

# Authority Without Apology

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**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 10:7-11

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Would you turn in your Bibles, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter 10? We are going to be reading from verse seven in that chapter this morning.

Paul says in verse seven:

Do not look at things according to the outward appearance. If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself. That just as he is Christ's even so we are Christ's. For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—lest I seem to terrify you by letters. "For the letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.<sup>1</sup>

All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.  
The grass withers, And its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD  
endures forever.<sup>2</sup>

My sermon's title this morning is "Authority Without Apology."

I remind you that Paul is defending himself in these chapters and he is defending himself for the purpose of protecting the Corinthians from the deception of the false teachers that were in their midst. He had in the previous verses called believers to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.<sup>3</sup> That means bringing everything into submission to what God has said.

You know, we can hear these words and still not apply them to our own lives, apply them to how we think about things, how we imagine things and what we perceive things to be. Our danger is that we continue to think about all things according to our traditions and our experience, the things that we have experienced over time and what we have been

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:7-11

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 1:24-25

<sup>3</sup> See 2 Corinthians 10:5

taught over time. We continue to still feel confident that that is an adequate foundation to weigh up, to judge and to evaluate.

Paul's accusers were saying that though he called himself an apostle, he had no authority from God for this office. Thus, his teaching was merely coming from his own mind.

The Corinthian believers were continuing to be influenced by the arguments of these false teachers that were in their midst. They were influenced. Yes, they had had a major turning now back to Paul where they once again embraced him and his authority, but they were still being undermined and influenced by these false teachers that were in Corinth. Paul wasn't in Corinth. He was somewhere else and he is writing to them. And these false teachers continue to do their undermining of Paul's position and Paul's authority.

And though the Corinthians said they believed in Paul, they also were believing the lies to a certain degree or being influenced by the lies that these false teachers were saying about the apostle Paul. And they were trying to undermine Paul's authority so that they could take control of the Corinthians themselves.

Paul concern was how to effectively deal with these lies and protect the Corinthians by preventing them from turning against him again or becoming dull to his instructions.

“So how do I protect them? How do I deal with these lies that are being said about me?”

And, thus, he says in verse seven, “Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?”<sup>4</sup>

I am of the opinion that Paul is addressing the Corinthian believers and not writing at this stage to the false teachers. Some commentators feel that he is addressing the false teachers directly. I do not believe he is doing that. I believe he is still writing to the believers. I believe he refers to the false teachers and, thus, they are brought into the picture, but I don't believe he is kind of speaking to them, per se. I think the flow is much easier if we keep the believers in Paul's focus and in Paul's sights.

Paul's apostleship was under fire in Corinth. But how was it possible to attack the apostle Paul? How do you attack the apostle Paul? The same way people attack God's Word today. They throw off God's absolute authority and revelation by using man made criteria to judge it. They evaluate the authority of God by human tradition, by human understanding and by human perception of what should and shouldn't be. They bring God's absolute authority and subject it to man's wisdom. They make man made criteria to judge it. They evaluate it according to human standards. And then they find it wanting. They find holes in God's revelation because they have brought man's wisdom to it and said, “Huh, this doesn't make sense. This doesn't seem to tie up.”

Thus, people come with a...they grate. They think this is the great slam dunk for the atheists will use it.

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:7

“Well, if God is all loving and all powerful how come there is evil in the world and suffering? Huh. I have got you there.”

Or, “Since our scientific laboratories say that this bone is 50 billion years old, then creation, the creation account and the age of the earth revealed in Scripture is wrong.”

So we bring this external standard, this appearance, something that appears to be good according to man’s wisdom and we bring this wisdom and find the Word of God wanting according to it. That is judging according to outward appearances.

And Paul is warning, “Do you judge?” He is saying, “You must not judge according to outward appearances.” He is saying, “Oh, is this how you are judging? My authority is being shaken in your minds because you are using an outward appearance, you are using an outward standard in order to evaluate my position of who I am and what I am doing in the kingdom.”

Paul is being judged by outward things, man made criteria. And when this criteria was used, he was found to be wanting.

“Paul does not measure up to the standard he should be, therefore you should not trust his word.”

