

Mark — Introductory  
**Introductory Lectures on the Gospels**

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**MARK 1 - 8.**

It is remarkable how tradition has contrived to injure the truth in touching the question of the method of the gospel we now enter on; for the current view which comes down to us from the ancients, stamped too with the name of one who lived not long after the apostles, lays down — that Mark's is that gospel which arranges the facts of our Lord's life, not in, but out of the order of their occurrence. Now, that order is precisely what he most observes. And this mistake, if it be one, which notoriously had wrought from the earliest days, and naturally, therefore, to a large extent since, of course vitiated the right understanding of the book. I am persuaded that the Spirit of God intended that we should have among the gospels one that adheres to the simple order of the facts in giving our Lord's history. Otherwise, we must be plunged in uncertainty, not merely as to one particular gospel, but as lacking the means of rightly judging departures from historic order in all the others; for it is plain, that if there be no such thing as a regular order in any one gospel, we are necessarily deprived of all power of determining in any case when the events did really occur which stand differently connected in the rest of the gospels. It is not in any way that one would seek what is commonly called a "harmony," which is really to obscure the perception of the special objects of the gospels. At the same time, nothing can be more certain than that the real author of the gospels, even God Himself, knew all perfectly. Nor, even to take the lowest ground, on the part of the different writers, is ignorance of the order in which the facts occurred a reasonable key to the peculiarities of the gospels. The Holy Ghost deliberately displaced many events and discourses, but this could not be through carelessness, still less through caprice, but only for ends worthy of God. The most obvious order would be to give them just as they occurred. Partly, then, as it seems to me, that we might be able to judge with accuracy and with certainty of the departures from the order of occurrence, the Spirit of God has given us in one of these gospels that order as the rule. In which of them is it found, do you ask? I have no doubt that the answer is, spite of tradition, In the gospel of Mark. And the fact exactly agrees with the spiritual character of his gospel, because this also ought to have great weight in confirming the answer, if not in deciding the question.

Any person who looks at, Mark, not merely piecemeal, though it is evident in any part, but, much more satisfactorily, as a whole, will rise from the consideration of the gospel with the fullest conviction that what the Holy Ghost has undertaken to give us in this history of Christ is His ministry. It is now so much a matter of common knowledge, that there is no need to dwell long upon a fact that is generally confessed. I shall endeavour to show how the whole account hangs together, and bears out this well-known and most simple truth — how it accounts for the peculiarities in Mark, for what is given us, and for what is left out; and of course, therefore, for his differences from the others. All this, I think, will be

made clear and certain to any who may not have thoroughly examined it before. Here I would only observe, how entirely this goes along with the fact that Mark adheres to the order of history, because, if he is giving us the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and particularly His service in the word, as well as in the miraculous signs which illustrated that service, and which were its external vouchers, it is plain that the order in which the facts occurred is precisely that which is the most calculated of all to give us a true and adequate view of His ministry; whereas it is not so, if we look at the object of either Matthew or Luke.

In the former the Holy Ghost is showing us the rejection of Jesus, and that rejection proved from the very first. Now, in order to give us the right understanding of His rejection, the Holy Ghost groups facts together, and groups them often, as we have had occasion to notice, entirely regardless of the time at which they occurred. What was wanted was a bright vivid view of the shameless rejection of the Messiah by His own people. It was needed, thereupon, to make plain what God would undertake in consequence of that rejection, that is to say, the vast economic change that would follow. It was necessarily the weightiest thing that had ever been or that could be in this world, the rejection of a divine Person who was at the same time "the great King," the promised expected Messiah of Israel. For that very reason, the mere order of the facts would be entirely insufficient to give proper weight to the object of the Holy Ghost in Matthew. Therefore the Spirit of God does what even man has wit enough to do, where he has any analogous object before him. There is a bringing together, from different places, persons, and times in the history, the great salient facts which make evident the total rejection of the Messiah, and the glorious change which God was able to introduce for the Gentiles in consequence of that rejection. Such is the object in Matthew; and accordingly this accounts for the departure from mere sequence of events.

In Luke, again, there is another reason that we shall find, when we come to details, abundantly confirmed. For therein the Holy Ghost undertakes to show us Christ as the One who brought to light all the moral springs of the heart of man, and at the same time the perfect grace of God in dealing with man as he is; therein, too, the divine wisdom in Christ which made its way through this world, the lovely grace, too, which attracted man when utterly confounded and broken down enough to cast himself upon what God is. Hence, throughout the gospel of Luke, we have, in some respects, a disregard of the mere order of time equal to that which characterized Matthew. If we suppose two facts, mutually illustrating each other, but occurring at totally different times, in such a case these two facts might be brought together. For instance, supposing the Spirit of God desired in our Lord's history to show the value of the word of God and of prayer, He might clearly bring together two remarkable occasions, in one of which our Lord revealed the mind of God about prayer — in the other, His judgment of the value of the word. The question whether the two events took place at the same time is here entirely immaterial. No matter when they occurred, they are here seen together; if put out of their occurrence, in fact, it is to form the justest order for illustrating the truth that the Holy Ghost meant us to receive.

This general observation is made here, because I think it is particularly in place in introducing the gospel of Mark.

But God has taken care to meet another point by the way. Man might take advantage of this departure from the historical order in some gospels, and the maintenance of it in others, in order to decry the writers or their writings. Of course, he is hasty enough to impute "discrepancy." There is no real ground for the charge. God has taken a very wise method to contradict and rebuke the credulous incredulity of man. As there are four evangelists, so He has arranged it that, of these four, two should adhere to historical order, and two should forsake it where it was required. Further, of these two, one

was, and one was not an apostle in each case. Of the two evangelists, Mark and John, who generally maintain historical order, the most remarkable thread of events was not given by an apostle. Nevertheless, John, who was an apostle, adheres to the historical order in the fragmentary series of facts, here and there, in the life of Christ, that he gives us. At the same time that the gospel of John does not undertake to present a sketch of the entire course of Christ, Mark describes the whole career of His ministry with more particularity than any other. Hence it is that John practically acts as a kind of supplement, not to Mark only, but to all the evangelists; and we have, ever and anon, a cluster of the richest events, yet keeping to historical order. Not to speak of its wondrous preface, there is an introduction that precedes the account given in the other gospels, filling up a certain space after His baptism, but before His public ministry. And then, again, we have a number of discourses which our Lord gave more particularly to His disciples after His public relations were over. These are all given, as it appears to me, in the exact order of their delivery, without any departure from it, save only that we find a parenthesis once or twice in John, which, if not seen there to be a parenthesis, wears an appearance of a departure from the succession of time; but of course a parenthesis does not come under the ordinary structure of a regular sentence or series of things.

This explanation, I trust, will help to a general understanding of the relative place of the gospels. We have Matthew and Luke, one of them an apostle, and the other not, both of whom are wont to depart from historical order very largely. We have Mark and John, one of them an apostle, and the other not, both of whom likewise, as a rule, adhere to historical order. God has thus cut off all just reason on men's part for saying that it is a question of knowing or not knowing the facts as they occurred, some being eyewitnesses, and others learning the events, etc., otherwise. Of those that keep the order of history, one was, the other was not, an eye-witness; to those that adopt a different arrangement precisely the same remark applies. Thus it is that God has confuted all attempts of His enemies to cast the smallest discredit upon the instruments He has used. It is thus made apparent that (so far from the structure of the gospels being attributable in any way to ignorance on one side, or, on the other, to a competent knowledge of the facts), on the contrary, he was no eye-witness who has given us the fullest, minutest, most vivid, and graphic sketch of the Lord's service here below; and this in small particulars, which, as every one knows, is always the great test of truth. Persons who do not commonly speak the truth can nevertheless be careful enough sometimes about great matters; but it is in little words and ways where the heart betrays its own treachery, or the eye its lack of observation. And it is precisely in this that Mark triumphs so completely — rather, let me say, the Spirit of God in His employment of Mark. Nor was it that Mark had earlier been a worthy servant himself. Far from it. Who does not know that, when he began his work, he was not always fervent in serving the Lord? We are told in the Acts of the Apostles that he deserted the great apostle of the Gentiles when he accompanied him and his cousin Barnabas; for such was the relationship, rather than that of uncle. He left them, returning home to his mother and Jerusalem. His associations were with nature and the great seat of religious tradition, which for a while, of course, ruined him, as it tends to ruin every servant of God who is similarly ensnared. Nevertheless, God's grace overcomes all difficulties. So it was in the personal ministry of Mark, as we gather from the glorious work Mark was afterwards given to do, both in other ministry (Col. 4: 10; 2 Tim. 4: 11), and in the extraordinary honour of writing one of the inspired accounts of his Master. Mark had not possessed the advantage of that personal acquaintance with the facts which some of the other writers had enjoyed; yet is he the one through whom the Holy Ghost condescended to impart the minutest, and at the same time the most suggestive touches, if I may so say, that are found in any view vouchsafed us of the actual living ministry of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, such was the current of his own history, as forming him for the work he subsequently had to do; for while at first there was certainly that which looked uncommonly like a false start, afterwards, on the

contrary, he is acknowledged by Paul most cordially, spite of early disappointment and rebuke; for his company had been absolutely refused, even at the cost of losing Barnabas, to whom the apostle had special grounds of personal attachment. Barnabas was the man who had first gone after Saul of Tarsus; for assuredly he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and thus the more willing to accredit the great grace of God in Saul of Tarsus, when the new convert was regarded with suspicion, and might have been left alone for a season. Thus Saul had known literally in his own history how little the grace of God commands confidence in a sinful world. After all this, then, it was that Mark, who had fallen under the censure of Paul, and had been the occasion of separating Barnabas from that apostle — that very Mark afterwards completely retrieved his lost character, and the apostle Paul takes more pains by far to reinstate him in the confidence of the saints, than he had done personally to refuse association with him in the service of the Lord.

Who, then, so fit to give us the Lord Jesus as the true servant? Choose whom you like. Go over the whole range of the New Testament; find out one whose own personal career so adapted him to delight in, and to become the suited vessel for the Holy Ghost to show us, the perfect Servant of God. It was the man that had been the faulty servant; it was the man whom grace had restored and made to be a faithful servant, — who had proved how ensnaring is the flesh, and how dangerous the associations of human tradition and of home; but who thus, unprofitable at first for the ministry, became afterwards so profitable, as Paul himself took care to declare publicly and for ever in the imperishable word of God. This was the instrument whom God employed by the Holy Ghost to give us the grand lineaments of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, as Levi the publican, the apostle Matthew was providentially formed for his task; and grace, condescending to look at all circumstances, never deigns to be controlled by them, but always, while working in them, nevertheless retains its own supremacy above them. Even so in Mark's case there was just as great an appropriateness for the task God had assigned him, as there was in the call of the earlier evangelist from the receipt of custom, and the choice of one so despised of Israel to show the fatal course of that nation, when the Lord turned at the great epoch of dispensational change to call in Gentiles and the despised of Israel themselves. But if there was this manifest fitness in Matthew for his work, it would be strange if there were not as much in Mark for his. And this is what we find in his gospel. There is no parade of circumstance; there is no pomp of introduction even for the Lord Jesus Christ in this gospel, not even that style which is most rightly found elsewhere. It could not be that the Messiah of Israel was to enter among His chosen people, and be found in Israel's land, without due witness and clear tokens preceding His approach; and the God who had given promises, and who had established the kingdom, would surely make it manifest; for the Jews did require a sign, and God gave them signs in abundance before the coining of the greatest sign of all.

Thus it is that in the gospel of Matthew we have seen the amplest credentials from angels and among men of the Messiah, who then and there was born the King of the Jews, in Immanuel's land. But in Mark all this is with equal beauty absent; and suddenly, without any other preparation than John preaching and baptizing — the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" — at once, after this, the Lord Jesus is found, not born, not the subject of homage, but preaching, taking up the work which John not long after laid down, as it were, on going to prison. That setting aside of the Baptist (ver. 14) becomes the signal for the public service of the Lord; and, accordingly, the service of Christ is thenceforward pursued throughout our gospel; and first of all His Galilean service, which continues down to the end of chapter 10 I do not purpose tonight to look even at the whole of this Galilean ministry, but to divide the subject matter as my time requires, and therefore I do not now limit myself to the natural divisions of the gospel, but simply follow it according to chapters, as the occasion may require. We shall take it in two portions.

In the opening section or preface (of verses 1-13), then, we have here no genealogy whatever, but very simply the announcement of John the Baptist. We have our Lord then ushered into His public ministry, and, first of all, His Galilean labours. As He walks by the sea, He sees Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea. These He calls to follow Him. It was not the first acquaintance of the Lord Jesus with these two apostles. At first sight it might seem strange that a word, even though it were the word of the Lord, should call these two men away from their father or their occupation; yet no one can call it unprecedented, as the call of Levi, already referred to, makes plain. Nevertheless, so it is that in the case of Andrew and Simon, as well as the sons of Zebedee, called about the same time, there was certainly previous acquaintance with the Saviour. Two disciples of the Baptist, one of them Andrew, preceded his brother Simon, as we know from John 1. But here it is not at all the same time or facts that are described in that gospel. In the call to the work, I have no hesitation in saying that Andrew and Simon were called before John and James; but in the personal acquaintance with the Saviour, which we find in the gospel of John, it is evident to me, that an unnamed disciple (as I think, John himself) was before Simon. Both are perfectly true. There is not even the appearance of contradiction when the Scripture is rightly understood. Each of these is exactly in its proper place, for we have in our gospel Christ's ministry. That is not the theme of the gospel of John, but a far deeper and more personal subject; it is the revelation of the Father in the Son to man upon the earth. It is eternal life found by souls, and of course in the Son of God. This accordingly is the first point of contact which the Holy Ghost loves to trace in John's gospel. Why is all that entirely left out of Mark? Evidently because his province is not a soul acquainted for the first time with Jesus, the display of the wonderful truth of eternal life in Him. Another subject is in hand. We have the Saviour's grace, of course, in all the gospels; but the great theme of Mark is His ministry. Hence it is, that not the *personal* so much as the *ministerial* call is the one referred to here. In John, on the contrary, where it was the Son made known to man by faith of the Holy Ghost's operation, it is not the ministerial call, but the previous one — the personal call of grace unto the knowledge of the Son, and eternal life in Him.

