

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST  
Mark 1:21-28

Intro: (Read the text.)

This account is found also in Luke's Gospel, 4:31-37.

The key words in both accounts with regard to the response of the people are "authority" and "power." Mark used only the word "authority"; Luke used both words.

It is appropriate that these words should be used together because there is power in authority. "Authority" has never been a popular word. It is probably less powerful in America than it ever has been before. I recently heard a young woman, a member of the Catholic church, who wanted to be a member of the Catholic church, but she resented papal authority. She said that she didn't want anyone telling her what to do. We are seeing a breakdown in parental authority, in the authority of teachers over their pupils, in the authority of police officers, and in the authority of governmental leaders. One of the problems is that many people in these positions which I have just mentioned do not understand that, while our position may carry authority with it, there is also another sense in which authority has to be maintained.

Many a young preacher goes into a church and begins immediately to make changes before he has won the confidence of his people, and the results are usually disastrous. As a pastor he has a position of authority, but he has to win the confidence of his people before they will submit to his authority.

It is important for us to notice that the Lord, even though He was the Son of God and had the highest authority because of Who He was, did not appear among the people demanding that they submit to His authority. His authority was something which they recognized without His having to say anything at all about it. It was so different from what the people were used to in a teacher that they recognized that "authority" was the great difference between the Lord and their regular teachers, "the scribes." The scribes had positions of authority, but they did not have that affect upon the people.

Both Luke and Mark spoke first of:

- I. OUR LORD'S AUTHORITY IN HIS TEACHING (Mark 1:21, 22; cf. Luke 4:31, 32).

The people felt power in His teaching which they did not feel with their scribes. They felt moved by His teaching. They felt inclined to accept His teaching. They recognized that

our Lord's teaching was something very different from the ordinary teaching they had in the synagogue. How can we explain this?

Well, neither Mark nor Luke tell us what the Lord taught on this particular occasion, but we have enough in the four Gospels to know how the Lord taught, and what He taught.

We know that He taught the Word of God. And we know that He taught it as the Word of God. We also know that He believed the Word of God. There was great conviction in His teaching. And we know that He lived what He preached. It could not be said of Him, as it was said of the scribes, that He taught one thing, but practiced another. Or that He wanted the people to do things that He was not doing.

When Peter was exhorting those who ministered the Word, he said this: "If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11a). That is, their teaching was limited to what God had revealed in His Word, and they were to speak as men commissioned by God to carry this message to the people to whom they spoke.

The scribes were not like this. They did not limit themselves to the Word of God. Through the years additions had been made by Israel's religious leaders so that many of them probably did not know the difference between the Word of God and what our Lord called the traditions of men. The Bible is full of warnings against false teachers and false teaching. There is no true authority or power in false teaching like there is in the teaching of God's Word. People do not have to be told that there is authority in the Word of God; they sense it themselves. They feel it because of the effect that it has upon their lives. But the Word makes it very clear that the teaching of the Word, to be powerful, must be done by men who believe, and who themselves are living in obedience to it. Our Lord was that kind of a teacher, and the people recognized the difference between the Lord and the scribes.

This is something which all of us who teach the Word need to remember. And this applies to parents as well as to SS teachers and those of us who speak in our services. We want our people to sense the authority of our position because of the power there is in our teaching. But we need to limit ourselves to God's Word, and we need to make sure that we believe it, and that our lives are being molded by the Word of God. There is little wonder that people heard the Lord gladly.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones went into a rural community in Wales and

into a church with a small attendance, and he began to preach like those before him had not preached. As time went on, more people came, and still more people, until, instead of preaching to a handful, he was preaching to several hundred. Dr. Lloyd-Jones believed the Word of God, and would not waste time preaching anything else, and was careful about his own life. Consequently his preaching was with authority and power. And the people recognized the power of the Lord's Word and the Lord's servant. He, like many before him, learned how to preach from the Lord, the Master Preacher and Teacher.

But now let us move on to see what our text says about:

II. OUR LORD'S AUTHORITY IN HIS WORK (Mark 1:23-27; cf. Luke 4:33-36).

Note especially what the people said according to Mark 1:27. (Read. Cf. also Luke 4:36.)

Have you ever wondered if some miracles required more power from the Lord than others? By that I do not mean that anything was really difficult for the Lord, but it seems that power went out from the Lord when He performed miracles, and He was conscious of the outflow of that power (as when the woman was healed by touching his garment--cf. Luke 8:43-48). (Read.)

IF SOME REQUIRED MORE POWER THAN OTHERS, I WOULD SAY THAT DRIVING OUT DEMONS REQUIRED THE MOST POWER. Here He was dealing with demonic forces, superhuman forces. And, while all of our Lord's miracles were amazing, probably none was more startling than for people to be delivered from demons. As far as Scripture is concerned, it seems that no period in history was marked more by demon possession than when our Lord was here on earth, and immediately afterwards in the early history of the Church.

