and the Trinity but also continued to do so throughout history. In order even to begin to nullify any consequences of our disconnection, the first step was to accept God's Son Jesus as Savior and Lord individually and be reborn spiritually. Then, the Holy Spirit would show people how to proceed whenever they desired to increase their dependence on God.

"If anyone among you thinks that he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, this man's religion is useless." (James 1:26)

"The tongue is (like a) fire--a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature and it is set on fire by hell. For, every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea is tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father and curse men who have been made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Can a spring send forth fresh and bitter from the same opening?" (James 3:6-10)

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for a tree is known by its fruit.... Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart

brings forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasures brings forth evil things. But, I say to you that for every idle word men may speak they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment, for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:33-37)

"(Jesus) said to the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves before (other people) but God knows your hearts, for what is highly esteemed among (people) is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)

"A man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. " (1 Samuel 16:17b)

Jesus taught His followers that it was their individual responsibility continually and conscientiously to pay attention to and practice the Word of God. It was what kept Him from adversity and was an authority that they, too, could count on, forever. However, they had to use their communication to their advantage and not just *believe* that it would work.

"The Word is near you in your mouth and in your heart." (Romans 10:8a)

Jesus said that God held everyone accountable for everything that his or her words as well as actions caused. No matter what they might feel, they had to keep believing and saying what the Scriptures and He instructed them and ignore everyone and everything contradictory. They should learn from Him and use that knowledge to resist Satan's influences with increasing frequency in their lives. No one but they were responsible for the venom or gossip that too often poured out of their mouths and without God's help they could not stop this behavior. All of humanity was imperfect and had stronger tendencies to react either for or against what their *human* senses pick up, instead of only doing and repeating what God directed.

"When He had called all the multitudes to Himself He said to them, 'Hear Me everyone and understand! (Matthew 13:23) There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him. Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man but what comes out of the mouth--those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear let him hear!'

When He had entered a house away from the crowd His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?'

But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind and if the blind leads the blind both will fall into a ditch.

Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.'

'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him? What goes into the mouth does not enter his heart but enters the stomach and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?'

And, He said, 'But those things which come out of the mouth of a man come from the heart and they defile a man. What comes out of a man from within, that defiles a man. For, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, covetedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, false witness, pride, foolishness, (and) blasphemies. These are the evil things which come from within and defile a man but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man,'" (Matthew 15:10-18 & Mark 7:14-23)

Additionally, whenever people confessed and sincerely asked God to pardon any negative outburst He did so without delay. Then, they had to continue to refill themselves with more of His Word by hearing, studying, and practicing it so that the next time a similar situation arose they would be better equipped to deflect it. Not only did they have to "uproot" all seeds of disobedience, they had to "re-plant" using seeds of Godly faith in order to progress. Repetition was the key to learning and building new habits.

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17)

Words were God's creative power, what He used (and still uses) to bring into being everything that He ever made. Since God made mankind in His Own image, Jesus taught His disciples that they likewise had this creative force residing within them. Therefore, as mentioned above, whatever *they* practiced speaking would eventually happen to some degree.

"We all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word he is a perfect man able to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships. Although they are so large and are driven fierce winds they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so, the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles and the tongue is a fire--a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire by hell." (James 3:2-6)

Speak Directly to the "Mountain"

"Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So, when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late He went out to Bethany with the twelve. He left the city to Bethany and He lodged there. Now the next day in the morning when they had come out from Bethany as He returned to the city He was hungry. And, seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves by the road He went to it to see if perhaps He would find something on it and found nothing on it but leaves for it was not the season for figs.

In response, Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you again. Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' and His disciples heard it. Immediately the fig tree died and withered away.

[Note: They went back into Jerusalem to the temple and Jesus drove the moneychangers out of there.]

When evening had come He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots and Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away! How did the fig tree wither away so soon?'

So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have the same faith God does. For, assuredly I say to you if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree but also whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea.' (Matthew 17:20) and does not doubt in his heart but believes that those things which he says will be done, it will be done. He shall have whatever he says and whatever things you ask in prayer believing you will receive. Therefore, I say to you whatever things you ask when you pray believe that you receive them and you will have them. And, whenever you stand praying if you have anything against anyone forgive him (so) that your Father in Heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But, if you do not forgive neither will your Father in Heaven forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 21:17-22 & Mark 11:11-14, 19-26)

Jesus went into Jerusalem to take a look inside the temple to see what was going on and appraise Himself of the situation the day before He did anything about it. He did not just barge into the temple and chastise the moneychangers. Jesus completely left the location behind Him and even walked several miles away to spend the night, probably mostly alone in prayer with His Father asking Him what to say about the situation in the temple, as well as what course of action was the best. Therefore, when Jesus chastised the moneychangers making a profit off of the people who had come to worship God (by forcing them to use only their doves as sanctioned sacrifices) Jesus rebuked them for offending His Father's house and degrading it with their greed. Jesus had taught that this kind of judgment was righteous because it was not merely self-serving and greedy, but actually charitable because it was to serve God rather than His Own worldly ambition.