This may serve to show that weighty lessons lie under that which a careless eye might count a comparatively trivial difference in these gospels. Well we know that in God's word there is nothing trivial; but what might at first sight seem so is pregnant with truth, and also in immediate relation to God's aim in each particular book where these facts are found.

All things, then, they now forsake at the call of the Lord. It was not a question simply of eternal life. The principle, no doubt, is always true; but we do not in fact find all things thus forsaken in ordinary cases. Eternal life is brought to souls in the Christ who attracts them; but they are enabled to glorify God where they are. Here it is all abandoned in order to follow Christ. The next scene is the synagogue of Capernaum. And there our Lord shows the objects of His mission here in two particulars. First there is teaching — "He taught them," as it is said, "as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." It was not tradition, it was not reason, not imagination, or the persuasible words of man's wisdom. It was the power of God. It was that, therefore, which was equally simple and sure. This necessarily gives authority to the tone of him who, in a world of uncertainty and deceit, utters with assurance the mind of God. It is a dishonour to God and His word to pronounce with hesitation the truth of God, if indeed we know it for our own souls. It is unbelief to say "I *think*," if I am sure; nay, revealed truth is not only what I know, but what God has made known to me. It is to cloud and weaken the truth, it is to injure souls, it is to lower God Himself, if we do not speak with authority where we have no doubt of His word. But then it is plain that we must be taught of God before we are at liberty to speak thus confidently.

But it is here to be noted, that this is the first quality mentioned in our Lord's teaching. This, I

need not say, has a voice to us. Where we cannot speak with authority, we had better not speak at all. It is a simple rule, and abundantly short. At the same time it is clear that it would lead to great deal of searching of heart; but, I am no less persuaded, it would be with immense profit to ourselves and to our hearers.

The second thing was not authority in teaching, but power in action; and our Lord deals with the root of the mischief in man — the power of Satan, now so little believed in — the power of Satan over human spirits or bodies, or both. There was then in the synagogue — the very place of meeting, where Jesus was — a man with an unclean spirit. The demoniac cried out; for it was impossible that the power of God in the person of Jesus could be there without detecting him that was under the power of Satan. The bruiser of the serpent was there, the deliverer of the enthralled sons of Adam. The mask is thrown off; the man, the unclean spirit, cannot rest in the presence of Jesus. "He cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" In the most singular way he blends together the action of the evil spirit with his own — "What have we to do with thee? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God." Jesus rebukes him. The unclean spirit tore him; for it was right that there should be the manifestation of the effects of the evil power, restricted as it was before Him who had defeated the tempter. It was a profitable lesson, that man should know what the working of Satan really is. We have on the one side, then, the malignant effect of Satan's power, and on the other the blessed benignant might of the Lord Jesus Christ, who compels the spirit to come out, amazing all that saw and heard, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." There was, we thus see, both the authority of truth, and also the power that wrought in outward signs accompanying.

The next scene proves that it was not merely displayed in such acts as these: there was the misery and the maladies of man apart from the direct possession of the enemy. But virtue goes out of Jesus wherever there was an appeal of need. Peter's wife's mother is the first who is presented after he leaves the synagogue; and the marvellous grace and power blended in His healing of Peter's mother-in-law attracts crowds of sick with every evil; so that we know all the city was come together at the door. "And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."

Thus, then, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is fully come. It is thus that he enters upon it in Mark. It is clearly the manifestation of the truth of God with authority. Divine power is vested in man over the devil, as well as over disease. Such was the form of the ministry of Jesus. There was a fulness in it naturally, one need scarce say, which was suitable to Him who was the head of ministry as well as its great pattern here below, no less than, as He is now, its source from His place of glory in heaven. But there is another notable feature in it, too, as contributing to fill this instructive introductory picture of our Lord's ministry in its actual exercise. Our Lord "suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him." He refused a testimony that was not of God. It might be true, but He would not accept the testimony of the enemy.

But positive strength is also requisite in dependence on God. Hence we are told, "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." There, just as there is the rejection of the enemy's testimony, so there is the fullest leaning upon God's power. No personal glory, no title to power that attached to Him, was the smallest reason for relaxing in entire subjection to His Father, or for neglecting to seek His guidance day by day. Thus He waited on God after the enemy was vanquished in the wilderness, after He had proved the value of that victory in healing those oppressed of the devil. Thus engaged it is that Simon and others follow and find Him.

"And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee."

But this public attraction to the Lord Jesus was a sufficient ground for not returning. He did not seek the applause of man, but that which comes from God. Directly it came to be published, so to speak, the Lord Jesus retires from the scene. If all men sought Him, He must go where it was a question of need, not of honour. Accordingly He says, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there; for therefore came I forth." He ever abides the perfect, lowly, dependent servant of God here below. No sketch can be more admirable, nowhere else can we see the perfect ideal of ministry completely realized.

Are we, then, to assume that all this was set down at random? How are we to account without a definite purpose for these various particulars and no others swelling the picture of ministry? Very simply. It was what God inspired Mark for. It was the Spirit's object by him. It is owing to a different design that we find other topics introduced elsewhere. No other gospel presents even the same facts after such a sort, because no other is thus occupied with the Lord's ministry. Thus the reason is most plain. It is Mark, and he alone, who was led of God to put the facts together that bear upon Christ's ministry, adhering to the simple natural order of the facts related, omitting of course what did not illustrate the point, but among those which did, keeping the events as they followed one another. Christ is thus seen as the perfect servant. He was Himself showing what service of God is at the beginning of His ministry. He was forming others. He had called Peter, and James, and Andrew, and John. He was making them fishers of men-servants, too. And so it is that the Lord presents before their eyes, before their hearts, before their consciences, these perfect ways of grace in His own path here below. He was forming them after His own heart.

Then, at the close of the chapter, the leper comes and, at the beginning of the next chapter, the paralytic man is brought (Mark 2). These we have had in Matthew, and we shall find the same in Luke. But here you will observe that the two cases are closer together. It is not so in Matthew, but in Luke. Matthew, as we saw, gave us the leper at the beginning of Matthew 8, and the paralytic man at the beginning of Matthew 9. Mark, who simply relates facts as they occur, introduced nothing between these two cases. They were, as I conceive, not long apart. The one followed soon after the other. and they are so introduced to us here. In the one, sin is viewed as the great type of defilement; in the other, sin is viewed as guilt accompanied by utter weakness. Man, utterly unfit for the presence of God, needs to be cleansed from his loathsome impurity. Such is the representation in leprosy. Man, utterly powerless for walk here below, needs to be forgiven as well as strengthened. Such is the great truth set forth in the paralytic case. Here too, with singular fulness, we have the picture of the crowds that were gathered round the door of the house, and the Lord, as usual, preaching to them. We have then a graphic picture of the palsied man brought in, borne by four. All the particulars are brought before our eyes. More than that: as they could not come nigh to Jesus for the press, the roof was uncovered, and the man is let down before the Lord's eyes. Jesus, seeing their faith, addresses the man, meets the unbelieving blasphemous thoughts of the scribes that were there, and brings out His own personal glory as Son of man, rather than as God. This latter was the great point in curing the leper; for it was an axiom that God alone could cure a leper. Such was the acknowledgment of Israel's king at a remarkable point in their history; such would have been the common confession of any Jew "Am I God?" This was the point there. God must act directly or by a prophet, as every Jew would allow, in order to cure leprosy; but, in the case of the palsied man, our Lord asserted another thing altogether, namely, that "the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins." Then He proved His power over the most hopeless bodily weakness as a witness of His authority here below to forgive. It was the Son of man on earth that had power. Thus the one proved God had come down from heaven, and had really, in the

person of that blessed Saviour, become a man without ceasing to be God. Such is the truth apparent in the cleansing of the leper; but in the paralytic healed, it is a different side of the Lord's glory. The servant of God and man in every case, here He was the Son of man that had power on earth to forgive the guilty, and prove its reality by imparted strength to walk before all.

Then follows the call of the publican. "As he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Next, the Lord is seen at a feast in the house of him who was thus called by grace, which excites hatred in the slaves of religious routine. "When the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples" — not to Him; they 'had not honesty enough for that — "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." It gave the Lord an opportunity to explain the true character and suited objects of His ministry. To sinners, as such, went forth the call of God. It was not the government of a people now, but the invitation of sinners. God had delivered His people once; He had called them His son too, and called His son out of Egypt; but now it was a question of calling sinners, even if the words "to repentance" be given up as an interpolation derived from the corresponding passage in Luke, where its propriety is evident. The Lord gloried in the grace which He was ministering here below.

As the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast, this is the next scene, raising the question of the character of those whom Jesus was sent to call. The narrative presents all this in a very orderly manner, but still adhering simply to the facts. Then comes the question of mingling the new principles with the old. This the Lord pronounces quite impossible. He shows that it was inconsistent to expect fasting when the Bridegroom was there. It would argue an entire unbelief in His glory, a total want of right feeling in those who owned His glory. It was all very well for people who did not believe in Him; but if the disciples recognised Him as the Bridegroom, it were utterly incongruous to fast in His presence.

Hence, our Lord takes the opportunity of pursuing the subject more deeply in the observation that "no man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment, else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse." The forms, the outward manifestation of that which Christ was introducing, will not suit, and cannot mingle with the old elements of Judaism, still less will their inner principles consent. This He enters on next: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles." Christianity demands an outward expression, agreeable to its own intrinsic and distinctive life.\*

\* Here is found one of the few exceptional dislocations, if not the only one, in Mark; for it would appear from Matt. 9: 18, that while the Lord was speaking of the wine and the bottles the jailor Jairus came about his daughter. This is only given (in Mark. 5) by Mark.

Mark 3. This theme is followed up by the two sabbaths, the first of these sabbath days bringing clearly out to view that God no longer owned Israel, and this because that Jesus was as much despised in this day as David had been of old. Such is the point referred to here. The disciples of Christ were starving. What a position! No doubt David and his men suffered lack in that day. What was the effect then as to the system which God had sanctioned? God would not maintain His own ordinances in presence of the moral wrong to His anointed, and those that clave unto Him. His own honour was at stake. His ordinances, however important in their place, give way before the sovereign dispositions of His purpose. The application was evident. The Lord Jesus Christ was a greater than David; and were

not the followers of Jesus quite as precious as those of Jesse's son? If the bread of priests became common, when they of old were hungry, would God now hold to His sabbath when the disciples of Jesus lacked ordinary food? Besides, He adds, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath." Thus He asserts the superiority of His own person, and this as the rejected man; and therefore the title, "Son of Man," is especially brought in here.

But, then, there is more which comes out on the second sabbath day. There was the presence of bitter helplessness among men. It was not merely, that the disciples of Jesus were in want, the witness of His own rejection, but in the synagogue He enters next was a man with a withered hand. How came this to pass? What was the feeling that could plead the law of the sabbath to keep from healing a miserable human sufferer? Had Jesus no heart, because their eyes were only open to find in His love an occasion to accuse Him who felt for every sorrow of man upon the earth? He was there with adequate power to banish all sorrow with its source. And therefore it is that our Lord Jesus, in this case, instead of merely pleading the case of the guiltless, goes boldly forward; and in the midst of a full synagogue as He sees them watching that they might accuse Him, He answers the wicked thought of their heart. He gives them the opportunity they desired. "And he said to the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth." There was no concealment for a moment. "He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" Was He not the perfect servant of God, that knows so well the times? Here, then, instead of merely defending disciples, He challenges their wicked and evil thoughts in open congregation, and bore His witness that God's delight is not in holding to rules, when it would be for the hindrance of the displays of His goodness. Contrariwise, His act declares that no rules can bind God not to do good: His nature is goodness; let man pretend ever such zeal for His own law to keep man wretched and hinder the flow of grace. God's laws were never intended to bar His love. They were intended, no doubt, to put a restriction upon man's evil, never to forbid God from doing His own good will. Alas! they had no faith that God was there.

And it is remarkable, though not noticed at the beginning of Mark 1, that Mark does not enter upon the service of our Lord Jesus before presenting Him in verse 1 as the Son of God, followed by the application of the prophetic oracle, that He was really Jehovah. The only true servant was truly divine. What an illustrious testimony to His glory! At the start this was well, and rightly ordered, and in place most suitable; the more so as it is an unusual thought in Mark. And here let me make the remark in passing, that we have hardly any quotation of Scripture by the evangelist himself I am not aware that any positive case can be adduced, except in these prefatory verses of the gospel; for Mark 15: 28 rests on too precarious authority to be fairly regarded as an exception. There are some not infrequent quotations either by our Lord or to our Lord; but the application of Scripture about our Lord by the evangelist himself, so frequent in the gospel of Matthew, is almost, if not entirely, unknown to the gospel of Mark. And the reason, I think, is very plain. What he had in hand was not the accomplishment of Scriptural marks or hopes, but the fulfilment of the Lord's ministry. What he therefore dwells on was not what others had said of old, but what the Lord Himself did. Hence it is that application of Scripture, and accomplishments of prophecy, naturally disappear where such is the theme of the gospel.