It is important to notice that Mark and Luke both called this demon "unclean." And this also describes the effect that the demon had upon the man he possessed. This undoubtedly means that he was morally bad, probably the worst man in Capernaum at the time. He was guilty of everything that rendered him unfit to stand in the presence of God. Whether or not he had the freedom to attend the synagogue hoping that he would receive help there even though he was demon-possessed, we do not know. But we are to see from this that the effect of anything and everything that the Devil and the demons do is bad! Their objective is to take as many people into hell with them as they can possibly get.

Well, this demon possessed-man came to the synagogue. He evidently was quiet and listened while the Lord was teaching. This, too, shows the authority of the Lord in being able to keep things under control. But at some point, possibly as the Lord was concluding, the demon spoke out. And he seemed to be speaking either for all of the demons, or possibly for the people who were assembled in the synagogue on that particular day when he said, "Let us alone." See his words in verse 24.

Evidently when a person was demon-possessed, the demon took full control of the body of the person he was indwelling, even to the extent that he spoke through the vocal chords of the person he had possessed. And it is significant to see that while, at this point, the people did not know why the teaching of our Lord was so different (because they had not yet recognized that He was the Messiah, and the Lord), yet the demon knew Him, and did not hesitate to identify Him.

Be sure to notice that the demon recognized both the true humanity of our Lord as well as His Deity. And the demon also knew that he was under judgment (along with all other demons), and that it was the Lord Who was going to execute the judgment.

This incident indicates, among other things, that the Devil and his demons are strongly opposed to the teaching of the Word of God! If he would attack the Lord, he will attack any of us. It might not be in the same way, but you can be sure that the teacher of the Word of God will never have an easy time. And the opposition often comes from within. Paul warned the Ephesian elders of this very thing.

But the Lord lost no time in dealing with the demon. See verses 25 and 26. The Lord silenced him. According to both Mark and Luke, this demon did not say another word.

We might wonder why the Lord did not accept the testimony of this demon, because he was telling the truth, and it was truth which the Lord sought to get the people to understand and to believe. But the Lord never teams up with Satan and his demons. It would seem that the demon was seeking to make the people present think that he was on the Lord's side. But Satan and the demons are master deceivers. They will go to any length to make people think well of them. They will speak well of Christ, even speaking the truth about Christ, but it is only that they might go on with their malicious work of bringing people into the same judgment which they face and from which they cannot escape.

And so when the Lord demanded that the demon come out of him,

he reverted to his true character, tore the man he had possessed, but Luke tells us that he "hurt him not" (Luke 4:35b). We can be sure that the people in the synagogue had never been in a service like this before.

What was the response of the people? See verse 27. (Read.)

It shows the Lord's power, the Lord's authority, over the forces of hell. If He did not possess such power, no one would ever be saved. But the Lord is greater in power. When He said to the demon, "Come out of him," the demon came out, as Spurgeon said, "Like a whipped cur" (Vol. 31, p. 94). The people, you will notice, were not amazed to see a demon-possessed man, but they were amazed to see a demon-possessed man delivered from the demon.

You see, there was not only authority in our Lord's teaching, but authority, the same authority, to be seen in His work.

The last point in our text had to do with:

### III. THE INCREASING FAME OF THE LORD JESUS (Mark 1:28).

This was early in His ministry. He had no advance team going before Him, no public relations men. The message about the authority of His message and the authority of His work quickly spread by word of mouth throughout Galilee. The Lord does not need man-made methods of attracting attention. The power of the message, and the effect of His power in changing lives, will soon be known.

Concl: What does this parable teach us beyond what we have seen of the authority of our Lord in His preaching and in His work?

It surely illustrates for us the nature of the Lord's work among men.

It is interesting to me that we really don't have a record here of anything that the Lord did; just of what He said. There is great power, life-changing and great convicting power in the words of our Lord--which is the same as saying, in the Word of God.

We also see here that, in this instance, the Lord did not call for faith. The man did nothing to deliver himself. There was nothing that he could do. He had been captured by the demon and was unable to set himself free. He did not deserve it. He did not contribute to it. He made no pledges. Actually, he said nothing. His deliverance was all in the Lord and what the Lord said.

And, finally, we can say that the truth of this whole incident was confirmed by the testimony of those who were present so we know that Mark and Luke were not making up this story.

Our experience has obviously been very different from this demon-possessed man. But it has taken the same power, the same authority, to set us free. But we can see from this story that, if the Lord can set a demon-possessed man free, He can set anyone free. There is nothing too hard for Him. And it is no wonder that as the people talked about this experience in the synagogue, they did not talk about the demon-possessed man, but about the One Who had set him free.

To God always belongs all of the glory for every sinner who is delivered from the power of Satan and brought into the kingdom of God.