

## Jesus Christ...One with Authority

Scripture: Mk. 1:21-34

Text: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mk. 1:1

Over 25 years ago we were at Yale University Institute of Far Eastern Languages learning Korean. Since most of the students were going to the Far East as missionaries we sometimes held a chapel service together. Once it was announced that Dr. Kenneth Scott Latourette would be the speaker. As a renowned professor, church historian, and writer, I expected some kind of learned lecture. Instead an old man of 70 with a youthful gleam in his eyes spoke very simply taking Mk. 1:1 as his text, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He showed how these words are the heart of the Gospel, the message of church history, and how his own faith was wrapped up in them. Since then I have always liked this verse and the forthright way Mark starts his account, wasting no words, going straight to the point.. Indeed his whole Gospel focusses all eyes on Jesus, and Jesus stands out, the commanding figure, the one with authority. Something in these first words of the Gospel are like the command to stand at attention in the presence of the commanding officer. Our thoughts right now are on Jesus Christ, ...One with Authority. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

1. Jesus Christ...His authority was Divinely granted. This Gospel first established that Jesus Christ had the highest credentials for his authority. The last of the <sup>of</sup> prophets, John the Baptist, had officially announced his immanent arrival; and at the occasion of his baptism Jesus Christ was recognized and publicly endorsed by God's voice from heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased." Every now and then when a new ambassador arrives in Seoul there are pictures in the papers of this ambassador presenting his credentials at the Blue House. Jesus had his credentials. God sent him. God recognized him as His Son. God expressed his 100% approval of Him and His mission.

All hail the power of Jesus' name  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown him, Lord of all.

2. Jesus Christ...His authority was daily displayed. Jesus spoke with authority, he acted with authority, there was never any doubt but that He was Master of every situation. Had Mark been an artist he would have painted no weak sallow-faced, timid person. Strength and vigor and the majestic bearing proper to the Son of God would have been there. The hands of Jesus would have been strong and powerful as befitting a carpenter who worked with lumber and tools, or a friend of fisherman drawing in their nets. There would have been the tenderness and love which could touch the fevered brow of a child and point to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field but could also be raised <sup>with authority</sup> to still the storm of the sea or the tumults of a noisy multitude,

a. With authority He commanded men to follow him. To Simon and Andrew he spoke: "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Men obeyed with alacrity.. "And immediately they left their nets and followed him." To Levi the taxgatherer, "Follow me!" And he rose and followed him. This is part of the good-news, that the One men and women can follow without hesitation or fear is here to take charge of our lives.

b. With authority He taught. Men were wandering in those days, searching for truth and direction. He announced: "The time is ~~xxxxxxx~~ fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." "And men were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and as the scribes." Here was no fake, but one with ultimate truth from God Himself. Modern man stumbling in the slough of falsehood, agnosticism, moral permissiveness, pessimism, frustration, fed-up-to-here attitudes...can find here the way and the truth and the life.  
*Heille Walter p. 7 Barclay* "Healed no authorities and quailed no experts. (Barclay 21)

c. With authority He worked. All talk and no action would never have been effective. Mark portrays One moving rapidly from place to place and situation to situation doing miraculous deeds demonstrating an authority that left observers goggle-eyed. To an evil spirit; "Be silent, and come out of him!" He commands and a man is cured. To an imploring leper beseeching cleansing: "I will, be clean"...and he was. Men exclaimed over these deeds, "What mighty works are wrought by his hands." The Gospel includes the presence of One who can cure and correct and cleanse.

*Jesus completely disregarded all the paraphernalia of popular magic, and with a gesture and a word of authority and power, He healed the woman. Barclay 29*  
d. With authority he forgave sins. A paralytic is dropped through the ceiling into a packed room where Jesus is teaching. "Your sins are forgiven!" He announced and when challenged as to his authority to do so, he calmly proves it by healing his body as well.

3. Jesus Christ...His authority to save the world from sin. No criminal ever could have acted with the kingly authority of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Three times Mark records that with matter-of-face authority Jesus predicted His own death: "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." There was no hesitation, no evasive action, no regret...merely the assertion calmly stated of one who was in absolute and certain control of His own destiny. Here was determination to carry through on the mission for which he had come.