That is what the professor is trying to do all the time in the universities when they try and undermine the Word of God. They try and find it wanting for some.

“It does not measure up to our scientific intelligence, the Word of God, and therefore you should not trust the Word of God.”

They are doing the same thing that was being done to Paul.

We know from verse 10 that he didn’t have the eloquence that this human standard demanded for an apostle. They found him...he just didn’t measure up to the great eloquence that he should have had.

“Don’t you think,” they argued, “that if he was really an apostle that his communicative skills would have been stunning? Surely, surely he would have been a stunning speaker, communicator. I mean you would have just sat there and said, ‘Oh, man.’”

He wasn’t like that.

“Surely to be God’s mouthpiece his abilities should be mesmerizing. He could have just held us gripped. Any time he opened his mouth we should have just been spellbound by what came out. His use of words and ability to string breathtaking sentences together should have been greatly advanced if he was an apostle. And, unfortunately, we have

heard him speak and we know he is not like that. Therefore we conclude he cannot be an apostle.”

That’s a pretty solid argument in my book.

“I mean think about it. If he was truly speaking God’s words, then the God who created language, the God who created his tongue made all these things, surely he would make Paul’s speech thrilling. If his verbal communication was not riveting and awe inspiring, then surely that indicated he was not God’s apostle.”

People still judge like this today. We are attracted to the person who has the greatest charisma. We are attracted to the person who can send chills down our back.

“Whoa. That was good. He really got me going, that guy.”

You know, like somebody like Hitler. He was really great and doing that. He could whip that crowd into a frenzy. He could get them chanting and promoting slogans and get them just full of goose bumps everywhere.

“It doesn’t matter what he does. It doesn’t matter what he believes about other things. It doesn’t matter his ideas on those matters. It doesn’t really matter about his whole worldview. He just sends me going. Just listen to how he can grip a crowd and wow them. And that means he is something great.”

In the case of Paul, due to some man made criteria he was despised in the eyes of the false apostles. They held up this man made standard and said that Paul didn’t measure up to the necessary level required for an apostle and, therefore, since he claimed to be an apostle, he was clearly that when he didn’t clearly meet the requirements he must be a deceiver.

You see, they make the false standard. They then bring the standard and evaluate Paul. And since he doesn’t measure up to the false standard they say he cannot be an apostle. It is this...that is a foolproof argument, don’t you think?

“Deceivers cannot be believers,” they argue.

This much is true. They cannot. They cannot. But is their criteria the way they arrived at the fact that he is a deceiver, was that correct?

What Paul asked, however, was, “How do we determine who is and who isn’t a deceiver?”

In other words, by what standard, by whose standard do we use? That is what Paul points them back. “Are you judging according to outward things? Is that what you are using?”

Remember, he has just come out of, “Bring every thought captive in obedience to Christ,”<sup>5</sup> the verses prior to this. He has just come out of that sentence and he is saying, “Now, are you using...are you judging according to outward appearances?”

You see, he is defending himself here and he is defending himself against specific accusations. Paul says that we can only know something when we start with God’s Word. That is the only standard that can be trusted.

“You say that you are a believer,” so he is asking the Corinthians now. “You say you are a believer. Good. I’m glad you say that. How do you know? How do you know?” That’s his question. “How do you know? You say you are a believer. How do you know?”

“Well, I...I love Jesus.”

Paul would say, “So what? You love Jesus.”

The right answer is, say, “I know I am a believer because I believe what the Scriptures say about me, that I am a sinner, I am in need of redemption, I cannot save myself. I believe what the Scriptures say about Jesus Christ that he is the only one who can save sinners. I believe what the Scriptures say that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ when I trust in that, that I am saved. That is why I am a believer.”

Ok, now we know.

Now Paul...what Paul is doing is establishing the foundation. There is only one foundation that you can give me any authority from, that you can give me anything that is true or saying anything that is true; and that is God’s Word. And he is pushing them to this foundation by the question he asks in verse seven. It is only what Christ has accomplished, his work on my behalf and how God has made reconciliation with him possible through faith in Christ’s perfect obedience. When I believe that based on Scripture then I can say, “Ok, now, now I am understanding, yes I am a Christian because I believe this. I wholeheartedly embrace that. I know that I am a believer because my profession ties up with God’s revelation and the Spirit bears witness with my Spirit that I am a child of God. That is what the Bible says and my experience and understanding are subject to that or resting upon that.”

