

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS TEMPTATION: DEALING WITH TEMPTATION MARK 01:12–13

Introduction

The importance of understanding temptation cannot be overstressed. The believer faces temptation every day of his life. For this reason, he needs to gain a thorough understanding of what temptation really is and how it is to be overcome.

- I. Temptation follows a person's decision (v. 12).
- II. Temptation is used by the Spirit (v. 12).
- III. Temptation is a desert or wilderness experience (v. 13).
- IV. Temptation is of Satan (v. 13).
- V. Temptation is met by God's help (v. 13).

I. *Mark 01:12 The Temptation of Jesus Christ*

Jesus was tempted immediately after making the decision to be baptised. His baptism was a momentous decision, for Jesus was declaring His total commitment to God and to God's mission. The decision was to lead to His death in less than thirty — six months. The point to see is that His decision was immediately attacked by Satan. Jesus was tempted immediately after His clear-cut decision to follow God and to launch God's great mission of salvation. (See *The Temptation of Jesus Christ*, Mt. 4:1-11; *Temptation*, Lk. 04:01-02; *God's Way: Faith, not Proof*, Mt. 4:1-11.)

Thought 1. Great and wonderful things happen to a person who makes a decision for God. (See *Salvation*, Rom. 1:16.) Satan, as the adversary of God and man, knows this; therefore, temptation always follows a decision for God. Satan always fights against a person when that person...

- is set free from selfishness and sin by God; when that person is set at liberty to live a life of love and joy and peace. (See *Forgiveness*, Eph. 1:7.)

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

- is set free from death and the fear of death by God, when that person is set at liberty to live a life of confidence and assurance — the confidence and assurance that he has become a child of God.

Rom 8:15 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

Gal 4:4-6 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

- is set free from condemnation and hell by God, when that person is set at liberty to live life knowing that he will never be condemned by God, that he will live forever with God, when that person knows that nothing will ever separate him from the love of Christ.

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

Rom 8:38-39 *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Just imagine all that is involved in the above: the depth and the richness, the assurance and the confidence, the joy and the motivation that fills a life that receives so much. And not only does this happen to the person who truly makes a decision for God, but all this shows itself through the person’s life to others. The family and friends of the new convert see the depth and richness of his changed life. The result is heart-warming: usually some of them also come to know Christ as their personal Saviour.

The adversary to God and man is bound to tempt the new convert. Satan is bound to attack, attempting to overthrow the person’s new decision for God. He attacks by causing the person to doubt, to question, to choose another way, to undertake another task, to seek something else. Satan knows that he cannot leave the new convert alone lest that person become strong in the Lord and in his witness for the Lord.

MATHEW 04:01–11 THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS CHRIST

This was not the only time Jesus was tempted.

1. Satan tempted Jesus through Peter when Peter tried to divert Him from the cross. Jesus revealed what really was behind Peter’s apparent concern: “Get behind me, Satan” (Mt. 16:23).
2. Jesus commended His disciples by saying: “You are those who have stood by *me* in my trials” (Lk. 22:28).
3. Jesus faced the severest temptation of His life in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there that Satan made a last-ditch effort to divert Christ from the cross.

In referring to Christ's experience in Gethsemane, Scripture says to all believers: "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Heb. 12:4; see Lk. 22:44).

Thought 1. The devil knows just where to tempt a person.

- 1) *In the wilderness or desert:* when a person is without bread, when he really has need. This is the temptation that appeals to the sinful nature, the lust of the flesh.
- 2) *On the pinnacle, the highest point of the temple:* when a person is before multitudes. This is the temptation that appeals to pride — the pride of life (fame).
- 3) *On a high mountain,* when a person sees what is available — sometimes rightfully his, sometimes just desired.

This is the temptation that appeals to the lust of the eyes. ■

LUKE 04:01–02 TEMPTATION (PERIRAZO)

The word temptation is used here in both a good and a bad sense. In the good sense it means to test, to try, to prove. It does not mean to seduce into sin. Its purpose is not to defeat or to destroy. The idea is not that one is tempted, seduced, enticed, and pulled into sin by the Holy Spirit (see Jas. 1:13); but one is tested, proved, strengthened, reinforced, and purified through the trials of temptation.

In the bad sense, it means to tempt, to seduce, to entice, and to pull someone away from God into the way of sin, of self, and of Satan (Mt. 4:1; 1 Cor. 7:5; 1 Th. 3:5; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 1:13-14).

Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit *to be tested*. The Spirit did not seduce or entice Jesus to do evil, but He led Jesus into circumstances whereby He could learn obedience and discipline. Through such trials, Jesus was to be perfected and enabled to succour all those who suffer trials (Heb. 4:15-16; 5:8).

Six things need to be said about overcoming temptation.

1. Temptation has its bottom root in passion and appetite (Mk. 7:20-23; Jas. 1:14). It comes directly from within, from man's heart, not from without. And it does not come from God. "For God cannot be tempted by evil; nor does he tempt anyone" (Jas. 1:13). God does not tempt any man in a bad sense. What He does is look upon His people as they endure temptation, and He strengthens them to bear the temptation. By such He teaches them discipline and obedience for a greater work (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Heb. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).
2. No man confronts any temptation that is not common to all men (1 Cor. 10:13).

3. God does not allow the believer to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear. There is always a way to escape (1 Cor. 10:13).
4. Jesus Christ understands temptation. He was tempted in all points just as all men are tempted, yet He never sinned (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).
5. Jesus Christ is a sympathetic High Priest in helping the believer through temptation (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15).
6. Temptation is overcome (a) by submitting to God and resisting the devil (Jas. 4:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:8-9), and (b) by using and obeying Scripture to combat temptation (Lk. 4:4; see Deu. 4:8; 4:12; 6:13, 16; 8:3; 10:20). ■

MATHEW 04:01–11 GOD’S WAY: FAITH, NOT PROOF

Jesus Christ was tempted three times by the devil. He was tempted to prove that He was the Son of God. What was wrong with proving His deity?

