

# **MARK 1:38-39**

## **HEARING THE MESSAGE OF JESUS**

Twelve men changed the world. Eleven of them ate, slept, sailed, and walked with Jesus. The 12<sup>th</sup> man was a latecomer, so he got three years alone in the desert with Jesus<sup>1</sup>. Who were these men? The Apostles, the sent ones, those entrusted with the Gospel of God's Grace. Peter and the eleven and then, Paul the 12<sup>th</sup> and Final Apostle. Together they appear on a divine videotape on Evangelism. Together they demonstrate in public what they had been trained, taught, and commanded by Jesus.

Jesus saved them to share the Gospel, the Good News of Salvation. There are few things more exciting than to actually learn from Him our Master, His message and the way He called men and women, boys and girls to Salvation. That is what those Fishers of Divine Souls were taught.

As we continue this study tonight, get ready with your pen, paper and notebook. Mark God's Word so that again and again you can revisit these pages and see the Message of Jesus. Remember that Galilee in the time of Jesus was composed of no less than 3.6 million people living in 240 towns and villages of about 15,000 each. So into a heavily populated area, Jesus went out preaching a message to all who would hear. With Him went twelve tape recorders that captured His words, His passion, and His method. Then He left and asked them to keep up the work of the Gospel. They did so fanning out the furthest corners of the Roman Empire. They blazed the Gospel across untold millions of people from India to Britain, from Russia to Africa. They took Christ's call seriously

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians provides valuable historical information about Paul's background (chaps. 1, 2), including his 3-year stay in Nabatean Arabia (1:17, 18), which Acts does not mention; his 15-day visit with Peter after his stay in Arabia (1:18, 19); his trip to the Jerusalem Council (2:1-10); and his confrontation of Peter (2:11-21). (MacArthur Study Bible, Galatians Intro.)

Now as we turn to Acts we are actually turning on a video that lasts 30 years. What did I just say? Acts is not so much a book on doctrine as it is a divinely recorded and edited video of 30 years of sharing the greatest message ever given, by the greatest witnesses ever chosen. You see, the Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles to go and take the Gospel to the World. So Acts is a video report of how the Apostles and disciples shared the Gospel message in every possible setting. What we get is to see how the eyewitnesses shared with the world what happened in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As we go through all 28 chapters we find that there are 22-recorded events where a Gospel Message is presented.

This morning we saw the first six. The seventh is in Acts 9. Let's start there tonight. Acts 9: 1-6 introduces us to Saul, who becomes Paul, the latecomer, as one born out of due time as Paul later describes himself. This is one of the more amazing portions of Scripture. What dazzles us is the inspired record of Paul being converted by none other than Jesus Christ. The setting is the road to Damascus. The place is the dusty road; Paul is lying on his face, and then is looking up at a light brighter than the noonday Sun. His eyes are being seared, but his soul is even more enflamed. He is talking to God, or is it Jesus, or is it the Lord against whom he had fought? Then Jesus speaks and explains the plan of salvation. Jesus calls it "The Way" and gives seven elements of genuine faith. Note what Jesus calls those who are saved in Acts **9:2 who were of the Way**. This description of Christianity, derived from Jesus' description of Himself (John 14:6), appears six times in Acts (19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). This is an appropriate title because Christianity is the way of God (18:26), the way into the Holy Place (Heb. 10:19, 20), and the way of truth (John 14:6; 2 Pet. 2:2).

The actual record of Christ's words to Paul is not revealed until Paul's witness to Agrippa in Acts 26:18. Let's turn there for just a moment to catch the flavor of Christ's soul winning pattern used on Paul.

Please stand with me as we listen to God's Word in Acts 26:18-20.

v. 18 'to **open their eyes**, in order **to turn them from darkness to light**, and **from the power of Satan to God**, that they may **receive forgiveness of sins** and **an inheritance** among those who are **sanctified by faith in Me.**'

Salvation is always presented in a divine style in Acts. Remember?

Let's quickly sketch what we saw in your Bibles this morning:

**MESSAGE ONE:** The time has come. After being called to be a fisherman for eternal souls. After being given on site, hands on training for three plus years. After being tutored privately, commissioned publicly, and filled with the very Holy Spirit of God, Peter steps up to the microphone to deliver his first sermon. I'm sure his pulse was throbbing in anticipation, his heart pounding with excitement to at last say what he had been taught, shown, and commanded him, to say.