You see, there is your foundation.

You are saying, “Well, how do you know?”

I point you to the Scriptures. This is what the Scriptures say and therefore this is what I am standing on. Therefore I know.

There is no way to know that you are saved other than by the testimony that God has given us and preserved as Scripture. There is no other standard whereby any truth can be

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<sup>5</sup> See 2 Corinthians 10:5

known. Truth about salvation or truth about right and wrong in any aspect of life, we cannot know it unless we are starting and resting upon Scripture. This is the foundation why I am doing this or why I think this is right true.

See, Paul claimed to bring direct revelation from Christ and, thus, spoke with absolute authority. You cannot be a believer and claim to bring new divine revelation if that is not true. If you come to me and say you are bringing me divine revelation I have question marks about your standing with Christ. I do because I believe the Scriptures show that that is not possible. You can bring me the Word of God and you can show me in the Scriptures what God's Word is, but you cannot bring me divine revelation.

Now the apostle Paul did. He was chosen by God and used by God to bring divine revelation, bring new revelation to the body of Christ. And Paul claimed to do that without apology. I bring this revelation. Paul was either a true apostle or a deceiver. Anyone who claims to be bringing God's revelation when all he is bringing is his own revelation is a deceiver and he is deceived.

Now Paul argues that the only way for the Corinthians to know for sure that they were believers, to know within themselves that they belonged to Christ was by buying to the Scriptures and what the Scriptures said on this matter.

So when you allow the light of God's truth to search your heart and give you the assurance about all things and that that rests upon God's authority and biblical authority, then you are convinced in yourself that your thoughts are captive to Christ. The only assurance a person can have that they belong to Christ is if their thoughts about all this are brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

"I am bound to Christ."

How do you know this?

"The Word of God says."

How do you know that?

"The Word of God says."

Paul says, "Ok." This is his argument in verses eight and nine which I am getting ahead of myself, but we will get there. Paul says, "Ok, just as you arrived in yourselves at the conviction that you belong to Christ, well, if you use that same process of arriving at truth you will see that just as you belong to Christ so do we," Paul and his team.

How do you know you are a believer? Because of the Word of God, ok. "If you use that same standard when you are evaluating me, the Word of God, you will see that I am the same as you. I am as in Christ as you are in Christ."

You see, Paul is forcing them to be consistent in determining what is true and how they can know what is true. It is only God's Word preserved as Scripture that can show us this. Thus, to find fault with Paul is to find fault with God's Word. And to find fault with God's Word means you are judging according to appearances, that is, according to man made standards and customs.

Paul has challenged them. "Why are you using man made standards? Because if you are not and you are using the Word of God then what you believe about yourself you are going to arrive at the same conclusion about me and what I have said."

So he is calling on them to be consistent. We are not to evaluate God's Word according to our opinions and thoughts, but rather to bring our thoughts into subjection to every word from God's mouth. You might be able to find fault with Paul's lack of eloquence.

Paul was not an incompetent speaker. He wasn't incompetent, but he refused to glory in man's finely honed, exquisitely articulated speeches that would wow audiences with human skill. Paul refused to follow this path of human pride and accomplishment when he told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter two:

I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.<sup>6</sup>

I refuse to get into that eloquence, this Greek philosophical pride and arrogance of perfecting the speech and wowing the audience with fancy words. The power of God is in his Spirit working with his truth, not with our perfectly timed pauses, our nuanced exclamations and our subtly woven sentence structure. That is now where the power of God resides. The power resides in the truth and we proclaim the truth, not manipulate the situation and try and think that if I can just perfect this in some kind of way then the power of God is going to flow.

If you truly hope in the power of God then you will place little importance upon that which tantalizes and exalts man and rather spend your time making sure that your thoughts are fully submitted to God's truth. It is the truth that sets people free and God's Word is the truth Jesus told us.