Proof is not God’s way; faith is God’s way. Proof is not what God wants; faith is what God wants. God wants to be trusted and loved. He wants to be freely loved, not loved because of force — because some persons are constrained by irrefutable proof. There are facts, plenty of proofs that He is the Son of God; but in the final analysis, an act of faith has to be taken. No one has seen God. God cannot be known by the physical senses. To know God, a person has to leap by faith, reach out for God in an act of belief, believing that God will reward his faith.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Jesus Christ had come to establish and construct the way of faith. Therefore, Jesus Christ had to reject anything that led men away from the life of faith. Note that all three temptations had to do with man’s senses and the physical world. If Christ had given in and secured the loyalty of men by feeding bread to the whole world, or by performing a spectacular miracle, or by taking over the kingdoms of this world, life would end and end soon. Why? Because all die. All waste away. The world is physical and material, corruptible and dying, deteriorating and decaying. It does not last. That is just the way of the physical world and all within it. This is the very reason Jesus Christ has come — to conquer the physical world of decay and death and to usher in the eternal world of the spirit — by the way of faith.

Therefore, Jesus Christ had to live the life of faith Himself. He had to walk the way of faith, of trusting and believing God Himself. He had to reject the devil’s *proofs* and show and lead men by faith. □

ROMANS 01:16 SALVATION (SOTERIA)

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” **Romans 01:16***

Salvation means deliverance, be made whole, preservation. From what does man need to be saved and delivered and preserved? Scripture paints five descriptive pictures of salvation, showing man's great need.

1. Salvation means deliverance from being lost. Man is pictured as wandering about in the forest of life trying to go someplace, but unable to find his way. He is lost, and if he continues to stumble about through the forest of life, the under-brush and thorns of the forest will sap his strength and prick him to the point that he lies down and dies. His only hope is for someone to notice that he is lost and to begin seeking for him. This is where the glorious gospel of salvation comes in. God sees that man is lost and He sends His Son to seek and to save man.

Salvation means that Christ...

- seeks and saves man from his lost condition.
- sets man on the right road that leads him to eternal life.

Mat 18:12 *“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety — nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?”*

Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

John 5:14 *Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

John 10:9 *“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.”*

2. Salvation means deliverance from sin. It means deliverance from mistakes, from corrupt ideas and thoughts, from moral impurity and from a crooked and perverse generation. Sin is like...
 - an infection, a disease for which man has no cure.
 - a master that enslaves and will not let go.
 - a crooked and perverse world that man cannot straighten out.

Man's only hope is for someone to discover a cure, someone with the intelligence and power to do it. This is where God steps in with His glorious salvation. God knows all about man's infection and enslavement by sin, all about his crooked and perverse world: so He sends His Son to save man, to cure him and liberate him and

straighten out his world. Salvation means that Christ saves man from the terrible tyranny of sin, from...

- the infection of sin.
- the enslavement of sin.
- the crooked and perverse world of sin.

Salvation also does something else. It frees man from the pricking and burden of guilt and shame, and it plants within man's soul a deep sense of health and peace with God.

***Mat 1:21** "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

***Luke 7:50** Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

***John 3:17** "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

***John 5:34, 40** "Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."*

***John 12:47** "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it."*

***Acts 2:40** With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

***Eph 2:8-9** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

***2 Th 2:10** And in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*

***2 Tim 1:9-10** Who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

***Titus 3:5** He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

3. Salvation means deliverance in the future from all evil and corruption: from aging and wasting away, deterioration and decay, death and hell. It is the complete redemption of man's spirit and body at the end of the world. It is salvation from the wrath of God — salvation that saves a man from being

separated from God eternally. It is the life and exaltation which believers will receive at the final triumph of Jesus Christ. It is the salvation that will keep a man safe and preserve him both in time and eternity.

Man and his world are pictured as having a *seed of corruption* within their very nature, a seed of corruption that eats away causing them to...

- age and waste away.
- deteriorate and decay.
- suffer destruction and die.

Again, man is hopeless. He cannot stop himself and his world from death and destruction, but God can. God can save both man and his world; God can deliver them from the terrible fate of death and destruction. This is the message of salvation. God loves man and his world and wants to save them, so He sent His Son into the world to save them. Salvation is...

- the complete redemption of man's body and soul in the future: a redemption that saves man from the process of aging and wasting away, deteriorating and decaying, dying and being condemned to hell.
- the perfect deliverance from the wrath of God: a salvation that saves man from being separated from God eternally.
- the gift of life and exaltation: a salvation that will be given to believers at the final triumph of Jesus Christ.
- the presence of perfect assurance: a salvation of security and preservation both in time and eternity.

Rom 8:23-24 *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?*

1 Th 5:9-10 *For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

1 Pet 1:3-5 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

1 Pet 1:9 *For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

4. Salvation means deliverance from enemies and dangers. Man is pictured as walking in a world lurking with enemy after enemy and danger after danger. Man has to confront all kinds of enemies and dangers that attack both his body and soul, his mind and spirit. He faces all kinds of problems and difficulties, trials and temptations. No matter how much he may long for peace and security, he is forced to combat...

- a hostile environment
- an unknown universe
- unregulated urges
- an evil pride and ego
- unpreventable accidents
- a lust for more and more (possessions, fame, wealth, power)
- a savage world of nature
- an uncertain future
- inevitable aging and dying
- greed and covetousness
- dreadful diseases

Man is seen as helpless in overcoming all the enemies and dangers that lurk in the shadows of this world. But God is not helpless — God can *save* man; He can gloriously deliver man as he journeys along the road of life. This is exactly what salvation means. God delivers man from the enemies and dangers that war against him. But note a crucial point.

