**“One with Authority”**

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Deuteronomy 18:15-20

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28

Epiphany 4

“He (that is Jesus) taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

“Opinions (it’s said) are **like nose**s. Everybody **has one**.” We live in what’s called the “Age of **Post-Modernism**”. In the era that preceded this one (called the “Age of **Modernism**”), there was the guiding thought that some opinions were more accurate than others (“**truer**”), so arguments (or discussions) were thought **appropriate** so as to **be corrective of errors**. It was even thought **caring** to argue someone into “proper, or correct-thinking”. Today, most (except for those considered “narrow-minded”) don’t believe in **“truth” being one thing**. Post-modern belief is that there are **infinite amounts of valid so-called “truths”** (probably as many as there are people). “What’s **true for** **one person**”, post-moderns would say, “is probably **not really true for someone else**”. “Arrogance” is thought, now, to be the only motivation for debate or discussion over “truth” verses “falsehood”. “One who thinks they’re right over and against another makes a **condescending** **assumption** … one that (this Post-modern age would say) could never be twisted to be called at all caring.” “**Tolerance**”, then, is the **Post-modern’s definition of love and caring concern for someone else**. To tolerate another’s opinions (no matter what it is … even affirming them as, quote, “true and divinely-sanctioned for them”) is the new **social** (so **not anti-social and hateful**) **civility**.

And that’s never-before been the posture civilization has had over the entire history of the world until the 1960’s. **Individualism** (and, so, **individually-sacred thoughts**) have become the “new Norm” of “authority” for humanity. “Have it (everything) your way”, and that’s advertised as being what each and every individual (no matter **who or how they are**) **deserves**. **What one thinks** (which mostly means **what we crave or want** … or our **gut feeling**) is (for most everyone) **THE** **divine deity** (and I don’t say that flippantly). “Having no other gods before **THE** One” gets sinned-against (through Post-modern thought) in the **glorification of the opinions of** **SELF** (**SELF-IMAGE BECOMING THE SMALL-“G” GOD**). Which is the reason why I think that we’re in the last days: because the ultimate “Anti-Christ” who will prevail effectively on this planet in the last days (the one who will empower other anti-Christ’s that humans will worship) is every person’s **EGO** … and he’s already here. For all of you here (**since you’re here**), I’m sure God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is your **second in command**, but (if you’re like me), the first sin that I confess is the most-often putting on a throne my own brain and gut feelings (my opinions). My repentance is to consciously to try let the God kill my “me-centeredness” and be my Lord rather than myself. The Apostle Paul puts it: “I **must** no longer live, but **Christ who now lives in me**.” The only hope, then, for Post-moderns is that we constantly be about the task (consciously) of killing ourselves so as to give a chance to live to Christ.

And I’m stumped by as to why we (anymore) give so much credence to **any opinions at all (and, maybe, even our own)**. We’re getting a good dose of the failed opinions all around us as governments lie and the media skews its presentations of so-called “news”. We’re not even sure how to trust the fickle opinions of medicine (the Center for Disease Control). It’s told us (throughout this past year) one thing about COVID safety one week, and then another the next. Nobody (in other words) “**knows**” much of really anything … even the people (or we the people) that, often, claim to “**know**”.

Text

And (as I’d said) this is the first time in the history of creation where this Post-modern “**Relativism**” has been the **main thought**. God, who created and creates everything, has (always before this) been **known** as the **Sole Authority / the “Norm”**. Scribes (of all kinds) have (before this last 50 years) forever referenced what they sought (and thought) to be His Words and then **quote those** **as the** **authority**. **Opinions** hadn’t been (ever) **authoritative**. Only **oracles** always were. Many scribes got the words wrong that they thought they’d heard (or communicated them wrong) but it was (forever before) **God’s Words** that everyone sought … everyone on this planet. For the first 2,500 years it was from personal divine conversation that was orally scribed (that is, passed on). But on a mountain in, what’s now, Saudi Arabia, all of that became different: a **mass revelation of the Voice and sight of God** … ended by a **writing of it all down**.

God was **audible** there. From Mount Horeb (or Sinai) “on the day of the assembly” **God spoke (and He was loud / thunderous) and He showed Himself as a “great” and frightful fire**. “**’Let me not hear again the unfiltered voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die’** was the people’s reaction**. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘They are right in what they have said’**”.

