

Gospel According to Mark I

by Stephen Kaung

The speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and building Christian character, using the example of Mark's spiritual potential and Paul and Barnabas' ministry.

Duration: 1:15:27

Scripture: Mark 10:45, Acts 12:12-13, 1 Peter 5:13

Topics: "Mark"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of learning Christ before being able to effectively present Him to others. He explains that the measure of our gospel is based on the measure of Christ we know. The speaker also highlights the need for believers to go through training and hardships in order to become good soldiers of the Lord Jesus. He shares a personal story of a brother who faced opposition from others but found support and revival through the prayers of an elderly woman. The sermon concludes by emphasizing that God works in our lives to mold and transform us so that we can effectively present Christ to the world.

Transcript

This is Sunday evening, July the 2nd, 1972, in Richmond, Virginia. Ministry given through Brother Stephen Kong. In the fountain, cleansed by his blood, Join us with Jesus as we travel this path.

I'm part of the family, the family of God. May we have a word of prayer? Lord, we do confess we are unworthy to be here. But we praise and thank Thee.

We belong to Thy family. Thou has included us in the family of God. Thou has washed us with Thy precious blood.

Thou has given us Thy own life. That we may be born into this family. Oh, how we praise and thank Thee.

We can commune with the Father. We can commune with Thyself. We can commune with one another.

What a family. We worship Thee together. Lord, make Thy presence very real to us.

Remove from our hearts any veil that may be there. We want to see Thee. We want to hear Thee.

We want to know Thee, Lord. Knowing Thee is eternal life. Lord, there is nothing in our hearts that we desire above this.

To know Thee. To know Thee, Lord. So we pray that as we study Thy word together, Thou will breathe upon Thy word.

Make it very living. Let us see Thyself that we may be transformed and be conformed to Thy image. And it is all to the praise of Thy glory.

We commit ourselves to Thee, Lord, for this hour. We trust Thy Holy Spirit to anoint every one of us that in one spirit we may be taken up, we may see Thee and hear Thee. In Thy precious name we pray.

Amen. I believe as you go on with the Lord, more and more your heart will be occupied with the Lord Himself. I believe that more and more you will go back to the full gospel.

I do not know how you feel, but this is the way I feel. I feel we have to go back to the full gospel. Not because this is fundamental, but also because this is the consummation.

That we may see Him. We may see Him. We may know Him.

Our knowledge of the Lord Jesus comes from the records of the full gospels. As we mentioned last month, if you still remember, there are not full gospels. There is only one gospel.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord. But our Lord Jesus is so full, so rich, we are not able to know Him in all His fullness unless He is presented to us in these four different records of the gospel. And this is the reason why we have the gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Mark, the gospel according to Luke, and the gospel according to John.

All of them try to present to us the same Christ. But it is the Christ that each one of them knows personally in a very special way. This is the reason why we say this is the gospel according to Matthew.

Because it is the Christ that Matthew knows in a special way. And as we mentioned last time, Matthew knows Christ as the King. So His gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom.

This time, God willing, we would like to go into the gospel according to Mark. The Christ that Mark knows. The Christ that Mark himself experienced in a very special way.

And out of his personal experience of the Lord, he is used by the Holy Spirit to present to us a picture of our Lord Jesus. That we may know the Lord Jesus in the way that Mark knows Him. As we must know the Lord Jesus as Matthew knows Him, too.

Now before we can go into the gospel according to Mark, we would like to know something about Mark. Not that Mark is so important. It is the Lord that Mark presents to us that is important.

Mark is only a vessel. But if we know the vessel, it will help us to know the Lord. And it is only in this connection that we would like to know something about this man.

And why is it God uses him to present Christ in such a special way? As we find in the gospel according to Mark. So let us read a few passages from the New Testament. The book of Acts.

Acts chapter 12, verse 12. This is the first mentioning of the name Mark in the Bible. Acts 12, 12.

And having become clearly conscious in himself, that is Peter. You remember an angel was sent by God to open the iron gate to relieve Peter out of prison. And after he came out of prison and went to the next street, then he began to come to himself.

At first he thought it was a dream. Then he began to realize it was real. So here you find, and having become clearly conscious in himself, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surname Mark.