However, again returning to the conclusion of the second sabbath day. Our Lord looks round about on these Sabbatarians with anger, being distressed, as it is said, at the hardness of their hearts. and then bids the man stretch forth his hand, which was no sooner done than 'it was restored. This goodness of God, so publicly and fearlessly witnessed by Him who thus served man, at once goads on to madness the murderous feeling of the religious leaders. It is the first point where, according to

Mark's account, the Pharisees, taking counsel with the Herodians, conceived the design of killing Jesus. It was not fit that One so good should live in their midst. The Lord withdraws to the sea with His disciples; and subsequent to this it is that, while He heals many, and casts out unclean spirits, He also goes up into a mountain, where He takes a new step. It is one point of change in Mark's gospel, a step in advance of all He had hitherto done. Following upon the design of the Pharisees with the Herodians to destroy Jesus, the new measure He adopts is the sovereign call and appointment of the twelve, that He might in due time send them forth. Thus, He not merely calls them to be with Him, but He appoints them in a formal manner to the great mission on which they were to be sent out. The Lord now takes the conspiracy of two great enemies in Israel, the Pharisees and the Herodians, as an opportunity to provide for His work. He sees well in their hatred what was before Him; indeed, He knew it from the first, it need hardly be said. Still, the manifestation of their murderous hatred becomes the signal for this fresh step, the appointment of those that were to continue the work when the Lord should be no longer here in bodily presence Himself to carry it on. And so we have the twelve; He ordains them, "that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach," etc. Ministry in the word has always the highest place in Mark — not miracles, but preaching. The healing of sickness and the casting out of the devils were signs accompanying the preached word. Nothing could be more complete. There is not only evidence that we see the servant depicted here, but that the servant was the Lord Himself, even as we saw in the beginning of this gospel.

Thus there was the appointment of those He pleased to call for the due execution of His mighty work on the earth. At this juncture it is that we find His relatives so greatly moved when they heard of all — the crowds — no time to eat, etc. It is a remarkable and characteristic fact mentioned by Mark only. "When his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold of him: for they said, He is beside himself." It was mainly, I suppose, because of an entire devotedness which they could not appreciate; for just before we are told, that "the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." To His friends it was mere infatuation. They thought He must be out of His mind. It must be so, more particularly to one's relatives, where the powerful grace of God calls out and abstracts its objects from all natural claims. Such it always is in this world, and the Lord Jesus Himself, as we find, had no immunity from the injurious charge on the part of His friends. But there is more; we have His enemies now, even the scribes that came from Jerusalem. "He hath Beelzebub," say they, "and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." The Lord condescends to reason with them — "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."

But thereon our Lord most solemnly pronounces their doom, and shows that they were guilty — not of sin, as men say, but of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. There is no such phrase as sin against Him in this sense. People often speak thus, Scripture never. What the Lord denounces is *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost. Keeping that distinctly in view would save many souls a great deal of needless trouble. How many have groaned in terror through fear of being guilty of sin against the Holy Ghost! That phrase admits of vague notions and general reasoning about its nature. But our Lord spoke definitely of blasphemous unforgivable sin against Him. All sin, I presume, is sin against the Holy Ghost, who has taken His place in Christendom, and, consequently, gives all sin this character. Thus, lying in the Church is not mere falsehood toward man, but unto God, because of the great truth that the Holy Ghost is there. Here, on the contrary, the Lord speaks of unforgivable sin (not that vague sense of evil which troubled souls dread as "sin against the Holy Ghost," but blasphemy against Him). What is this evil never to be forgiven? It is attributing the power that wrought in Jesus to the devil. How many troubled souls would be instantly relieved, if they laid hold of that simple truth! It would dissipate what really is a delusion of the devil, who strives hard to plunge them into anxiety, and drive them into despair, if possible. The truth is, that as any sin of a Christian may be said to be sin against the Holy

Ghost, what is especially *the* sin against the Holy Ghost, if there be anything that is so, is that which directly hinders the free action of the Holy Ghost in the work of God, or in His Church. Such might be said to be *the* sin, if you speak of it with precision. But what our Lord referred to was neither a sin nor *the* sin, but blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost*. It was that which the Jewish nation was then rapidly falling into, and for which they were neither forgiven then, nor will ever be forgiven. There will be a new stock, so to speak; another generation will be raised up, who will receive the Christ whom their fathers blasphemed; but as far as that generation was concerned, they were guilty of this sin, and they could not be forgiven. They began it in the lifetime of Jesus. They consummated it when the Holy Ghost was sent down and despised. They still carried it on persistently, and it is always the case when men enter upon a bad course, unless sovereign grace deliver. The more that God brings out of love, grace, truth, wisdom, the more determinedly and blindly they rush on to their own perdition. So it was with Israel. So it ever is with man left to himself, and despising the grace of God. "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness." It is the final stage of rebellion against God. Even then they were blaspheming the Son of Man, the Lord Himself; even then they attributed the power of the Spirit in His service to the enemy, as afterwards still more evidently when the Holy Ghost wrought in His servants; then the blasphemy became complete.

And this is, I suppose, what is referred to in principle in Hebrews 6. Hebrews 10 seems to be different. Then it is the case of a person who had professed the name of the Lord utterly abandoning Him, and giving loose rein to sin. This is another form of sin and destruction.

In the case before us in the gospel of Mark, the enemies had shown their uncontrollable fury and hatred after the fullest evidence, and cast the worst imputation on the power they could not deny, but endeavoured to discredit to others by attributing it to Satan. It was clear that any, all other testimony after this was utterly vain. Hence, our Lord then turns to introduce the moral ground for a new call and testimony. The real object of God, the ulterior object in the service of Jesus, comes out. There was a testimony, and righteously, to that people in the midst of whom the Lord had appeared, where His ministry had displayed the mighty power of God in grace here below. Now our Lord intimates that it must be no longer a question of nature, but of grace, and this because of His mother and His brethren, who had been pointed out by some. "Behold," said they, "thy mother and thy brethren without seek thee. He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them that sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." In short, He owns no one henceforth because of any connection with Himself after the flesh. The only ground of relationship is the supernatural tie in new creation. Doing the will of God is the point. For this only grace avails: "the flesh profiteth nothing."

Therefore, in the next chapter, we are given a sketch of His ministry from that time down to the very end. Such is the bearing of this chapter. It is the Lord's ministry in its great principles under that aspect, and viewed not only as a fact going on (as we have had ministry in general before this), but now in its connection with this special work of God. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Hence we see Him forming a people, founded upon submission to the will of God, and therefore by the preached word of God; and this pursued to the very close of all, with a view of the difficulties of those engaged in that work, or in the midst of the trials from this world which always attend such a ministry. Such is the Mark 4. Accordingly the first parable (for He speaks in parables to the multitude) is of a sower. This we have very fully given us with its explanation. Then follow some moral words of our Lord. "Is a candle," He says in the twenty-first verse, "brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?" It is not only that there is a word that acts upon the heart of man,

but there is a light given (that is, a testimony in the midst of darkness). The point here is not merely the effect on man, but the manifestation of the light of God. This therefore should not be put under a bed to be concealed. God does not in ministry merely consider the effect upon the heart of man; there is much besides done for His own glory. There is the need not only of life, but of light; and this is what we have first of all — light that germinates far and wide, and seed producing fruit. Part of the scattered seed was picked up by the enemy, or in some other way less openly hostile it comes to nothing. But after the necessity of life is shown in order to fruit-bearing, we have then the value of light; and this not only for God's glory though the first consideration, but also for man's guidance in this dark world. "Take heed what ye hear." Not only is there thus the word of God sown everywhere, but "take heed what ye hear." There is a mingling of what is dark and what is light, a mingling of a false testimony with a true, more particularly to be remembered when the question is raised whether there is a light from God. These Christians in particular have need to take care what they hear. They only have discerning power, and this therefore is brought in most appropriately after the first foundation is settled.

In the next place comes a parable peculiar to Mark. There is no part of his gospel which more thoroughly illustrates it than this: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." It is the Lord manifesting Himself at the beginning of the work of God in the earth, and then coming at the end of it, all the intermediate state where others appear being left out. It is the perfect servant inaugurating and consummating the work. It is the Lord Jesus at His first advent and at His second, in connection with ministry. He commences and crowns the work that had to be done. Where is anything like this to be found in other gospels? Turn to Matthew, for instance, and what a difference! There we have, no doubt, the Lord represented as sowing (Matt. 13); but when in the next parable the harvest at the end of the age is brought before us, He says to the *reapers, etc.* It is not Himself who is said to do this work, but in that gospel the design requires us to hear of the authority of the Son of man. He commands His angels. They are all under His orders. He gives them the word, and they reap the harvest. Of course, this is perfectly true, as well as in keeping with God's aim in Matthew; but in the gospel of Mark the point is rather His ministry, and not authority over angels or others. The Lord is viewed as coming, and He does come; so that the one is just as certain as the other. Supposing, then, you take this parable out of Mark and put it into Matthew, what confusion! And suppose you transplant what is in Matthew into Mark, evidently there would not only be the rent of the one, but also the introduction of that which never would amalgamate with the other. The fact is, that all, as God has written it, is perfect; but the moment these portions are confounded, you lose the special bearing and appropriateness of each.

After this we hear of the grain of mustard seed, which was merely to show the great change from a little beginning into a vast system. That intimation was all-important for the guidance of the servants. They were thereby taught that material magnitude would be the result, instead of the work of the Lord retaining its primitive simplicity and small extent, spiritual power being the real greatness and the only true greatness in this world. The moment anything, no matter what it may be, in the Lord's work becomes naturally striking before men's eyes, you may rely on it that false principles have somehow got a footing within. There is more or less that which savours of the world. And therefore was it of great importance that, if their worldly greatness was to come, there should be a sketch of the great changes to follow; and this you find given in such an orderly manner in Matthew. This was not Mark's object, but just enough for the guidance of the servants, that they should know that the Lord would surely accomplish His work, and do it perfectly; as He began it well, so would He end it well. But at

the same time there would be no small change effected here below, when the little sowing of the Lord should grow into an aspiring object before men, as man loves to make it. "And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it." This, therefore, is the only parable that is added here; but the Spirit of God lets us know that the Lord on the same occasion spoke a great many more. Others we have in Matthew, where full dispensational light was specially called for. It was sufficient for the object of our gospel to give what we have seen here. Not even the leaven follows, as in Luke.

But then, in the end of the chapter, we have another instructive appendix. It is no new thing for man's work to mar, as far as can be, the Lord's work — to turn service into a means of lordship here below, and make great that which at the present time has its worth in refusing to part from the scorn and reproach of Christ. For the flock is not great, but little: till He return, it is a despised work of a despised Master. We have the dangers to which those engaged in His work would be exposed. This, I think, is the reason why the record is here given of the tempest-tossed vessel in which the Lord was, and the disciples, full of anxiety, trembled at the winds and the waves around them, thinking of themselves much more than of their Master. Indeed, they reproachfully turn to Him, and say, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Such, alas! are the servants — apt to be heedless of His honour, abundantly careful for themselves. "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" It was little faith; but was it not little love too? It was an utter forgetfulness of the glory of Him who was in the vessel. It did, however, bring out the secret of their hearts — they at least cared for themselves: a dangerous thing in the servants of the Lord. Oh, to be self-sacrificing! to care for nothing but Him! At any rate the comfort is this — He does care for us. The Lord accordingly rises at that call, selfish as it might be, of glaring unbelief; yet His ear heard it as the call of believers, and He pitied them. "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." The wind ceased, and there was a great calm; so that even the shipmen feared exceedingly in the presence of such power; and said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

The next chapter (Mark 5) opens with a highly important incident connected with ministry. Here it is a single case of a demoniac, which makes the details all the more striking. In point of fact, we know from elsewhere that there were two. The gospel of Matthew, not in this only, but in various other cases, speaks of two persons; as, I suppose, because this fact fell in with his object. It was a recognized principle in the law, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established; and he among the evangelists on whom, so to speak, the mantle of the circumcision fell, — he it was who, speaking in view of the circumcision, gives the required testimony for the guidance of those in Israel that had ears to hear. Nothing of the kind was before Mark. He wrote not with any special aim of meeting Jewish saints and Jewish difficulties; but, in truth, rather for others that were not so circumscribed, and might rather need to have their peculiarities explained from time to time. He evidently had humanity before him as wide as the world, and therefore singles out, as we may fairly gather, the more remarkable of the two demoniacs. There is again no thought here of delineating the destinies of Israel in the last days, without denying an allusion typically here to that which is fully drawn out there. But I apprehend the special *object* of this chapter is to trace the moral effects of Christ's ministry, where it is brought home in power to the soul. We have, therefore, the most desperate case possible. It is neither a leper nor a paralytic; nor is it simply a man with an unclean spirit. Here is the minute specification of a case more appalling than any we can find elsewhere in the gospels, and none describes it with such power and intense naturalness, or so circumstantially, as our evangelist.

"When he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains." All human appliances but proved the superior might of the enemy. "Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him." What a picture of dreary wretchedness, the companion of desolation and of death! "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." Utter degradation, too, weighed him down, the cruelty of degradation such as Satan loves to inflict upon man that he hates. "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many." Again the same trait, one may just remark, appears here as before — a most singular identifying of the evil spirit with the man. Sometimes it would seem as if it was but one, sometimes a kind of manifold personality. "He besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country." And the Lord accordingly casts the unclean spirits into the swine, which were destroyed.

However, it is not only deliverance, as we saw in Matthew, but there is the moral result on the soul. The people of the country come — for now it is the testimony of the effects of ministry; they come to Jesus, and seeing him that was possessed of the devil and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid; and they that saw it told them how it befell him that was possessed of the devil, and also concerning the swine. Mark their unbelief! Man showed that he cared less for Jesus than for Satan or the swine. "When he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him" the natural impulse of a renewed heart, true of every saint of God. There is no believer, I care not how feeble he may be, who does not know this desire, unless he lose the sweet simplicity of truth, or, it may be, stifled by bad doctrine, such as putting him under law, which always produces fear and anxiety. But when a man is not poisoned by misuse of law, or other corrupt teaching, the first simple impulse of him who knows the love of Jesus is to be with Him. This is one reason why all Christians are spoken of as loving His appearing. (2 Tim. 4) Nor is it only a desire to be with Him, but that His glory should be made good everywhere. The soul right well knows that He who is so precious to the heart only needs to be known to others, only needs to be manifested before the world, to bring in the only power of blessing that can avail for such a world as this.