Salvation does not mean that God delivers man *from* experiencing difficulty and danger, not in this present world. God does not give a life free from the nature and circumstances of this world. What salvation does is deliver one *through* the difficulties and dangers of life.

Salvation means that...

- God gives *security and peace* of soul, no matter what happens.
- God gives *safety* independent of circumstances and environment.
- God gives inward strength and courage to bear the onslaught and attacks of *danger*.

Mat 8:25-27 *The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”*

Mat 14:30-31 *But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”*

Luke 1:69, 71 *He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.*

Acts 27:34 *“Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.”*

Heb 11:7 *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

2 Pet 3:10-15 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.*

5. Salvation means to make well, to heal, to restore to health, to make whole both physically and mentally. Man is pictured as a suffering creature, a creature who...
- gets sick
 - wears out from aging
 - struggles against deformities
 - meets with accidents
 - suffers infirmities

Salvation declares that Christ is concerned with man’s suffering. Christ saves and delivers man, rescues and restores man in body as well as in spirit. He takes a man who suffers and makes him whole.

Mat 9:20-22 *Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment.*

Mark 10:51-52 *“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*

Acts 4:9-10 *If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the*

people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

James 5:15 *And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. □*

EPHESIANS 01:07 FORGIVENESS

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. **Ephesians 01:07***

The word *forgiveness* (aphesin) means to send off, to send away, to release, to let go. The word for *sin* (paraptomaton) means transgression, trespass, a falling by the way, or deviating from the way. All men...

- have transgressed the law of God
- have deviated from God
- have fallen from the way of God

Therefore, all men stand guilty of having broken the law of God, and the penalty for breaking the law is death. However, the blood of Jesus Christ brings forgiveness to men. How? Jesus Christ died *for man*. He took the penalty of sins and bore the punishment Himself. He was able to do this because He was the Perfect and Ideal Man, and as the Ideal Man, He could stand for and represent all men. When He died, He died as the Ideal Man, as the Representative for all men. Any person who really believes that Jesus Christ died for him is forgiven his sins. God takes his faith and counts it as the death of Jesus Christ. God sees the man as being *in Jesus Christ*, as being in the death of Jesus Christ. God counts the death of Jesus Christ for the death of the man. Therefore, the guilt and penalty for breaking God's laws are completely removed. The man's sins and guilt are sent away or washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

Acts 13:38 *"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."*

Acts 26:18 *'To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me [Christ Jesus].'*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. □*

II. *Mathew 01:12 The Purpose of Temptation*

Temptation is used by the Spirit. The words “sent Him” (*ekballei*) mean to thrust, to cast forth, to drive forth, to force. Jesus is compelled with great force to go into the desert or wilderness. He was driven by the Spirit to be tried. He was to be tried and tested *not to make Him fall*, but to make Him stronger and better prepared to do great things for God.

Thought 1. Trials and temptations are to be stepping stones, not stumbling blocks. They are opportunities for the Spirit of God to use in making us *stronger and more able* to do greater things for God.

Rom 5:4 *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

James 1:2-5 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

2 Cor 12:8-10 *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

1 Pet 1:7 *These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Pet 4:12-13 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

Rev 2:3 *You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*

Thought 2. After a significant decision or a mountaintop experience, it is very wise to get alone with God. One must be spiritually strengthened and prepared to follow through with the new decision.

Heb 10:22 *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

Psa 145:18 *The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

Psa 34:18 *The Lord is close to the broken — hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psa 73:28 *But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.*

III. **Mark 01:13** *Temptation, a Wilderness Experience*

Temptation is a desert or wilderness experience, it is a discomfoting, apprehensive and threatening experience. Jesus faced all three experiences in His desert or wilderness temptation. (See Mt. 4:2-4; 4:5-7; 4:8-10 *Jesus' temptation.*)

- ⇒ He was discomfoted in that His peace and security in God were disturbed. He was made immediately aware of another choice, a choice that aroused His flesh to desire the forbidden thing: bread created from rocks. Christ was tempted to use His own power to meet both a personal and a worldwide need: hunger. He was hungry, and His hunger was critical. He had not eaten for forty days. The devil tempted Him to create bread to feed Himself, and in this suggestion was the hidden idea that He could feed the world, proving Himself to be the Son of God. By such, He could secure what He was after: the loyalty and worship of men. He was tempted to trust Himself, not God.
- ⇒ He was apprehensive in that He was made immediately aware that a decision must be made, a decision that could be wrong and could result in bad consequences.
- ⇒ He was threatened in that if He yielded to the temptation, the consequences of sin would result and God's purpose would not be fulfilled.

Thought 1. Temptation is a desert or wilderness experience, that is, a worldly experience. Temptation is of the desert or wilderness and comes from the desert or wilderness. Temptation is not civilized, comforting, peaceful, secure or safe. Note three things about the desert or wilderness (world).

- 1) The life of the desert or wilderness...
 - is covered with rocks and precipices (difficult, threatening situations) which can trip and injure.
 - is often a desert (dry, empty, purposeless) in which a person can die from thirst and hunger.
 - is camouflaged with serpents (food and drink, worldly deceptions) which will strike and poison.
 - is filled with ravenous beasts (both people and things, whether friend or foe) which will consume.
- 2) The danger of the desert or wilderness is that rocks, desert, serpents or animals will injure and consume us.
- 3) The call of the desert or wilderness is adventuresome, stimulating, challenging and exciting. It appeals to the *nature of man*.

Mat 16:26 “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Eph 2:3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.

Thought 2. God wills us to conquer the wild, to triumph over the desert or wilderness experience, but His presence and power are needed to conquer and triumph. Note that God sent Jesus into the desert or wilderness only after the Spirit had come upon Him.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Heb 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

2 Pet 2:9 If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

IV. Mark 01:13 Temptation is of Satan

Temptation is of Satan; it is not of God (See *Temptation*, Lk. 04:01-02; *Satan*, Rev. 12:9)

Thought 1. So few people know and accept that temptation is of Satan. But the fact remains that temptation is a lie and a deception. It comes from the father of lies and deception. We must, therefore, reject temptation, for temptation kills a person eternally.

