



John's Schedule

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Mark the Failure



Part 33 (001001 AM)

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This morning as we open our Bibles there is a name linked to the book we are studying. We are in the Gospel by _____ - RIGHT, Mark!

For as long as believers live on Earth we will call these 16 chapters that capture Christ through the eyes of Peter, and under the flawless breath of God's Spirit. But always it will be remembered that they were from the pen of Mark. So as the words of the Gospel by Mark lay before us, we are faced this morning with a sobering reminder of our Gracious God. Look who God used!

To study the Gospel by MARK, we need to start at [Acts 12:24-25](#). Let's stand to read God's Word!

Wow, the 1st Missionary Journey. Can you see the glow in Mark's eyes? Led to Christ by no less than the Apostle Peter. Discipled by his uncle Barnabas - who is now taking him along.

Going on the historic trip with Paul – the greatest man in the entire Roman Empire, even rulers trembled before him.

Now [Acts 13:13](#) he quits. Just a slight mention of cutting out, heading home. Then it happens, his choice splits the greatest evangelistic team in history [Acts 15:36-40](#). Branded by all who may have known him, Mark the Quitter, the Fearful, and the Failure.

Twenty years have passed. As Mark sat to capture the words of Peter, inspired by God' Spirit the start of over 600 miles of catacombs under the city of Rome had been started by Christians facing persecution.

The world that Mark served the Lord in was a terrible time in history. One of the most memorable pages of the History of Christ's Church are the 0 years from AD 60 and 70. For half those years the hatred and evils of Nero had led to the random acts of fierce persecution upon Christians. Across the city of Rome believers were killed from the arenas to the prisons. For his evening dinner guests Nero would have the followers of Jesus dipped in tar and burned alive in sticks as torches in Nero's gardens. For the delight of the masses in the games, Christians were wrapped in animal skins and chased to death by wild beasts.

Have you pondered how hard it must have been to be a Christian in those ten years? Yet in that dangerous time to even be a believer, Mark boldly wrote to the Romans of Jesus, the Servant Savior. And he did so seated next to Pater who had become the "Most Wanted" man of the day. Mark demonstrated the holy boldness Christ can bring into the lives of His children.

Ten generations of Christians, starting with Mark's generation, built and inhabited the Catacombs over a period of 300 years. In the early centuries of the church, the catacombs served as meeting and burial places for perhaps as many as four million Christians. A common inscription found on walls there is "The Word of God is not bound." This hope shared by all believers was captured in the famous hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," as Martin Luther declared, "The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still."

Branded by all who may have known him, Mark the Quitter, the Fearful, and the Failure.

This same Mark writes a biography of encouragement to those living through the Roman persecutions and beyond. He weaves together Peter's eyewitness accounts, and the Holy Spirit's revelations into a fabric that portrays Jesus as the One who has suffered and triumphed for us. So we who are His can suffer and triumph through Him.

- Part: 5 [John the Baptist: He Must Increase](#)
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Is Mark unique? No! Apart[1] from the brief ministry of His own Son, the history of God's work on earth is the history of His using the unqualified. Even the twelve disciples who became apostles were no exception. From the human standpoint they had few characteristics or abilities that qualified them for leadership and service. Yet God used those men, just as He did Noah, Abraham, and the others, in marvelous ways to do His work. God picks normal people and pours His grace on them. Satan wants our sins and failures to convince us to give up. But one look at the people of the Bible should defeat that temptation. The work of God is performed by weak individuals like us, surrendered to the God whose power is perfected in man's weakness ([2 Cor. 12:9](#)). God has always had only weak and sinful humans to work with. Listen to the team God has used to win the championships:

- As soon as God delivered Noah and his family through the Flood, Noah became drunk and acted indecently.
- God uses a doubting and sometimes disobedient dad named Abraham to be the father of the faithful, he doubted God, lied about his wife, and committed adultery with her maid.
- Isaac told a similar lie about his wife when he thought his life was in danger.
- Jacob took advantage of his brother Esau's weakness and extorted the birthright from him, so he was a cheat and liar and yet becomes the father of God's people Israel.
- Moses was a murderer, and in pride he struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had instructed, dragged his feet in obedience yet led and taught the people knowing God face to face.
- His brother, Aaron, the first high priest, led Israel in erecting and worshiping the golden calf at the very time Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God.
- Joshua was fooled into disobeying the Lord by making a treaty with the Gibeonites instead of destroying them.
- Gideon had trouble trusting God at first, had little confidence in himself and even less in God's plan and power.
- Samson was repeatedly beguiled by Delilah because of his great lust for her.
- David was a ladies man, committed adultery and murder, was an almost total failure as a father, and was not allowed to build the Temple because he was a man of blood.
- Elijah stood fearlessly before 450 false prophets but cowered before one woman, Jezebel. From the exhilaration of Mt. Carmel's victory he plunged so soon into deep depression. Elijah should encourage us all. [James 5:17](#) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. NKJV. Why? Because God says he had a nature like ours. "Subject to like passions" homiopathes lit. Of the same experience!
- Ezekiel was brash, crusty, and quick to speak his mind.
- Jonah defied God's call to preach to the Ninevites and resented His grace when they were converted through his preaching.

