

# The Servant's Authority

**Mark 1:21-28**

Our title this morning is *The Servant's Authority*.

A school teacher injured his back and had to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body. It fit under his shirt and was not noticeable at all. On the first day of the term, still with the cast under his shirt, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in school.

Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, he opened the window as wide as possible and then busied himself with desk work. When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he took the desk stapler and stapled the tie to his chest.

He had no trouble with discipline that term.

Open you bibles please to Mark 1 as we continue our verse-by-verse study through this gospel. We're looking at verses 21 through 28.

**21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.**

**22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

**23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,**

**24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"**

**25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"**

**26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.**

**27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."**

**28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.**

As Jesus taught and ministered to the people in Capernaum, they get caught up by and carried away with the message of this man named Jesus. The Bible tells us that they were "**astonished**" and "**amazed**" by the things they heard and saw. Their astonishment and amazement centered on the authority of Jesus. In verse 22 Mark says, **And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.** And again in verse 27, **Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."**

Jesus' authority is evident in two ways in this passage today: The authority of His word and the authority of His actions.

Let's look at the first, the authority of His words.

## 1. The Authority of Jesus' Words (1:21-22).

Verse 21 says, **Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.**

Jesus and His men went to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. The synagogue was much like the local church in those days. Now you will not find the synagogue in the Old Testament. The religious life of the Jews in the Old Testament centered on the home, where teaching was to take place, and on the temple, where worship and sacrifice took place.

Historically, the synagogue system was established during the years of Israel's Babylonian captivity. They could not go to the Temple to worship for two reasons: (1) the temple had been destroyed; and (2) they were living so far away from Jerusalem. So they began to gather together to read the Law; teach the Law and worship God. These gatherings eventually became known as synagogues.

The synagogue quickly became the center of every Jewish community. A synagogue could be established in any place where there were at least ten married Jewish men. The people met there for worship on Sabbath days, which was Saturday. They would meet again on Monday and then again on Thursday. The building was also used as a schoolhouse and courtroom during the week.

A typical service involved prayer, the reading of the Law, and a sermon by a rabbi or a scribe. Jesus took advantage of the custom that allowed visiting teachers to teach or preach when they were invited to do so by the ruler of the synagogue.

As Jesus taught, verse 22 says, **And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

The people were astonished and amazed, literally that word means 'to strike with panic or shock'. They were thunderstruck by the authority that was in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I looked up the word "astonished" in my concordance - I was amazed at how many times Jesus astonished people. For instance, When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:28 says - the crowds were astonished at his teaching. When Jesus went home to Nazareth to teach, Matthew 13:54 says they were astonished, and asked, **"Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?"** Even when he said nothing, people were amazed - as Pilate was when Jesus would not answer the Jews' accusations (Mark 15:5).

What amazed the people about Jesus' teaching? Mark tells us it was that **He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.** Jesus would expound on God's Word in such vivid and concrete ways - that some people had a hard time swallowing what he was saying. For instance, he told Nicodemus - an old man - that he needed to be born again if he wanted to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus thought, "what! I can't go back into my mothers' womb and be born again?" It was this amazing statement of Jesus that made him think and ask questions however.

Another example is when Jesus very plainly told the disciples that he would be crucified in Jerusalem. But instead of running away from Jerusalem - he went straight there. Mark 10 says that the disciples were astonished, while those who

followed were afraid. Jesus was talking about life and death situations - and it amazed them that Jesus would walk into such a situation.

One of my favorite examples is when Jesus told the disciples in Mark 10 - **"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."** The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, **"Who then can be saved?"** And how did Jesus answer? **With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.**

If you stop and think about what Jesus said - it is simply amazing, is it not? He gave vivid pictures about a rich man burning in hell and begging for a drink of water (Luke 16). He told the people that they had to be perfect if they wanted to inherit the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:48). But the most amazing things He said pertained to Himself. "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58). With that one statement, Jesus was saying that He was God Almighty - the same God that filled and created the universe was contained in His flesh. That is an amazing thing to say. Later on he told everyone - **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father EXCEPT THROUGH ME."** In very clear terms Jesus said that He is the only person that determines the difference between whether someone burns eternally in hell or lives forever in paradise. Our life and death revolves around HIS life and death, according to Jesus. Even though it is IMPOSSIBLE for man to save Himself - God accomplishes this through His own miraculous birth, death and resurrection.