Where were many gathered together and prayed? The same chapter, verse 25. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, having fulfilled the service entrusted to them, taking also with them John, surname Mark. Chapter 13, verse 5. The second part of verse 5. And they had John also as their attendant.

The same chapter, verse 13. And having sailed from Paphos, Paul and his company came to Perga of Pamphylia. And John separated from them and returned to Jerusalem.

Chapter 15 of the book of Acts, verse 36. But after certain days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city where we have announced the word of the Lord and see how they are getting on. And Barnabas proposed to take with them John also, called Mark.

But Paul thought it not well to take with them him who had abandoned them going back from Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. There arose therefore very warm feeling so that they separated from one another. And Barnabas, taking Mark, sailed away to Cyprus.

But Paul, having chosen Silas, went forth, committed by the brethren to the grace of God. And he passed through Syria and Sicilia, confirming the churches. Colossians chapter 4, verse 10.

Aristarchus, my fellow captive, salutes you. And Mark, Barnabas' cousin, concerning whom ye have received orders, if he come to you, receive him. And Jesus called Justus, who are of the circumcision.

These are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who have been a consolation to you. 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verse 11. Luke alone is with me.

Take Mark and bring him with thyself, for he is serviceable to me for ministry. And the last place is in Peter. 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 13.

She that is elected with you in Babylon salutes you. And Markers, my son. What we know of Mark today is found mainly in these various passages that we have just read.

But when you go through these passages, you will see this man Mark. And this is what we hope we'll do tonight. After Peter was released by the angel from prison, he came to himself.

And he was trying to decide where he should go. Why? Because at that time in Jerusalem there were more than 10,000 believers in the church there. Sometimes they met together at the porch of Solomon.

But at other times they met in homes. And most likely during that time there must be quite a number of homes open for the saints to come together to meet, to worship, and to pray. So when Peter was released, now he had to think a little bit before he could decide which home he would go.

He knew that there would be a number of homes open and there must be a number of prayer meetings being held in these many homes. Now where should he go? To notify the brothers and sisters that the Lord has set him free. So he thought for a while and he decided to go to the house of Mary.

Mary, the mother of John, surname Mark. Now John was his Jewish name. Mark was his Latin name.

Because you know at that time the Jewish nation was under the rule of the Roman Empire. So it is the custom of that day people will have a Jewish name and a Latin name. And especially those who have Hellenistic background.

That is, the Jews at that time were divided into two kinds. The Hebrew Jews and the Hellenistic Jews. The Hebrew Jews were those who were born and reared in Palestine.

But the Hellenistic Jews were Jews born and reared in the Gentile city. So with the Hellenistic Jews especially they had a Latin name as well as a Jewish name. And this happened to this young man.

John, surname Mark. His mother was a believer. His mother must be a woman of means.

We had no record of Mark's father. Probably his father passed away in the early days of his life. But anyway we find his mother was a believer.

And because God gave her means she had a big house in Jerusalem. And you know it was again the practice of those days. Some Hellenistic Jews they had their homes in their Gentile cities.

For instance Mark's cousin Barnabas he had property in Jerusalem too. So it shows us that those people who had means they maintained not only a house, a home in their native city but they also maintained a house in Jerusalem. Because you know all the pious Jews would go to Jerusalem at least three times a year.

So if they had the means they would have a house in Jerusalem just like people may live in different places but they maintain an apartment or a house in Washington D.C. Now if a person can do that he must be a person with means. So here you'll find Mary. Maybe a widow.

But she was a woman of means. She had a big house in Jerusalem. She offered her house to the Jews of the church there.

So believers will come to her house and meet during that time to open her home. For believers to meet became more and more dangerous. In the beginning you'll find there wasn't much persecution.

But then later on Herod noticed that the Jews would like to see him persecute the believers. He put James the brother of John to death and he saw the Jews were very happy about it so he put Peter into prison. In other words you'll find persecution began in those days.

Stephen was told during the time of persecution to open your home for believers to come together and meet. Well that was very dangerous. It might cost her her life because the government, the Roman government was not favorable and the Jewish people were persecuting the believers and yet this sister Mary she loved the Lord so much she did not count the cost of even losing her life.

She was willing to lay what God had prospered her what God had given her at the feet. Believers met in her home. Most likely Peter frequented that home very often.