In the case before us, however, our Lord suffers him not. He shows that, no matter how true and right and becoming might be this sentiment of grace in the heart of the delivered man, still there is a work to be done. Those that are delivered are themselves to be deliverers. Such is the beneficent character and aim of the ministry of Jesus. If Jesus does His work, if He breaks the power of Satan that none else can touch, it is not merely that the delivered one should have his heart with Him, and forthwith desire to go and be with Him. In itself, indeed, it is due to his love, and it could not but be that he who has been taught of God what Jesus is, should long to be where He is. But as Jesus pleased not Himself, coming to serve God here below, so his sphere of service is in the place where he could tell others the great things which had been done for him. Accordingly the Saviour meets him with the words, "Go home to thy friends."

Mark it well, dear brethren; we are apt to forget the injunction. It is not merely, Go to the world, or, Go to *every creature*; but, "Go home to thy *friends*." How comes it that there is such difficulty, often, in speaking to our friends? Why is it that persons who are bold enough with strangers, are so

timid before their household, relatives, connections? It often tells a tale which it is well to bear in mind. We shrink from the comparison which our friends are so apt and sure to make; who test our words -however clear, and good, and sweet — by that which they have such abundant means of ascertaining in our daily ways. An inconsistent walk makes a coward, at least, before "our friends." It would be well if it really had the effect of humbling us before all. Were there genuine lowliness with fidelity before God, there would be courage, not only before strangers, but before "our friends." Here, however, the point simply amounts to this: The Lord would spread the message of grace, would send him to make it known to his friends; for it was clearly they who had best known in his case the awful and degrading power of Satan. They would, of course, be most interested in the men who were his familiars; and therefore there were special reasons, I doubt not, for it. For us, too, it is a good thing to bear it in mind. Not that a saved soul should only go to his friends; but it remains ever true and good that the secret of grace in the heart should send us to our friends, to make it known to those who have known our folly and sins, that they may hear of the mighty Saviour we have found. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him."

How sweet this identification of "Jesus" with "the Lord." "How great things the Lord hath done for him." The Saviour put it forth in the most general way, I believe, in uttering these words without special allusion to Himself. The man, on the other hand, I cannot doubt, was perfectly right. How often, when it may appear that there is a want of literal exactitude, in interpreting "the Lord" of "Jesus," there is in truth a better carrying out of the mind of God. Mere literalism would have held slavishly to the letter of the Lord's language. But oh how much deeper, and, withal, more glorifying to God it was, when the man saw underneath that great mystery of godliness — the Lord in the servant's garb. He who was pleased to take the form of a servant was none the less the Lord. "He went and told how great things Jesus had done for him."

Then follows the account of the Jewish ruler of the synagogue, who fell at the feet of Jesus, and besought Him greatly to heal his dying daughter. Having dwelt on the scene elsewhere, I need say the less here. The Lord goes with him, intimating His specified ministry in Israel — a work which goes down to the reality of death, under which they would be shown really to lie. But the Shepherd of Israel could raise from the dead. This seems to be the bearing of the case before us, and not a mere general inroad upon Satan's power, which became the occasion and justification, if one may so speak, of carrying victoriously the glad tidings of God's kingdom and goodness to man. This was true of the Lord's ministry even while on the earth, the place where Satan reigns. His temptation in the wilderness proved Him stronger than the strong man, and therefore He spoils his goods, delivering the poor victims of Satan, and making them to be the captors of him whose captives they were. But here we find that his heart, far from being turned away from Israel, yearned over their need, deep as it was. The call of Jairus is no sooner made than He goes to answer it. He alone could wake out of death's sleep the daughter of Zion; yet, ineffable grace! while on the road He is open to everybody. In the throng through which He had to pass was a woman having an issue of blood. It was a desperate case; for she had suffered much, and tried many physicians in vain. Such is the hapless lot of man away from God; human aid avails not. Where is the man who has had to do with what is in the world, and would not at once acknowledge the justice of the picture, the powerlessness of man in the presence of the deepest wants? But this was just the opportunity for One who, even as man ministering here below, wielded the power of God in His love. Jesus was the true and unfailing servant of God; and the woman, instead of seeking good from man as he is, and thus suffering more and more by the very efforts made to benefit her, unseen in the press behind, touches the garment of Jesus. "For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her

body that she wad healed of that plague." To have banished her ailment would have been too little for Jesus; for He is a perfect Saviour, and therefore is a Saviour not only for the body that had suffered so long, but for the soul's affections and peace. She got a better blessing than she sought. He not only staunched the issue of blood, but filled her trembling heart with confidence instead of the fear that had possessed her before. Nothing would have been morally right had she gone away with the reflection that she had stolen some virtue from Jesus. Emphatically banishing, then, all dread from her spirit, He says to her, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." That is, He seals to her with His mouth the blessing which, as it were, her hand would else have seemed to have taken surreptitiously from Him.

Then, in the end of the chapter, the Lord is in the presence of death; but He will not allow death to abide His presence. "The damsel," said He, (and how true it was!) "is not dead, but sleepeth." Just so the Spirit says believers are asleep; as, "Those that sleep in Jesus God brings with him." Here typically Israel is viewed according to the mind of God. Unbelief may weep, and wail, and create all sorts of tumult, and with little feeling after all; for it can equally even then laugh Jesus to scorn. But as for Him, He suffers none to enter but chosen ones — Peter, and James, and John, alone, with the parents. "And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn." So the Lord takes the damsel by the hand, after He had turned the others out, and straightway at His word she arises, and walks. "And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat." Why in this gospel more than any other does the Lord Jesus thus enjoin silence? I conceive it is because Mark's is the gospel of service. The truth is, brethren, service is not a thing to be trumpeted by those engaged in it, or their friends. Whatever is from God, and is done toward God, may be safely left to tell its own tale. It is what God gives and does, not what man says, that is the real point of holy service. Observe here, too, how the Lord, at least, perfect in every thing, not only does the work, but besides tenderly cares for her. There is the considerate goodness of the Lord to be remarked, that "something should be given her to eat." In every matter, even in what might seem the smallest, Jesus took an interest. Thus He bore in mind that the maiden had been in this state of trance, and was exhausted. Whatever be the occasion that calls it forth, is it not the greatest of all things for our hearts to know how Jesus cares for us?

In Mark 6 we have our Lord again — now thoroughly despised. Here He is "the carpenter." It was true; but was this all? Was it "the truth?" Such was man's estimate of the Lord of glory; not merely the carpenter's son, but here, and here only, He is Himself the carpenter, — "the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joses, and Judah, and Simon. Are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." Beautifully, too, you may remark that, where there was this unbelief, our Lord would not remove it by dazzling feats of power, because there would have been no moral worth in a result so produced. He had given already abundant signs to unbelief; but men had not profited by them, neither was the word that He spake mixed with faith in them that heard it. The consequence is, that "He could there do no mighty work;" as here only it is recorded — yes, of the man before whom no power of Satan, no disease of man, nothing above, or below, or beneath, could prove the very smallest difficulty. But God's glory, God's will governed all; and the display of perfect power was in perfect lowliness of obedience. Therefore this blessed One could there do no mighty work. It is needless to say that it was no question of power as to Himself. It was not in any wise that His saving arm was shortened; not that there was no virtue in Him longer, but there was the lovely blending of the moral glorifying of God with all that was wrought for man. In other words, we have not here the mere setting forth of the power of Jesus, but the gospel of His ministry. Therefore it is a weighty part of this, that because of unbelief He could do no mighty work there. He was really serving God; and if man only was seen, not God, no

wonder that He could do no mighty work there. Thus, that which at first sight seems strange, the moment you take it in connection with the object of God in what He is revealing, all becomes striking, plain, and instructive.

And now He proceeds to act upon that appointment of the twelve, whom we saw, in Mark 3, He had ordained. "He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth." It was in presence of the thorough contempt which had just shown itself that He gives them their mission. It was only when the extremest scorn fell on Him, so that He could do no mighty work there. He replies, as it were, in the most gracious and also conclusive manner, that it was from no lack of virtue, because He sends them two and two on their new and mighty errand. He that could communicate power, then, to a number of men — the twelve — to go forth and do any mighty work, certainly did not Himself want intrinsic energy, nor was it from any want of power to draw upon in God. Jesus invests them with His own power, as it were, and sends them out in all directions as witnesses, but witnesses of the ministry of Jesus. They were servants called after His own fashion; and so He commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; they were to go forth in the faith of His resources. Therefore, anything of human means would have been contrary to the very intention. In a word, we must remember that this was a special form of service suitable to that moment, and, in point of fact, rescinded by our Lord afterwards in very important particulars. In the gospel of Luke, we have carefully given us the change that takes place when the Lord's hour was come. It was not only that it was an hour come for Him, but it was a crisis for them, too. They had thenceforward to encounter a great change, because of the character of utter rejection, and, indeed, of suffering, on which the Lord was entering. He therefore cast them upon the ordinary resources of faith, using such things as they had; but as yet it was not so. On the contrary, the witnesses of Jesus to Israel were then going forth. It was in the face of unbelief against Himself, but unbelief answered by the fresh outflow of grace on His part, sending out messengers with extraordinary powers from Himself all over the land. And so He told them where to go, and "what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent" — a very important feature here added. John preached repentance; Jesus preached repentance, as did these apostles. And be assured, beloved friends, that repentance is an eternal truth of God for this time as much as for any other. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that the change of dispensation weakens (I will not say merely the place of repentance for every soul that is brought to God, but) the duty of preaching repentance. We are not to leave it after a perfunctory sort, contenting ourselves with the assurance, that if a person believes, he is sure to repent; we ought to preach repentance, as well as to look for repentance in those who profess to have received the gospel. At any rate, it is equally clear that the Lord preached it, and that the apostles were to do and did the same. "They preached that men should repent, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."

Then we have Herod appearing upon the scene; and Herod, I take it, represents in Israel the power of the world — its usurping power, if you please. However this be, there he was in point of fact, the holder of the world's power in the land, and ever, though not without qualms and struggles in the end, thoroughly opposed to the testimony of God. He was really hostile to it, not merely in its fullest forms, but at bottom also, in its first appearance and most elementary presentation. He had no love for the truth; he might like the man who preached it well enough, and at first hear him gladly; he might have many anxieties about his soul before God, and know perfectly well that he was doing wrong in his ordinary life; but, still, the devil managed to play the game so well, that although there was personal

affection, or respect, at least, for the servant of God, the disastrous end comes, as it always will, when there is a fair trial in this world. No respect, no kindly feeling for any one or anything that is of God, will ever stand when Satan is allowed to work, and is thus free to accomplish his own deadly plan of ruining or thwarting the testimony of God. This is what those engaged in the ministry of Christ must expect to see attempted, and will do well to resist. If this be the point, as I apprehend, the reason of its introduction here is not obscure. The Lord was sending out these chosen vessels. In the presence of this new action of His in the work, we learn how the world feels about it; not merely the ignorant world, nor the religious parties with their chiefs, but the highly cultivated profane world. And this is the way in which they treat it. They have the outward power which Satan finds means to make them use. They kill the witness of God. It may be only a wicked woman who stirs them up to do the deed; but be not deceived. It was not a question of Herodias merely. She was but the tool by which the devil brought it about: he has his own particular way; and in this case we have not only the circumstances, solemn as they are, but the spring of all in the opposition of Satan to God's testimony. The issue of it is, that if wicked men have power to kill, even if reluctant, he whose they are somehow compels them to use their power, when the opportunity arises. Fear of man, and notions of honour, are strong where God is unheeded: what may not follow where there is no conscience? That old serpent can manage to entrap the most prudent, just as Herod here fell into the trap. For his word to a wicked woman, passed in presence of his lords, John's head was struck off, and produced in a charger.

The apostles come to our Lord after their mission, and tell Him the result of their mission; or as it is said here, "told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught." It was not very safe ground: it were better to have spoken of what He had taught, and what He was doing. As, however, the Lord corrects all most graciously, He takes them away into a desert place, and there He is found unwearied in His love. A hungry multitude was there. These disciples, only a little while before so full of what they had taught, and what they had done — was it not a worthy emergency for their labours now? Could they not help in the present distress? They seem not so much as to have thought of it. Alone, at any rate, in this scene, our Lord Jesus brings out in the plainest possible manner their utter failure. Mark the lesson well. It is especially, when there was somewhat of boastfulness, after they had been occupied with their own doings and teachings. Then it is that we find them thus powerless. They were at their wits' ends. They did not know what to do. Strange to say, they never thought of the Lord; but the Lord thought of the poor multitudes, and in His richest grace not only spread a table and fed the people, but makes the feeble disciples themselves to be the dispensers of His bounty, as afterwards they must gather up what remained.

After this, again, we find them exposed to a storm, and the Lord, joining them in their troubles, brings them safely, and at once, to the desired haven. Therein follows the scene of joy where Jesus is recognized, and the abundant blessing that attended His every footstep where He moved. As surely as Jesus thus blessed the poor world then, such and far more will He prove Himself at His return after the world will have done its worst. I do not doubt that this carries us to the end, when the Lord Jesus will rejoin His people after their manifold and sore troubles, after all their proved weakness, as well as exposure to outward storms. As He was in the place He had visited, so He will be in the universal diffusion of power and blessing, when the tempest-tossed disciples shall have come safe to land.

Mark 7. But then there is another view necessary also in connection with ministry; we need to learn the prevalent feeling of the religious powers. Accordingly we have the traditionist in collision with Christ, as we had in the last chapter Herod with John the Baptist. Here it is the accredited leaders from Jerusalem, the scribes, before whom our Lord brings the most convincing evidence, that the principle and practice of their cherished traditions demoralise man and dishonour the word of God. The

reason of the evil is manifest — it is from man. This is enough; for man is a sinner. There is nothing really good but what is from God. Show me anything from fallen man which is not evil. Tradition, as being man's supplement, is always and necessarily evil. The Lord puts it together with what He afterwards brings out — the condemnation of man's heart in all its depravity. There it is not only the mind of man, but the working of his corrupt feelings. This is not the time to dwell on this well known chapter, and the contrast it furnishes of Christ's display of God's all-perfect grace toward the greatest possible need — the woman who came to Him on account of her demoniac daughter. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation, who besought Him to cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But the Lord, trying her faith in order to give her a richer blessing, not only accomplishes what she desires, but puts the seal of His approval in the most striking manner upon her personal faith. "And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed."

