

# (Through the Bible) Mark

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen explores the Gospel of Mark, emphasizing the importance of discipleship, community, and seeking God's will in our lives.*

**Duration:** 57:36

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Evangelism"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God's interests over our own, the need to value Jesus above all other spiritual figures, the significance of fasting and prayer for certain spiritual battles, the warning about the eternal consequences of neglecting God's commandments, and the call to choose the fire of heaven over the fire of hell. It also highlights the distinction between evangelism and disciple-making in spreading the Gospel.

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## Transcript

Let's turn now to scriptures, to the Gospel of Mark. Now, there must be very good reasons why God allowed four biographies of Jesus Christ to be written, not just one consolidated one. And people who have studied these books usually have one fixed view.

I think every single book and commentary I've ever seen always says Matthew shows Jesus as the king, Mark as the servant, Luke as the man, and John as God. Matthew shows him as a lion, Mark as an ox, Luke with the man's face, you know the four faces in Ezekiel and Revelation, and John as an eagle. And people, since most Christians are too lazy to think, they just accept that.

And since even most theologians are too lazy to think, they just accept that. And since most Indians just repeat what the Americans and the British people say, they just repeat it over here. India has become a big echo for all that is said in the West, unfortunately.

It's almost as though God does not speak to anybody in India. He only speaks to people there, and we just got to echo what they say. I decided when I came to this book, I'm not going to stick in this rut that has been dug for hundreds of years, and I want to get out and allow the Holy Spirit to bring me some freshness and thinking in my own mind.

And I just mentioned that in passing, don't accept traditional concepts always. That is how they missed out on Jesus, who he was. They said the traditions of the fathers, and that's how they completely missed the

will of God in that time.

And if you're going to be a blind follower of tradition and just an echo of what hundreds of other people are saying, you will never get what the Holy Spirit is saying to you personally. I'm not saying we go outside the scriptures. There's no revelation outside the scriptures.

There is no revelation chapter 23. It finishes with chapter 22 for me. But in this book, God can give us revelation, which affects our life.

So, I don't know what the purpose is fully. I must tell you honestly, I don't understand fully yet. As I go along, I probably get more and more revelation.

But I have tried to look at the first verses when a person writes something. He probably writes something at the beginning. And I see that Matthew wrote that he was the son of Abraham and the son of David.

I say, okay, that's what he's trying to say. This is how he came as a Jew, born of Abraham and David, and he's introducing the kingdom of heaven. Mark begins like this.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God. He's telling us that this person is the son of God. And you find in Mark's gospel, as you compare it with Matthew's, Matthew's is a lot more teaching.

But if you flip through the pages of Mark's gospel, it's a lot more action and activity of the miracles and many other things that he did. Not as much teaching, not as many parables as in Matthew's gospel. There he was laying down the teaching of the kingdom of heaven.

And in Mark, he was demonstrating that he was the son of God on earth. Now I want to turn to Mark chapter one, first of all, and verse 17. When Jesus was going by the Sea of Galilee, verse 16, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net, for they were fishermen.

And Jesus said to them, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. There were hundreds of fishermen along the coasts of Galilee. He did not call all of them.

He called two. Then he called James and John as well. What I want to say is, if God calls you only, then you go for a ministry.

You cannot just say, I want to be an evangelist. I want to be a teacher. I want to be a prophet.

I want to be an apostle. We all like to be many things. But God has to sovereignly come by us and call us.

It is so important. If you are going to serve the Lord in some important ministry God has for you, and I believe every ministry is important, may not be as big, but everything is equally important, like the parts of the body. Every part of the body is important, even though it's not all parts are not obvious.

You can see my face. You can't see my kidneys and my liver. So some believers ministry is more prominent.

Some are more invisible. But if you want to fulfill a purpose according to God's will in your earthly life, it's important that you learn to hear God calling you. And even if you're on a secular job, God's got a function for you in his body.

You got to wait on him and hear him calling you to fulfill that function. And these people heard a call and said, come and follow me. That's all he said.

What do you have to do? Follow him. This is discipleship. In Matthew 11 we saw, learn from me.

Here he said, follow me. These are the two things. A disciple is a learner and a follower.

All our life we have to learn and we have to follow and learn and follow and learn and follow. It's like in the military, they say left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right. It's learn and follow and learn and follow and learn and follow till Jesus comes again.

It's like taking steps. That's how we walk. If you're only learning, you're like a man who's only walking on his left foot.

It's like a military parade where he says left, left, left, left, left, left, left. What sort of parade is that? And we just moving forward like this and that's the odd type of way a lot of believers are living because it's learning, learning, learning, learning, learning, learning. No, it's learning, following, learning, following, learning, following, learning, following.

This is a disciple. That means what you learn, you must practice. If you don't, you're not a disciple.

Otherwise, what's going to happen is you're going to learn such a lot and you're going to produce another bunch of people who walk on one foot all the time. Neither can you say, well, I've learned enough now. Now I can keep following.

