

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Mark: Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God

Part II: The Perfect Service Of Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God, Mark 1:1-10:52

G. Christ's Work To Disciple Receptive Notorious Sinners Opposite Unbiblical Religious Restrictions (Mark 2:13-17)

I. Introduction

- A. We learned in our first lesson in this series that Mark's Gospel presents the perfect service of God's Perfect Servant, Jesus, with Mark's focus of having rebounded unto upright Christian service from personal failure.
- B. At times such failure arises from avoiding outreach to notorious sinners due to unbiblical religious restrictions, but Mark 2:13-17 tells of Jesus' work to reach notorious sinners who were open to His truth (as follows):

II. Christ's Work To Disciple Receptive Notorious Sinners Opposite Unbiblical Religious Restrictions.

- A. John Mark's choice to leave the mission field in Acts 13:13 is held by some to have been caused by his being offended as a Jerusalem Jew (cf. Acts 12:12) at Paul's new emphasis in his leadership of the missionary team of discipling Gentiles and not Jews as in the Acts 13:4-12 Cyprus ministry, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 388.
- B. At the time, the most influential religious party in Israel, the Pharisees (Ibid., p. 113), were so devoted to the Mosaic Law that they "strictly regulated their lives by the supposedly binding interpretations of it passed down in oral tradition and were meticulous about maintaining ceremonial purity (cf. 7:1-5)," Ibid. One such extra-biblical "rule" was "their pious distinction between 'the righteous' (they themselves) and 'the sinners,'" people not educated in the Law as they were and thus not believed holy enough with whom to fellowship, Ibid.
- C. Jesus however countered such legalistic separation, ministering to great but receptive sinners, Mark 2:13-15:
 - 1. First, Jesus called a notorious but receptive sinner to be one of His disciples, Mark 2:13-14:
 - a. As Jesus ministered by the sea near Capernaum (Mark 2:13, 1), upon passing by a "tax booth," He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting there, and said to him, "Follow me," so Levi obeyed, Mark 2:14 ESV.
 - b. This was a great reach to a notorious sinner no Pharisee would have made: such officials worked for the Gentile rulers over Israel, and in collecting taxes with the power of Rome behind them, these officials regularly worked to extort excessive taxes from the people so they could pocket the excess in personal greed, being very despised by their fellow Hebrews, Ibid., p. 113.
 - c. Nevertheless, Jesus called this notorious thief, and he responded in faith, and was saved, Mark 2:14.
 - 2. Second, Jesus sat and ate with many of Levi's fellow receptive tax collectors and "sinners," people untaught in the Law and considered improper by the Pharisees' for fellowship, Mark 2:15; Ibid.
- D. This mix of Jesus and His disciples with tax collectors and "sinners" at a meal, even though they were open to Jesus' teaching and followed Him, did not please the observing Pharisees, and they asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mark 2:16 ESV)
- E. Jesus heard their question, and, realizing the objection the Pharisees had to His mingling with these notorious sinners who were open to His ministry, He explained: those who were well had no need for a physician, but those who were ill do. Jesus had not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Mark 2:17.
- F. The words, "the righteous" are "used ironically to refer to those who saw themselves as such, namely, the Pharisees (cf. Luke 16:14-15). They saw no need to repent and believe (cf. Mark 1:15)," Ibid. Actually, all men, including the Pharisees, were spiritually in need of Christ's salvation (Matthew 5:20), for one's righteousness had to exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees or he would by no means have eternal life! However, since the Pharisees were not open to Jesus' ministry while the tax collectors and "sinners" were, Jesus mingled with the latter while avoiding the former to fulfill His mission to save the receptive lost.

Lesson: *Though Levi was a notorious sinner at the tax collector booth outside Capernaum, Jesus called him to come follow him and he was saved, and though Levi's tax collector colleagues and other "sinners" were also notorious sinners the Pharisees would avoid, since they heeded Jesus, He mingled with them, eating with them, for the purpose of Christ was to reach the needy, open lost regardless of the legalistic separatism of the Pharisees.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ as the truly loving Savior of the lost, John 3:16. (2) May we realize that He fellowshiped with anyone who heeded Him regardless of their sinful backgrounds, and that as a pattern for us in reaching the world, Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 9:10-18. (3) However, in obedience to Scripture at 2 John 9-11, we must practice "first degree separation" from professing and practicing apostates and "second degree separation" from professing believers who practice lives of sin in violation of Scripture, 2 Thessalonians 3:6 -14.*