Next we come to another tale, finishing the chapter, and strikingly characteristic of our gospel — the case of one deaf and dumb, whom Jesus met as He departed from these quarters into Galilee. "And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him." Here again the Lord shows us a beautiful sample of considerateness and tender goodness in the manner of His cure. It is not only the cure, but the manner of it, that we have so strikingly brought out here. Our Lord takes the man aside from the multitude. Who could intermeddle with that scene between the perfect servant of God and the needy one? "He puts his fingers into his ears." What would He not do to prove His interest? "And he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed." As He weighed the distressing results of sin, what a burden was upon His heart! It is a particular instance of the great truth we saw in Matthew the other night. With Jesus it was never bare power relieving man, but always His spirit entering into the case, feeling its character in God's sight, and its sad consequences for man too. The whole was borne upon His heart, and so, as here, He sighs, and bids the ears be opened. "And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well." Such might be the motto of Mark. The utterance of the multitude, of those that saw the fact, is just what is illustrated throughout the entire gospel. "He hath done all things well." It was not only that there was the power fully adequate to accomplish all He undertook, but "He hath done all things well." He is the perfect servant everywhere, and under all circumstances, whatever may be the need. "He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

The next (Mark 8) must be our last chapter now, on which I will just say a word or two before closing. We have once more a great multitude fed; not the same, of course, as before. Here, not five thousand were fed, but four thousand; not twelve baskets of fragments remained over, but seven. There were outwardly less limits, and a less residue; but observe that seven, the normal number of perfection spiritually, is here. I consider, therefore, that contrariwise, and viewed as a figure, this was still more important than the other. There is no greater mistake in Scripture — and, indeed, it is true in moral questions — than to judge of things by their mere appearances. The moral bearing of anything you please is always of more importance than its physical aspect. In this second miracle the number fed was less, while the original supply was greater, yet the remainder gathered up was less. Apparently, therefore, the balance was greatly in favour of the former miracle. The truth is really this, that in the former case the intervention of men was prominent; here, though He may employ men, the great point is the perfectness of His own love, sympathy, and provision for His people, no matter what the need. It appears, therefore, that the seven has a deeper completeness than the twelve, both being significant in

their place.

After this our Lord rebukes the disciples for unbelief, which comes out strongly now. The greater His love and compassion, the more perfect His care, the more painfully, alas! unbelief betrays itself even in the disciples, and yet more in others. But our Lord performs another cure, the record of which is peculiar to Mark. At Bethsaida, a blind man was brought. The Lord, for the express purpose, it seems to me, of showing the patience of ministry according to His mind, first touches his eyes, when partial sight follows. The man confesses in reply, that "he saw men like trees walking;" and the Lord applies His hand a second time. The work is done perfectly. Thus, not only did He heal the blind, but He did it well — a further illustration of what has been already before us. If He puts His hand to accomplish, He does not take it away until all is complete, according to His own love. The man then saw with perfect distinctness. Thus all is in season. The double action proved the good Physician; as His acting so effective, whether by word or hand, whether by one application or by two, proved the great Physician.

The close of the chapter begins to open the faith of Peter in contrast with the unbelief of men, and even with what had been working among the disciples before. Now, things were hurrying on rapidly to the worst. Peter's confession was therefore the more seasonable. The account differs very strikingly from what is found in Matthew. Peter is represented by Mark as saying simply, "Thou art the Christ;" while in Matthew the words are, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" "Hence you have no such thing in Mark as, "Upon this rock I will build my church." The Church is built not exactly on the Christ or Messiah as such, but on the confession of "the Son of the living God." Hence we may see how beautifully the omissions of Scripture hang together. The Holy Ghost inspired Mark to notice no more than a part of the confession of Peter, and thus there is only a part of the blessing mentioned by our Lord. The highest homage to our Lord in Peter's confession being omitted, the great change then at hand, which displays itself in the building of the Church, is consequently quite left out of Mark. There our Lord simply charges them that they were not to tell any man of Him, the Christ. What an end of the testimony of His presence! The reason, too, is most affecting: "The Son of man must suffer many things," etc. Such is the portion of Him, the true servant. He is the Christ, but it is no use to tell the people so any more; they have heard often, and will not believe it. Now He is going to enter upon another work: He is going to suffer. It is His portion. "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

After this point, He begins, in view of the transfiguration, to announce His approaching death. He gives it most circumstantially. He would guard His servants from supposing that He was in any wise taken by surprise by His death. It was an expected thing. It was what He knew, perfectly and circumstantially, before the elders and scribes did. The very people that were going to cause it knew nothing about it. They planned rather the reverse of the actual circumstances of His death. Still less did they know anything about His resurrection; they did not believe it when it came to pass; the Jews covered it up by a lie. But Jesus knew all about both, and now first breaks the tidings to His disciples, intimating that their path must lie through the same pathway of suffering. Christ's suffering is here viewed as the fruit of the sin of man, which accounts for the fact, that there is not a word said about atonement here. There never was a greater misconception in looking at Scripture than to limit our Lord's sufferings to atonement: I mean upon the cross, and in death. Certainly, atonement was the deepest point in the sufferings of Christ, and one can understand how even Christians are apt to overlook all else in atonement. The reason why believers make atonement everything is because they make themselves everything. But if they were not unbelieving believers, they would see that there is a great deal more in the cross than the atonement; and surely they would not think less of Jesus if they

were to see more the extent of His grace, and the profundity of His sufferings. Our Lord does not speak of His death here as expiating sins. In Matthew, where He speaks of giving His life a ransom for many, of course *there* is atonement substantially. Christ expiates their sins, and this I call atonement. But here, where He speaks of being killed by men, is that atonement? It is painful that Christians should be so shut up and confused. Were not God dealing in judgment with the Saviour of sinners, there would have been no atonement. His rejection by men, though taken from God, is not the same thing. And, beloved friends, this is a more important and more practical question than many might be apt to think; but I must defer further remarks for the present. We have before us a new subject — the glory which our Lord immediately after speaks of in connection with His rejection and sufferings.

5.

## MARK 9 - 16.

The transfiguration, as a matter of fact witnessed by the eyes of chosen witnesses, introduces naturally the great change that was about to be effected by the mighty power of God; for that wondrous scene was the passing vision of a glory that shall never pass away. Therein certain disciples were admitted to a sight of the kingdom of God coming with power, founded upon the rejection of Christ by man, and the maintenance and manifestation by-and-by of the power of that Jesus rejected of man, but glorified by God. Of course, our Lord's ministry had this double character. It was, as is everything in Scripture, presented to human responsibility before its result is established on God's part. There was every evidence and proof that man could ask; there was every moral manifestation of God; but man had no heart for it. Hence the only effect of such a witness was the rejection of Christ and of God Himself as thus morally represented here below. What, then, will God do? Surely He will make good His counsel by His own power; for nothing fails that is of Him, and every testimony of His must accomplish its aim. But then God waits; and, even before He lays the foundation for that great work of establishing His own kingdom and power, He gives a sight of it to those whom He is pleased to elect. Hence it is that the transfiguration was a kind of bridge, so to speak, between the present and the future, confronting men even now with God's plans! It is really the introduction, as far as a testimony and even a sample could go with believers, of that kingdom which should be set up and displayed in due time. Not that the rejection of Christ ceases after this, but, on the contrary, goes on up to the cross itself. But in the cross, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see, by faith, the issue complete; man's rejection on the one side, and God's foundation actually laid on the other. Notwithstanding a testimony to it was on this holy mount brought before the sight of the disciples according to the sovereign choice of our Lord, He takes even out of the chosen twelve a chosen few to be the witnesses of His glory. But this gives it a very important and emphatic place in the synoptic gospels, which bring before us the Galilean progress of Christ; more particularly in the point of view of ministry we have this in our gospel.

The Lord having then taken up James and John, as well as Peter, was transfigured before these disciples. The glorified men, Elias with Moses, are seen talking with Him. Peter lets out his lack of appreciation of the glory of Christ, and the more remarkably, because only in the scene immediately before Peter had in striking terms testified to Jesus. But God must show that there is but One faithful witness; and the very soul that stood out brightly, we may say, for a little moment in the scene that preceded the transfiguration, is the same that manifests the earthen vessel more than any other in the transfiguration. "It is good," says Peter, "for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." It is evident, that although he might put the Saviour at the head of the three, he counted the others to be in a measure on a level with Him. At once we see the cloud

overshadowing, and hear the voice out of it which maintains supreme undivided glory for the Son of God. "This" (says the Father; for He it was who spoke) — "this is my beloved Son: hear him."

You will observe that in Mark there is an omission. We have not here the expression of complacency. In Matthew this was made prominent, as we know. In Matt. 17 it is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him," I apprehend the reason was to set this in the most absolute contrast with His rejection by the Jewish people. So again, in the gospel of Luke, we have the testimony of Christ being God's Son on the ground of hearing Him rather than Moses or Elias. "This is my beloved Son," he says: "hear him," omitting the expression of the Father's complacency in Him. Assuredly He was always the object of the Father's delight; but still there is not always the same reason for asserting it. Whereas, on comparing the testimony in 2 Peter 1, there is an omission of "hear him" found in the three gospels. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is evident that the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ over the law and the prophets is not the point in Peter. The reason, I think, is obvious. That question had been already decided: Christianity had come in. It was not the point here to claim for Christ a place above the law and the prophets, but to show simply the glory of the Son in the eyes of the Father, and His delight or loving satisfaction in Him; just as afterwards he makes it plain that in all the word of God the one object of the Holy Ghost is Christ's glory; for holy men of old spake as they were moved of Him. Scripture was not written by man's will; rather, God had a great purpose in His word, which was not met by the transient application of certain parts of it to isolated facts, to this person or to that. There was one grand uniting bond throughout all prophecy of Scripture. The object of it all was this — the glory of Christ. Separate prophecy from Christ, and you divert the stream of the testimony from the person of Him to whom that testimony is most due. It contains not mere warnings about peoples, nations, tongues, or lands; about facts providential, or otherwise; about kings, empires, or systems in the world: Christ is the Spirit's object. So on the mount we hear the Father there witnessing to Christ, who supremely was the object of His delight. The kingdom was ensampled there; Moses also, and Elias; but there was One object pre-eminently before the Father, and that object was Jesus. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The point was not exactly hearing Christ, but hearing the Father about Him, so to speak. Such was the emphatic object here; and therefore, as I believe, are the words "hear him" omitted. In Matthew we have the fullest form of all, which the more enforces the call to hear Him. Luke gives the "hear him," but the expression, both in Mark and Luke, of personal complacency was not so much the ruling aim. Of course, there were common points in all, but I just notice this for a little passing moment to illustrate their differences.

Then we find, without dwelling upon all the particulars, that our Lord tells the disciples that the vision was to be kept hid till the rising from the dead. His own resurrection would introduce an entirely new character of testimony. Then it was that the disciples could make manifest, without hindrance, this great truth. The Lord was thus teaching them their total incapacity, until that great event brought in a new work of God, the basis of a new and unrestricted testimony, old things being passed away, and all things made new to the believer.

This, I think, was very important, if we look at the disciples here as called to service. It is not in man's power to take up the service or the testimony of Christ as he will. From this is evident the weighty place that the rising from the dead holds in Scripture. Outside Christ sin reigned in death. In Him was no sin; but, until the resurrection, there could not be a full testimony rendered to His glory or His work. And so in point of fact it was. After this follow, passingly, a notice of the difficulties, which shows how truly our Lord had measured their incapacity; for the disciples were really under the influence of the scribes themselves at this time.

At the foot of the mountain another scene opens. At the top we have seen, not the kingdom of God only, but the glory of Christ; and, above all, Christ as the Son, whom the Father proclaimed now as the One to be heard beyond the law or the prophets. This the disciples never did understand till the resurrection; and very manifest is the reason, because the law had naturally its place till then, and the prophets came in as corroborating the law and maintaining its just authority. The raising from the dead does not in any wise weaken either the law or the prophets, but it gives occasion to the display of a superior glory. However, at the foot of the mountain there is an awful evidence to present facts, just after the sample of what is to come. Meanwhile, before the kingdom of God is established in power, who is the potentate that influences men and that reigns in this world? It is Satan. In the case before us most manifest was his power — a power that the disciples themselves could not eject from the world because of their unbelief. Here, again, we see how manifestly service is the great thought all through this gospel. The father is in distress, for it was an old story; it was no new thing for Satan to exercise this power over man in the world. From his childhood such was the case; even as from the earliest day it was the history of man. In vain had the father appealed to those that bore the name of the Lord in the world; for they had wholly failed. This drew out from our Lord Jesus a severe reproof of their unbelief, and especially for the reason that they were His servants. There was no straitness in Him; no stint of power on His part. It was really unbelief in them. Hence He could only say, when this manifestation of the weakness of the disciples was brought before Him, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." For the Lord would not hide the full extent of the power of Satan, but allows the child to be torn by his power before their eyes. There could be no question that the spell was unbroken up to this. The disciples had in no way subdued, suppressed, or crushed the power of Satan over the child. "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child." It was really the history of this world in contrast with the new creation. Of the world, or rather kingdom, of God, a vision at least had just been seen in the transfiguration.

Thus the chapter is first of all founded upon the announced death of Christ in utter rejection, and the certainty of God's introducing His kingdom of glory for the Christ rejected of men. In the next place, the uselessness or impossibility of testifying the transfiguration till the rising from the dead is affirmed: then it would be most timely. Lastly follows the evidence of what the power of Satan really is before the kingdom of God finally comes in power, where the testimony of it even was unknown. The fact is, that under the surface of this world viewed by the disciples, and brought to light by the presence of our Lord Jesus, there is this complete subjection of man from his earliest days, as it is said. The power of Satan over man is too plain, and the servants of the Lord only proved how powerless they were, not from any defect of power in Christ, but because of their own lack of faith to draw it out. The Saviour at once proceeds to act, letting the man see that all turns on faith. In the meantime, what Christ brings into evidence is the power that deals with Satan before the kingdom is established. Such is the testimony at the foot of the mountain. The kingdom will surely in due time be established, but meanwhile faith in Christ defeats the enemy's power. It is beyond doubt that this was the true want and only remedy. Faith in Him alone could secure a blessing; and so, accordingly, the father tremblingly appeals to the Lord in his distress. "Lord," he says, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." "When Jesus then saw the people running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." The work was done. Apparently the child was no more; but the Lord "took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose." In the house He gave the disciples another profitable lesson in the way of ministry.