He faced it like a king, and Pilate could not help but note the regal bearing and question: "Are you the King of the Jews?" Even in mockery, his enemies could not avoid his kingliness as they placed a crown of thorns on his head, robed him in purple and taunted, "Hail, King of the Jews!" But a centurion, sensitive to authority, could not but exclaim with He died, "Truly this was a son of God!" There was cruel truth in the mockery of the priests; "He saved others; he cannot save himself" Yet this was why He came perfect, sinless, clothed in the all the authority rightfully claimed by the Son of God...to give himself that we, the others, might be saved. Here is the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

4. Jesus Christ...His authority in the church today. Mark closes his gospel with the open tomb and the command of Jesus Christ to go and tell all men. But that is not the end. In Rev. 2:1 we read of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands." What a picture of supreme authority. He holds the stars in his hands...the church and all His company of believers are in His hands today...those same hands which touched the sick, beckoned the multitudes, and were pierced on the cross...they now hold us in an unbreakable grip. He walks among the seven candlesticks...the churches of the world...just as He moved along the shores of Galilee or the crowds of Jerusalem. He is here to speak the words of authority, to call you to faith and obedience, to grant forgiveness and power. He is the Lord, the authority. This is indeed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, The Son of God.



At even, when the sun was set,  
The sick, O Lord, around thee lay;  
O in what diverse pains they met!  
O with what joy they went away.

O Savior Christ, our woes dispel  
For some are sick, and some are sad  
And some have never loved thee well,  
And some have lost the love they had.

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,  
For none are wholly free from sin  
And they who fain would serve Thee best  
Are conscious most of wrong within.

Thy touch has still its ancient pow'r  
No word from Thee can fruitless fall  
Hear, in this solemn ev'ning hour  
And in thy mercy heal us all.

## LESSONS FROM A FAILURE

Scripture Reading: Mark 14:53-54; 66-72

Text: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Mark 14:38)

Peter had been with Jesus for three years. He had followed the Master ever since that day his brother Andrew had run home in great excitement from a trip down to the Jordan River to hear the preaching of the newest prophet, John the Baptist, and had exclaimed: "We have found the Messiah." Soon Jesus had called Peter to be a "fisher of men." He had chosen him as one of the twelve disciples. As one of the inner circle of three intimate friends of the Master, Peter had been with Him on a mountain top where Jesus was transfigured. Day after day he had heard Jesus teach and had witnessed His miracles. When Jesus had asked who the disciples thought He was, it was Peter who had declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"

Yet in spite of all this, in the crisis when Jesus was on trial, Peter failed, and denied his Lord three times. Only a few hours before, at the end of the Passover observance with Jesus and the other disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem, Peter had stoutly boasted that under no circumstances would he desert his Lord. Jesus had predicted that all the disciples would "fall away" but Peter insisted, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not"...to which Jesus replied, "Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me." But Peter vowed, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny you!" Several hours later, Peter did exactly what he had sworn he would never do...he failed. How could this happen?

Let's give Peter his due...he did display considerable courage up to the moment of his breaking point. 999 out of a thousand other Christians might have given in long before he did. But why did a man of such courage wind up playing the coward? Why did it take the cock's crow to remind him of his failure so that "he broke down and wept?" Were there conditions which could have enabled him to be brave to the end of that trial? The account suggests at least four reasons, and they are lessons for us too as we try to live and witness to our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. PETER SLEPT WHEN HE WAS TOLD TO WATCH AND PRAY. From the upper room supper, Jesus led His disciples to a familiar spot across a little valley from Jerusalem...the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Leaving the others, Jesus took Peter, James, and John further into the garden and commanded them to "watch and pray." Jesus went on alone and agonized in prayer to His Father, knowing that the ordeal of the cross was only hours away. "Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this