No. Till the end of our life, we have to learn. Not the scriptures, but God.

Through the scriptures, we come to know Jesus. Okay. And what does, and the second part of that is a promise.

If you follow me, I will make you. Think of that expression. I will make you.

It's like a potter making a vessel. And you know, potters don't make all vessels the same shape. Have you seen a potters? You see it down the street sometimes where people sell these earthenware vessels.

They're all types of different shapes. And God also makes us in different shapes. Don't ever try to tell God that you should be in the shape of that brother there.

You must have that brother's ministry. He'll never give it to you. And if you struggle to try and have some other person's ministry, you will hinder the shape God is trying to make of you.

I've told people repeatedly in my church, don't ever try to imitate my ministry. Don't imitate the way I speak. Don't imitate the way I teach.

Don't imitate my ministry at all. Because God wants you to be you. God wants only one person like me in the church, in ministry.

He wants one person like you. And if you try to imitate somebody else, you will never fulfill what he wants you to be. I will make you.

That's the Lord's responsibility. In the case of these people, what were they supposed to become? What was their ministry? Fishers of men. That was the ministry for James and John.

For you, it may not be fishers of men. It may be teachers in the church. It may be some other ministry.

Some are called as apostles, and some are called as prophets, and some are called as evangelists. Those are the fishers of men. Some are called as teachers, and some like Paul are everything together.

Apostle, prophet, teacher, evangelist. They're very rare people who are all together like that. Most of us usually have one thing.

I think in the early days, many of the apostles had to be with so many gifts, because there were so few people. But now we are so many believers, and God has distributed the gifts. But the important principle is, whether you're a teacher, or an evangelist, or an apostle, or whatever it is, the principle is, I will make you.

The Lord has to make us. We can't make ourselves. Don't ever try to make yourself into an evangelist, or a teacher, or an apostle.

You'll just be a total failure. Don't ever try to do a ministry God never called you to. Humble yourself.

Wait on the Lord. Let Him fill you with the Holy Spirit, and let Him show you what He's called you for. I've seen numerous people in this country who have tried to have a ministry for themselves.

Yeah, you can get money from somewhere, and continue a ministry. One day, God will pull it all out and destroy it. Don't waste your earthly life.

Please remember, you've got only one earthly life. Don't waste it trying to impress some people that you've got a ministry. Fulfill what God has called you to fulfill in the body of Christ.

Wait on Him. The Lord will make you. And He doesn't call everybody to the same thing.

Out of all those people, all of them could become disciples of Jesus. Those fishermen by the Sea of Galilee, if they wanted. But all could not become apostles.

No. Those He had to call specifically. All could not become evangelists.

All could not become teachers. But all can be disciples. So we need to distinguish between the two.

Don't try to make everybody have your ministry. That's foolish. Okay, now we go to verse 35.

This is a habit that Jesus had, which is a very good habit for all of us to do. In the previous evening, it says, verse 32, after the sun had set, they brought to Him people who were ill and demon-possessed, and the whole city had gathered near the door. Mark 134, He healed many who were ill with various diseases, casting out demons, and He did not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

Why did He not permit the demons to speak? The demons would have said, this is the Son of God. Isn't that a good testimony? Would you like a demon to say, oh, you are a great man of God. You want everybody to hear that? Jesus did not want a testimony from demons.

And I don't want any testimony from demons, that I'm a man of God or any such thing. They are liars in any case. What is their testimony worth? Anything.

You know, there are people, I just want to say a word about casting out demons, that there are people who, when they cast out demons, carry on a conversation with demons. When did you come, and it's like sitting and talking to somebody. It's foolish.

Jesus never did that. He just cast it out. So, when you encounter that, let me mention that.

And verse 35, even though it was late into the night that He had this ministry, it says, in the early morning, before the sun rose, while it is still dark, He got up. You want to be a disciple of Jesus? In what area? In healing the sick? Or in this verse written here? A lot of people want to follow Jesus in the healing ministry. What about this verse, that after a late night, the previous night, He probably missed His supper, I don't know.

The next morning, He got up, because He wanted to find the will of God. What shall I do today? He lived from day to day, and He arose, went to a lonely place, and prayed there. See, somebody has said, just like tourists, when they come to a city, they always ask, which are the important buildings and sites to be seen here? Whenever Jesus came to a new place, He would always look around to see, where are the lonely places here, and the deserted places, where I can be alone for a little while.

Depends whether you're a follower of tourists, or whether you're a follower of Jesus Christ. He always wanted to find some lonely place. He was always looking for that.

See, some people don't like to be alone. They always like to be with company. Jesus was always looking for a place to be alone, because that's where He would get His strength, where He could get alone with God, talk to God, the Father, hear Him.

Do you have a desire for that, my brother, sister? This is how we can be true servants of God. So, after a little while, Simon and his companions were hunting for Him, and they found Him, and they said, everyone wants you. He said, sorry, we're not staying here.