In what does your hope rest and trust? Is it the truth? This is the truth, as simple, as earthly, as plainly as that. It is the truth.

You see, Paul shows us a very simple, though powerful, apologetic as he is dealing with the Corinthians. The Corinthians have a problem with him because of the lies that are being said. And he is defending himself in a presuppositional way which means he has a starting place which is Scripture. This is where I start. I don't start out there. I don't start with this fancy plan. I don't start with a scientific investigation. I don't start with any conclusions that man has. I start with Scripture. I stand upon Scripture. That is my

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:2, 4

absolute authority. That is my only authority. That is where I begin and that is where I end presuppositionally in that sense. I am presupposing the authority of Scripture. That is my starting point for knowing anything that is true, Scripture. If I do not start on Scripture I cannot know anything truly. I can know things about it, but I cannot know it truly.

That is the first point in his apologetic. His second point is to be—I love this term—epistemologically self conscious. It's just a fancy term for something very simple. It means you are...you know what you know and you are self conscious about it, you know. I am self consciously going to apply all my knowledge on everything I learn. I am going to get that from the Scriptures. Everything you claim to be true is truly derived from and resting upon God's revelation preserved as Scripture.

That means if you have no clear scriptural foundation for something you are claiming to be true, then you are being inconsistent. So I am going to self consciously say everything I am going to arrive at, every understanding I am going to hold to, everything I am going to say is true. I am going to self consciously say, "Where is the Scripture for this? Where is the scriptural foundations for this position?"

You see, otherwise if we don't do that then we are being inconsistent. We are saying, "Well, we stand on the Scriptures self consciously when we want to. And when we don't it doesn't really matter."

And Paul says you cannot do that to the...you see the Corinthians were finding fault with Paul, with his credentials, with something. And he is saying, "No, but if you are going to evaluate yourself as a Christian where do you go to?"

They say, "The Scriptures."

He says, "Well, when you are evaluating me where are you going to go to?" He is saying, "You have got to go to the Scriptures."

There is only one starting place for all knowledge, for all things that we can know. The only way to know that you are truly in Christ is by evaluating your life and thoughts by God's Word. However, this doesn't just have to do with knowing whether you are in Christ or not because it is only...the only way to know anything truly, by submitting to and understanding everything in the light of Scripture. That's why...that's why government school that rejects God cannot teach true knowledge. They could tell you some things about this tree here. They could tell you some things about it. But they don't truly understand a tree. They don't know why it is there. They don't know its origin. They don't know what its purpose is. They can't tell you about it in any fundamental, truthful way. To take God out of the picture and his...what he has revealed... On this we are understanding everything we own or understand based upon God's Word then we cannot know it truly.



So that's Paul's point. He is challenging the Corinthians to do that. He says in verses eight and nine:

For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—lest I seem to terrify you by letters.<sup>7</sup>

Paul is going to be dealing with the idea of boasting or glorying in something and we will look at that in some future sermons. We won't focus on that today. He brings it out more later. But this boasting has the potential to be employed both positively or negatively. You can boast in a wrong way and you can boast in a good way.

In the passage we are looking at today Paul is suggesting that his claim to have equal standing with the Corinthians in the Lord is somewhat of a boast. "I have boasted in that. I am in the same footing as you." He is kind of saying that that is kind of a boasting. He said, "I could even boast more. I could even boast above that and beyond that and boast about the authority that I have in Christ," he says in verse eight. "So if I could...If I decide to boast more I could."

You see, Paul could easily boast about this authority that Christ gave him, this apostolic authority for the purpose of building up and not tearing down the Corinthians. This was divine authority given to him which is far greater than anything given to the Corinthians. Paul could exalt this fact.

He says, "If I want to boast more I could point to the authority given to me. If this is what it is about, boasting, I could do it."

Remember, Paul is being criticized for his strong letters. And also accused for being inconsistent or timid in person in comparison to his strong letters. So his letters were very powerful. But when he came in person he was very timid. He was too scared to say the things that he should have said, so to speak.