cup from Me; yet not what I will but what Thou wilt." So intense were His feelings that Luke records that His sweat was like drops of blood falling on the ground. Coming out to the three, Jesus found them sleeping and said to Peter: "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Naturally Peter and the others were tired after a day in the big city with Jesus and the emotional strain of the tensions building up about Him. But Jesus had given him a special responsibility to watch and pray, and Peter had gone to sleep instead. When a soldier is put on guard, a sentinel in the night, to watch for the enemy who might surprise an encampment of soldiers, he must stay awake. Under wartime conditions he can be shot on the spot if he goes to sleep at that post. Jesus was in great distress of mind and full of grief, something Peter could not have failed to detect. He wanted the support of His disciples. He wanted to be able to count on them in the hour of trial. So He commanded "Watch and pray." But Peter slept, not once, but a second time, and still a third time.

Here is the first reason Peter failed. God would have strengthened him for the ordeal ahead, had he prayed. He would have shown Peter how to act and what to say. Rather than denying Jesus, he would have defended his Lord. God would have built up his spiritual reserves to resist temptation. Here is a lesson for each of us in facing the tasks of each day. Unless our spiritual batteries are kept charged through prayer, we cannot expect top performance in times of need. Prayer is not confined to those formal times in worship services, or asking the blessing at meal-time...it is the constant attitude of communicating with God all our needs and desires and seeking His will as Jesus did that night, and as Peter did not. If the Son of God felt the need of prayer on a night like that, surely ordinary men like Peter or you and me have greater need to remember the admonition of Paul: "Pray without ceasing." We are reminded of phrases from a familiar hymn:

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged; Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.

2. PETER TRIED TO DEFEND JESUS IN HIS OWN STRENGTH. When Jesus found the disciples sleeping the third time, He announced that the time had come and He would be betrayed. Shortly afterwards Judas Iscariot came leading a mob with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus. Because the Roman guards who came along did not know Jesus, Judas had arranged to kiss Jesus as a signal to identify Him. There was confusion and scuffling in the dark, people were hard to identify, but Peter drew his sword and

bravely struck out, cutting off the ear of Malchus, a slave of the high priest. Yet, was this bravery? Perhaps it was more like foolishness. Peter was a fisherman and knew all about boats and fishing tackle, but he was no military man. A squad of tough seasoned Roman soldiers, trained to kill, experienced fighters, could have finished him off in a moment and there could have been a blood-bath. And why strike the slave of the high priest anyhow, except by accident? Jesus cured the slave, but all in all it was an act of foolish bravado on Peter's part which could have had serious consequences.

The trouble was that Peter was acting in his own strength. Had he prayed as he should have, he would have been "strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might" but instead he tried to battle for the Lord in His own strength. Over confidence in his own determination had caused him to claim that he would never deny his Lord. Here is the second lesson for us to learn. When we do the Lord's work, we will surely fail if we attempt it in our own strength. Some with great financial wealth think they can do the Lord's work for Him by building churches, supporting orphanages, or by other good deeds using their money. Others have special talents or gifted minds and think that by their cleverness they will accomplish great things for the Lord. But trusting our own powers, whatever they may be, dooms us to failure. An ancient prophet wrote: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." God expects us to use all the gifts He bestows on us, but in the long run, the victory is not by our own strength, but through the power He gives, especially that of His Holy Spirit...present and active and working in our lives.

3. PETER FOLLOWED JESUS AT A DISTANCE. As Jesus was led into Jerusalem, Peter followed Him at a distance. With the possible exception of John, all the other disciples faded away into the darkness. But Peter followed at a distance. Already fear was getting a grip on him. By staying far enough behind not to be seen, he could keep an eye on what was happening without exposing himself to danger. Here was his third mistake. Had Peter stuck right with his Master, it would have been impossible to deny that he knew Him. Everyone would immediately recognize him as a disciple and there would be no way Peter could claim otherwise. But more than that, with such a Companion close by, Peter would have derived strength from Him. Watching how Jesus faced danger, how He breathed quiet authority, how He was determined to do the will of His Father even though it meant death on the cross...all this would have given Peter courage. Something of the life of Jesus Himself would have flowed into his life.