**It would be normal** to **fear** the **obviousness** of the Words of God. The world’s largely made itself Post-modern because **that’s the farthest place that it can run-away from (it thinks) appropriate accountability to the authority of God**. In other words, to deny the **absolute** correctness of **Words from Him** is burying one’s head in the sand of denial and lies. That God expects of us **exacting things**, **clear in what those things are**, that’s an unforgiving place without a gracious antidote. **Instead of being repentant (sorry and wanting the grace to change), humanity lies to itself that exact Words and expectations even exist**.

Yet they do exist in (for instance) Commandments (10 of them) where perfect obedience to them is expected, or else you die. And “no one is righteous in that, not one” yet without listening to God speak humans quickly get “thinking much too much of ourselves”. So “**Let us not hear the voice of the Lord God or see His great fire, lest we die**” … and we can fail to hear (or pay attention to) the fact that (if we do), we can “**DIE TO LIVE**”. ….

Seem a **palatable** sight and sound gift got given to speak the same awesome Words, authoritative but with the flesh of humanity and the intonations of human speech. The same booming Words and “great fire” upon Mount Horeb stepped into the sanctuary of a church the exact size, almost, of this one. In the synagogue of Capernaum, **Jesus** entered and was teaching (speaking) … but **not as scribes do** (reciting a source) … but **AS THE Source of all THAT’S true and Good and Right as opposed to wrong**.

And **demons knew that**. “’What have You to do **with us, Jesus of Nazareth**? Have You come to **destroy us?** **We know who You are—the Holy One of God**’”. And He said “’Be silent and come out of **this man**!’ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of **him**.”

And that **authoritative confrontation with the demonic** wasn’t an isolated thing. The Gospels are full of other occasions (this account is surrounded by 2 others) where authoritative Words of authority from God incarnate **cosmically did what they always do**. And those Words from God in Christ are still available to speak and be heard and heeded (even feared for their honesty). And demons still know that today … appropriately fear the Words of God.

Yes, **God’s Son did come to “destroy” demonic holds on humans**. As you heard them convulse themselves away from what Jesus spoke there, know how they scrambled when He Voiced (from a cross, but in a final and authoritative Word) “It is finished!”

What’s noteworthy is that every even **unclean spirit obeys the commands of Jesus (every one of them do)**. We’re hard-pressed (these Post-modern days) to find times **when we do** or when **our country and culture does**.

But it was for **that reason** that the same Voice and great fire that boomed and raged from a mountain in view of every Hebrew became a man to die: **to destroy the effectiveness of Satan and his demons (unless we permit them to win in us), paying (with His bloodshed) for the wages of sin in neglect with His own death**. And we might choose to have an **opinion on that**, yet I’d say, instead, just **receive it and believe the “truth”**. “**Truth**” **does exist**. **Listen to it / Him (Jesus)**. What **He says** (along with **what He did** and **still does**) **IS “truth”**. Opinions are no longer opinions when they’re “truth” from Him **exactly quoted**.

Application

The New Testament says that “in many and various ways God has spoken to us through the prophets. But **now, in these last days, He has spoken to us through His Son**”. One like Moses (saying the same things, but the **Source of those things**) was promised by the booming Voice and great fire upon Mount Horeb. It said “I will raise up for My people a prophet like you, Moses, from among their brothers. And **He will have** My Words in His mouth, and **He shall speak to all My people (who will listen) all that is My Voice, because He is the Voice**. And whoever will not listen to My Words that He (Jesus, the Word made flesh) shall speak, H**I Myself will require it of him** **(accountability**). But the prophet (because there are false ones) who presumes to speak a word in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.” ….

If the **too tame** Voice of God, **mediated** in Christ Jesus and human-scribed faithful preaching, has lulled you to sleep because we’re too far away from its booming, so fear and **awe** of the Words and the Speaker has been too far calmed because of other noise or your own opinion or that He’s just too much a man to really be believed as God’s divine Voice, then pray for the **reverence** that starts by confessing that sin … and then **enjoy** (beyond what you ever could without confession) the forgiveness that’s announced by His will in absolution … the most gracious gift of the Gospel “for you”.

**Love (with the proper acknowledgment of “truth”)** is what Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians (chapter 8) was all about (a love that’s not the today-defined tolerance of lying, but **compassion and patience with “truth”**). **That** is a study unto itself, one I’d be pleased to **have discussion about** and **mutually learn-from with you** … wrangling about **“true” love**.

May **we** **love from God’s defining of that Word**. May **we** **love Him and His Words (knowing what they are)** to **love our neighbors with His Words** (**so that they can know them for what they are)**. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.