The bottom line for Paul's accusers was that he should have said what he said in his letters...he shouldn't have said what he said in his letters. They were harsh, they were unloving and they were inappropriate.

Paul says in response, "I could boast more than merely being in Christ and talk about the authority Christ has given me. But this authority is for the purpose of building up and not tearing you down."

The Corinthians were interpreting Paul's letters as offensive. They were interpreting them as tearing us down. "You are terrifying us. You are making us afraid. You are tearing us down by these letters." That is what the liars were saying about these letters. And the Corinthians apparently were now buying into these lies.

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:8-9

“However, I remind you that the authority that I have,” Paul says, “comes from Christ.” He is reminding them. “And, thus, I am responsible to him for what I do. And I am responsible to him to act in this way. I am responsible to use my authority in this way, the way I sent these strong letters to you.”

The Corinthians were misinterpreting the use of Paul’s authority. They were being tempted to regard it as destroying them rather than preserving them.

See, this is like that rebellious trying to side step authority. “You are trying to destroy me.”

Children, don’t interpret your parents authority like that.

“What are you trying to do? You are trying to destroy me.”

There is a place for strong authority. Paul, as we have seen many times already, would not apologize for his authority. He says here that he has this authority from Christ. He then asks at the end of verse eight and into verse eight—which, I tell you, is an extremely difficult sentence to translate. And as many commentators as you will read you will get that same opinion. It is extremely difficult. But I am not going to get stuck on the difficulties. I am just going to explain how I understand it.

So he asks, Paul asks, in the light of this authority that has been given to him by Christ, if he should be discredited or put to shame in God’s service... “I have been given this authority. Should I be put to shame?”

Let me try and explain what he is meaning there. His accusers were making much of the fact that he had frightened the Corinthians. In fact, it...but as we know it was the terror of his letters that brought them back to Paul. Ok, we know that is a fact. Whoa. They woke up. They were given, as Verdie would say, “A two by four across the forehead.” And that kind of woke them up and brought them to their senses.

Paul scared these believers. There is no doubt about it. You see, the Calvinist seeks the warnings in Scripture as coming from a loving Father who uses them to preserve his children. When we are told, “Work out salvation with fear and trembling,”<sup>8</sup> we do not see that as inconsistent with eternal security. That’s the way God deals with us, the way he speaks to us. God is a consuming fire.<sup>9</sup> And because of this we should be fearful about walking in darkness.

I want you to stay away from sin and darkness. Why? Because God is a consuming fire. Fear is one of the means God uses to safeguard his elect. Warnings in Scripture are not inconsistent with the perseverance of the saints. Warnings are good. Fear is good.

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<sup>8</sup> See Philippians 2:12

<sup>9</sup> See Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29

Children, to fear your parents is something that is good. It is God's means to use to deliver you from foolishness and rebellion and blindness that you could be caught up in. I fear my parents and to fear your parents is a good thing because it protects you and preserves you.

Wow. If my dad found out about this would I... I'm not going to do that.

This is...there is wisdom in that. There is wisdom to submitting to that fear and saying, "You know, that is showing me this is a foolish path to be on." But the fear, sometimes, is the action or the emotion that God uses in order to bring you to your senses.

You should have been saying, "That's wrong," before you thought about, "What is my dad going to say about this?" It is rather, "This is wrong because it is wrong." But God uses and because of our weakness and our own foolishness he uses the fear of men as well in the sense of our parents or the fear in the Church and even the fear of the state. That is why the state carries the sword for execution so that people are fearful to murder. They are fearful to rape because the sword is there as a means of execution for those who do these things. When you take away the sword you remove the fear.

We are not going to get side tracked at this stage.

But God uses the warnings in Scripture. They are not inconsistent with the perseverance of the saints. God warns us time and time again in Scripture and we need to heed those warnings.

Paul, though being criticized for terrifying the Corinthians does not apologize for scaring them. Rather, he points to his God given authority whereby he could authoritatively do this. And he explains what its purpose was. It was to build up.

He says, "If you think this is for destroying you, then you are mistaken and you need to have your mind renewed according to God's truth. If you think what I said in those letters is destroying you, you need to be renewed in your thinking about it."