We got to go somewhere else, because I've got to preach there. My father's told me that. Just think, if Jesus had not waited on the Father at that time, and He had woken up late, and Peter had said, you know, there's a great revival going on here.

Last night was a fantastic miracle ministry here, and everybody has come now for a further preaching from you. Jesus would have stayed there, and He would have missed the will of God for one day, and our attitude is, what does it matter if we miss the will of God for one day? That is the careless way in which we behave. It's like a millionaire saying, what is there if I lose thousand rupees? You lose thousand rupees.

For us, thousand rupees is a large amount of money. For a millionaire, it's nothing. Jesus was very careful with one day.

He said, I don't want to waste one day. I've got only three and a half years. I don't want to waste one day outside the will of God in my life.

Keep that attitude. We may not be able to find the will of God so perfectly as Jesus did, but I want to have that attitude that, Lord, I don't want to waste a single day of my life, arrange my circumstances that I

should be in the place where you want me to be every day of my life. It's a good prayer to pray.

Even if I don't hear a voice from heaven, God can still arrange my circumstances such that I can be where God wants me to be every day of my life. I'll tell you that this is the passion of my life. I don't want to be in a place where God doesn't want me to be because I know I'll waste my life there.

Don't ever go to a place because it's a comfortable place to live. Ask yourself whether God wants you there. And then you won't miss the will of God.

When you come to the end of life, you won't have any regrets. Then we go to chapter two and verse three. We read about this man who was paralyzed and he could not come himself.

And four people carried him and they opened up the roof and lowered him into the place. And this is the one or two places like this where we see. You know, yesterday I said to you there was a law according to your faith, be it unto you.

That's right. But sometimes, it's a great encouragement to me to see this. Sometimes when I'm so weak that I'm depressed and discouraged and I don't have faith.

Thank God for the body of Christ where four other brothers can carry me, the paralyzed man, discouraged man, depressed man, and bring me to Jesus. And here is this wonderful verse. Verse five.

Jesus, seeing the faith of the four people, healed this man. I don't know whether this man had any faith at all. But this is the one verse in scripture where it says Jesus looked at one person's faith and healed another person.

It's not the only place. Once we read, he saw father's faith and healed his demon possessed son. The Syrophenician woman, Jesus saw her faith when she said, give me the crumbs that fall and healed her daughter.

Saw the centurion's faith and healed his servant. So it's not always only your faith. A father can have faith for his son.

Four brothers can carry a paralyzed brother and have faith for him. I praise God for the body of Christ. I don't want to live a Christian life all alone.

I don't want to be a loner. I don't want to work alone. I'm not interested.

I know it's inconvenient when we have to work with other people. It's much more convenient to work on our own. We can do what we like, go where we like.

We are answerable to nobody, subject to nobody's authority. I want to tell you in Jesus' name, you will destroy yourself. If you don't understand it today, you'll understand it at the judgment seat of Christ when it'll be too late.

Seek fellowship. That's your salvation. I've seen many loners in India, and I've always seen they don't have any light on their spiritual condition, even if they are doing some so-called work for the Lord, and they ultimately destroy themselves.

Don't be a loner. Subject yourself to somebody's authority. Find a godly brother, particularly when you're young.

Find a godly brother, subject to authority, work with the body of Christ. Sometimes when you are weak and helpless, their faith can help you. I know when my children were growing up, and they came to their teenage years.

Teenage years are difficult years for some boys particularly, maybe girls too. I found that the young brothers in my local church could help those children of mine more than I could at that time. How thankful I was for the body of Christ that I was not a loner living all by myself.

Don't think you can manage on your own. Jesus saw their faith and healed this man. Wonderful.

Now chapter 2 verse 18 to 22, Jesus answers a question about fasting. The disciples asked John's disciples, and the Pharisees were fasting, and they came and said to him, why do John's disciples and the Pharisees fast, and why do your disciples not fast? Actually the answer is, you mind your own business. But anyway, Jesus gave an answer.

Because you know, I've had people come to our church and say, why don't you all fast? We fast, why don't you fast? The same old question is here. I say, if you want to fast, go ahead and fast. Why do you want to push that on me? And even if I do fast, why should I tell you about it? But anyway, Jesus answered and said, while the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? And now listen to this.

Verse 20, here is the one word where Jesus spoke about fasting. Another word rather, we saw one yesterday about don't tell others. When the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away, those are these days, and then my disciples will fast.

That's not a command. Jesus never gave a command, you must fast. It's a statement.

There's a difference between a statement and a command. He never told his disciples, go and fast. But he made a statement that my followers will fast.

From that verse, I understand that the bride will fast in the days when the bridegroom is away in heaven. If you never fast, something is wrong. That's all I say.

And then he said about this new covenant type of fasting, which applies to everything in the new covenant. It's not like the old covenant fast, which are by rules on such and such a day, you must fast and such and such a day, you must fast. No, here it's different, a different spirit altogether.