Mat 13:19 “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”

John 8:44 “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

John 13:2 *The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.*

Eph 2:2 *In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

1 Pet 5:8 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

V. **Mark 01:13** *Overcoming Temptation*

Temptation is met by God's help. This is seen in three experiences of Jesus.

1. He was with the wild animals of the desert or wilderness, yet they did not devour Him. The animals of the desert or wilderness would have included the leopard, lion, bear, wild boar, jackal, scorpions and serpents. God protected Jesus from all these for forty days.
2. He was ministered to by angels. Jesus did not have to face the temptations alone. God saw to it that He had whatever provision was necessary.

Rom 8:31 *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Heb 2:18 *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

James 1:2-5 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

1 John 4:4 *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

3. He relied upon God's Word to answer the temptations (See, *The Temptation of Jesus Christ*, Mt. 4:1-11; *Temptation*, Lk. 04:01-02; *God's Way: Faith, not Proof*, Mt. 4:1-11).

Thought 1. The armour of God is the glorious provision God provides for the believer's victory over temptation. ■

REVELATION 12:09 SATAN

*The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. **Revelation 12:09***

Satan is called “the great dragon...that ancient serpent.” His name is Lucifer. He was probably one of the highest angels ever created by God, but he fell because of selfishness and pride (Isa. 14:12; cp. 1 Tim. 3:6; Rev. 12:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Pet. 5:8.). He is “an angel of light” with such deceptive and seductive power that even some ministers follow him, ministers who “masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Throughout Scripture Satan is described as follows:

1. He is “the god of this world” who blinds men’s minds (2 Cor. 4:4).
2. He is “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:20; 16:11) and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2; 6:12).
3. He is Satan, which means the adversary (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 1:6; 2:1-6; Zec. 3:1; Mt. 4:10; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:8; Jn. 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Rom. 16:20).
4. He is the devil, which means the slanderer (Mt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11; Lk. 4:2-6, 13; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 20:2).
5. He is the deceiver of the whole world (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).
6. He is the tempter (Mt. 4:3; 1 Th. 3:5).
7. He is the evil one (Mt. 6:13; 13:19, 38).
8. He is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).
9. He is the accuser of our brothers (Rev. 12:10).
10. He is a murderer (Jn. 8:44).
11. He is called Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15).
12. He is called Belial (2 Cor. 6:15).
13. He is called Abaddon (Rev. 9:11).
14. He is called the angel of the Abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11).
15. He is called Apollyon (Rev. 9:11).
16. He is called the enemy (Mt. 13:39).
17. He is called the gates of Hades (hell) (Mt. 16:18).
18. He is called an enormous red dragon (Rev. 12:3).
19. He is called a lying spirit (1 Kng. 22:22).
20. He is called that ancient serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; cp. Gen. 3:4, 14; 2 Cor. 11:3).

21. He is called the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13).
22. He called the prince of devils (Mt. 12:24).
23. He is called the ruler of this dark world (Eph. 6:12).
24. He is called the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Eph. 2:2).
25. He is called the evil spirit (Mt. 12:43).

Satan's purpose in making war against God is twofold.

1. Satan's purpose is power and worship, to receive as much of the power and worship of the universe as possible (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:11-17). He goes about this in three ways.

=> He opposes and disturbs God's work in the world (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:11-17; Job 1:6; 2:1-6; Mt. 4:10; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:8; Rev. 12:7-9).

=> He discourages believers through various strategies (Lk. 22:31; Eph. 6:10-12).

=> He arouses God's justice against people by leading people to sin and to deny and rebel against God. And when they do, God's justice has to act and judge people to the fate of their choice: that of living with Satan eternally (Mt. 12:25-26; Jn. 13:31-32).

2. Satan's purpose is to hurt and cut the heart of God. Why? Because God has judged and condemned him for rebelling against God. Therefore, Satan does all he can to get back at God. The best way he can do this is to turn the hearts of people away from God and lead them to sin and to follow the way of evil.

However, Christ has broken Satan's power by two acts (Jn. 12:31-32; 16:11; 8:44; Col. 2:15).

1. By never giving in to the devil's temptation (Mt. 4:1-11) and by never sinning (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ overcame sin. He was righteous: He was perfect.
2. By destroying the devil's power of death. Christ was not held by physical or spiritual death (Heb. 2:14-15). He arose and ascended to God's right hand.

It is for this reason that the Bible says "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4); and again. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). ■

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS MESSAGE: THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD MARK 01:14–15

Introduction

The good news of the gospel includes three emphatic points.

- I. Jesus preached the good news of the gospel (v. 14).
- II. The time has come (v. 15).
- III. The Kingdom of God is near (v. 15).
- IV. Repent and believe (v. 15).

I. *Mark 01:14 Jesus Christ's Ministry in Galilee*

Jesus preached the good news of God. Mark says Jesus began to preach the good news of God throughout Galilee when John was put in prison. This statement serves as a date to fix the approximate time that Jesus began to minister in Galilee. One year had passed between Mk. 1:13 and 1:14. Mark does not cover the events that took place between the temptation of Jesus and the imprisonment of John the Baptist. They are covered by Jn. 1:19 - 4:54. Apparently, the order of events was this:

1. Two of John's disciples, Andrew and Peter, became followers of Jesus right after Jesus' baptism (Jn. 1:35-42).
2. The very next day Jesus, accompanied by Andrew and Peter, left Judea and went into Galilee. It was there that Philip and Nathaniel became followers of Jesus (Jn. 1:43-51), and that the first miracle took place at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11).
3. Jesus then took His family and His followers and moved to Capernaum, which was to become His headquarters (Mt. 4:12-13). But He stayed there only a few days, probably just long enough to move His family's belongings.
4. The Passover was at hand, so Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate it (Jn. 2:13). It was while there that the first cleansing of the temple and the conversation with Nicodemus about the new birth took place (Jn. 2:14-3:1f).
5. Jesus then began to move about Judea and to openly preach and baptise (Jn. 3:22). But His ministry posed a problem for John and aroused the opposition of the religious leaders. Consequently, He left Judea and returned to Galilee (Jn. 3:23-4:3).
6. It was at this point that Mark (also Mathew) picked up the story of Jesus' ministry. The reasons why Jesus chose Galilee to be the centre for most of His ministry should be noted.

