

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE SON

John 5:19-30

Key Verse: 5:24

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

In the last passage Jesus said to a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years: “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” With this word, Jesus made the man’s body well. He could get up, pick up his mat and walk, after 38 years of frustration. It was a cause for celebration, even more than when the Red Sox won the World Series. Instead, controversy arose. The Jewish religious leaders suppressed the truth, ignoring the power of God through Jesus, and began to criticize the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath. The man should have defended Jesus. But he became an enemy informant. In fact, his soul was paralyzed by sin; he was unthankful and extremely selfish. Jesus was sorry that this man was not healed spiritually. Nevertheless, Jesus was not discouraged. Jesus looked at his Father God and was strengthened to continue doing the work of God.

In today’s passage Jesus speaks to the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus tells them about the authority of the Son of God. It is to help them accept his word and have eternal life. In America, the word “authority” is not always popular. Our national history contains the seed of rebellion against the authority of the English Crown. Many historians claim that America would have gained freedom inevitably, without waging a bloody war, just as India and Canada did. This may be true. Yet, no one can deny that God has blessed America to be a great missionary-sending country, later a world power nation. Still, the bad influence of a rebellious spirit remains in America. Many young people totally disregard the authority of parents, teachers, or pastors. They want absolute human freedom; it is an illusion. In truth, there is absolute authority in God’s world. God is the Creator. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus has the same authority as God. Jesus’ authority is not like that of a mean boss or an insane dictator. Jesus’ authority can give us eternal life. May God help each of us to accept Jesus’ authority and have eternal life.

First, Jesus is the Son of God who does the work of God (19-23).

As we studied last time, the Jewish religious leaders wanted to charge Jesus with blasphemy for calling God his Father. They were so angry that they wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus could have slipped away and avoided this moment, but he did not. Look at verse 19. “Jesus gave them this answer, ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.’” Jesus refers to himself as “the Son.” Jesus did not speak in the first person, “I,” but deliberately spoke in the third person, “the Son.” It was to emphasize the relationship he had with God. It was a Father and Son relationship. It was an intimate love relationship. Jesus is the Son of God. The Jewish leaders did not understand this. They thought Jesus was making himself equal with God in order to exercise authority as he pleased. This is what the Jewish leaders really wanted to do; it is what the devil does. But Jesus was different. Jesus was one with God. Jesus knew the mind of God and the heart of God. Jesus absolutely obeyed God’s will. When God thought something, Jesus put it into action. When God desired something, Jesus made it a reality. When Jesus healed the paralytic man, it was exactly what God wanted to do. Jesus displayed God’s love for one helpless person. Jesus displayed God’s power to heal and his divine compassion. Jesus did nothing by himself. But Jesus did everything God wanted him to do.

Jesus amazes us. Even though he is the Son of God, he does not exercise his power and authority at random like a spoiled prince. In the movie, “Bruce Almighty,” a man named Bruce suddenly receives the power of God while God goes on vacation for a while. At first, Bruce enjoys exercising God’s power for his own selfish purpose. But as he does so, the entire universe gets messed up. Jesus is not like Bruce. Jesus is God who is full of wisdom and compassion. Yet even Jesus did nothing by himself. Jesus humbly submitted to the will of God. We must learn from Jesus. To be used by God, we must obey God. We must humble ourselves before God like Jesus.

One person feels compelled to do something because he has the position of a leader. Actually, God is working in his fellowship. He must see what God is doing and work together with God. But sometimes he sees only what God is not doing and thinks that people are not growing. Then he panics, thinking he must perform a miracle. But he does not need to perform a miracle, nor can he do so. He must learn how to work with God by listening to God’s word and obeying it. God does his own work through the humble obedience of his servants.

Look at verse 20a. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does." Jesus knew what God was doing because God showed him all he was doing. This reveals the intimate love relationship between the Father and the Son. God shared his secret thoughts, plans and desires with Jesus. We human beings like to keep secrets in our hearts. Sometimes we secretly like someone or secretly plan to do something. Sometimes we may secretly dislike someone. But we only tell the most trusted person these secrets. So it is with God. God holds many secrets in his heart that he reveals only to those he loves. In the Old Testament, there is Father Abraham. God called him when he was an old man. God trained him in faith until he could be called God's friend. Once, God visited his house church. It was a beautiful sanctuary where spiritual order was kept and the love of God was overflowing. God was pleased by Abraham's family and told Abraham his secret: that he was going to bring judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:17ff). Knowing this, Abraham interceded with God in prayer for Lot. God answered his prayer and spared Lot (Gen 19:29).

Jesus wanted to raise his disciples as God's coworkers who could know God's heart and participate in God's work. So Jesus taught them the word of God to elevate their spiritual understanding of God, man and the world. Jesus cleansed them from petty desires and opened their spiritual eyes. Finally, Jesus said in John 15:15, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from the Father I have made known to you." Jesus wants us all to grow in the love of God until we can know God's heart and share God's secrets.