So here it is, here is Gospel Presentation number **ONE** in Acts chapter 2. Peter preaches the first sermon after Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and sending the Holy Spirit down to indwell the Church. What does he say? Many things, all-important in Acts 2: 37-39:

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, **what shall we do?**"<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; and you **shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.<sup>39</sup> "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

So, what was the summary of the first message? One word, REPENT.

**MESSAGE TWO:** Let's go to the **SECOND** gospel presentation in Acts 3:19. Again it is Peter preaching after the wonderful healing of the man who had been unable to walk for over 40 years (Acts 4:22). What is the gospel message? Listen to Acts 3: 19 and then v. 26:

v. 19 "**Repent therefore and be converted**, that your **sins may be blotted out**, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

v. 26 "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in **turning away every one of you from your iniquities.**"

So, what was the summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> message? REPENT and TURN AWAY FROM INIQUITY.

**MESSAGE THREE:** Now to the **THIRD** gospel presentation in Acts 4:12

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which **we must be saved**<sup>2</sup>."

So what is saved? Saved from sins. Thus we can say in summary after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gospel message? REPENT and TURN AWAY FROM INIQUITY, and BE SAVED FROM SIN.

**MESSAGE FOUR:** The **FOURTH** Gospel Message comes in Acts 5: 31-32 as Peter is again speaking, declaring the way of salvation:

"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give **repentance** to Israel and **forgiveness of sins**.<sup>32</sup> "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

So what is our GOSPEL MESSAGE SUMMARY after the 4<sup>th</sup> message on how to be saved? REPENT and TURN AWAY FROM INIQUITY, and BE SAVED by RECEIVING FORGIVENESS of SINS.

The **FIFTH** Gospel Message is no longer directed just to Jews, now Samaritans, half Jew and half Gentile, are getting the message. Now we see for the first time a false believer. Jesus warned of this in the Gospels, now we see it. Note Acts 8: 13:

Then Simon himself also **believed**; and when he **was baptized** he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs, which were done.

So he believed and was baptized, but something was missing. When the Apostle Peter who has given every recorded Gospel Message on this videotape so far shows up to confirm the veracity of this evangelistic outreach he declares something was lacking<sup>3</sup> from this man's conversion. Listen and note the report in Acts 8:21-23:

"You have **neither part nor portion in this matter** (what matter? Salvation), for your **heart is not right in the sight of God**. (Wow, what makes a heart right in God's sight Peter?) 22 **"Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if**

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<sup>2</sup> There is a common description we use today. Peter said again, the third description of salvation: be saved. From what we might ask? Well when the name of the Messiah was given as Jesus it was stated in Matthew 1:21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

<sup>3</sup> Simon believed and was baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit, which was the seal of true conversion and New Birth. This means that belief and baptism without repentance was insufficient. He never repented of his sin so he was never saved! Salvation again is stated by Peter to involve a turning from sin, which is called repentance.

**perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.**<sup>23</sup>  
“For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

So what is our GOSPEL MESSAGE SUMMARY after the 5<sup>th</sup> message on how to be saved? Really REPENT and TURN AWAY FROM INIQUITY, and BE SAVED by RECEIVING FORGIVENESS of SINS.

**MESSAGE SIX:** Look now at the **SIXTH** Gospel Message in Acts 8:35-37:

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning **at this Scripture, preached Jesus** to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” 37 Then Philip said, “If you **believe with all your heart**, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

So this morning we have watched the video for 8 chapters of Acts. What do we see contained in the first six Gospel Message they presented? What is our GOSPEL MESSAGE SUMMARY after the 6<sup>th</sup> message on how to be saved? Really REPENT and TURN AWAY FROM INIQUITY, and BE SAVED by RECEIVING FORGIVENESS of SINS, when you BELIEVE WITH ALL YOUR HEART.

Now rapidly, what are the rest of the messages in Acts? First let me sum them up, then go back and point out some key elements.

The **SEVENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 9:4-6 which records the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle, where the Gospel Message is described as Turning to God in Acts 26:18-20.

The **EIGHTH** Gospel Message in Acts 10:35 to 11:18 where the Gospel Message is described as believing, receiving remission of sins, and God granting repentance.

The **NINTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 11:20-21 where the Gospel Message is described as believing and turning.

The **TENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 10:38-39, 48 where the Gospel Message is described as forgiveness to all who believe, who do so at the appointment of God.

The **ELEVENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 14:27-15:9 where the Gospel Message is

described as God opening the door of faith and purifying the heart.

The **TWELVTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 15:19 where the Gospel Message is described as turning to God and away from what offends God's Word and people.