That's the reason why he chose to go to that home above all the other homes. It came naturally. Most likely the other apostles had been to that home.

Most likely many believers had been to that home. And you know this young boy John called Mark was reared in such an environment and atmosphere. He was exposed to good Christian influence.

It is true. The first generation cannot pass on their faith to the second generation in the sense that if the parents are saved that does not guarantee the children are saved. Everyone has to believe the Lord himself.

That is true. New birth is not something that can be passed on that can be inherited. New birth is something that each must come to the Lord himself.

But even though the parents are not able to pass on new birth yet they can provide for the younger generation the best atmosphere and environment which will help the younger generation to trust the Lord. That is something the old generation can do. So here you find this young man.

He was given the best Christian environment that anyone could have. And under such an environment he was brought to know the Lord. Most likely through Peter.

Because Peter called Marcus my son. That is Mark my son. Not in the physical sense but in the spiritual sense.

Just like Paul called Timothy his son. Whom he begot in truth. So brothers and sisters very very likely most likely this young man Mark was exposed to such good Christian influence and he was finally brought to know the Lord personally through the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

Now this was the background of this young man. He showed spiritual potentials in his early days. Now we do not know whether he had seen the Lord or not.

We don't know. Some people think you know in Mark chapter 14 verses 51 and 52 when they took the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane all his disciples fled but there was a young man following. Now this young man was curious about things you know as all young men are.

Young people are. They are all curious. So when they took the Lord this young man followed and then people began to see him.

So you remember he threw off his linen cloth and fled naked. And you know of all the four gospels only Mark recorded this thing. And he didn't tell us who this young man was.

So everybody was guessing this must be Mark himself. It might be so. We don't know.

It might be so. You know. This young man was curious.

But when he found that the danger was so too big well he threw off his garment and fled naked even. Now if this young man was Mark then he had seen the Lord. But probably he had not known the Lord at that time.

You know a person can be under certain environment but he may not be really saved. So maybe it was afterwards. We don't know.

But anyway whether he has seen the Lord or not anyway you'll find he was exposed to the best and finally he was brought. As a young man he showed great potential. Remember there were over 10,000 Christians at that time.

But he really showed great spiritual potential. So when Barnabas and Paul came to Jerusalem to fulfill the ministry of help supply to the poor in Jerusalem after they fulfilled this ministry of love they went back to Antioch. But when they went back to Antioch they took Mark with them.

Now remember it is true that Mark was Barnabas' cousin. There was a blood relationship between Mark and Barnabas. But I do not believe that Barnabas took Mark with him just because Mark was his cousin.

You know in the things of God you cannot decide things on the basis of natural relationship. Mark must have shown some potential in his spiritual history. And because of that Barnabas, you know he is the son of consolation.

Barnabas was a good man. Oh he was tender hearted. He could detect the good in anybody very quickly.

And you know he was the one who found Paul's soul out of Tarsus and brought him to Antioch. And now he saw his cousin. This young man Mark showed real spiritual promise.

And he felt he would like to help this young man. And of course he would never take Mark without the consent of Paul. Because they worked together.

So this shows that when they took Mark with them to Antioch it was not on the basis of natural relationship. It was because Mark had shown some spiritual potential. Well they took Mark with them.

And you remember in chapter 13 of the book of Acts five prophets and teachers they were ministering unto the Lord together fasting and praying. And the Holy Spirit said set me apart Barnabas and Paul for a wider ministry. And when they went out they took Mark with them as their attendant.

As their helper. You know. Not because this young man showed spiritual potential.

Therefore he could go out independently. A person may show potential. But there is still much that needs to be done in that life yet.

This young man Mark he showed spiritual potential. But remember he was a young man and if that young man in Mark 14 was himself then it showed that he was very impulsive. He was an impulsive young person.

He would do things suddenly. And he can drop things suddenly too. And he was a young man that came out of a wealthy family.

He was used to comfort and maybe luxury. He didn't know hardship. He might be a young man who shows some spiritual promise and yet basically he was still an arrogant independent self-willed self-centered young man.

All brothers and sisters thank God He raised up young people. And really give them spiritual potential. And the church should be quick to discern that.

You know many young people the Lord really had His hand upon them but the church was blind. These people were buried. They were not given the opportunity.