Such, then, it is easy to see, is the point that comes out here. The Lord shows that, along with the

unbelief, is the lack of the sense and confession of dependence on God. This alone also judges the energy of nature, "This kind," he says, "goes not forth, but by prayer and fasting." While the power is in Jesus, faith alone draws it out; but that faith is accompanied by the sentence of death upon nature, as well as the looking up to God, the only source of power.

Next, we have another lesson, still connected with the service of the Lord, while the power of Satan is at work in the world, before the kingdom of God is established. We must learn the state of these servants' own hearts. They desire to be something. This falsifies their judgments. They departed thence, and passed into Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying." At first sight how singular, yet how frequent, is this lack of ability to enter into the words of Jesus! To what is it owing? To self unjudged. They were ashamed to let the Lord know what the true reason was; but the Lord brings it out. He came to Capernaum, and being in the house He asked them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" "But they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest." No wonder there was little power in the presence of Satan; no wonder there was little understanding in presence of Jesus. There was a dead weight behind — this spirit of thinking of themselves, of desiring some distinction to be seen and known of men now. It was evident unbelief of what God feels, and is going to display, in His kingdom. For there is but one thought before God — He means to exalt Jesus. They were thus quite out of communion with God about the matter. Not only had those failed who were not on the mount, but just as plainly James, Peter, and John, all had failed. How little has special privilege or position to do with the humility of faith! This, then, is the true secret of powerlessness, either as against Satan, or for Jesus. Further, the connection of all this with the service of the Lord must, I think, be manifest.

But there is another incident, too, peculiar to Mark, of which we hear directly after this. The Lord rebukes them by taking a child, and thence reading them humility. What a withering censure of their self-exaltation! Even John proves how little the glory of Christ, which makes one content to be nothing, had entered into his heart now. The day is coming when it would all take deep root there — when they would really gather everlasting profit from it; but for the present it was the painful demonstration that there is something more needed than the word even of Jesus. So it is, then, that John immediately after this turns to our Lord, complaining of some one that was casting out demons in His name — the very thing they had failed to do. "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name." Was not this, then, a matter for thankfulness of heart to God? Not a bit of it! Self in John took fire at it, and became the mouthpiece of the strong feeling which animated them all. "Master, we saw" — not "I" merely; he spake for all the rest. "We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followed not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us." It is evident, then, that no previous reproof had in any way purged out the self-exalting spirit, for here it was again in full force; but Jesus said, "Forbid him not." Another most weighty lesson in the service of Christ is this. The question here is not one of dishonour done to Christ. None in this case contemplates or allows any act whatever contrary to His name. On the contrary, it was a servant going forward against the enemy, believing in the efficacy of the Lord's name. Had it been a question of enemies or false friends of Christ, overthrowing or undermining His glory, he that "is not for him is against him; and he that gathereth not with him scattereth abroad." Wherever it is a question of a true or a false Christ, there cannot be a compromise of one jot of His glory. But where, on the contrary, it was one who may have been unintelligent, perhaps, and who certainly had not been so favoured in point of circumstances as the disciples, yet who knew the value and efficacy of His name, Jesus graciously shields him. "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our

part." He certainly had faith in the Lord's name; and by faith in that name he was mighty to do what, alas! disciples were feeble to do. It was evident that there was a spirit of jealousy, and that the power which manifestly wrought in one who had never been so privileged outwardly as they, instead of humbling the disciples to think of their own shortcoming and lack of faith, led even John to cast about for some fault to find, some plea for restraining him whom God had honoured.

Hence, our Lord here brings out an instruction, not of course at variance with, but totally different from what we had in Matthew 12: 30. Their distinctive use in the right time and circumstances, I cannot but hold to be by no means unimportant. Mark's, you will remember, is the gospel of service; and it is the question of ministry here. Now the power of God in this does not depend upon position. No matter how right (that is, according to God's will) the position may be, that will not give ministerial power to the individuals who are in the truest position. The disciples, of course, were in an unimpeachable place as following Christ — there could be nothing more certainly right than theirs; for it was Jesus that had called them, gathered them round Himself, and sent them out clothed with a measure of His own power and authority. For all that, it was evident that there was weakness in practical manifestation. There was a decided want of faith in drawing upon the resources of Christ, as against Satan. They were, then, quite right in cleaving to Christ, and in following none other; they were right in abandoning John for Jesus; but they were not right in letting any reason hinder their acknowledgment of God's power, which "ought in another who was not in that blessed position which was their privilege. Accordingly our Lord rebukes this narrow spirit sternly, and lays down a principle seemingly counter, but really harmonious. For there is no contradiction in the word of God here, or anywhere else. Faith may rest assured that nothing in Matthew 12 opposes Mark 11. No doubt at first sight there might appear to be such a difference; but look, read again, and the difficulty vanishes.

In Matt. 12: 30 the question was totally different. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." There it was a question of Christ Himself — of the glory and the power of God in Jesus here below. The moment it comes to be a question of His person, assailed by adversaries, then he that is not with Christ is against Christ. Do persons allow anything to lower His person now? All questions are secondary in comparison with this, and any one who is indifferent to it would deliberately take the part of the enemy against Christ. He who would sanction the dishonour of Jesus proves, no matter what his pretensions may be, that he is no friend of the Lord, and that *his* work of gathering can but scatter.

But in the mind of the Lord given in Mark, wholly different matter was before them. Here it was a question of a man who was exalting Christ according to the measure of his faith, and certainly with no inconsiderable power. The disciples, therefore, in this case ought to have acknowledged and delighted in the testimony to Christ's name. Granted that the man was not so favoured as they; but surely the name of Christ was exalted in desire and in fact. Had their eye been single, they would have owned that, and thanked God for it. And here, therefore, the Lord impresses on them a lesson of another kind altogether: "He that is not against me is for me." Thus, wherever it is a question of the Spirit's power put forth in Christ's name, it is evident that he who is thus used of God is not against Christ; and if God answers that power, and uses it for the blessing of man and the defeat of the devil, we ought to rejoice.

Need I say how applicable both these lessons are? We know, on the one hand, that in this world Christ is rejected and despised. Such is the main groundwork of Matthew. Accordingly, in Matt. 12, we have Him not merely the object of loathing, but this even to those who had the outward testimony of God at that time. Hence, no matter what way be the reputation, the traditional respect or reverence of men; if Christ be dishonoured, they that prize and love Him can have no fellowship for an instant. On

the other hand, take the service of Christ, and in the midst of all that bears the name of Christ around, there may be those whom God employs for this or that important work. Am I to deny that God makes use of them in His service? Not for an instant. I acknowledge the power of God in them, and thank Him; but this is no reason why one should abandon the blessed place of following Jesus. I say not, "following us," but "following Him." It is evident that the disciples were occupied with themselves, and forgot Him. They were wishing ministry to be their monopoly, instead of a witness to Christ's name. But the Lord puts everything in its place; and the same Lord who in Matt. 12 insists on decision for Himself, where His enemies had manifested their hatred or contempt of His glory, is no less prompt in the gospel of Mark to indicate the power that had wrought in the ministry of His unnamed servant. "Forbid him not," says He. "for he that is not against me is for me." Was he against Christ who used, on John's own showing, His name against the devil? The Lord thus honours, in any quarter or measure, the faith that knows how to make use of His name, and gain victories over Satan. Hence, therefore, if God employs any man — say, in winning sinners to Christ, or delivering saints out of the bondage of wrong doctrine, or whatever else the snare may be — Christ owns him, and so should we. It is a work of God, and homage to Christ's name, though not a around, I repeat, for making light of following Christ, if He have graciously accorded such a privilege. It is a most legitimate ground, no doubt, for humbling ourselves, to think how little we do as entrusted with the power of God. Thus we have to maintain Christ's own personal glory, on the one hand, always holding that fast; we have, on the other hand, to acknowledge whatever ministerial power God is pleased in His own sovereignty to employ, and by whomsoever. The one truth does not in the slightest degree interfere with the other.

Further: let me draw your attention now to the appropriateness of the place of, the incident in this gospel. You could not transpose either it or the solemn word in Matthew. It would altogether mar the beauty of the truth in both. On the one hand, the day of despising and rejecting Christ is the day for faith to assert His glory; on the other hand, where there is the power of God, I must acknowledge it. I may have been myself rebuked for my own lack of power just before; but, at least, let me own God's hand wherever it is manifest.

Our Lord follows this up with a remarkably solemn instruction, and in His discourse shows that it was no question merely of "following us," or of anything else, for a time. Now, no doubt, the disciple follows Him through a world where stumbling-blocks abound, and dangers on every side. But more than that, it is a world into the midst of whose snares and pitfalls He deigns to cast the light of eternity. Hence it was not a mere question of the moment; it was far beyond the objects of party strife. Our Lord, therefore, strikes at the root of what was at work in the mistaken disciples. He declares that whosoever gives a cup of water in His name — the smallest real service rendered to need — "because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Yet more, it was not merely a question of rewards on the one side, but of eternal ruin on the other. They had better look to themselves while they yet may. Flesh is a bad and ruinous thing. No matter who or what the person may be, man is not safe in himself, especially, let me add, when in the service of Christ. There is no ground where souls are more apt to get astray. It is not merely in questions of moral evil. There are men that pass us, and, that, so to speak, run the gauntlet of such seductions unscathed; but it is quite another and a very much more dangerous thing, where, in the professed service of the Lord, there is the nursing of that which is offensive to Christ, and grieves the Holy Ghost. This lesson comes out, not merely for saints, but also for those that are still under sin. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." Deal unsparingly with every hindrance, and this on the simplest moral ground; most urgent, personally, and imminent is the peril they entail. These things would test a man, and sift whether there be anything in him Godward.

The end of Mark 9 reminds one of the end of 1 Cor. 9, where the apostle Paul, no doubt also speaking about service, deepens in his tone of warning, and intimates that service may often become a means of detecting not state only, but unreality. There may not be open immorality in the first instance, but where the Lord is not before the soul in constant self-judgment, evil grows apace out of nothing more than ministry, as, indeed, the fact proved among the Corinthians; for they had been thinking much more about gift and power than about Christ; and with what moral results? The apostle begins by putting the case in the strongest way to *himself*; he supposes the case of his own preaching ever so well to others, but abandoning all care about holiness. Occupied with his gift and others, such an one yields without conscience to that which the body craves after, and the consequence is total ruin. Were it Paul, he must become a castaway, or reprobate (*i.e.*, disapproved of God). The word is never used for a mere loss of reward, but for absolute rejection of the man himself. Then, in 1 Cor. 10, he applies the ruin of the Israelites to the danger of the Corinthians themselves.

Our Lord in this very passage of Mark similarly warns. He deals with the slight which John put upon one that was manifestly using the name of Christ to serve souls, and defeat Satan. But John had unwittingly ignored, if not denied, the true secret of power altogether. It was really John that needed to take care — holy and blessed man as he was. There was an evident mistake of no ordinary gravity, and the Lord proceeds from this to the most solemn warning that He ever gave in any discourse that is recorded of Him. No other sets eternal destruction more manifestly before us in any part of the gospels. Here, above all, we are admitted to hear continually ringing in our ears the awful dirge, if I may so call it, over lost souls: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." On the other hand, our Lord turns the occasion also to the profit of His own, though this too be a solemn warning. Hence observe, before the subject closes, how He lays down grand principles that involve the whole of this question. Thus we are told, "Every one shall be salted with fire." It is well to remember that grace does not hinder this universal test of every soul here below. "Every one," says He, "shall be salted with fire;" but besides that, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." These are two distinct things.

No child of man, as such, can escape judgment. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after that the judgment." The judgment, in one form or another, must be the portion of the race. Whenever you look at what is universal, man, being a sinner, is an object for divine judgment. But this is far from the whole truth. There are those here below who are delivered from God's judgment even in this world — who have even now access into His favour, and rejoice in hope of His glory. What then of them? They that hear Christ's word, and believe Him who sent the Saviour, have eternal life, and enter not into judgment. But are they not put to the proof? Assuredly they are; but it is upon another principle altogether. "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" It is clearly not a question there of a mere sinful man, but of that which is acceptable to God; and, therefore, not salted with fire, but salted with salt. Not that there is not that Which tests and proves the ground of the heart in those that belong to God; but even so their special nearness to Him is borne in mind.

Thus, whether it be the general dealing in a judicial manner with man, with every soul as such; whether it be the special case of such as belong to God (*i.e.*, every sacrifice acceptable to God, as brought in by Christ on the foundation of His own great sacrifice), the principle is as clear as it is comprehensive and sure for every one; not only for every sinner, but for every believer, however truly acceptable to God by Jesus Christ our Lord. With the glorified saints, although it be not, of course, the judgment of God, certainly there is no concealment of the truth, though there is that also which God in His grace makes to be mighty to preserve; not pleasant, it may be, but the preservative energy of divine grace with its sanctifying effects. This, I think, is what is meant by being "salted with salt." The figure of that well known antiseptic does not leave room for the pleasant things of nature with all their

evanescence. "Salt," says our Lord, "is good." It is not an element which excites for a moment, and passes away; it has the savour of God's covenant. "Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" How fatal is the loss! How dangerous to go back! Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another; "that is, have purity first, then peace mutually, as the apostle James, too, exhorts in his epistle. Purity deals with nature, and resists all corruption it preserves by the mighty power of God's grace. Following this, but of no worth without it, is "peace one with another." May we possess this peace also, but not at the cost of intrinsic purity, if we value God's glory!