He said, if you've taken a new patch of unshrunk cloth, in those days, they didn't have pterylene and these type of materials, synthetic stuff, it was all cotton. And you know cotton, before you stitch it, you must always soak it in water. Whenever you buy cotton materials, soak it in water, then only stitch it.

So he was talking about that. Because when you soak cotton in water, new cloth, it shrinks. And if you stitch it before you wet it, before it is shrunk, it'll be too tight for you.

So he says, if you got an old dress, which is already washed many times, and you take a new patch of cloth, which is not shrunk and stitch it onto that old dress, what'll happen when you wash it? This will shrink and it'll tear the old dress. So he's saying, if you take a little bit of new covenant truth and attach it to

an old covenant type of understanding, it's not going to work. There'll be a big hole in your life.

The whole garment must be new. Don't take a, oh, that's a good bit of teaching. I like to take that teaching and attach it to my work.

It doesn't work. It must be totally new covenant. You can't have a church which is run 75% according to old covenant principles and take a 25% new covenant patch and patch it on.

It doesn't work. You will not be able to build a new covenant church that way. It must be 100% new covenant.

The whole garment must be new. Otherwise it'll tear. It doesn't agree.

And the same thing you said about wine skins in verse 22. Those days they did not put wine in glass bottles. Glass was not invented in those days.

They used to put it in skins, animal skins, which were stitched so well that they were watertight. It could not flow out. But the thing about animal skin is again like cloth.

Animal skin, when the wine inside begins to ferment, when wine ferments, it expands. If you keep it in a bottle, it just flows out from the top. So here in the skin, they wouldn't fill it up.

The skin would expand as the wine fermented because the skin has got a stretching power. But once the skin is expanded to a certain extent, it cannot stretch anymore. And then if you fill it with wine, it'll burst the skin.

The new wine speaks of the life of Jesus. The old wine is the life under the law. The old wine skin is the old covenant system.

The new wine skin is the new covenant church. Now, if I try to take a new covenant life, the life of Jesus, and put it into an old covenant system with priests, and tithes, and Sabbath days, and rituals, and legalistic rules, what's going to happen? Thing is going to burst. It won't work.

If you want an old covenant system with priests, and tithes, and laws, and regulations, and rules, and don't touch, and don't taste, and don't all that, then you must have a life under the law also. You can't mix the two. If you have the life of Jesus, you must have a new covenant church.

Everything in the new covenant. Get rid of that old covenant system. Do you know that the vast majority of Christians live in church systems which are not following the new covenant? They are new wine trying to put in old wine skins, and the whole thing is bursting here and there, naturally.

It's exactly what Jesus said. Okay, we go on to chapter 3, in verse 5. Here we read about Jesus going into a synagogue on a Sabbath day, and the people were watching him, verse 2, to see if he would heal on the Sabbath day. And this is the one place in scripture where we read Jesus was angry.

Now I'm sure when he made a whip in the temple, and chased people out, he was also angry. But here, there it doesn't say that, but here it specifically says in verse 5, he looked at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and he said to the man, stretch out your hand. He was not bothered what they were going to do to him, and he stretched out his hand.

And as soon as the Pharisees saw it, verse 6, they immediately went out and took counsel with the Herodians how to destroy him. Did you read that phrase? Destroy him. Do you know there are people who'd like to destroy your ministry, destroy your life? They are the followers of the Pharisees, not just the heathen.

There are Christians who try to destroy the ministry of other Christians by scandalizing them, speaking evil about them. They're jealous. It's mostly based on jealousy.

Why? Because that man could accomplish something in his ministry which you could not. And you're jealous of that. They could not heal this man with the withered hand who sat there for so many years.

Here is this unlearned carpenter from Nazareth who comes and heals him immediately. Naturally, they get jealous because everybody will see this preacher can help these people far better than we can. So what to do? We lose our congregation.

Destroy him. Destroy his ministry. Call him a false prophet.

Call him a heretic. Destroy his ministry. It's happening today.

Just make sure you don't get involved in that type of work. Destroying the work of God and destroying men of God. And I want to mention here something about anger.

There's a verse in Ephesians 4 26 which says, be angry but don't sin. There is an anger which is not sin and there is an anger which is sin. And you see that in Jesus' life here.

When is it angry? When is anger sinful? Anger is sinful when I react to something people have done to me. Like for example, when they slapped Paul on the face and he got angry and yelled back at the priest, my priest, that was sinful anger and he repented of it. When they slapped Jesus, he did not get angry.

When they spat on him, he didn't get angry. When they crucified him, he didn't get angry. When did he get angry? When he saw people making money in the name of religion in the temple.

When he saw people not helping some poor man with a withered hand. Saw the old testament prophets were concerned about the poor. Jesus came in the spirit of those prophets concerned about poor people in the church.

People who are enslaved to sin and the devil. You can't deliver them and you don't let some other preacher come and deliver them either. Jesus is angry where people are exploiting religion for their own benefits.