In 2002, Mother Barry gave UBF the prayer topic to raise 100,000 missionaries by the year 2041, especially for Muslim countries, North Korea and China. It seemed impossible. But God is working mightily to fulfill this prayer topic. God opened the "back door" for Muslim evangelism in Kazakhstan. Last week there was a beautiful Bible school in Almaty with the title, "God's love." Eight native shepherds and shepherdesses delivered Bible messages with tears. One of them was Shepherdess Sarah. She had a difficult time as a child because of an abusive uncle. As a Muslim, she cried to Allah for help, but there was no answer. Through one-to-one Bible study with Korean missionaries, she accepted Jesus as her personal Savior. Afterward she was persecuted by her Muslim family members, but she stood firm. She made a decision of faith to marry a man of God and establish a Christian house church. Missionary Gideon Kang, the director of Almaty UBF, prays to send out the growing native leaders to pioneer all the cities of Kazakhstan and other Muslim countries as well. It is amazing work of God. Through Dr. Liz Lincoln's report last Friday, we learned that Turkey is opening to the gospel. It is a kind of "side door" for Muslim evangelism. In addition, God is opening China day by day to the gospel. Even now, several second-generation missionaries from UBF USA are teaching the Bible in China. And we have a great hope for North Korea to open to the gospel very soon. We can participate in this great work of God because God's servants discovered the secrets of God's heart. Each of us must grow to know God's heart and participate in his work.

It is amazing that Jesus gave such a wonderful revelation to the Jewish leaders who were threatening to kill him. Jesus really wanted them to accept the word of God and be saved. Of course, Jesus could feel the hatred and unbelief in their hearts. This would motivate them to kill Jesus on the cross. Yet Jesus knew this was God's will for him. God made Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But death was not the end. Look at verses 20b-21. "Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it." God would raise Jesus from the dead. This is the greatest evidence that Jesus is the Son of God (Ro 1:4). This was the proof of his divine authority (Jn 2:19). Jesus' resurrection is God's victory over sin and death. Jesus became the life-giving Spirit who can give eternal life to anyone who believes in him (1Co 15:45). With his life-giving power, Jesus gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

That's not all. Look at verses 22-23. "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." God has entrusted the task of judging human beings to his Son Jesus Christ. God did this so that Jesus would be honored by men. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus has authority to give life and authority to judge. Jesus is God on earth. How one treats Jesus is precisely how one treats God. No one can go around Jesus and approach God in another way. Muslims cannot go around Jesus to approach God. Jews cannot go around Jesus to approach God. Jesus Christ is the Judge and he is the only way to God. This was a strong warning to the Jewish religious leaders.

Second, Jesus has authority to give eternal life (24-26).

When we consider Jesus' authority, it is really awesome. How does Jesus use this authority? He uses it to give eternal life. Look at verse 24. "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." According to Jesus' words, we can have eternal life at the moment we believe. We can have eternal life right now. How? When we hear his word and believe in God through him.

Martin Luther was once a Catholic monk. He wholeheartedly participated in all the religious disciplines prescribed by the Church. But he always felt like a dead man whose conscience was burdened with guilt. He had no hope and no sense of a bright future. One day, he heard Romans 1:17, "The righteous will live by faith." He believed this word as the word of God. Then he experienced the forgiveness of his sins. He received the gift of eternal life freely from God. After that, Luther had to fight a fierce battle with church politicians. But Luther held on to Romans 1:17 as the absolute word of God. He had assurance of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

When we hear Jesus' word and accept it as the word of God, we have eternal life. This eternal life begins at the moment we believe. Eternal life liberates us from the fear of death and all anxiety. We can have true peace and joy and look forward to a bright future. We can be ever optimistic and hopeful. But without eternal life, all people remain under the power of death. These days many worry about terrorist threats and future calamity. But those who have eternal life are not alarmed. We can pray for North America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Look at verse 25. "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live." Jesus is the source of life. Jesus breathes life into our souls through his word. Sharing the word of life with perishing souls is the most important work in the world today. This week we will have a presidential election. The candidates have raised many important issues. It is our Christian duty to vote according to our conscience. But political leaders cannot give eternal life. Only Jesus gives eternal life through his word. We must share his word with perishing souls.

Third, Jesus has authority to judge (27).

Look at verse 27. "And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man." Here the authority to judge pertains to eternal destiny. The first time Jesus came to this world, he came as a good shepherd. However, after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Even now God is putting everything under Jesus' feet. And a time is coming when Jesus will judge each person according to what he has done.

Look at verses 28-29. "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." At the final judgment, everyone who has ever lived will be present. Jesus will give a word of command and those who are in their graves will come out. Death is not the end. After death, there is judgment, and Jesus is the Judge. Both good and evil, both sinner and saint will stand before him and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Mt 25). There is no mistake in his judgment. It is absolutely right and it is final. "Those who have done good" are those who accepted the gospel as the absolute truth of God and gave their lives to Jesus. They lived for his holy mission and participated in his sufferings. They will be given eternal life in the kingdom of God. "Those who have done evil" does not merely refer to the murderers and the sexually immoral. It refers to those who lived without God in unbelief. They may have seemed to be moral people, but they were men and women of unbelief. No matter how good their lives and actions seemed in light of Confucius' teachings, Socrates' morality, or the American Constitution, without Christ, they are evil in the sight of God. They will be condemned. This is eternal punishment in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

It is important for us to believe the final judgment of God. Without believing the final judgment of God we cannot believe in God properly. The question of many unbelieving people is, "Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?" Without believing the final judgment of God we cannot answer these questions. But the final judgment of God assures us of absolute justice for all mankind.

In this passage we learn that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus has great authority as the Son. It is authority to give life and authority to judge. But Jesus uses his authority to save men. Jesus promises that whoever hears his word and believes in God has eternal life and will not be condemned. May God help each one of us to hear Jesus' word in our hearts as the absolute word of God and be saved. May God help us to share the word of life diligently with perishing souls in our generation.