This closes, then, our Lord's ministry — the connection of ministry, as it appears to me, with the transfiguration. That manifestation of the power of God could not but impress a new and suited character upon those concerned.

In the next chapter our Lord introduces other topics, and very strikingly, because it might be hastily gathered, that if all is founded upon death and resurrection, and is in view of the coining glory, such a ministry as this must take no account of relationships which have to do with nature. The very reverse is the case. It is precisely when you have the highest principles of God brought in, that everything God has ever owned on the earth finds its right place. It was not when God gave the law, for instance, that the sanctity of marriage was vindicated, most. Every one ought to know there is no relationship so fundamental for man on earth — there is nothing that so truly forms the social bond — as the institution of marriage. What is there naturally in this world so essential for domestic happiness and personal purity, not to speak of the various other considerations, on which all human relationships so much depend? And yet it is remarkable that, during the legal economy, there was the continual allowance of that which enfeebled marriage. Thus, the permission of divorce for trivial reasons, I need not say, was anything but a maintenance of its honour. Here, on the contrary, when in Christ the fulness of grace came, and, more than that, when it was rejected, when the Lord Jesus Christ was announcing that which was to be founded upon His approaching humiliation unto death, and when He was expressly teaching that this new system could not be, and was not to be, proclaimed until His own rising from the dead, He also insists on the value of the various relations in nature. I admit the connection with the resurrection is only shown in Mark; but, then, this points out the true import of it, because Mark naturally indicates the importance of that epoch and glorious fact, for the service of Christ in testimony, for bringing the truth out to others.

Here, however, the Lord having disposed of that which was eternally momentous, having traced it up to the end of all this passing scene, having shown the results for those that have no part nor lot in the matter, as well as for such as enjoy the grace of God in its preservative force, namely, those that belong to Christ, now takes up the relation of these new principles to nature, to what God Himself acknowledged in what you may call the outside world.

The Lord here, then, stands up as the vindicator, first of all, of the relationship of marriage. He teaches that in the law, important as it was, Moses did not assert the vital place of marriage for the world. On the contrary, Moses permitted certain infractions of it because of Israel's state. "For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother." That is, even the nearest other relationship, so to speak, disappears before this relationship. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." To this it came; but for this most simple yet thorough. exposition of God's mind, we are indebted to the Lord Jesus, the great witness of grace, and of eternal things, now connected with His own rejection and the kingdom of God coming with power, and the setting aside of the long spell of the

devil. It is the same Jesus who now clears from the dust of ruin God's institutions even for the earth.

A similar principle runs through the incidents that follow here. "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them." Had His followers drunk deeply into that grace of which He was full, they would, on the contrary, have estimated very differently the feeling that presented the infants to their Master. The truth is that the spirit of self was yet strong; and what so petty and narrow? Poor, proud Judaism had tainted and spoiled the feelings, and the little ones were despised by them. But God, who is mighty, despiseth not any; and grace, understanding the mind of God, becomes an imitator of His ways. The Lord Jesus rebuked them; yea, it is said, "He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." In both these particulars, so all-important for the earth, we find the Lord Jesus Christ proving, that grace, far from not giving nature its place, is the only thing that vindicates it, according to God.

Another lesson follows, in a certain sense even more emphatic, because more difficult. It might be thought that God's mercy occupies it specially with a child. But let us suppose an unconverted man, and one, too, living according to the law, and in great measure satisfied with his fulfilment of its obligations, what would the Lord say of him? How does the Lord Jesus Christ feel about such a one? "When he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." The man was totally in the dark; he had no saving knowledge of God; he had no knowledge really of man; he had no sense of the true glory of Christ; he did honour Him, but merely as one differing in degree from himself. He owned Him to be a good Master, and he wanted to glean what he could from Him as a good disciple. He put himself, therefore, so far on a level with Jesus, assuming his competency to carry out the words and ways of Jesus. It is evident, therefore, that sin was unjudged, and that God Himself was unknown in the heart of this young man. The Lord, however, brings out his state fully. "Thou knowest the commandments," He says, putting expressly forward those duties that touch human relations. "He answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth." The Lord does not refuse his statement — raises no question how far he had fulfilled the second table. On the contrary, it is added, that "Jesus, beholding him, loved him." Many find a serious difficulty in that assertion of the Spirit of God. To my own mind it is as instructive as it is beautiful. Not that the man was converted, for he was clearly not; not that he knew the truth, for the difficulty arises from the fact that he was a stranger to it; not that the man was following Jesus, for, on the contrary, we are told that he went away from Jesus; not that his heart was made happy in God's grace, for in truth he turned back sorrowing. There was the deepest reason, therefore, to regard him with pain and anxiety, if you judged the man according to what was eternal. Nevertheless, it remains true that Jesus looked upon him, and beholding him, loved him.

Is there nothing in this which traverses ordinary evangelicalism? An important lesson for us, I cannot doubt. The Lord Jesus, from the very fact of His perfect perception of God and His grace, and the infinite value of eternal life before His Spirit, was free enough, and above all that crowds human judgment, to appreciate character and conduct in nature, to weigh what was conscientious, to love what was lovable in man simply as man. So far from grace weakening, I am persuaded it always strengthens such feelings. To many, no doubt, this might seem strange; but they are themselves the proof of the cause that hinders. Let them examine and judge whether the word does not reveal what is here drawn from it. And let it be noted that we have this emphatic statement, too, in the gospel which reveals Christ as the perfect servant; which gives us, therefore, to know how we are to serve wisely as we follow Him. Nowhere do we see our Lord bringing it out so distinctly as here. The same truth substantially is given

in Matthew and in Luke; but Mark gives us the fact the He "loved him." Nor do Matthew and Luke say a word about there being the perception of the reason why the Lord thus loved the young man: only Mark tells us that, "beholding him," Christ loved him. Of course, that is the great point of the case. The Lord did admire what there was naturally lovely in a man that had been preserved providentially from the evil of this world, and sedulously trained in the law of God, in which he had hitherto walked blamelessly, even desiring to learn from Jesus, but without divine conviction, of his own sinful lost estate. Certainly the Lord did not deal with either the narrowness or the roughness which we so often betray. Indeed we are, alas! poor servants of His grace. The Lord far better knew, and far more deeply felt than we, the state and danger of the young man. Nevertheless there is much for us to weigh in this, that Jesus, beholding him, loved him.

But, further, "He said unto him, One thing thou lackest." But what a thing it was! "One thing thou lackest." The Lord denies nothing that he could in any way or ground commend; He owns everything that was naturally good. Who could blame, for instance, an obedient child? a benevolent and conscientious life? Am I, therefore, to attribute all this to divine grace? or to deny the need of it? No! these things I own as a boon belonging to man in this world, and to be valued in their place. He that says they have no value whatever slights, to my mind, evidently, the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, he who would make this, or any thing of the sort, a means of eternal life, evidently knows nothing as he ought to know. Thus the subject calls, no doubt, for much delicacy, but for what will find a true recognition in Jesus, and in the blessed word of God, and nowhere else. Our Lord therefore says, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." Is not this what Jesus had done, though in an infinitely better way? Certainly He had given up all things, that God might be glorified in the salvation of lost man. But if He had emptied Himself of His glory, how infinite were the results of that humiliation unto death itself?

The young man wanted to learn something of Jesus; but was he prepared to follow even in the earthly path of the Crucified? was he willing only to have the thing he lacked supplied? to be a witness of divine self-renunciation in grace to the wretched? to abandon treasures on earth, content to have treasure in heaven? If he had done this, however, Christ could not but ask more; even as here He adds, "And come, take up the cross, and follow me." The Saviour, as we may thus see, goes not before the light of God; He does not anticipate what would be brought out in a day that was at hand. There is no premature announcement of the astonishing change which the gospel in due time made known; but the heart was fully tested. Man in his best estate is proved to be lighter than vanity, compared with Him who alone is good; and this revealed in Christ, His only adequate image and expression. Yet could He who thus (not to speak of the unfathomable depths of His cross) distanced man look on this young man with love, as He beheld him spite of evident shortcoming. Still, whatever he was, this did not in the smallest degree take the man out of the world. His heart was in the creature, yea, even in the unrighteous mammon: he loved his property, *i.e.*, himself, and the Lord in His test dealt with the root of the evil. And so the result proved. For it is said, "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." Now, it appears to me that our Lord's way of dealing is the perfect pattern; and first in this, that He does not reason from that which was not yet revealed by God. He does not speak of His own bloodshedding, death, or resurrection. They were not yet accomplished, and it would have been quite unintelligible. Not one of the disciples themselves knew anything really, though the Lord had repeatedly spoken of it to the twelve. How was this man to understand? Our Lord did what was of all importance — He dealt with the man's own conscience. He spread before him the moral value of what He had done Himself, giving up all that one had. This was the last thing the young man thought of doing. He would have liked to have been a benefactor — a generous patron; but to give up everything, and to follow Christ in shame and reproach, he was in no way prepared to do. The

consequence was, that on his own ground the man was left perfectly convicted of stopping short of good brought before him in the good Master to whom he had appealed. What the Lord may have done for him afterwards is a matter for the Lord to tell. As it is not revealed in the word, it is not for us to know; and it would be vain and wrong to conjecture. What God has shown us here is, that no matter what the extent of moral following the law, even in a most remarkable case of outward purity and of apparent subjection to the requirements of God, all this does not deliver the soul, does not make a man happy, but leaves him perfectly miserable and far from Christ. Such is the moral of the rich young ruler, and a very weighty one it is.

Next, our Lord applies the same principle to the disciples; for now He has done with the outward question. We have seen nature in its best estate seeking Christ in a sense; and here is the result of it: after all the man is unhappy, and leaves Jesus, who now looks upon His disciples in their utter bewilderment, and enlarges on the hindrance of wealth in divine things. Alas! this they had thought to be an evidence of God's blessing. And if *they* were only rich, how much good might they not do! "How hardly," says Christ, "shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God!" He further says to them, already astonished, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The Lord insists only the more solemnly on this lesson, so little understood even by disciples. They, beyond measure surprised, say among themselves, "Who, then, can be saved?" which gives the Lord the opportunity to explain what lies at the bottom of the whole question; that salvation is a question of God, and not of man at all. Law, nature, riches, poverty — no matter what, that man loves or fears — has nothing in the least to do with the saving of the soul, which rests entirely on the power of God's grace, and nothing else: what is impossible for man is possible with God. All turns, therefore, on His grace. Salvation is of the Lord. Blessed be His name! with God all things are possible: otherwise how could we, how could any, be saved?

Peter then begins to boast a little of what the disciples had given up, whereon the Lord brings in a very beautiful word, peculiar to Mark. "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold." Be it noted that only Mark mentions "and the gospel's." It is service that is so prominent here. Others may say, "for His sake;" but here we read, "for my sake, and the gospel's." Thus the value of Christ personally is, as it were, attached to the service of Christ in this world. Whosoever, then, is thus devoted, He says, "shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with *persecutions*; and in the world to come eternal life." It is a wonderful conjunction, but most true, because it is the word of the Lord and the reckoning of faith.

All things that Christ possesses are ours who believe in Him. No doubt such a tenure does not satisfy the covetous heart; but it is a deep and rich satisfaction to faith, that, instead of wanting something to distinguish self by, one has the comfort of knowing that all the Church of God possesses on the earth belongs to every saint of God on the earth. Faith does not seek its own, but delights in that which is diffused among the faithful. Unbelief counts nothing its own, save what is for selfish use. If, on the contrary, love be the principle that animates me, how different! But then there is an accompaniment — "with persecutions." These you must have somehow, if you are faithful. They that will live godly cannot escape it. Am I only to have it in that way because they have it? It is better to have it myself in the direct following of Christ. In His warfare, what can be so honourable a mark? But it is a mark that is found especially in the service of Christ. Here, again, we see how thoroughly Mark's character is preserved throughout. "But many that are first shall be last, and last first," we find solemnly added here as in Matthew. It is not the beginning of the race that decides the contest; the end of it

necessarily is the great point. In that race there are many changes, and withal not a few slips, falls, and reverses.

The Lord then goes on to Jerusalem, that fatal spot for the true prophet. Man was wrong in averring that never a prophet had arisen in Galilee; for, indeed, God left Himself not without witnesses even there. But, assuredly the Lord was right, that no prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. The religious capital is exactly the place where the true witnesses of God's grace must die. Jesus, therefore, in going up to Jerusalem was well understood by the disciples, and so, amazed, they follow Him. Little were they prepared for that course of persecution which was to be their boast in a day that was coming, and for which they would be surely strengthened by the Holy Ghost. But it was not so yet. "Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up" (how gracious! not only "I," but "we," go up) "to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles." Then we have the persecution unto death (and what a death!) fully laid before us. James and John at this critical time show how little flesh, even in the servants of God, ever enters into His thoughts. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," no matter in whom. Again, it was not in obscure ones, but in those that seemed to be somewhat, that the ugliness of the flesh especially betrayed itself; and therefore it is these who furnish the lesson for us. "Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire." Their mother appears in another gospel — in the gospel where we might expect such a relationship after the flesh to appear; but here, alas! it is the servants themselves, who ought to have known better. As yet their eyes were holden. They turned the very fact of their being servants into a means of profiting the flesh even in the kingdom of God itself. They seek to gratify the flesh here by the thought of what they would be there. So the Lord brings out the thought of their heart, and answers them with a dignity peculiar to Himself. "Ye know not," He says, "what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine. to give; but [it shall be given] to them for whom it is prepared." He is the servant; and even in view of the time of glory He preserves the same character. A high place in the kingdom is only for those "for whom it is prepared."