Where people are exploiting poor people and not helping them, allowing them to be delivered. But he was never angry when anybody did anything to him. Judas Iscariot stole his money, he was not angry.

They spat on him, they called him the devil, he was not angry. Now human beings, it's exactly the opposite. Human beings are angered.

Children of Adam are angry when people do something to them. You steal my money, I'm angry. You call me a devil, I'll be angry.

You speak evil about me, I'll be angry. You slap me, I'll be angry. And they are never angry when the name of the Lord is dishonored.

Oh, there are so many people in India making money in the name of Jesus Christ. What to do if these things happen? They're not angry. Poor people are being exploited.

What to do brother, this is the way it is in the world, they're not angry. They are exactly the opposite of Jesus Christ. And I'm sorry to say, many believers are like that too.

You ask yourself, do you get angry when you see people making money in the name of religion in the temple? Like Jesus got angry? No. You're angry when somebody calls you a devil, or when somebody insults you or spits on your face. Then you're behaving like a child of Adam.

Jesus says, learn from me and follow me. Okay, we go on to chapter 4 and verse, we read about a time, just one little thing I want to mention here, which has encouraged me through the years. I don't know if it'll encourage you.

Little verses. It says, when they were in the boat, now we know that there was a storm and Jesus still the boat, but there's another little thing mentioned here, which encourages me. It says in the chapter 4, verse 38, they were in the boat and the waves were beating.

And it says he was asleep on a cushion. To me, a cushion speaks of comfort. And Jesus was not ashamed to use a cushion.

That's the thing that blessed my heart. That there's no virtue in being an ascetic and saying, no, I'll sleep on the hard floor, on the hard bed. If you have a cushion, brother, use it.

There's nothing wrong in it. Because there are a lot of Christians who think you become more spiritual if you sleep on a hard bed or on the floor. That's not spirituality.

And it's not following Jesus either. Chapter 5, we read about this demoniac who was healed, this man who had an unclean spirit. And when the demon was cast out, they said, please send us into these pigs.

And there was a big herd of swine there. And this man must have had at least 2000 demons because it went into all these pigs. And the thing I want you to see here is that when the people who are looking after the pigs saw this, they went to the city, verse 14, and reported it.

And when they saw this man whom they always knew was a demon-possessed man sitting there completely healed, instead of being excited and saying, praise the Lord, this is wonderful, Lord. You have healed this man. Come and minister in our country.

It says in verse 17, they began to entreat him to depart from their region. Have you read that verse? What does that teach us? They valued pigs more than human beings. That's what you learn.

They lost 2000 pigs. They are not bothered that one man is healed. Yeah, it's a very sad thing when people do not value the conversion of one soul more important than any amount of property.

The conversion of one soul, even if 2000 pigs is your entire business, do you believe that the conversion of one soul is better than that? So Jesus didn't stay. He told this man, verse 19, you go and tell other people the wonderful things the Lord has done for you. In chapter 6, verse 3 is the one verse in scripture

that tells us that Jesus had younger brothers and sisters.

He had four brothers born of Mary, verse 3, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And he had sisters also. We don't know how many sisters, but sisters means at least two.

So he had four brothers and two sisters. So Mary had seven children. So since we don't hear of Joseph, we presume Joseph had died.

And presumably in the many years of Jesus life, he worked as a carpenter to support a family of eight members. There are not many families with eight members nowadays, but Jesus, that is the mother and seven children, including Jesus himself. So Jesus went through that experience in order to learn and to be an example to people who have to struggle through difficult circumstances and bring up a large family.

Great example of a person who worked hard to support his family because there also he had to be an example for us. One more statement here, verse 4, Jesus said, a prophet has honor everywhere except in his hometown and among his relatives and his household. That was true in the first century, it's true in the 20th century.

A prophet is never accepted by his own relatives. His relatives devalue him. Other people value him.

And usually a prophet is not valued in his own home church. Other churches value him a hundred times more. That was true in the first century, it's true in this century.

It's very sad in his own hometown, in his own relatives, they don't value him so much because they see him all the time and familiarity breeds contempt. That's what Jesus said. And because of that attitude, it says in verse 5, he could not do any miracles there.

When you don't value a brother, his ministry does not bless you as much as it blesses those other people who value him. If you want to be blessed through a brother's ministry, you've got to value him. They did not value Jesus and so he could not do any miracle there.

And he wondered at their unbelief. So we see that because of unbelief, he could not do all that he wanted to do. By unbelief, we tie the hands of Jesus even today that he can't do for us all that he wants to do.

Chapter 7, we read in verses 1 onwards about God's word versus human tradition. This was the great conflict that Jesus always had with his people, with the people of his time. God's word versus human tradition.

Jesus stood for God's word and all the Pharisees stood for the traditions of the elders. Now, we may think that this is not a very big thing, but this is the great conflict that we find in Christendom today as well. Here's a tradition that we have received for years and years and years and years and years and years.