They were not given the training that they should receive. But in the early days you'll find that God raised up young people and the church was very quick in discerning. And would do everything for these young people to mature them.

That they might be useful vessels in the hand of God. How we need Barnabas today. How we need Paul today.

Those who are able to see God's working in the lives of young people and try to complete them to perfect them. But on the other hand young people not because you have show some spiritual promises therefore you can just launch out on your own. And you know many young people were shipwrecked when they do that.

There is much yet to be done in these lives. Before God can really use them. And that is the reason why Barnabas and Paul took John's surname Mark.

They took Mark with them. In order that Mark might be under their wing. To learn.

Not only to learn the technique of work. But more to learn the building of Christian character. You know people today put too much emphasis on methods and techniques.

If we can learn the techniques or the methods then we can do the work. In the work of God character is more important than technique. It is very easy to learn a technique.

You go to a school and you learn it. But that doesn't guarantee that you are able to do God's work. There must be that building of character in a person.

There must be that maturing of life. And this is the reason why Paul and Barnabas took Mark with them. Not just to learn a technique.

He could learn that in a school. But he had to learn these under the discipline of two elder brothers. All right? They went out.

And naturally Barnabas came from Cyprus. So the first place they visited was the island of Cyprus. Their native place.

And probably Mark was born in Cyprus too. We don't know. But anyway that was their native place.

Cyprus. So first of all they went to Cyprus. And they passed from one end of the island to the other end of the island.

When they come to Paphos something happened. The pro-council the Roman pro-council Sergius Paulus was an intelligent man. And he wanted to hear the gospel.

But in his court there was a magician. Elymas. And this magician tried every means to hinder the pro-council to hear the gospel.

So Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit looked at that person and said God will blind your eyes because you resist the truth. And this magician became blind. And the pro-council saw it.

And willingly he listened to the gospel. After this happened they moved on. But when they left Cyprus and went to Pamphylia Perga of Pamphylia John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Why? Later on you will find in chapter 15 of the book of Acts Paul considered the leaving of Mark at that moment as a desertion. They went out on a mission. And only through a short period Mark deserted.

He abandoned them. He deserted them. And he returned to Jerusalem.

Now why? We do not know exactly but there might be several reasons. Number one Mark being brought up in a wealthy family he was used to a life of ease and comfort. So probably he couldn't endure the hardship of the journey.

In doing God's work to be a good soldier of the Lord. One thing you have to learn and that is to endure hardship. It may have nothing to do with spirituality but it has lots to do with serving God.

You know why is it that when a young man is drafted he has to go to the boot camp? So far as fighting is concerned that may be a waste. Why should people have to get up at a certain hour and have to march and do all these things? What's the use of all these things? When you go to the battlefield you cannot march in formation. Why is it you have to go through all these trainings, strenuous trainings running with the full pack on and live in such a primitive condition? Why? Why the hardship? I was told that secondhand that in this country the young people are just too soft.

In comparison with the young people in Europe we are too soft. Because we live a life of ease and comfort and even luxury. Brothers and sisters such a life will not make you a good soldier even in this world.

How can you become a good soldier of the Lord Jesus? By indulging yourself in ease and comfort. Now I'm not preaching on asceticism. I'm not preaching on suffering or hardship.

No, not at all. Not at all. But it is a necessity that young people should learn to endure hardship for the Lord.

If you do not learn how to endure hardship not to say spirituality you are disqualified. You know the story of Huston Taylor? The founder of the China English Mission? When he was a young man he felt the call to go to China but he felt that he should learn medicine to be a medical doctor. That would be useful in China.

So he went to London and there he began to study medicine. He lived in a small room. He tried to save every money he could.

He ate the most simple food. He would not tell anybody his need. He worked for a doctor at that time.

But this doctor was very forgetful and always forgot to give him his salary. But he had to pay his rent. And he could easily say well, doctor, you haven't paid my salary.

He could easily do that. But he felt if he went to China he had to live by faith. So he would have mentioned it.

And if you read his life you know how he was tested. The doctor closed the office without mentioning his salary and there his rent was waiting there. It was not necessary for him to live such a hard life in London.

He could live much more comfortably in London. But in view of the work in China he had to train himself to hardship. And no wonder God used him.