We Christians must remember this too. Following Jesus from a distance does not work. The young person living at home may easily attend church and live a Christian



life, but when he goes off to work elsewhere in a big city, or study in a university, or serve in the military...how easy to follow Jesus at a distance. Or when one is on vacation, on a long trip away from usual surroundings where it is easy to keep the faith, how easily we are tempted to conceal the fact that we are followers of Christ. Admission of our Christian faith could bring discrimination or ridicule...maybe even persecution...so we just follow Jesus at a distance hoping no one will notice. But Jesus has said, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me; and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." (Jn. 15:5) Peter would have been encouraged, cheered, and strengthened had he been close to His beloved Master. Instead he followed at a distance.

4. PETER KEPT COMPANY WITH ENEMIES OF JESUS. Following the unruly mob, Peter entered the courtyard of the high priest where Jesus was submitted to a mock trial. Servants, soldiers, and curious spectators huddled about a fire near the gate, because at 2600 feet altitude, it was cool at night in Jerusalem. Peter stood there warming himself, but because he was not one of the usual crowd, a maid noticed him and remarked, "You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene." At that moment Peter broke his promise to his Lord. He didn't just say, "No!" but denied any knowledge of Jesus vehemently. Even when the cock crowed once, it failed to remind him of Jesus' prediction. Again the maid accused him of association with Jesus, and he denied the second time. By now, everyone recognized his Galilean accent and someone said, "Surely you are one of them," and this time Peter denied with cursing and swearing, "I know not this man of whom you speak." At that moment the cock crowed a second time, and Luke tells us that Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Doesn't this suggest that Jesus had been watching Peter all along...and that He sadly watches us even when we fail Him, and prays for us in those moments? Only Peter could have known about that look, and later often recounted with great sorrow that look of love and forgiveness at the moment of his failure. Overcome with remorse, he went out and wept bitterly.

Peter's failure came while he kept company with people who did not know Jesus, did not believe in Him, and perhaps hated Him. Had Peter been with the other disciples who loved Jesus, or with those women who so faithfully attended the Master to the very end...he would never have denied Him. But he was with the wrong crowd, people who were callous, scoffing, ribald, irreverent, unbelieving. In such a situation it was easy to fail...Peter denied knowing Jesus at all. Isn't this the fourth reason he failed. He had slept when he should have prayed, he had trusted his own strength to win battles for his Lord, he had followed Jesus at a distance, and now he was with the wrong crowd.

How easy, especially for young people, to fall into this error. True, as Christians we cannot live in isolation as hermits, or in the seclusion of a monastery, but we must live out in the world as salt and light bearing witness to the love and saving power of the Saviour. But when it comes to choosing our constant companions, our close friends...then let them be those who love the Lord and seek to live for Him. As a father, I know how happy we are to know that our children are keeping company with Christian friends. Were it otherwise, how anguished we would be! But to know that they are with those who share a common Christian faith, who love the Lord, who delight to worship in His house, who want to serve Him, and whose times of fun and recreation are in this kind of company gives us joy. I am sure too that our Father in heaven is equally happy to know that His children are with the right crowd. Perhaps most important of all is the matter of a choice of a life-long mate...when joined with another Christian how much more secure is faithfulness to the Lord of that home! Supremely, within the church we find mutual support and strength to uphold our commitment to the Savior while in the fellowship of Christian friends who are walking with the Lord. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

CONCLUSION. Fortunately we know about Peter later on. He failed, and he wept bitter tears of anguish and repentance. But three days later on resurrection morning the angel standing by the empty garden tomb where Jesus had been buried, gave three women a special message for Peter: "Go, tell His disciples AND PETER...he (Jesus) is going before you into Galilee." That special word signaled to Peter that Jesus loved and forgave him. Soon the two met on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where three times Jesus asked: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" And three times, Peter declared his love for the Master. There were three denials, and now three affirmations of love and loyalty. What had happened in the meantime? Simply that Peter had repented and had been forgiven.