That's the way my father did it. My grandfather did it. My great-grandfather did it.

But is it the right way? And Jesus said, tradition, first of all, if you hold on to tradition, verse 8, you'll neglect God's commandment. Step one. Step two, if you keep your tradition, verse 9, you will set aside the commandment of God.

And step three, you hang on to your tradition, you will cancel the word of God. There are three steps here. Verse 8, verse 9, and verse 13.

You start with neglecting God's commandment, then you set it aside, finally you cancel it. That's the danger of holding on to traditions. Check your traditions with the word of God.

If it's not according to the word of God, it cannot be what God wants you to do. I'm surprised that so many Christians, when they want to go, see, for example, if I want to take my children and my small children are sick and I want to take them to a hospital, I don't find out which hospital my great-grandfather went to. That doesn't interest me.

I don't even want to find out which hospital my father went to. Because we have got more updated hospitals today. Right? You'll do the same.

You don't go to the hospital your father or great-grandfather went to. Okay. When I want to put my children in school, I don't find out which school my great-grandfather went to.

Or even which school my father went to. I find out which is the best school today. I find out which is the best hospital today.

Because these are earthly things. We are very interested in it. But when it comes to the church, which church do you go to? The one your great-grandfather went to.

Why is that when it comes to spiritual things you don't find out the best available? Because we are not interested in spiritual things as much as we are interested in education and medical health. That's the truth. If you were as interested in your spiritual life as you are interested in medical health and education, just like you'd look for the best hospital today and the best school, you'd look for the best church.

Even if it is not the one your father or grandfather went to. But how many people have the courage to do that? One in a hundred perhaps. Most of them stick to what their great-grandfather did.

And that's like going to a third-rate school. And a third-rate hospital. And a third-rate church.

That's the plain truth. That's the result of tradition. Following tradition instead of following the word of God.

And I want to challenge all of you young people. Be bold. Stand for God's word.

I'm not telling you which church to join. I'm telling you join the best group of disciples in your hometown. You must find the best group of disciples in your hometown and be there just like you'd go to the best hospital and the best school.

That's what I would do. And that's what I encourage everybody to do. You know what I do? We have some churches in different places.

But I have sometimes told people, if you find that church which is in fellowship with us is not the best church in that town, please don't go there. Even though it's one of our churches. You find another one which is better, please go to that one.

I don't believe in this denominational type of loyalty. My loyalty is to Jesus Christ. Not to our group of churches.

There's no such thing as my group of churches. In every locality, the quality of a church depends on the quality of its eldership. And you must go to the best church in that locality.

Chapter 7 and just one more thing before I proceed. Verse 10 and 11. This matter of helping our parents.

Some people think it's a very spiritual thing to tell our parents, I'm sorry I'm serving the Lord. I can't help you in any way. You know what Jesus said about that? That is canceling, verse 13, the Word of God.

Of course you must help your parents. You can't say I've sacrificed it to God. You can serve God and help your parents.

You don't have to obey your parents after you've left your home. But you don't have to make them hinder you from serving God. But he's talking about practically helping them financially or in some practical way.

You must certainly care for them. Chapter 8, verse 6. He speaks here about the feeding of the multitude. We could look at that in another study.

In chapter 8 and verse 15, he speaks about the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. Jesus spoke about three types of leavens. In another study we saw that, Matthew 16.

The leaven of Pharisees, the leaven of Sadducees, and the leaven of the Herodians. Of Herod. What is the difference between these three? The Pharisees are the ones who had all their doctrines correct.

Jesus said, Matthew 23. All that the Pharisees say to you, do. Because what they're teaching is correct.

They are the evangelicals and fundamentalists of Jesus' time. The Sadducees were the people who did not believe in miracles or angels or resurrection or anything. These are the liberals of Jesus' time.

Who did not believe all these things that the Bible is literally true. And they are the people who studied the higher critics and all these people type of stuff. They are the Sadducees.

And then we have the third group, which is the Herodians. The Herodians were followers of Herod who were thoroughly worldly. They just believed in having parties and having a good time.

Worldly Christians. There are three types of Christians today. Evangelicals, liberals, and worldly Christians.

Now the important thing is, when you look in the Gospels, whom was Jesus fighting with most of the time? That's quite a word to us. He wasn't fighting with the worldly Christians all the time. He wasn't fighting with the liberals.

He was fighting with the evangelicals because they were the biggest Pharisees of his time. And very often you find that today. Some of the biggest Pharisees are the people who got all their doctrines correct and are pretty correct, pretty proud of their correct doctrines, but don't realize what legalistic, narrow-minded, stuck-in-the-mud type of believers they are.

There's no freedom. There's no liberty because the Holy Spirit does not come and set them free. And Jesus is in conflict with such people today, just like as he was in those times.

So remember these three leavens. In chapter 8, we go on to verse 23 to 26, which is a very important passage about healing. Jesus prayed for a blind man and he was not healed immediately, fully.