Brothers and sisters, being spiritual does not make you any less practical. Here you find this young man. He was brought up in such a comfortable environment.

Probably he had developed a habit of self-indulgence. And when he just passed through Cyprus that was his native place. He could go.

But when they let the native place Cyprus go to other place he was just frightened. No, no, I go back. Anyone who could not, cannot endure hardship or even willing to do so is not qualified to serve the Lord.

So he went along happily. But when he came to Cyprus something happened. God seemed to use Paul in such a way that from then on it was Paul and Barnabas.

Now you read the book of Acts carefully. You'll find it became Paul and Barnabas. Paul had went ahead in spirituality.

Barnabas seemed to be behind. And the order, the spiritual order is Paul. Brothers and sisters, who is before and who is behind? It is not fixed, not fixed.

Whoever has the greater measure of Christ is before. It is not a human appointment. In a human arrangement you may arrange this person to be the president, that person to be the vice president.

But in spiritual order you'll find it can change anytime. It depends on spirituality. So when it came to that point you'll find Paul seemed to manifest more spiritual power than Barnabas.

And naturally the Bible, the Holy Spirit began to say Paul and Barnabas, and this young man. Thank God for Barnabas. Even though he might be older, even though at one time he helped Paul, yet he knew the Lord.

He was willing to recognize the Lord and the Lord's authority. He was willing to take the second place. He was willing to play the second fiddle.

Oh, there's much to say about Barnabas. He really knew the Lord. Now if he did not know the Lord he would strive with Paul and say, well, I'm the head.

I'm the leader. That's how we came out. And it should be continued like that.

No, no. He knew the Lord. He knew that the Lord had a greater place in the life of Paul than in him.

And he was willing to go along. But this young man had not learned. This young man was not happy with it.

Why should my cousin fail into the second place? He was not happy with it. And he wouldn't go along. He returned.

He had yet to learn spiritual authority. That's possible. And thirdly, it was also possible.

You know, even though Mark was most likely a Hellenistic Jew, just like Paul. Paul was a Hellenistic Jew. Barnabas was a Hellenistic Jew.

Now, the Hebrew Jews were stricter in their practice of Judaism than the Hellenistic Jews. And if you read the book of Acts, you'll find that was a problem at that time. The Hebrew Jews thought that God's blessing could only come upon the Jews and not upon the Gentiles.

Now, if a Gentile should come into the blessing of God, he had to become a Jew first. He had to be a Apostolite first. And then the blessing of God would come upon.

You know, he had to be circumcised first. But Paul was a Hellenistic Jew, you know. So his view was much freer and broader.

Now, Mark was brought up, remember, in Jerusalem. He was under the influence, probably, of Peter. And James and others.

So maybe, in this matter of the nature, the scope of the gospel, he had a different view from. So after he had listened to Paul's preaching, he couldn't agree. He thought Paul was too broad.

Too broad. You know, young people have lots of opinions, right? Well, I do not say only young people have opinions. Older people have opinions too.

But the good thing is, young people can change their opinions. That's a good thing. But anyway, you'll find young people usually are full of opinions.

And because they have their ideas, they have to fight for it. You know, they may change, but they will not change unless they put up a fight. So probably, Mark, you know, he was not happy with Paul's style of preaching.

He was theologically at odds with Paul. And because of that, he wouldn't go along. Wouldn't go along.

But anyway, whatever the reason might be, he left them and returned to Jerusalem. He thought by leaving them and returning to Jerusalem, then everything was solved. Brothers and sisters, escaping the cross is to forsake an opportunity.

In the sovereignty of God, he was put under the authority, help of Paul and Barnabas. But this young man couldn't. He was an undisciplined, gifted, showing signs of promise, but undisciplined, unbroken in the flesh.

And he was not willing to accept the cross in his life. By deserting them and going back to Jerusalem, he was escaping an opportunity of his life. It was sad, very sad.

But thank God. He thought by going back to Jerusalem, certainly his problem would be solved. He went back.

And you can imagine. After he went back, he probably would go straight to Peter and pour out all his complaints about Paul. Certainly Peter would stand by him and say, well, this Paul was really bad.

But he didn't got it. Even though Peter might not see eye to eye with Paul, and yet Peter knew the Lord. When this young man came back, I believe, Peter, especially maybe, maybe others, they helped this young man.