The **THIRTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 16:14 where the Gospel Message is described as the Lord opening the heart to heed His Word.

The **FOURTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 16:31 where the Gospel Message is described as believing.

The **FIFTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 17:1-7 where the Gospel Message is described by pagans who observed the process as getting a new King of your life.

The **SIXTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 17: 30 where the Gospel Message is described as God commanding all to repent.

The **SEVENTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 18: 8-13 where the Gospel Message is described as believing, when God draws one to worship Him.

The **EIGHTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 19: 8-26 where the Gospel Message is described as a Kingdom, following a Way, which people follow instead of their own way. (Isaiah 53: 6)

The **NINTEENTH** Gospel Message is in Acts 20: 21-25 where the Gospel Message is described as repentance, faith, to the Gospel of Grace (Titus 2: 11), and into God's Kingdom (only need a King!).

The **TWENTIETH** Gospel Message is in Acts 24: 14-25 where the Gospel Message is described as a Way, of Worship, that involves

righteousness, self-control, and averts judgment that makes the lost to fear. Thus not an easy to believe, try Jesus message!

The **TWENTY-FIRST** Gospel Message is in Acts 26: 14-20 where we see the Gospel Message directly from Jesus, soul winning in Acts. Jesus describes salvation as opened eyes, turning, receiving, and being sanctified. How did Paul sum up what he heard? He told the **LOST** to "repent, and turn to God, and do works befitting repentance"

The **TWENTY-SECOND** and final Gospel Message is in Acts 28: 31 where the Gospel Message is described as coming into God's Kingdom (only need a King!). The starting message is repent and the concluding message is God's Kingdom, both rarely if ever used in our new way of doing God's business. Should we go back and check out the way we are doing God's Work, to be sure it is God's Way?

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Please turn there Acts 25:13. Meet the cast for a moment. Paul is facing pagans, steeped in sin, lost and doomed men and women. What does he tell lost people?

First is a little known figure introduced in Acts **24:27 Porcius Festus succeeded Felix**. Festus was a member of the Roman nobility, unlike the former slave, Felix. Little is known of his brief tenure as governor (he died two years after assuming office), but the Jewish historian Josephus described him as better than either his predecessor or his successor.

**King Agrippa**. Herod Agrippa II, was

- ✓ the son of the Herod who killed James and imprisoned Peter. He was
- ✓ the last of the Herods, who play a prominent role in NT history. He was
- ✓ the grand-nephew of Herod Antipas, the Herod of the gospels who wanted Jesus to do a trick, and then mocked Jesus at his crucifixion and to whom Jesus would not even utter a word (Mark 6: 14–29; Luke 3: 1; 13: 31–33; 23: 7–12), and he was
- ✓ the great-grandson of Herod the Great, who ruled at the time Jesus was born, and murdered the innocents at Bethlehem in cruel, calculated, cold bloodedness (Matt. 2: 1–19; Luke 1: 5). He was
- ✓ a man who knew so much, but cared so little.

**Bernice.** Not Agrippa's wife, but his consort and sister. (Their sister, Drusilla, was married to the former governor, Felix). Agrippa was living in an incestuous<sup>4</sup> relationship with his own sister, which was the talk of Rome, where Agrippa had grown up. His wicked partner in sin, Bernice, for a while even became the mistress of Emperor Vespasian, then of his son Titus, but always returned to her brother.

So how does Paul do personal evangelism with big shots who have sordid lives? He hits them with God's Word, God's Law, God's Holiness, and their utter failure to meet His standard.

**Acts 24:25 righteousness, self-control, and the judgment.**

God demands "righteousness" of all men, because of His holy nature (Matt. 5: 48; 1 Pet. 1: 15, 16). For men and women to conform to that absolute standard requires "self-control." The result of failing to exhibit self-control and to conform oneself to God's righteous standard is (apart from salvation) "judgment."

**Felix was afraid.** Living with a woman he had lured away from her husband, Felix obviously lacked "righteousness" and "self-control." The realization that he faced "judgment" alarmed him, and he hastily dismissed Paul. **when I have a convenient time.** The moment of conviction passed, and Felix foolishly passed up his opportunity to repent (cf. 2 Cor. 6: 2).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Drawn from Acts 12, 25 and 26 by John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

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So what did that mean to Paul? He explains it in v. 19-20:

"Therefore, King Agrippa, **I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,**<sup>20</sup> "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and **then to the Gentiles**, that they should **repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**

What did Paul tell the lost? Did his message differ for the Jews? No, one Gospel, one salvation, one faith!

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