He asked him, do you see everything clearly? He said, no, I can see sort of men like trees walking. And if Jesus were like some preachers today, they say, no brother, confess that you're healed. You must say

that you're healed even when you're not healed.

Speak, say I'm healed. Jesus didn't say that because Jesus doesn't ask us to tell lies. He said, okay, you're not healed, we'll pray again.

Now, why did Jesus ever allow that one incident to take place? Always in every other case, one touch healed people. Why would there be a need for two touches here? I think this was written for because Jesus knew that in the 20th century, people will go around teaching people that even when you're not healed, you must confess that you're healed. And this incident was deliberately there for the sake of 20th century people to say, when you're not healed, say you're not healed.

Don't say you can see clearly when you're still seeing men like trees. So don't be confused by this false teaching of faith that goes around today, where even when you're sick, you're supposed to confess you're healed. That's a lie.

And Jesus never expects you to tell a lie. That's what we learned from this passage. Okay, we go on to verse 33, where we read about Jesus rebuking Peter, saying, get behind me, Satan.

Why did he tell Peter, get behind me, Satan? What is the mark of a man who is influenced by Satan? That's very important. Do you think Jesus will say to you, get behind me, Satan? You say, no, he'll never tell me, get behind me, Satan. Are you better than Peter? Remember, Peter had forsaken everything to follow Jesus.

Perhaps we are not as good as him. And even he could be deceived by Satan. Who is the one who is deceived by Satan? If I can understand that question, the answer to that question, I can be protected from deception.

Here is the answer in the same words. Get behind me, Satan. Your mind is set on your own interests and not God's interests.

You got the answer? Who is the one who will be deceived by the devil in Christian work? The one whose mind is set on his own interests and not God's. Anybody sitting here, you may be born again. You may be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

And I want to tell you this in Jesus name. If your mind is set on your own interests and your own game, you are a candidate for deception. Satan will deceive you any day.

Deception means you'll be thinking you're doing God's work and you won't be doing God's work. You'll be thinking that you're serving the Lord and you're actually serving yourself. There were many people like that in Paul's time who sought their own.

Only Timothy was one who didn't seek his own. So I find the way to escape deception is by making sure that my mind is not set on my interests or my game or my profit, but on God's interests. Okay, chapter 8 and verse 35, he said, whoever seeks to save his life will lose it.

This is a statement that comes seven times in the gospels. And I'll deal with it in another gospel. Chapter 9 and verse 1, I say to you that some of you standing here will not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.

Not everybody standing here, not nobody standing here, but some of you standing here will not die until you see the kingdom of God come with power. What does that mean? Some people say it refers to the transfiguration, which was in the next verse. I don't believe the kingdom of God came with power on that mountain.

And I don't believe the very next day somebody, so many people that already died because he said only some of you standing here will see it. Some of you here, you think most of the people died by the next day? It cannot refer to verse 2 because it says six days later, most of the people didn't die six days later. But some of you will see the kingdom of God come with power.

I believe refers to the day of Pentecost. That is when power came. The Holy Spirit brought the kingdom of God.

Compare scriptures with scripture. Romans 14, 17 says the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Till the Holy Spirit comes, there's no kingdom of God.

And when the Holy Spirit came, Jesus said, you shall receive power. That was a reference to the day of Pentecost when the kingdom of God came with power. So there we understand what Pentecost was.

This is Jesus definition of Pentecost. The kingdom of God, the government of God coming to earth with power, forming the church. That's what the church is meant to be on earth.

A demonstration of a pocket of the kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdom of the devil manifesting the power of God. Chapter 9 and verse 7 and 8, we see this beautiful verse where the Lord turned the minds of people away from looking at Moses and Elijah. They were looking at Moses and Elijah.

And you know, Peter said, let's make three tabernacles. Verse five here. And Jesus said, and God said from heaven, don't you ever dare to put my son on the same level as Moses and Elijah.

This is my son. Listen to him. What is the message for us? However great a man of God comes and blesses you, even if it be Moses or Elijah, don't put them on the same level as Jesus.

Jesus must be unique in your life. The greatest man of God who has been the greatest blessing in your life, maybe a Moses or Elijah. The moment you begin to admire them, you know what happens? A cloud formed and they could not see anything clearly after that.

Verse 7. Why is it so many believers, their vision is cloudy because they are looking at Moses and Elijah and they are not looking at Jesus. They are not listening to Jesus. Now that doesn't mean we should not respect Moses and Elijah.

Definitely you must respect godly men, but our eyes must not be, we don't look at Moses or Elijah or any godly man today. That's the message here. And chapter 9, verse 20 to 29.

Here's another example of a father's faith brought deliverance for his son who was demon possessed. And verse 29, the disciples, verse 28 said, why couldn't we cast out this demon? And Jesus said, that's because you did not pray, you did not fast and pray. Such demons can be cast out only if you are fasting and praying.

I don't, I can't explain that. I don't try to explain it. I've never been able to explain prayer and I've never been able to explain fasting, but I believe there's something in it.

