

Expository Thoughts On Mark - Mark 6:7-13

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

These verses describe the first sending forth of the apostles to preach. The great Head of the church made proof of His ministers, before He left them alone in the world. He taught them to try their own powers of teaching, and to find out their own weaknesses, while He was yet with them. Thus, on the one hand, He was enabled to correct their mistakes. Thus, on the other, they were trained for the work they were one day to do, and were not novices, when finally left to themselves. Well would it be for the church, if all ministers of the Gospel were prepared for their duty in like manner, and did not so often take up their office untried, unproved, and inexperienced.

Let us observe, in these verses, how our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth His apostles "two by two." Mark is the only evangelist who mentions this fact. It is one that deserves especial notice.

There can be no doubt that this fact is meant to teach us the advantages of Christian company to all who work for Christ. The wise man had good reason for saying, "Two are better than one." (Eccles. 4:9.) Two men together will do more work than two men singly. They will help one another in judgment, and commit fewer mistakes. They will aid one another in difficulties, and less often fail of success. They will stir one another up when tempted to idleness, and less often relapse into indolence and indifference. They will comfort one another in times of trial, and be less often cast down. "Woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up." (Eccles. 4:10.)

It is probable that this principle is not sufficiently remembered in the church of Christ in these latter days. The harvest is undoubtedly great all over the world, both at home and abroad. The laborers are unquestionably few, and the supply of faithful men far less than the demand. The arguments for sending out men "one by one," under existing circumstances, are undeniably strong and weighty. But still the conduct of our Lord in this place is a striking fact. The fact that there is hardly a single case in the Acts, where we find Paul or any other apostle working entirely alone, is another remarkable circumstance. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that if the rule of going forth "two and two" had been more strictly observed, the missionary field would have yielded larger results than it has.

One thing at all events is clear, and that is the duty of all workers for Christ to work together and help one another whenever they can. "As iron sharpens iron, so does the countenance of a man his friend." Ministers and missionaries, and district visitors, and Sunday school teachers, should take opportunities for meeting, and taking sweet counsel together. The words of Paul contain a truth which is too much forgotten--"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the

more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb. 10:24, 25.)

Let us observe, in the second place, what solemn words our Lord uses about those who will not receive nor hear His ministers. He says, "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."

This is a truth which we find very frequently laid down in the Gospels. It is painful to think how entirely it is overlooked by many. Thousands appear to suppose, that so long as they go to church, and do not murder, or steal, or cheat, or openly break any of God\

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