Jesus' initial confrontation with the fig tree was important for it set up a background for a later teaching. The tree had leaves and so looked good from afar; nevertheless it was devoid of edible fruit. Just because the tree had leaves and appeared to be healthy did not necessarily mean that it could give nourishment, only shade. It was like judging the contents within a book from the beauty of its cover, so to speak.

The disciples heard the encounter but no one commented on it at the time. Even later, in the evening of the same day while walking back to Bethany, probably by the same route, no one seemed to regard or discuss any noticeable change in the outward appearance of the tree. However, returning on the following day, Peter did distinguish a change and made a pointed remark about it. Jesus had to realize what took place, yet He Himself did not point it out to any one of them. He let His disciples be sensitive to the Holy Spirit God revealing what had happened.

Jesus took this opportune moment where His disciples had the seeable proof that they still needed to instruct them on a situation He had already set up to be able

use. Even though He was going to Jerusalem to deal with a problem in His Father's temple, Jesus had the foresight to recognize an opportunity that might become useful in the future. He always was alert to teach about His Father's Kingdom, how it worked in Heaven and how God wanted them to learn to allow it to do the same on the earth.

Jesus spoke directly to the tree in front of His audience, not about it. He did this regularly, as when He addressed roaring wind and waves (*Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24*), or a person's dead body. (*John 11:43*) Once again Jesus' disciples, the men who were around Him constantly and knew His actions more intimately than are revealed in the Bible were astonished and marveled at how He was able to manipulate tangible things. Jesus taught His followers to imitate Him and also speak directly to things to effect changes with the faith and power behind their words. By following His example, they eventually would do even greater things on the earth than He did, if, like Him, they allowed God's Holy Spirit dwell in them and do the works. Thus God the Father would be glorified through them just as He was in Jesus

"Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven (also) and whatever you loose on earth (likewise) will be bound in Heaven. Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven, for where two or three are gathered together in My Name I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:18-20)

"Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also, and greater works than these because I go to My Father. And, whatever you ask in My Name that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:12-14)

The tree started to change beginning with its roots, its unseen foundation and from which it derived its nourishment and life, like the heart of a human being. The tree withered from within, not from an outside source like the weather. As He had directly after demonstrating an outline of a sample perfect prayer to God, Jesus again stressed the importance of forgiveness to stay within God's will in order be able to utilize His power without ever misusing it on selfish concerns.

How to and Not to Pray to God

"When you pray you shall not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand praying in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they (already) have their reward. But, you, when you pray go into your room, and when you have shut the door pray to your Father Who is in the secret place, and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you openly. And, when you pray do not use worthless repetitions as the heathens do for they think they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them for your Father knows the things that you have need for before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:5-8)

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Jesus said that people should not pray to impress other people with how "religious" they were. This does not impress God at all. Acting in this way was not for His benefit whatsoever, but only arrogant self-seeking for temporary human approval, which He did not appreciate. No one could communicate effectively with Him when his or her thoughts and intentions really are elsewhere at times. Like waves, they are thus unstable and during those times people were being double-minded. (*James 1:7-8*) God wanted their full attention on Himself when they talked to Him, just as they expected the same in return, especially when we are asking for something.

How insulted do you feel when you are trying to get someone's whole focus when you are talking to him or her and you can sense that their minds really are elsewhere? It seems offensive and not special enough to merit total concentration. Why do we ever suppose that our God feels differently? Because we can't see Him? Just as we want people's undivided attention sometimes, He does, too.

Chanting was not in God's will and did nothing but lead individuals away from Him to other 'gods'. It was really deceptive and meaningless chatter that did nothing more than clutter minds, not clear them. Anyone who practiced chanting was letting their guard down and allowing their thoughts to drift. Eventually, no matter what they believed or thought, they were not controlling themselves any longer, Satan was. How would you like it if someone came up to you and kept repeating the same thing incessantly? Would it do anything to further and strengthen your relationship with each other? Or, would it annoy you to be expected to listen to the same chatter so much so that even if it began as important you would start to reject listening to it? Again, why do we ever imagine that speaking to God is any different?

The Prayers of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

"He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.