They put him under discipline. Thank God for that. He escaped one discipline, but he entered into another discipline.

How do we know? Because he was restored. If he should come home and his mother would just pat him and say, now, poor boy, you have suffered a great deal. Or if Peter said, well, well, well, you better stay here.

You have gone with the wrong person. What would happen to this young man? He would be spoiled for life. A total failure.

But in God's mercy, I believe when he came back, he tried to get sympathy from Peter. But Peter wouldn't give him sympathy. Peter helped him to see his weakness.

Thank God for that. Oh, I cannot forget an incident about our brother, dear brother Watchman Lee. Now forgive me to mention him because I think he will illustrate this point.

After our brother was saved, he was a young man. He was saved when he was 20. He was 18.

He was saved when he was 18. And then a number of people began to meet together. And he became one of the three brothers who were in charge of the meeting.

And it so happened that he was not only the most brilliant one, humanly speaking, the most talented one, but it so happened that he was one whom God gave much more revelation than the other two brothers. He saw things more than the other two saw. But whenever he tried to communicate what the Lord had shown him, these two brothers just put him down.

And our brother was full of complaints in him. Now where should he go? It so happened there was an elderly Miss Margaret E. Barber. Now this sister from England helped our brother the most.

And it was through the prayer of this sister there was a revival in that city. And many young students were saved. So naturally these students would go to this sister for help, for spiritual help.

So brother Lee often went to this sister. And he said every time he went to this sister to complain. You know, this sister lives on an island.

So he went to see that sister. Now he said, surely this time she will stand with me because I have all the reasons. So he went time after time trying to complain.

And he thought surely this, this, this is time he will surely stand with me. And you know what this sister said? I heard my brother say this himself. He said whenever he complained about the other two brothers and he knew he was right, the other two brothers were wrong.

And it was true. And you know every time he went there the sister said, the young obey the old. And our brother went back and said, oh, I'm just five years younger than they.

And I have to obey them? And this continued at least two years. Two or five years, I forgot, two years probably. And do you know? Because of this our brother learned before the Lord.

And if you read his recent book, Spiritual Authority, you know why. He learned it when he was a young man. Brothers and sisters, especially young people, if the hand of the Lord is upon you, remember one

thing, you cannot escape.

Without discipline, you cannot become a vessel fit for the Master. Thank God after several years, Barnabas, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem again. And this time for an important conference, you know, in Acts 15.

And after the conference was over, they took Mark with them again to Antioch. If Mark had not been corrected to a certain degree or restored to a certain degree, this would never happen. And the reason why they took Mark was they must have seen that there was a change.

So they gave him. Oh, how we thank God for giving us. If we have only one change, we may have lost it already.

How patient is our God. He is willing to give us another chance. If He can see there is some change in us.

If He can see that we are softened. If we can see that we are broken. If we can see that we are willing to be disciplined.

We accept the discipline. Then you find they took him back to Antioch. But when they wanted to go out the second time, Paul said to Barnabas, let us revisit those churches that we established in the beginning.

And Barnabas agreed with him. But then Barnabas said, let's take Mark with us. You know, Barnabas was a kind-hearted, soft person.

Well, he really wanted to perfect Mark. He really wanted to help Mark. Not for any selfish purpose.

It is for God, you know. But he was that kind of person, you know, soft-hearted. So he wanted to restore Mark completely, you know, by taking him out.

Not to make it too difficult for him. But Paul was a natural disciplinary. So Paul thought, well, he said, well, it was all right to bring Mark back to Antioch.

But to bring Mark again in our travel. Well, no. He was not ready for it.

He deserted the first time. He had to learn more before he could be taken out. And unfortunately, there was heated.

So finally, Barnabas took Mark with him and they went back to Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas. And they went to other places.

Well, everybody is interested to know who is wrong and who is right. Is Barnabas wrong? Or is Paul wrong? Is Barnabas too soft? Or is Paul too hard? Well, I'll keep back my opinion. You may have your own opinion.

But I think the point is not who is right or who is wrong. I feel that the point is how sovereign is God. How sovereign is God.

God allowed this thing to happen. Barnabas took Mark, but you know what? Even though the Bible did not record anymore the work of Barnabas. As if.