Christ chose to set up his headquarters in Galilee. He left Nazareth. Why? Nazareth was His hometown. Why did He not make his hometown His headquarters? The

reason is clear: the city had rejected Christ: “No prophet is accepted in His home town” (Lk. 4:24). They had thrown Him out and had attempted to kill Him (Lk. 4:29). Therefore, Christ set up headquarters in the city of Capernaum. Capernaum lay in the northernmost point of Palestine. It was deliberately chosen by Christ as “His own town” (Mt. 9:1; Isa. 9:1-7).

God had prepared Galilee down through history as venue for His Son’s ministry. Several facts show this (see Gal. 4:4).

- a. Throughout history Galilee had been invaded and repopulated again and again with different people and cultures from all over the world. Over the years such an influx of differing people had created an atmosphere susceptible to new personalities and ideas.
- b. Galilee was strategically located. The world’s leading roads passed right through its borders. Merchants from all over the world passed through, boarding in its cities.
- c. Galilee was heavily populated. It was also surrounded by the Samaritans, Phoenicians and Syrians making it an open door for world evangelization. It was one of the most fertile lands in that part of the world. This fact, plus the travelling trade, led numbers to settle within its borders. There were within the district over two hundred cities with a population of fifteen thousand or more. There were multitudes for Jesus to reach.
- d. Galilee was open to new and fresh ideas. Its people, having come from all over the world, were liberal minded, always looking for new and fresh ideas to stimulate and challenge their thinking.

It was for these reasons that Christ chose Galilee to begin His ministry. The area was an open door for people to spread the news that the Messiah had come and the Kingdom of Heaven was being ushered in.

Thought 1. A person’s place of ministry should be deliberately chosen. He should consider strategic locations for ministry.

Mat 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Thought 2. People can reject the gospel and the Saviour. Just imagine! The Lord’s own hometown rejected Him.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:01–11 GOOD NEWS, GOSPEL

Gospel means “Good News.” There is only one gospel, but it is described in different ways. It is called the “Good News of the Kingdom and the Good News of God” (Mt. 4:23; Mk. 1:14); the “Gospel of God’s Grace” (Acts 20:24); the “Gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1); the “Gospel of Christ” (Mk. 1:1; Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 4:4; 10:14); the “glorious Gospel” (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11); and the “Eternal Gospel” (Rev. 14:6). □

II. *Mark 01:15 Fullness of Time*

First, the good news of God declares the time has come. The time has come for what? For the coming of Christ, God’s Messiah. It was time for the salvation of man to come upon the world scene. Two things were meant by “the time has come” or “the time had fully come” (Gal. 4:4).

1. World and religious events were ready for the coming of Christ.
 - a. The law had done its educational work. It had shown through the Jewish nation that men are terrible transgressors. Despite all of God’s favour and blessings, man still failed to worship God in love. The world now had a picture of the depraved heart of man.
 - b. The world was full of people spiritually starved. The worship of self, of pleasure, of gods, of philosophical ethics left many empty and barren. The soul was now ready to have its hunger met.
 - c. The world was at peace under Roman rule. The world was an open door for the spread of the good news of God — without any restraint.
 - d. The world spoke Greek as a basic language. This made communication possible with many from all over the world.
 - e. The world had a system of roads for mass travel. This allowed Christian missionaries to reach the farthest parts of the earth. It also brought commercial travelers to metropolitan centres where Christian believers were concentrated.

Gal 4:4-6 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

1 Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.

Heb 9:26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Titus 1:2 *A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.*

2. Prophetic events were ready for the coming of Christ. God had foretold that Elijah must *first* come and prepare the way (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1). Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist (Mt. 11:10). But now John was passing from the scene. His ministry of preparing the way for the Messiah was completed. It was now time for the Messiah to appear in force, proclaiming the glorious good news of God's kingdom. Mathew and Peter, as well as Mark, stress that "the time has come" for the Messiah to appear. The fact that the time was stressed so much points to Jesus as the true Messiah and gives additional proof of His Messiahship.

Mat 4:12, 17 *When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

Acts 10:36-37 *You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.*

Thought 1. Note two significant applications.

- 1) God prepared the way for His Son by moving world events. He controlled history and events, and He controls all events and circumstances for the sake of His people.

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

- 2) God fulfilled His promise to prepare the way for His Son. He will fulfil His promises to believers. He prepares the way for every genuine believer, running ahead of the believer to take care of him.

Rom 4:21 *Being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

2 Cor 1:20 *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

III. **Mark 01:15 Kingdom of God**

Second, the good news of God declares that the Kingdom of God is near. (See *The Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19: 23-24).

Luke 16:16 *"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it."*

Luke 17:20-21 *Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."*

Mark 1:14-15 *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

Luke 6:20 *Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."*

John 3:3, 5 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

IV. Mark 01:15 Repentance and Belief

Third, the good news of God declares that a person must repent and believe the good news of God. Both repentance and belief are essential.