It works. I just believe what Jesus said, that some demons, some places when the devil is entrenched somewhere, you can't cast him out unless you fast and pray. And we move on to verse 42 to 48 where Jesus spoke about, if your hand offends you, verse 43, cut it off.

Otherwise you could go to hell where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched. Verse 45, if your foot offends you, cut it off. Otherwise you can go to hell where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched.

And again, a third time where the worm never dies, 47 and 48. Jesus spoke about hell more than anybody else, more than any other preacher. And he spoke about hell as a place where the fire is never quenched and the worm never dies.

I believe it, that people go to hell where the fire never dies and the worm is never quenched. Clever intellectual people may say, how can worms never die in a fire? And I say, I don't want to find out. Those who go there can find out that.

I don't want to find out. But it's true. It's enough for me to know that there is an eternal fire and a worms that Jesus, because Jesus is the only one who knows about hell.

And if you are a true servant of God, you'll preach about hell like Jesus did. We don't preach only what we understand. We preach what we believe.

And then he said in verse 49, everybody must be salted with fire. I understand it like this, either the fire of heaven or the fire of hell. You can have your choice.

I've chosen the fire of heaven. Everybody must have one of these fires. This wishy-washy, neither cold nor hot, lukewarm type of people, Jesus says, I'll spit you out of my mouth.

You choose this fire or that fire. Which one do you want? Jesus came to baptize in the Holy Spirit in fire. And here is this unquenchable fire of hell.

Chapter 10, we read in verse 17 of this rich young ruler who came to follow Jesus. And Jesus told him that you cannot follow me unless you give up your money, all your money. Now, Jesus didn't say that to everybody.

Zacchaeus gave away only half his money to the poor. Mary and Martha had a house and they did not give it up. And Jesus never told him to sell their house.

To me, it's like cancer surgery. You go to a surgeon. One person, when he's operating him, he removes certain organs.

Another person who's got cancer, he removes more organs. Another person who does cancer surgery only removes a major lot, major surgery. Why is it? All three have got cancer.

But in one case, the cancer had spread so much that he's got to cut out so much. And that's why in the case of the rich young ruler, he said, your case, the cancer of the love of money has spread so much that the only way for you to be delivered is to get rid of all your money. But Zacchaeus, it did not spread so much.

And Mary and Martha did not spread so much. So God doesn't tell all of us to give up all our money. But if it has spread so badly, he may have to do it.

But it's such a terrible cancer. Otherwise, he said, you cannot follow me. And then he said that it's easier for a rich man to and it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, verse 25, than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom.

It's very difficult when other things on earth attract us. Now we turn to chapter 12. And we read in verse 43 about this widow who put in two copper coins, 42 to 44.

It says Jesus sat beside the treasury was 41. It's a very good words. Jesus sat near the treasury, watching how people were giving money, not how much notice what it says, not how much, but how very important distinction in the new old covenant.

It was how much 10% in the new covenant. It is how you are giving. Very important.

And this widow gave cheerfully all that she had, and the Lord appreciated it. And then we move on to towards the end of Jesus life. He's talking about his return in chapter 13.

And chapter 14, we read about the Lord's supper and his betrayal and arrest. We'll come to that in another gospel. And in chapter 15, I just want to point out one verse here that when Jesus was standing before Pilate and he was accused about so many things, he made no answer.

And Pilate was amazed. He never opened his mouth like a lamb stood before his shearers. He was dumb.

One last verse, chapter 16 and verse 15 to 18. This is the other commission. There are two commissions.

One commission is Matthew 28 going to all the world and make disciples in every nation. The other commission is verse 15 of Matthew, Mark 16, go and preach the gospel to all creation. Remember, these are like two sides of a coin, like two sides of a currency note.

One, go and preach the gospel. He doesn't say anything about making disciples. This is evangelism.

Matthew 28 is disciple making. The two must go together. If you do the evangelism, somebody else must do the disciple making, unless you can do both together.

And if somebody's doing disciple making, then he can do it on the basis of somebody else who's doing evangelism. These people are not in competition with each other. It's like some people going to the mountainside, cutting the quarry, going to the quarry, cutting the stones and bringing it to one site.

Another person is taking those stones and building them into a building. Now whose work is more important? I say both are required. Mark 16 speaks about going to the quarry and cutting out the stones.

It's very hard work. Don't ever go there unless God's called you. But don't criticize the masons who are building those stones into a building.

Don't say you fellows are having a cushy life. Why are you going to the quarry? I hope it's because God called you there. If God called you there, you have no business to compare yourself with the masons.

Go where God has called you. Maybe God has called those masons to build those stones. Now what's happening very often is, masons who should be building the house are going to the quarry.

And the result is piles and piles and piles of stones. No church being built. No fellowship.

Because masons are doing the work of evangelists. Let's learn that lesson. And let's say, Lord help me to fulfill my calling.

Let's pray.

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