When Mark compared the way Jesus taught to the teachers of the law, there was no comparison. The scribes majored on trivial things. They elevated the traditions of men above the Word of God. They were worried about things like tithing mint leaves and how far a man could walk on the Sabbath, Matt. 23:23.

Jesus, on the other hand, spoke of weighty matters such as life and death, Heaven and Hell, righteousness, God's Kingdom and eternity. When they heard Jesus preach, they knew they were hearing words of eternal value.

The scribes rambled on and on, quoting one another and never saying anything of any importance. Jesus taught systematically. He read or quoted the word of God. He explained it and He applied it.

The scribes were as dry as dust. They spoke of things that no one cared about in terms that no one understood. Jesus used vivid illustrations, parables, and crystal clear word pictures.

The scribes did not care about the people to whom they were preaching. They used the people for their own advantage and profit, Mark 12:40. Jesus spoke as a Lover of men. He cared about every person to whom He spoke, and He pointed them to the love of the Father.

These scribes and Pharisees were trying to draw water from broken cisterns, but Christ's words were like arrows from the Almighty.

What Christ was speaking and expressing was not second-hand theology, these were the very words of God! What Christ in effect was doing for these people was He was bringing God to them in the person of Himself. He was bringing God's absolute claim upon their lives to them, and that is what disturbed them so much - the authority that was in His speech! Jesus was confident and convicted and knowledgeable of what the Scriptures said. It was authoritative and when

these people heard Jesus preach, it literally left them with their mouths hanging open in amazement!

Not only did Jesus demonstrate His authority by His teaching, but He also displayed His power by His deeds.

## **2. The Authority of Jesus' Actions (1:23-28).**

As Jesus preaches, He is interrupted by a demon possessed man. The demon uses the man's vocal cords, causing him to scream. The demon declares his awareness of just Who Jesus is. The demon declares Jesus to be the Messiah. Jesus rebukes the demon and frees the possessed man from the demon's grip.

Now we will see this in our studies right throughout Mark's gospel, so many occasions of demon-possession where Christ uses His authority as the Servant of the Lord and casts them out. The authority of the Servant of the Lord was not just exhibited in the words that He spoke, but these mighty actions, and in this specific deed of casting a devil out of this man.

Demons are the fallen angels that followed Satan when he rebelled against God, Isa. 14:11-15; Eze. 28:12-19; Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:1-13. These demons possess the power to inhabit the bodies of unsaved people. Demons possess people in order to use their physical bodies to carry out the will of the devil.

Demon possession was something Jesus encountered on a regular basis during His earthly ministry. It may be that Satan was actively trying to disrupt what Jesus was doing. Or I think it may be that demonic activity was no more prominent then than it is now. It's just that when the holy Son of God encountered this evil, it was immediately exposed for what it truly was. The Bible says that Satan masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). The normal MO for demons is to disguise and hide themselves. But light always exposes darkness. And when Jesus was teaching the light of God's Word it immediately exposed the demon in their midst.

Look at how Jesus' authority and His deeds were exhibited. First of all His authority was testified by the demon itself. If you look clearly, you'll see that the train of thought is that once the Lord Jesus Christ, in verse 22, began to teach with authority, that in reaction to what Jesus is teaching the demon made an outburst in verse 24: **Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?** In effect, what the demon recognizes Jesus' authority, but does not wish to submit to it. **Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!** The demon was saying: 'You have no business with us yet, leave us alone!'. Now it's interesting to note, before we move on, that the demon addressed the Lord Jesus as first of all 'Jesus of Nazareth', which speaks of Christ's humanity, and then the demon said that He was 'the Holy One of God', which speaks in part of His deity.