1. Repentance by itself does not satisfy the law which was formerly broken. A person may repent and change from his former life, but repentance is not enough. Payment and satisfaction must be made for the laws he has already broken. This is why a person must believe in the good news about Jesus Christ. Jesus kept the law perfectly. He lived a sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22). He was perfectly righteous. As such, He satisfied God perfectly. He stood as the Perfect Man, the Ideal Man, the Pattern of what every man should be. And as the *Ideal Man He could stand for every man* and offer Himself to God as the *Ideal Payment*, the *Ideal Satisfaction* for all who had broken the law of God. This is the glorious good news of God, the *good news* preached by Jesus Christ throughout Galilee. The person who becomes acceptable to God is the person who repents and believes in the good news of God, who believes that Jesus is God's Son (Mk. 1:1), that Jesus is the *Ideal Man* who has made the *perfect payment*, the perfect satisfaction for our sins. Jesus is the propitiation for sins (See *Atoning Sacrifice*, 1 Jn. 2:2; and *Justification*, Rom. 5:1.)

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

Heb 7:25-26 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Pet 2:22-24 *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

2. Faith by itself does not satisfy the law. Faith without repentance, without a true change of life, is insincere. It is profession only. It presumes upon God, thinking He will excuse a self-centred life just like a grandfather who unwisely pampers and indulges a spoiled grandchild. Faith in Christ, in His satisfaction for sin, and repentance are both essential to enter the Kingdom of God. (See *Repentance*, Acts 17:29-30.)

Mat 3:2 *And saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”*

Luke 13:3 *“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Ezek 18:21 *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*

(See *Obedience and Belief*, Acts 5:32; and *Living by Faith*, Heb. 10:38). ■

1 JOHN 02: 02
ATONING SACRIFICE, PROPITIATION (HILASMOS)

He was the anointing sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 02:02

Propitiation means to sacrifice in order to appease; to satisfy; to cover; to pay the penalty for. It is a sacrificial word. In the Old Testament when a man sinned or something went wrong, he brought a sacrifice to God. The idea was that the sacrifice would appease and pacify and satisfy God. He thought God would be gracious to him and place the punishment for his sin upon the animal. When things go wrong, man has always offered to fast and pray and serve with renewed vigour, or else he has offered to give up some meaningful pleasure or possession. There is a feeling that this kind of denial or renewed sacrifice appeases and satisfies God.

It is true that God told Israel to offer sacrifices. But He did it for a reason: to teach Israel, and through them the world, that the answer does not lie in human or animal sacrifice. A human sacrifice cannot bring about a right relationship with God. Man's problem is too deep for human sacrifice; his contamination too severe; his disease too terrible; his infection too deadly. The paraphernalia of earthly sacrifice can never put things right with God.

The reason is simply stated. Man's sin has cut him off from God, severed his relationship with God, put God out of *arm's reach*. Man instinctively senses this. Thus, when man fails to get satisfaction from his sacrifice, he often returns to his former behaviour and practices.

What man needs is to be disinfected, to have his sins covered, He needs to know beyond a doubt that God does accept him and is satisfied with him. And then he needs a power to live for God.

This comes about through propitiation. Four things need to be said about propitiation.

1. God is the One who has to be appeased, satisfied, and propitiated. The Bible is not speaking of reconciliation. The Bible never says that God has to be reconciled to man. God is already the friend of man; He loves man. It is man who needs to be reconciled to God. Man is the one who holds enmity, who ignores, neglects and rejects God. Thus God is the One who has to be appeased or propitiated (cp. Lk. 18:13).

There is another thought here as well. God is righteous and holy, and His righteousness and holiness have to be satisfied. He can only accept a person who is perfectly righteous and holy. It might be said that anything less than perfection would contaminate the very atmosphere around God. And the presence and

dwelling place of God would no longer be the utopia which God has prepared for the believer and for which man dreams.

2. Jesus Christ is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, the satisfaction for sins. Christ was completely righteous and holy; therefore, He was the perfect and ideal Man. This means that His death was the perfect and ideal sacrifice. God was able to satisfy His justice against sins by casting it against Christ. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ completely satisfied and appeased the righteousness of God (1 Jn. 4:9-10).
3. Propitiation means *coverage*. Christ covers our sins so that God no longer can see them (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2).
4. Propitiation finds its type in the mercy seat, that is, in the lid of the ark (Heb. 9:5). God had said that man was to approach Him through the sacrifice of an animal, through the shedding of blood. The lid or covering of the ark was sprinkled once a year with the blood of a perfect animal. This signified that the life of the people was being offered to God in the blood of the victim. God was thereby appeased and satisfied. (Cp. Lk. 18:13; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10.) □

ACTS 05:32 OBEDIENCE AND BELIEF

“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” Acts 05:32

The Holy Spirit is given to “those who obey Him.” Note how the word *obedience* is used instead of *believe*. To believe is *to obey*. They are one and the same. If a person believes, he obeys. (See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24)

Luke 11:13 *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

John 4:50 *Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.*

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. □*

HEBREWS 10:38 LIVING BY FAITH

“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” Hebrews 10:38

The Christian believer is to walk by faith, not by feelings and emotions. The tendency of people, even of Christians, is to live by their feelings and emotions. They act according to their feelings. They experience some emotion, so they behave according to that emotion. If they feel bad, they act irresponsibly: grumbling, complaining, and reacting. If they feel good, they act happy. Their behaviour is determined by how they feel and react to emotional experiences.

Living by one’s feelings is contrary to God’s will. “My righteous one will live by faith” — this is God’s will. The Christian is to let faith control him. He is to let faith control his life and the particular problems that confront him every so often.

How does a believer live by faith? What does it mean *to live by faith!* It means to do four things — consistently.