And, thus, children, as well, in the same way, don't think your parents' authority is there to destroy you. As they act with God's authority in a godly way, it is there to preserve you, to protect you and to make you stronger.

Paul argues saying, "You want me to apologize for what I wrote to you and let you off the hook."

That is basically what the Corinthians were wanting. "We want you to retract, in a sense, to water down what you said."

But in the light of the authority that Paul claimed he had from Christ to do this very thing he would be discredited or put to shame. If he refused to write as he did when I fail to uphold that same truth he would put himself to shame.

He says, as I understand at the end of verse eight and verse nine, “Shall I be put to shame in order that I appear not to frighten you with letters?”

In other words, if Paul was to write in such a way that didn't strongly challenge their foolishness and show them the extreme dangers of the path they were on this would shame him because he would be contradicting Christ. It would shame him because he would do what...he would not be doing what his authority required him to do.

When you have authority to do something and you refuse to do it you are bringing shame upon yourself. He had received authority from Christ for this purpose of building and not tearing down. And in this context we see that his strong letters were not tearing down, but building up the Corinthians. It would be shameful for him to weaken his previous challenge and realign his position in a way that gives the impression... This is what he is saying, “Do you want me to give the impression that I never intended my letters to terrify you? I intended you to be fearful.”

He is not apologizing for that authority.

And verse 11, I believe, clearly shows—we are not jumping there yet. I am just pointing that to your attention—clearly shows that Paul does not apologize for his strong letters and nor does he water down his message, but rather he says, “When I come in person, I am going to be as strong as my letters.”

So he is not apologizing for anything. He is saying, “If you need me to be strong, I am going to be strong when I come in person and challenge you.”

Paul's opponents sought to blunt the sharp edge of his letters by saying that his letters were inconsistent with his presence. Paul says that he would be shamed if he didn't wield the authority given to him by Christ as he had done in his letters and that they are to be...fully expect him to wield the same kind of authority in person when he next came to Corinth.

You see, godly authority when exercised in accordance with God's truth, even when it is firm and causes fear, it is building. It is building. It is not tearing down. When you are made afraid, when you are brought face to face with the fear of God that is building the kingdom. It is building you. It is strengthening you as you walk in the Lord, as you obey the Lord, as you do the Lord's will.

Parents, if our children in their disobedience to our authority do not fear our authority, we are being put to shame. We are being put to shame. That is what Paul says. I shall not be put to shame. We are shaming our office and we are shaming our king.

It is not easy to exercise godly authority in an age that despises authority and that despises absolute moral standards. We live in a time when everyone wants to do what is right in their own eyes. Both those who are in positions of authority and those who are

under authority all want to do what is right in their own eyes. They both refuse to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Do you respect godly authority? Do you wield the authority that God has given to you in a godly way? God holds us accountable to do that. Paul refused to apologize for it. He had authority without apology and he used it in a godly way.

When the Church refuses to uphold God's truth and does not expose the foolishness and rebellion of the day, those in authority are put to shame. They are discredited. That's another way you could translate this being put to shame, that is to be discredited. When they do not uphold that standard, when they do not make known the truth of God they are being discredited. When the Church judges according to the standard, to a standard other than Christ's, it is put to shame.

The world we live in that loves its rebellion against God doesn't want to be called to account for its rebellion and, thus, will scream foul. "Foul. How dare you say that. How dare you make those accusations. How dare you put this bondage on me."

And they will say that when the light of God's truth is brought to bear upon their rebellion. They will use these terms that were used against Paul.

"This is so unloving. It is judgmental. It is scary."

They are told by them that the God whom they worship, whom has been fashioned according to their own imagination, "He would not send people to hell. My God wouldn't send people to hell. My God wouldn't discriminate upon the basis of sexual preference. My God wouldn't do that. My God certainly wouldn't say that Jesus Christ is the only way to come to him."

And they seek to dismantle it all because they use a human standard and on and on. They have so many arguments that are so similar to what was being said against Paul.