Barnabas must have worked for years for the Lord. Good work, maybe. But it is not recorded in the Bible.

Now, even though this is the case, when Paul was in Roman prison, when he wrote a letter to the Colossians, he told us, Mark, of the three fellow workers that were of the circumcision, Mark was one of them. And he was a convert. Now, who did a good job of restoring Mark? In the sovereignty of God, God used Barnabas to perfect so that he could be fully restored to Paul.

And Paul said, Mark, a convert. So, brothers and sisters, the question is not who is wrong and who is right. The question is, God in his sovereign mercy has overruled and brought it into good.

Paul treasured Mark so much during his second imprisonment in Rome. As he was to be martyred, he wrote to Timothy and said, Bring Mark with you. He is serviceable to me in ministry.

Oh, brothers and sisters, when you read that, you praise the Lord. This young man, who started out well, and then he seemed to be shifted. When he was tested, he seemed to fail in the testing.

But by God's sovereign grace, through the instrument of various persons, Paul, Barnabas, Peter, this young man came out as a vessel safe. It reminds me of that scene in Jeremiah chapter 18. God told Jeremiah to go down to the potter's field and there to watch a potter making a vessel.

When the potter put a clay on the wheel, he turned the wheel and then he tried to mold and fashion that vessel. But that vessel, did he throw it away? No. He remade it into a new vessel, more glorious than before.

Now this is the work of the Lord. Brothers and sisters, that gives us hope. How often, when the Lord put us on the wheel, turned us around, and his hand is trying to fashion us, we broke, we cramped.

There was something in us that hindered his work. But did God, does he throw us away? No. He took us and remade us into a new vessel, more glorious than ever.

That is the glory of God. The glory of God. After Paul was martyred, the last mention of Mark in the Bible, so far as historical record is concerned, was in 1 Peter.

We find Mark was again back with Peter in Babylon. Of the four Gospels, most people believe the first Gospel written was the Gospel according to Mark. That's chronologically speaking.

Mark was the first one chosen by God to write the life. You know that these men, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, they are more than historians. They are evangelists.

In other words, they are not just giving us a historical record, impersonal, accurate but impersonal. No. They are evangelists.

They are presenting to us the Christ that they know personally in their lives. And this is the Christ God wants us to know. And Mark was the first one chosen by God to give us the life.

And God considered his writing as the script. What a vessel he has become to be used by God to write the Bible and the life of Christ. Now if there should be any impurity in him, and if any impurity of that person should get into his writing, he will give us a distorted picture.

God has through the years worked in that vessel, mowed and fashioned that vessel, until finally God said, now this young man is ready. He can present to the world the life without distortion. It is the Bible.

It is the Christ that God wants us to know. What a work of mercy. What a work of God.

What is the message? What is the Christ Who is the Christ? What is the Christ that Mark presents to us? Everyone who reads the Bible knows. Mark presents to us Christ as the servant of the Lord. The servant.

And how can he present Christ as the servant of the Lord? In such a way, he himself. You cannot present Christ. You cannot impart Christ to others more than you have learned.

You have to learn Christ first. And it is what you have learned of Christ you can impart. This is spiritual.

This is the gospel that you will preach. The measure of your gospel is based on the measure of the Christ you know. And when you present the gospel in this way it is religious.

It is effective. Because it is the person, Christ. So dear brothers and sisters, what do we learn here? We learn one thing.

In order to preach the gospel, in order to present to this world as the servant of the Lord, God has to work in our lives to mold us, fashion us, transform us, discipline us, break us, make us, until we are fit to be his vessel in presenting Christ. And that kind of gospel we preach will be very effective. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, we do praise and thank thee thou dost apprehend people to be thy chosen vessels to present thy Son to this world.

But Lord, thou dost not choose and not work in these lives until they are fit to be used. Oh, how we praise and thank thee for thy faithfulness in spite of our resistance, in spite of our failures. Thy hand is still upon us.

Lord, take not thy hand away from us, but mold us, fashion us, make us, until we may be vessel, fit, for the Master's need that we can present Christ to this world in a living, effective way. Oh, Lord, remember every one of us here, whether we are young physically or older physically, Lord, we just offer ourselves to thee and trust thee to perfect thy work in all of us. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Amen.

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