1. The believer is to commit his life and his problems to God — all day long — throughout all his waking hours. He is to take the experiences and the problems of his day and commit them to God *once-for-all*. He is to believe that God hears his commitment and gives the strength to walk triumphantly throughout the day. He is to know that God does not like a whining, whimpering child begging and begging for strength when all he is doing is wallowing around in self-pity.
2. The believer is to deny self. The feelings, emotions, and selfishness of his flesh are to be rejected, even ignored if necessary.
3. The believer is to act as though he has made a commitment to God. He *has made* a commitment, so he is to act like it. His feelings are immaterial. He is to act responsibly. He is to go ahead and do what he should be doing. He is to behave as he should.
4. Then while the believer is doing what he ought to be doing, he is to be asking God for His grace and strength. He is to be acknowledging God in all His ways throughout the whole day. He is to walk in prayer all day long, asking forgiveness as he comes short, slips, and falls; praising and thanking God for His eternal mercy and grace.

God does not direct the believer’s path and then the believer feels good and goes about doing right. It is while the believer is going about his affairs in a responsible way that God directs his paths. This is the life of the new and living faith wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ for those who believe and follow Him. □

JOHN 02: 24
SAVING FAITH : BELIEVE, COMMIT, ENTRUST

The word commit or entrust is the very same word “believe” (see Jn. 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of *saving faith*, of what *genuine faith* is — of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not just *believing the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Saviour just as A J Abdul Kalam lived upon earth as the President of India. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of Abdul Kalam.
2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Saviour* and *Lord* of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
3. Saving faith is commitment — the commitment of a man’s total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man’s commitment of all he *is and has* to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man’s affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being, and possessions into Jesus’ hands. He lays himself upon Jesus’ keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man’s whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus.

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage.

1. There is the step of *seeing* (Jn. 2:23) or *hearing* (Rom. 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.
2. There is the step of *mental assent*. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behaviour to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.

3. There is the step of *commitment*. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment*, a *personal commitment to the truth*. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits (entrusts) and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behaviour and life. □

ACTS 17:29–30 REPENTANCE

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by man’s design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Acts 17:29-30

Repentance means to change; to turn; to change one’s mind; to turn one’s life. It is a turning away from sin and turning toward God. It is a change of mind, a forsaking of sin. It is putting sin out of one’s thoughts and behaviour. It is resolving never to think or do a thing again. (See Mt. 3:2; Lk. 13:2-3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 26:20.) The change is turning away from lying, stealing, cheating, immorality, cursing, drunkenness, and the other so-called glaring *sins of the sinful nature*. But the change is also turning away from *the silent sins of the spirit* such as self-centredness, selfishness, envy, bitterness, pride, anger, covetousness, evil thoughts, hopelessness, laziness, jealousy, lust.

1. Repentance involves two turns. There is a negative turn away from sin and a positive turn toward God. It is a turning to God and away from sin, whether sins of thought or action.
2. Repentance is more than sorrow. Sorrow may or may not be involved in repentance. A person may repent simply because he wills and acts to change; or a person may repent because he senses an agonizing sorrow within. But the sense or feeling of sorrow is not repentance. Repentance is both the change of mind and the actual turning of one’s life away from sin and toward God. □

ROMANS 05:01 JUSTIFICATION AND PEACE

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 05:01

The first result of justification is peace with God.

1. The meaning of peace with God is striking. Peace with God does not mean escapism, a quiet atmosphere, the absence of trouble, the control of situations by

positive thinking, the denial of problems, the ability to keep from facing reality. Peace *with* God means the *sense and knowledge...*

- that one has restored his relationship with God.
- that one is no longer alienated and separated from God.
- that one is now reconciled with God.
- that one is now accepted by God.
- that one is freed from the wrath and judgment of God.
- that one is freed from fearing God's wrath and judgment.
- that one is now pleasing God.
- that one is at peace with God.

2. The source of peace is Jesus Christ. Men can have peace with God only because of Jesus Christ. It is He who reconciles men to God. He has made peace by the blood of His cross.

Eph 2:14-15 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Isa 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

3. The reason we have peace is the glorious truth of justification. □

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES: THE KIND OF PERSON CALLED MARK 01:16–20

Introduction — Call

Jesus called simple men. Note that they were not...

- religious leaders
- powerful men, not the political leaders of the nation's ruling body, the Sanhedrin (See *Sanhedrin*, Mt. 26:59)
- of the priestly or ministerial profession
- students of schools of higher learning

Very simply, they were ordinary men, simple laymen engaged in the affairs of life just like all the laymen of their day. Having said this, however, a question needs to be asked. If these men were just ordinary people, why did Jesus call them instead of calling the more gifted? The answer lies in some very special qualities that the disciples possessed. They did have some very special qualities that made them stand out from the average layman. This passage gives a picture of these qualities, a picture of the kind of person Jesus calls.

- I. They were industrious, hard-working men (v. 16).
- II. They were visionary men: looking for the Messiah and ready to follow Him (vv. 18-19).
- III. They were collaborative men (v. 19).
- IV. They were successful, but sacrificing and considerate men (v. 20).

MATHEW 26:59 SANHEDRIN

Sanhedrin is the ruling body of the nation of Israel, both the governing council and supreme court of the Jews. It had seventy-one members and was presided over by the High Priest. Its membership was made up of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes or lawyers, and the elders who were leaders from among the people. A quorum was twenty-three. The legal power of the Sanhedrin to pass the death sentence was restricted about twenty some years before the trial of Jesus. However, they did retain the right of excommunication (see Jn. 9:22). To secure Jesus' death, they were forced by law to appeal to the Romans for the death sentence. □

I. *Mark 01:16 Qualities of the Disciples*

The disciples of Jesus were industrious, hard-working men. “[Jesus] saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake.” A little farther up the lake “He saw James... and his brother John... preparing their nets” (v. 19). Jesus has no use for the lazy, slow-moving, sloppy, nonchalant, disinterested, uncommitted workman. The person who Jesus

calls is an industrious, hard-working person. A study of God's call to various persons throughout Scripture will make this fact crystal clear. For example:

=> Compare the call of Amos.