In spite of everything, there are times when we are tempted and fail our Lord...perhaps not in the way Peter did by denial, but still a failure. And just as we can learn from Peter's failures, so we can learn from his repentance, that forgiveness is sure from our loving Lord. Proof of that forgiveness was shown in that each time Peter affirmed his love for Jesus, the Master then committed to him even greater responsibility for His work:..."Tend my lambs," "Shepherd my sheep," "Tend my sheep." As Jesus was willing to intrust greater responsibilities to a disciple who had failed so flagrantly but repented so deeply, so He wills to commit His work to erring but repentant followers. But best of all, that we may learn from Peter's failures these four lessons: (1) to "watch and pray that we enter not into



temptation," (2) to rely on the power of God's Holy Spirit instead of our own strength, (3) to walk closely with Jesus every step of every day, and (4) to keep company with those who love and follow our Lord.

God of pity, God of grace,  
When we humbly seek Thy face,  
Bend from heav'n Thy dwelling place;  
Hear, forgive, and save.

Should we wander from Thy fold,  
And our love to Thee grow cold,  
With a pitying eye behold;  
Lord, forgive and save.

When Thy love our hearts shall fill,  
And we long to do Thy will,  
Turning to Thy holy hill,  
Lord, accept and save.

Acts 13:13 Turned back. Why? 15B says "not because of homesickness, or anxiety for his mother's safety, or home duties, or the desire to rejoin Peter, or fear of the home people incident to the journey, but rather because he objected to the offer of salvation to the Gentiles on condition of faith alone."

① Mark's family were Hebrews of the Hebrews

② In Acts 13:5+13 given only Hebrew name - nothing intended Paul so much as this question

③ Sergius Paulus - became believer - at this point Saul became Paul and became leader which Mark resented and near Barnabas had disagreements about policy (Gal 2:13) ←

Acts 15:39 - 2nd journey - now called Mark (Roman name) - may have been Luke's quiet way of indicating Mark had changed conviction after council at Jerusalem

Eleven years later - Col 4:10 & Philm 24 - at Rome with Paul among faithful few among Jewish Christians who stood by Paul. Branch is healed. "fellow-worker" a great "comfort" to him

Col 4:10 may imply a visit to Asia Minor and Colossae  
I Pet 5:13. Could Mark have gone to Babylon with Peter?

II Tim 4:11 after Babylon → Asia Minor → Paul asks Timothy (who is at Ephesus) to pick up Mark and bring him to Rome.  
saying "he is useful to me for service"

Tradition Close attendant + interpreter of Peter  
Remained in Egypt after death of Barnabas  
and then to Alexandria + founded ch. there  
became its first bishop + died or was  
martyred in 5th year of Nero (62-63)  
815 AD Venetian soldiers stole his  
remains + buried under St Mark's in Venice

nearish approach to an eye witness

John - Jewish name, Mark Roman

Acts 12:25 - perhaps assumed Rom. name in Greek city Antioch

" body of Rom citizenship (south hall)  
(consistent with standing of family)

Molter Mary Acts 12:12 - house hers, father dead (?)

large house (large room + porch), slave, suggests wealth  
possibly like other zealous Jews, ~~rich~~ became rich  
in outside world + retired to Jerusalem

coming to Barnabas (Col 4:10) - possibly Mary's  
former home. young man in 14:51-52

Consistent with Peter's personal influence 1 Pet 5:13

had won a large place of esteem of the brethren  
as shown by being chosen to go with B+S  
Antioch a little later

His home a resort for Christmas so had opportunity to  
become acquainted with other leaders <sup>James, John</sup> ~~James, John~~

Chosen to go with B+S. - coming of B as "minister" or <sup>perhaps</sup> ~~perhaps~~  
or attendant - possibly a teacher in new church.  
or also preaching as a missionary. More likely  
personal service - role of a business agent.

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Acts 12:12 When (Peter) realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

Acts 12:25 Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

Acts ~~15:36~~ 13:5 And when they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.

Acts 13:13 Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 15:37 And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also.

But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

Col. 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him).

II Tim. 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

Philemon 23 Ephaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers.

I Peter 5:13 Who who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark.

? ~~XXXX~~ Mark 14:51 And a certain young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him.

But he left the linen sheet behind, and escaped naked.