When we compromise God's eternal, unchanging standards and apologize for his wrath against sin, we shame ourselves. When you realize the power of the media in our day to shape and direct people's thoughts about issues and agendas, then you will appreciate the challenge that faces us in the near future as we seek to uphold God's light and standard against the tidal wave of man's media supported and media justified rebellion. You have got a media system that is in place that is just pouring in support and justification for the rebellion of man against God. And who, I dare you, is going to stand against that?

But we are called to that. Salt and light to say, "No, thus saith the Lord. This is the truth. I shall not apologize for it. I shall not stop terrifying you about it. I shall proclaim it boldly because if I do not, I shall shame myself and I shall shame my King."

Continues in verses 10 and 11. "'For his letters,' they say," this is the accusation that is being spread about Paul.

“His letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.<sup>10</sup>

We basically dealt with these verses last week and have touched upon them again today very briefly. But their meaning is clear in my opinion. I think it is obvious what they are saying. What I want to briefly do is merely point out a couple of things that will help us better understand God's authority.

You see, we are tempted to think that authority comes in packages that are displayed in ways that the world keeps bombarding us with and telling us, “This is what authority looks like. This is what it looks like and therefore you need to measure up to this standard if there is going to be authority.”

And our minds get influenced by that and we start to think, “Well, what is authority. What does it look like?” And then we seek to recognize it, but we are being influenced by the world's perception and definition and packaging of authority.

You see, Christ's authority is antithetical. It is completely opposite to the world's presentation of authority. Tell me, why was Christ not recognized in his day? Very basically, why not? No glitz. No glitz.

All authority resides in God and, thus, it is according to truth. That is what authority is. Authority is according to truth, not glitz, not pomp and ceremony. It is according to truth, God's truth. That's where authority resides.

Man, on the other hand, is attracted to the pomp and the ceremony, the glitz and the show. This is what impresses man.

You say, “It is not true.”

I say, “Just open your eyes and look around.” That is what impresses man.

You see, God has a decentralized, simple manifestation of authority. What does man want to do? He wants to build a majestic Babel, this massive tower that reaches into heaven. “This is our centralized picture of authority and power and this is going to be where we centralized and this is the authority.” We want to build a structure. And that proves his authority in his own mind.

You see, Christ was a simple nobody and worldly terms. He was a nobody. But he spoke as one with authority and not as the scribes we are told. He spoke with authority because he spoke with the truth. He didn't have all the trappings.

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<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:10-11

You see, real authority resides in the truth, just the truth, not the truth that is wrapped and presented in a certain way. Our confidence is often not in the truth as the truth, but in the structure that presents the truth or represents the truth.

How is the truth presented? Show me the structure and then I am impressed by the structure as opposed to the truth in itself. And there is a great temptation that our minds are pulled away for that.

The more charismatic the speaker, the more authority we feel resides there. It is presented in this more fancy way. The grander the edifice the more authority we impute to it.

Why was Naaman offended by what Elisha told him to do in order to be healed from his leprosy in 2 Kings chapter five? Why was he offended?

Remember, there was this foreign military leader that had leprosy and he went to the people of Israel and he heard from this young girl who was a slave and worked with him that there was a profit in Israel—she was an Israelite—who would be able to heal his leprosy. And thus he goes and asks the King of Israel, “Can you heal me?”

And the king says, “What? You are trying to make war with us.”

And eventually Elisha hears about it and says, “Send him to me.”

And so Naaman goes to the prophet’s very humble, simple house and what does the prophet do? He doesn’t even come out. He sends his servant and he says, “Go tell Naaman what to do. Go and dip yourself seven times in the Jordan River.”

Naaman was incensed. We read in 2 Kings five verse 11, “But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal me.’”<sup>11</sup>

What is the power in? Some kind of manifestation, some kind of incantation as opposed to the Word.

“I told you this is the Word of God. Dip in the river and you will be healed.”

“No. I want this manifestation. I want this pomp. I want this ceremony. I want something that is meaningful.”

He wanted a grand spectacle in order to prove the existence of authority. But this is not God’s way. The way God has ordained to display his authority offends man every time and, thus, man is constantly tempted to create the right atmosphere that he feels is conducive to true authority. He builds his impressive cathedrals and his ostentatious

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<sup>11</sup> 2 Kings 5:11

parliament buildings. And every city wants to build to their own magnificent buildings for the city structure and the city to collect a few more taxes, because that is the picture of authority.