Amos 7:14-15 Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore — fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

=> Compare the call of Elisha.

1 Kng 19:19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.

=> Compare the call of Saul of Tarsus, a man who was anything but lazy (Acts 9: 1f).

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Thought 1. Note what Jesus said:

Mark 13:34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

Luke 19:12-13 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'"

MARK 01:16

SEA OF GALILEE; LAKE GENNESARET; SEA OF TIBERIAS

A fresh water lake in northern Palestine. At its widest points, it was only about 13 miles north to south and 8 miles east to west. It would not be called a sea today because of its small size. There are several important facts to note about the Lake.

1. The Lake was known by several names: the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 4:18; 15:29; Mk. 1:16; 7:31); the Sea of Tiberias (Jn. 6:1; 21:1); the Lake of Gennesaret (Lk. 5:1); and simply the "lake" (Jn. 6:16-25) or "the water's edge" (Lk. 5:2). In the Old Testament it was called the Sea of Kinnereth (meaning harp shaped) (Lk. 8:22; Jn. 6:16-25; Num. 34:11; Deu. 3:17; Jos. 13:27).
2. The Lake was surrounded by some of the richest and most heavily populated areas of Palestine. Large towns flourished along its shores, towns which play a prominent role in Scripture: Capernaum (O & N, Mt. 4:12-13), Bethsaida (Mk. 6:45), Khorazin (Lk. 10:13), Magadan (Mt. 15:39), the region of Gerasenes (Mk. 5:1).

3. The Lake was subject to violent storms. It sat 680 feet below sea level which gave the Lake a warm climate, but it was in a pocket-like basin surrounded by steep, fast-rising hills (2000 feet high) and funnel-like mountains. The funnels or deep ravines running down through the mountains have resulted from eons of erosion. When cold-fronts move in with their fierce winds, the cold whips through the funnel-like gorges and mixes with the warm temperatures of the Lake. Unpredictable and terrifying storms result (Mt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41; Lk. 8:22-25). □

II. *Mark 01:17–18 Special Qualities of His Disciples*

The disciples of Jesus were visionary men, men who were looking for the Messiah and ready to follow Him no matter the cost. This was the quality that distinguished the disciples from many others. Some lay persons possessed the other qualities of the disciples (as they do in every generation), but this particular quality was found in few, if in any other men. The fourth quality was a willingness to sacrifice all in order to follow Christ. Many were looking for the Messiah, but few were actually ready to follow Him. Few if any others would pay the cost of giving up their businesses and of immediately following Jesus. But these men were willing to follow Jesus, and they did follow Him.

Thought 1. Few people have a strong vision — a vision so strong that they are willing to pay any price to follow Jesus. Giving up their profession or business, home or environment, family or friends is just too costly. They lack the vision.

Mat 10:37-39 *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

Luke 14:33 *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

Phil 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Thought 2. Jesus calls a person to a life of work, not to a life of ease and comfort. He calls a person to invest his life, not to waste his life.

Luke 9:23-24 *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”*

John 9:4 *“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”*

1 Cor 4:2 *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

***Eccl 9:10** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.*

Thought 3. Note that the primary call is to become “fishers of men,” not to become teachers, preachers, counsellors, administrators, builders, fund raisers or anything else. Yet, how easily we obscure and camouflage the evangelistic ministry of the church.

***Mat 28:19-20** “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (see Mt.20:28)*

***Mark 16:15** He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

***Luke 19:10** “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

***John 20:21** Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

***Acts 1:8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

***2 Tim 2:2-3** And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

III. Mark 01:19 The Collaborative Nature of the Disciples

The disciples of Jesus were collaborative men. They were brothers, and yet they were working together. The fact that they were working together says at least three things.

1. They had good parents who had taught them to love and care for one another.
2. They came from a closely knit family, a family that worked together.
3. They followed in the steps of their parents’ teaching, maintaining a brotherly spirit throughout life.

Thought 1. The disciples’ brotherly, collaborative spirit shows us three things.

- 1) The need for a brotherly spirit: the kind of spirit Christ desires of His followers. The kind of kingdom Christ is building is a kingdom of followers with a brotherly spirit.

***Mat 22:39** And the second is like it: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

***John 15:12** “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (see John 13:35; 1 Pet. 1:22)*

***Rom 12:10** Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*

2) The need for reaching families: brothers and sisters reaching each other.

John 1:41-42 *The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).*

John 4:53 *Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and all his household believed.*

Acts 16:15 *When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.*

Acts 16:30-31 *He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.”*

3) The need for parents to train up their children in the way they should go (Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:20-21).

Deu 6:7 *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

IV. Mark 01:20 The Unique Nature of the Disciples

The disciples of Jesus were successful, but sacrificing and considerate men. Zebedee and his sons, James and John, were successful businessmen. Note: the sons left their father with “hired men.” Perhaps this is the reason John was able to enter the palace of the High Priest when Jesus was being tried for treason (Jn. 18:15f). He probably provided fish for the palace.

Note two significant facts about what is said.

1. James and John, despite their success as fellow workers with their father, sacrificed their part of the business. They were either present owners or would be future owners by inheritance. They gave it all up to follow Jesus. This, too, was a rare quality found in few persons.
2. James and John were considerate to their father. They did not leave him alone; they would have never done that! They cared for him; they left him with “hired men.”

Thought 1. How many would sacrifice their inheritance to follow Jesus?

Mat 6:21 *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Mark 10:21 *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Mat 19:29 *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.*

Thought 2. How many adults care enough for their parents to see to it that they have plenty of help in tending their affairs? The kind of person Jesus calls is a considerate person.

Mark 7:10 *For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’*

1 Tim 5:4 *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.*

1 Tim 5:8 *If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Lev 19:32 *“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.” ■*