



Introduction to John Mark

Sunday, April 30, 2017
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Isn't it great that God doesn't give us a highlight reel of our spiritual heroes? Imagine how unattainable the Christian life would seem if we only saw Abraham's faith and not his adultery, Moses' leadership and not his anxiety and frustration, David's victories and not his sins. What a discouraging thing that would be! It would also validate the claim of many non-Christians today—that the Bible is nothing more than good stories from which children can learn to be good people.

Yet that is not what the Bible is. The Bible is not primarily the story of a bunch of faithful people who did what was right and whose lives are meant to be imitated. The Bible is primarily the story of a God who pursues His sinful people with a relentless love and seeks to change them by the power of His grace.

There ought to be no reason for non-Christians to get the idea that Christianity is all about living a moral life. As Christians, we ought to be able to say, as Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) did to the man painting his portrait, "I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark (or take note of) all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me. Otherwise, I will never pay [anything] for it!"

See, our aim in this life is not to make much of ourselves, but to make much of Christ. We live to glorify God. One way that we glorify God is we confess our sins and our unrighteousness and we acknowledge God's perfection and righteousness. Then, as outsiders see the way that God transforms us lowly sinners into useful creatures, they will glorify Him as well.

So, as we think together about spiritual recovery, let us remember that acknowledging our sin and patiently enduring the process of spiritual recovery can ultimately be used to accomplish our greatest purpose: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

“Spiritual Recovery: The Journey of John Mark”

Acts 12.12 John Mark

- **Stage 1: Wonderful Promise**
- Home Life
- 1 Pet. 5:13: Peter calls him, “my son.”
- Col. 4:10: Barnabas is his cousin
- Acts 12:25: chosen for missionary team
- Potential is recognized
- Acts 13:4-5: “helper”
- Acts 13:6-12: team is doing well

Acts 13.13

- **Stage 2: Serious setback**
- Departs... AWOL
- Why did he leave? (Independent spirit)
- Acts 15:36: Consequences

Acts 15:39-40

- **Stage 3: Spiritual recovery**
- Missionary team is fractured!
- Acts 15:39: Barnabas sails for Cyprus w/John Mark
- Re-tooling
- He was there 10 years!

Colossians 4:10

- **Stage 4: Spiritually profitable**
- He emerges as a partner in ministry
- 2 Tim. 4:11... “profitable”

2 Tim. 2:21: “If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”

Recovered!

- Founded church in Alexandria, Egypt; martyred by Nero; wrote the Gospel of Mark

Discuss

- 1) Don mentioned four stages of spiritual recovery from the life of John Mark (see previous page). Which stage do you see yourself in right now and why? Or, describe a time when you were in one of those stages and how God ministered to you during that time.

- 2) All the theories as to why John Mark abandoned the missionary team on their first journey could be boiled down to the fact that he had an independent spirit. What does it mean to have an independent spirit? And how have you seen it manifested in your own life?

- 3) Our greatest need for restoration is not to a particular status or lifestyle, but to be restored in our relationship with God Himself. God has provided a way for this restoration through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. Now, anyone who believes in Him and commits themselves to be faithful to Him, they can be certain of their restoration. When you think about how God has restored us in Christ, what is your response?

- 4) How does John Mark's restoration (or restoration you've experienced in your own life) change the way you think about people in your life who have turned away from God?

- 5) How might we use John Mark's story to make us bolder in telling others about the restoration that can be found in Christ?