Sinful man finds that his heart warms to the grandiose towers of Babel in both church and state while it grows cold to the simply and even rudely dressed prophet.

How could the refined religious leaders in Christ's day tolerate John the Baptist? You tell me that. How could they possibly tolerate this wild man, unsophisticated, lived in the wilderness, dressed in rough camel hair, ate locusts and wild honey? How could the Word of God reside in his mouth? How could us refined people recognize the authority there? There was nothing grand about him. There was nothing grandiose. And so how can we bow our hearts to that authority?

You see the same line of argumentation was being used by Paul's opponents in order to show that he had no authority. But Paul without apology trounces upon their nonsense, upon their pagan concept of authority. Paul was going to come to Corinth and he was going to come in authority and he was going to proclaim that authority. He was not going to upgrade himself and get a fancy chariot. He was not going to upgrade his clothes. He was not going to upgrade his eloquence, ability and take on some elocution lessons before he came in order to perfect himself so that they would be able to recognize his authority.

"I am coming with the Word of God, that simple truth that is the truth. And I am going to proclaim it to you."

That is the authority. He wasn't going to dazzle the people in his articulate speech. He would not change the biblical concept of authority and truth. He would not allow the focus to be moved off of God and God's revelation and placed upon man's wisdom and man's clever inventions.

Maybe a light flashing laser spectacle would could have here and then you would know there is real authority in this place.

He says, "No. The Word of God is true and that is the authority. And I turn your attention to the Word, to the Scriptures. You bow to that and you humble yourself to that Word."

The authority resides in God's Word and that Word is plain and simple. And the faithful will see and hear that Word.

If your heart is humble to God you will hear that Word clear. You will hear it clearer than anything that comes out of the United Nations. You will hear it clearer than anything that comes out of some cathedral or from the pope speaking from Saint Peter's on a certain day of the year. You will hear it clearer because it is the truth of God's Word and God has ordained that his truth is communicated in that way. It is authority and bowing to his truth, not the trappings of man that man tries to spread around it.



May we not be tempted to try and entertain and dazzle when we present the truth whether in our families or wherever it is. We do not need to dazzle. It is the simple truth that we proclaim, that we communicate. And that is what builds, that is what strengthens. And that gives true foundations to those whom we are speaking to. The power resides in God, in his truth, in his Word, not in the circus show that tries to peddle the truth.

If you believe this, you will not apologize for the simplicity of God's Word and you will not tire of presenting it as the truth without showiness. Either God's Word is living and powerful in itself, or else the life and the power it talks about has to be created by us. But that is a wrong view. We do not have to create that power. We do not have to impute life into the Word of God. The Word of God is life and we are to trust in it. We are to hold in it. We are to proclaim it boldly and without apology.

What are you going to do? What will you trust in? May the Lord give us hearts that are alive to his simple truth. May he give us hearts that recognize and quickly bow to his truth and that don't need Babel like structures in order to believe its authority. Man's passion for grandeur and all it does is corrupts the truth and seduces our hearts from its simplicity. May we understand true authority and may we not apologize for it. And may we, by faith, live in terms of it and then stand and see the salvation of God as we hold that truth, as we proclaim it and as we live by it.

To him be all glory, power and honor both now and forever.

Will you bow your hearts and let us pray?

*Our Great God and King, we thank you for the truth that you have revealed in such great abundance. We thank you for Christ who is the Word. We thank you for the Spirit that has been given in such abundance as well to enable us to understand and apply the Word that you have revealed. And, Father, I pray that you would give us great faith and trust and hope in your Word as truth, that we would bow quickly to it, that we would fully do all that you have said and that we will not look to man's ideas, that we will not trust in man's imagination and that we will not seek a truth that is shrouded with man's wisdom and man's demonstration of grandeur. Give us faith to bow to the simple Word as you have revealed it and may we stand and see the might of your hand as you work through the simple truth. In Christ's name I do pray. Amen.*