'Two men went up to the temple to pray--one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all I possess.' And, the tax collector standing afar off would not so much as raise his eyes to Heaven but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'

'I tell you that this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" (*Luke 18:9-14*)

Which man was automatically more respected in that society? The Pharisee was a religious leader of an extremely pious culture and therefore commanded both honor and admiration. People naturally expected him to be close to and follow God's will. On the other hand, a tax collector was perceived as being nothing more than a Roman flunky, a traitor to his own people. Therefore, when Jesus compared the two men His listeners naturally would categorize them as polar opposites, the former being quite superior in their eyes to the latter. However,

"We dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who compliment themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves are not wise.... He who glories let him glory in the Lord, for not he who commends himself is approved but he whom the Lord commends." (II Corinthians 10:12)

"He said to Peter, 'Follow Me.'

Then Peter, turning around (Matthew 14:29-30) saw the disciple (following them) ... said, 'But, Lord, what about this man?'

Jesus said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come (again), what is that to you? You follow Me!'" (John 21:19b-22)

The religious leader held himself in high esteem because of his works, not his faith. Additionally, He did not speak to God in reverence. On the contrary, he bragged about how good he was to impress God with his deeds. This man never humbled himself before God as a subject, an inferior. He almost seemed to equate them both as equals, something that had gotten a certain angel, Lucifer, in big trouble centuries before. This attitude did not make him closer to God, rather a competitor and enemy.

"You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you. You were on the holy mountain of God. You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within and you sinned. Therefore, I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God and I destroyed you, o covering Cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor." (Ezekiel 28:14-17a)

"How you have fallen from Heaven, o Lucifer, son of the morning. How you are cut down to the ground. You have weakened the nations, for you have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into Heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High.'" (isaiah 14:12-14)

"And war broke out in Heaven. Michael and His angels fought with the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail nor was a place found for them in Heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out--that serpent of old called the Devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. He was cast out and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:7-9)

"(Jesus) said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightening from Heaven.'" (Luke 10:18)

The tax collector was well aware of his shortcomings and imperfections, classifying himself as a sinner. Unlike the supposedly more righteous man, he honored God's authority over him when he asked Him to be merciful. Likewise, the tax collector did not brag about anything good that he had accomplished. Rather, he ignored even trying to convince God that whatever good works he had performed were enough to defend himself. He definitely chose to humble himself and accept God's dominion over him. Jesus said that it was this demeanor of submission that moved God to bless him.

The Lord's Prayer

"It came to pass when He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John (the Baptist) also taught his disciples.'

So, He said to them, 'In this manner, therefore, pray. When you pray say, 'Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Grant us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone who has sinned against us and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one for Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. For, if you forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But, if you do not forgive men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'" (Matthew 6:9-15 & Luke 11:1-14)

Jesus taught that the basic framework of everyone's prayers to God should copy the form of a correspondence that they desired to deliver to someone dear to them, either verbally, signed or written. As such, it should be adapted to each individual situation, just as they did not communicate the same things, in the same way, to other people. Jesus proposed that a perfect and thorough communication with our Heavenly Father included several elements:

- (a) a greeting to a specific person, along with recognition of who they were, in this case, God the Father,
- (b) the body of information,
- (c) the wrap-up and closing, with appropriate respect,
- (d) a sort of PS instruction to sanction the above prayer, if needed.

The person praying had to believe that He was speaking directly to God Himself and acknowledge that fact; while simultaneously requesting that ultimately God's sovereign would take place, over what their finite minds could think up. They should make any requests straightforwardly, and daily, not merely when they were in some sort of trouble and wanted God to perform a miracle in order to bail them out of it. How do you feel, for example, if someone only contacts you when they need something, but they share themselves with their other friends and family regularly? Don't you feel used? God is not an Individual without feelings, so how can we expect that some sort of automation created us in His Own image yet cannot feel the identical emotions that we express? If so, how then did we get them? Did such feelings generate themselves spontaneously?

People should ask God to forgive whatever they had done to alienate Him, just

as they were prepared to do the same to other people. Jesus repeated this as a condition for God honoring their requests. He likewise reiterated it when He spoke about having faith in God to remove obstacles that blocked their lives. Jesus truly must have believed that unforgiveness impeded God's path, for one of the last things He did on the cross was to pardon those who were against Him. (*Luke 23:34*) He more than likely had already done so, but He expressly wanted witnesses to hear Him declare it. Luke, in whose gospel the account was written, was not present at Jesus' crucifixion; but he stated that he related his account of Jesus' life from reports that He had heard from other witnesses testifying to the declaration's reliability.

People had to petition God to keep them away from anything that would tempt them away from Him. They had to come to recognize that they, as temporal human beings, had very little capability to withstand misfortune and evil (and their consequences) without Divine guidance and help. This included also requesting protection from God's and personal enemies that tried to harm or destroy them.

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."
(Matthew 24:35)*