All this to say the key is not the person God uses, it is the Lord! We are all unqualified to do what needs to be done so the key is a willing and responsive heart. That is all God is looking for! What happens when we let Him use us? Great things!

Mark's Gospel is encouraging.

First we see that **God wants to use ordinary people**. The Gospel by Mark is the book of God's Word written as the Holy Spirit inspired John Mark. According to [Colossians 4:10](#), he was Barnabas' young cousin. He evidently came from a well-to-do family in Jerusalem and had been privy to the great goings-on in the Holy City.

Secondly, we see **God wants to use those we might call failures**. Virtually everyone agrees that the author was John Mark, a young man who had a shaky beginning in the ministry when he abandoned Paul on the apostle's first missionary trip and decided to return home ([Acts 13:13](#)). So, before Mark wrote this Gospel he was a drop out from ministry. Paul was so unhappy with Mark that he refused to take him on the second journey, thus beginning a bitter quarrel between Paul and Barnabas which ended with Paul and Silas going one way and Barnabas and Mark another ([Acts 15:36-41](#)). Although intimate details are lacking, Paul and John Mark later reconciled when Paul was in prison in Rome.

Next, we see how greatly **God wants to use young people in ministry**. When the Apostle Peter was writing 1 Peter in Rome, he affectionately called Mark his son ([1 Peter 5:13](#)). It was Mark's close relationship with Peter, which motivated and enabled him to write an intimate portrait of Christ. How Mark had changed from that 1st missionary trip with Paul. Back then he was probably enamored with the romance of the venture. In his mind he saw himself accompanying Barnabas and Paul as they conquered the world. He probably expected to see the miracle of the Antioch church duplicated elsewhere. There was also the appeal of a cruise to far off places, sights and experiences. But once on the missionary journey, reality quickly set in. They all became tired, even exhausted. The accommodations were not always the best, and soon the romance was gone. Mark began to wonder why he had come on this trip. And soon bails out. All of that is recorded in [Acts 15:37-40](#). So again God shows He is the God of the 2nd chance, and 3rd and on and on. His mercy endures forever.

One final thought about Mark. Remember the Book of Acts tells us he was a quitter, a drop out. He was not useful at one time in ministry. But have you thought about how gracious our God is? Every time we read this book we are experiencing the result of God's transforming grace. History records the path of Mark. Mark the failed follower of Christ, becomes Mark the forgiven follower, becomes Mark the devoted disciple, becomes the man who writes what may be called the premier biography of Jesus Christ, and finally becomes Mark the honored martyr.

Mark's Book should remind us of Mark's God who can encourage all of us to keep going. Listen to the poet who said:

They on the heights are not the souls

Who never erred or went astray,

Or reached those high rewarding goals

Along a smooth, flower-bordered way.

Nay, they who stand where first comes dawn

Are those who stumbled but went on.

Mark's gospel is exciting. Why? Because it is the apostle Peter recounting the greatest story ever told. If you will let him, Mark will let you see, feel and experience what it was like to walk around Israel watching God in a body, right here on earth. This gospel is Peter's dramatic, vivid, full of color action packed video that takes us on an eye witness journey with none other than the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ.

In a gospel written from Peter's words to the fast paced Roman Empire, Jesus is constantly in action! Mark, perhaps the first gospel account written, opens with: The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." God Himself ratifies the declaration in 1:11: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Mark joins the other three Evangelists who record Christ's ministry to the four groups of people then and now in the world.

1. **The Jews, who loved the Scriptures and the prophecies of God, would only listen** to one of their own. So **Matthew** speaks to the deeply religious Jews and the deeply religious of our day.
2. **Mark** spoke to the Romans. These were the leaders and leadership and action impressed them. They knew nothing of Scriptures but everything of power. So to this group comes the action packed Gospel of the powerful ministry of Christ. Mark uses the word "and" 1,375 times to tie together the endless actions of Christ. Like our modern successful businessman and woman, they want a God who can powerfully meet their deepest needs.
3. **Luke** was a Greek speaking to the Greeks. The Greeks loved culture, beauty and ideas. Happiness could be found in the pursuit of truth. Luke fills his book with insights, interviews, songs and details that fascinate the inquiring mind. So today the truth seekers find Jesus in Luke!
4. **John** wrote to everyone, because everyone needs to meet God and only Jesus can reveal Him. In this book we meet an absolutely powerful God in human flesh who controls and rules the Universe He created. So the best known verse is the best of all offer that God loves all and offers all – **His Son as their only hope!**

Mark uses a simple three-part outline:

1. The Birth and Preparation of Servant [Jesus 1:1 - 13](#);
2. Servant Jesus Speaks and [Serves 1:14 - 13:37](#);
3. Servant Jesus Suffers and Triumphs in Passion [Week 14:1 - 16:20](#).

But every time we open to the Gospel by Mark we remember that in one way or another, all of us too have stumbled. And for each of us, John Mark's triumph by God's grace is an incredible source of encouragement.

If we were to sum up the entire Gospel by Mark in a verse it would be

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." ([Mark 10:45](#))

[1] Adapted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 10*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983

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