The demon both recognized Jesus and His authority to deal with demons, v. 24. The demons know Jesus; they know His power, and they fear Him. James 2:19 gives us an insight into the understanding of demons, **You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!**

The second way His authority was evidenced in this deliverance of the unclean spirit from the man was: it was attested by the deliverance itself. Not only testified by the demon, but attested by the deliverance.

Jesus rebuked the devil and said “**Be quiet, and come out of him!**”, v. 25. The phrase “**Be quiet**” literally means “be muzzled”. Jesus told the demon to shut up and to vacate the premises. The demon immediately obeyed the Lord’s command and left the body of the poor possessed man.

Why did Jesus cast out the demon, when the demon was telling the truth about Jesus? Jesus did not want to be identified with the devil. How many of you would be happy to receive a character witness from Charles Manson, or Timothy McVeigh, or Osama Bin Laden? Demons are not the best witnesses!

Jesus refused to receive the testimony of demons. Jesus did not come to save the fallen angels. He came to save fallen people. He came to save sinners. What gives Him the most glory is a redeemed sinner testifying to His power and His identity.

When the people witnessed the power of Jesus to cast out the demon, they were left “**amazed**”, v. 27. That word means “to frighten, to render motionless”. They were riveted in their places when they saw Jesus do this. I get the idea that this was not the first time this fellow had showed at the synagogue and had disrupted the service. But, this was the first time they had ever seen anyone take authority of a devil and deliver someone from Satan’s grip.

When they saw what Jesus could do, they began to spread the word about Him all over the countryside, v. 28. Neighbors began to tell neighbors and before long, everyone in that area heard about the Lord Jesus and what He could do.

I want to point out a couple of important principles before we close.

First, there are no hopeless cases with Jesus! Regardless of how low into sin a person has fallen; regardless of how firm a grip Satan may have on them; regardless of the power of their addictions or the vileness of their sins, there is power in Jesus to save them and deliver them from the grip of sin and Satan, Eph. 2:1-10. That person the world views as beyond saving is the very person He came to save! If you will look at the Bible, you will see case after case that appeared hopeless. In every case, Jesus was able to save that soul and change that life.

As we continue to move through the verses of Mark, we are going to witness person after person that appeared to be hopeless cases. We are going to watch Jesus save them and change them by His power.

So, never give up! Jesus has the power to save anyone who will repent of their sins and believe the Gospel.

Second, when Jesus came and worked in power, the people left the synagogue excited about what they had heard and seen. They spread the word and multitudes responded, v. 33-34. When Jesus showed up in church, things happened. Lives were changed, evil was exposed, and people were amazed.

I am afraid that too often our churches today are more like the dead and dry synagogues of Jesus’ day, than the powerful living body of Christ in this world.

What the world needs today not just more “business as usual” from the church. What the world needs is the power of God, the authority of Jesus’ words and deeds! What the church needs is Jesus, alive and powerful, working in our midst-transforming lives for the glory of God!

As a church, we could do nothing better than to get on our faces before God and seek His presence and His power in these days! We do not need a new Bible. We do not need a new style of music. We do not need PowerPoint slides; coffee and doughnuts; and other gimmicks. We need the power of God and the presence of the Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit!

One night a church caught on fire and was burning to the ground. As the Pastor watched it burn, he noticed a man standing in the crowd watching the church burn. The Pastor recognized the man, because he had invited him to church many times with no success. The Pastor went to him and said, "I've invited you to come to this church many times, but you never came. Why are you here tonight?" The man replied, "Well, I've never seen this church on fire before!"

I believe it was John Wesley who was asked about the popularity of his preaching. His response was to say, "God just gets me on fire and the people come to watch me burn." That will work for the church in these days too! If we will ever get on fire, the world will come to watch us burn!