But it was not merely that these two disciples betrayed themselves; the ten made the secret of their heart manifest enough. It is not alone by the fault of one or another that the flesh becomes apparent; but how do we behave ourselves in presence of the displayed faults of others? The indignation which broke out in the ten showed the pride of their own hearts, just as much as the two desiring the best place. Had unselfish love been at work, their ambition would assuredly have been a matter for sorrow and shame. I do not say for lack of faithfulness in resisting it; but I do say, that the indignation proved that there was a feeling of self, and not of Christ, strongly at work in their hearts. Our Lord, therefore, reads a rebuke to the whole, and shows them that it was but the spirit of a Gentile that animated them against the sons of Zebedee; the very reverse of all He, could not but look for in them, even as it opposed all that was in Himself. Intelligence of the kingdom leads the believer into contentedness with being little now. The true greatness of the disciple lies in the power of being a servant of Christ morally, going down to the uttermost in the service of others. It is not energy that ensures this greatness in the Lord's estimate now, but contentedness to be a servant, — yea, to be a slave in the lowest or least place. As for Himself, it was not merely that Christ did come to minister, or be a servant; He had that which He alone could have — the title, as the love, to give His life a ransom for many.

From Mark 10: 48 comes the last scene — the Lord presenting Himself to Jerusalem, and that too, as we are all aware, from Jericho. We have His progress to Jerusalem, beginning with the cure of the blind man. I need not dwell on the details, nor on His entrance on the colt of the ass into the city as the King. Neither need I say more about the fig tree (one day cursed, the next day seen to be thoroughly withered up), nor the Lord's call to faith in God, and its effect in and on prayer. Nor need we enter particularly into the question of authority raised by the religious leaders.

The parable of the vineyard, with which Mark 12 opens, is very full on that which concerns the servants responsible to God. Then we hear of the rejected stone that was afterwards made the head of the corner. Again, we have the various classes of Jews coming before Him with their questions. Not that there are not important points in every one of these scenes that pass before our eyes; but the hour will not permit me to touch upon any of them at length. I therefore pass by advisedly these particulars. We have the Pharisees and the Herodians rebuked; we have the Sadducees refuted; we have the scribe manifesting what the character of the law is; and, indeed, in answer to his own question, the Lord shed the full light of God upon the law, but at the same time accompanied by a remarkable comment on the lawyer. "When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." It is a beautiful feature in our Lord's service — this readiness to own whatever was according to truth, no matter where He found it. Then our Lord puts His own question, as to His own person, according to the Scripture, gives a brief warning as to the scribes, and marks in contrast the poor blessed widow, His own pattern of true devotedness and of real faith in this most spiritually destitute condition of the people of God on earth. How He passes completely by the wealth that merely gave what it felt not, to single out, and for ever consecrate, the practice of faith where it might be least expected! The widow that had but the two mites had cast in all her living into the treasury of God, and this at a time decrepit and selfish beyond all precedent. Little did that widow think that she had found even upon earth an eye to own, and a tongue to proclaim, what God could form for His own praise in the heart and by the hand of the poorest woman in Israel!

Then our Lord instructs the disciples in a prophecy strictly conformed to the character of Mark. This is the reason why here alone, where you have the service of the Lord, the power by which they could answer in times of difficulty is introduced into this discourse. Hence our Lord passes by all distinctive reference to the end of the age — an expression which does not here occur. The fact is that, although it be the prophecy which in Matthew looks to the end of the age,, still the Spirit does not so specify here; and for the simple reason, that a prophecy which was forming them for their service accounts for what is left out and what is put in, as compared with Matthew. Another thing I may notice is, that in this prophecy alone He says, that not only the angels, but even the Son does not know that day (Mark 13: 32). The reason of this peculiar, and at first sight perplexing, expression seems to me to be, that Christ so thoroughly takes the place of One who confines himself to what God gave to Him, of One so perfectly a minister — not a master, in this point of view — that, even in relation to the future, He knows and gives out to others only what God gives Him for the purpose. As God says nothing about the day and the hour, He knows no more. Remark also how characteristically here our Lord describes both Himself, and the workmen, and their work. There is no such dispensational description, as in Matthew's parable of the talents, but simply this: "The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch." The features of difference in Matthew are plain. There is far greater augustness. He who goes a long way provides as it were for the length of His absence. Here, no doubt, He goes; but He gives "authority to His *servants*." Who can fail to note the suitability for the purpose of Mark? Again, He gives "to every man his work." Why, may we not ask, are these expressions found here? Surely, because in Mark it is the very subject-matter of the gospel all through; for even in a prophecy the Lord

would never abandon the great thought of service. Here it is not so much the question of giving gifts or goods as of work to be done. Authority is given to His servants. They wanted it. They do not take it without a title. It is doing His will, rather than trading with His gifts. We find this last most appropriately in Matthew; because the point in the earlier gospel was the peculiar chance to follow the Lord's leaving the earth, and the Jewish hopes of Messiah, for the new place He was going to take on ascending to heaven. There He is the giver of gifts — a thing quite distinct in its character from the ordinary principle of Judaism; and the men trade with them, and the good and faithful enter finally into the joy of their Lord. Here it is simply the service of Christ, the true servant.

In Mark 14 come the profoundly interesting and instructive scenes of our Lord with the disciples, not now predicting, but vouchsafing the last pledge of His love. The chief priests and scribes plot in corruption and violence for His death; at Simon's house in Bethany a woman anoints His body to the burying, which discerns many hearts among the disciples, and draws out the Master's, who next is seen, not accepting an offering of affection, but giving the great and permanent token of His love — the Lord's Supper. The state of Judas's heart appears in both cases — conceiving his plan in the presence of the first, and going out to accomplish it from the presence of the last. Thence our Lord goes forth; not yet to suffer the wrath of God, but to enter into it in spirit before God. We have seen all through the gospel that such was His habit, to which I merely call attention now in passing. As the cross was of all the deepest work and suffering, so most assuredly the Lord did not enter upon Calvary without a previous Gethsemane. In its due season comes the trial before the high priest and Pilate.

The crucifixion of our Lord is in Mark 15, with the effect upon those that followed Him, and the grace that wrought in the woman — men betraying their abject fear in the presence of death, but women strengthened, the weak truly made strong.

Finally, in Mark 16, we have the resurrection; but this, too, strictly in keeping with the character of the gospel. Accordingly, then we have the Lord risen, the angel giving the word to the women — "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter" — a word found only in Mark. The reason is manifest. It is a mighty consideration for the soul. Peter, despising the word of the Lord really, though not intentionally; Peter, not receiving that word mixed with faith into his heart, but, on the contrary, trusting himself, was pushed into a difficulty where he could not stand, even before man or woman, because he had never borne the temptation upon his spirit before God. So it was then that Peter broke down shamefully. From the Lord's look he began to feel his conduct acutely; but while the process went on he needed to be confirmed, and our Lord therefore expressly named Peter in His message — the only one who was named. It was an encouragement to the faint heart of His fallen servant; it was an acting of that same grace which had prayed for him even before he fell; it was the Lord effecting for him a thorough restoration of his soul, which mainly consists of the application of the word to the conscience, but also to the affections. Peter's was the last name, according to man, that deserved to be then named; but it was the one who needed most, and that was enough for the grace of Christ. Mark's gospel is ever that of the service of love.

On the cross and resurrection, as here presented, I need not speak now. There are peculiarities both of insertion and of omission, which illustrate the difference in scope of what is here given us from that which we find elsewhere. Thus we have the reviling of the very thieves crucified with Him, but not the conversion of one. And as in the seizure of Jesus we hear of a certain young man who fled naked when laid hold of by the lawless crowd that apprehended the Saviour, so before the crucifixion they compel in their wanton violence one Simon a Cyrenian to bear His cross. But God was not forgetful of that day's toil for Jesus, as Alexander and Rufus could testify at a later day. Not a word here of the

earth quaking, either at the death of Christ, or when He rose; no graves are seen opened; no saints risen and appearing in the holy city. But of the women we hear who had ministered to Him living, and would have still ministered when dead, but that the resurrection cut it short, and brought in a better and enduring light, the Lord employing angelic ministry to chase away their fright by announcing that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth was risen. How admirably this is in keeping with our gospel need scarcely be enlarged on.

I am aware that men have tampered with the closing verses (9-20) of Mark 16, as they have sullied with their unholy doubts the beginning of John 8. In speaking of John, it will be my happy task to defend that passage from the rude insults of men. Assured they are wrong, I care not who they may be nor what their excuses. God has given the amplest array of external vouchers; but there are reasons far weightier, internal grounds of conviction, which will be appreciated just in proportion to a person's understanding of God and His word. Impossible for man to coin a single thought, or even a word fit to pass. So it is in this scene.

I also admit that there are certain differences between this portion and the previous part of chap. 16. But, in my judgment, the Spirit purposely put them in a different light. Here, you will observe, it is a question of forming the servants according to that rising from the dead for which He had prepared them. Had the gospel terminated without this, we must have had a real gap, which ought to have been felt. The Lord had Himself, before His resurrection, indicated its important bearing. When the fact occurred, had there been no use made of it with the servants, and for the service, of Christ, there had been, indeed, a grievous lack, and this wonderful gospel of His ministry would have left off with as impotent a conclusion as we could possibly imagine. Chapter 16 would have closed with the silence of the women and its source, "for they were afraid." What conclusion less worthy of the servant Son of God! What must have been the impression left, if the doubts of some learned men had the slightest substance in them? Can any one, who knows the character of the Lord and of His ministry, conceive for an instant that we should be left with nothing but a message baulked through the alarm of women? Of course, I assume what is indeed the fact, that the outward evidence is enormously preponderant for the concluding verses. But, internally also, it seems to me impossible for one who compares the earlier close with the gospel's aim and character throughout, to accept such an ending after weighing that which is afforded by the verses from 9 to 20. Certainly *these* seem to me to furnish a most fitting conclusion to that which otherwise would be a picture of total and hopeless weakness in testimony. Again, the very freedom of the style, the use of words not elsewhere used, or so used by Mark, and the difficulties of some of the circumstances narrated, tell to my mind in favour of its genuineness; for a forger would have adhered to the letter, if he could not so easily catch the spirit of Mark.

I admit, of course, that there was a particular object in the earlier verses as they now stand, and that the providence of God wrought therein; but surely the ministry of Jesus has a higher end than such providential ways of God. On the other hand, if we receive the common conclusion of the gospel of Mark, how appropriate all is! Here we have a woman, and no ordinary woman, Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus, who was now dead and risen, had once cast seven devils; and who, therefore, so fit a witness of the resurrection-power of God's Son? The Lord had come to destroy the works of the devil; she knew this, even before His death and resurrection: who then, I ask, so suitable a herald of it as Mary of Magdala? There is a divine reason, and it harmonizes with this gospel. She had experimentally proved the blessed ministry of Jesus before, in delivering herself from Satan's power. She was now about to announce a still more glorious ministry; for Jesus had now by dying destroyed Satan's power in death. "She went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept." This was untimely sorrow on their part: what a thrill of joy that ought to have sent to their hearts. Alas! unbelief

left them still sad and unbiassed. Then "he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them." Here was an important practical element to remember in the service of the Lord — the dulness of men's hearts, their consequent opposition and resistance to the truth. Where the truth does not concern men much, they slight without fear, hatred, or opposition. Thus, the very resistance to the truth, while it shows in a certain sense, no doubt, man's unbelief, demonstrates at the same time that its importance leads to this resistance. Supposing you tell a man that a certain chief possesses a great estate in Tartary; he may think it all very true, at any rate he does not feel enough about the case to deny the allegation; but tell him that he himself has such an estate there: does he believe you? The moment something affects the person, there is interest enough to resist stoutly. It was of practical moment that the disciples should be instructed in the feelings of the heart, and learn the fact in their own experience. Here we have it so in the case of our Lord. He had told them plainly in His word; He had announced the resurrection over and over and over again; but how slow were these chosen servants of the Lord! what patient waiting upon others should there not be in the ministry of those with whom the Lord had dealt so graciously! There again we find, that if it be of moment, it is most especially so in the point of view of the Lord's ministry.

After this the Lord appears Himself to the eleven as they sat at meat, and "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them Which had seen him after he was risen." Yet a most gracious Master He proves Himself one that knew well how to make good ministers out of bad ones; and so the Lord says to them, immediately after upbraiding them with their incredulity, "Go ye into all the world, and. preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There is the importance not only of the truth, but of its being openly and formally confessed before God and man; for clearly baptism does symbolically proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ; that is the value of it. "He that believeth and is baptized." Do not you pretend that you have received Christ, and then *shirk* all the difficulties and dangers of the confession. Not so: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." There is not a word about baptism in this last case. A man might be baptized; but without faith, of course it would not save him. "He that *believeth* not shall be damned." Believing was the point. Nevertheless, if a man professed ever so much to believe, yet shrank from the publicity of owning Him in whom he believed, his profession of faith was good for nothing; it could not be accepted as real. Here was an important principle for the servant of Christ in dealing with cases.

Further, outward manifestations of power were to follow: "These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils." By-and-by the power of Satan is to be shaken thoroughly. This was only a testimony, but still how weighty it was! The Lord in this case does not say how long these signs were to last. When He says, "Teach [make disciples of] all nations [or the Gentiles], baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you," He adds, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [or age]." That is, He does connect His continuance with their discipling, baptizing, and teaching all the Gentiles what He had enjoined. This work was thus to go on till the end of the age; but as for the signs of Mark 16, with marvellous wisdom He omits all mention of a period. He does not say how long these signs were to follow them that believe. All He said was, that these signs were to follow; and so they did. He did not promise that they were to be for five, or fifty, for a hundred, or five hundred years. He simply said they were to follow, and so the signs were given; and they followed not merely the apostles, but them that believe. They confirmed the word of believers wherever they were found. It was but a testimony, and I have not the slightest doubt, that as there was perfect wisdom in giving these signs to accompany the word, so also there was not less wisdom in

cutting the gift short. I am assured that, in the present fallen state of Christendom, these outward signs, so far from being desirable, would be an injury. No doubt their cessation is a proof of our sin and low estate; but at the same time there was graciousness in His thus withholding these signs towards His people when their continuance threatened no small danger to them, and might have obscured His moral glory.

The grounds of this judgment need not be entered into now; it is enough to say that undoubtedly these signs were given. "They shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Thus there was a blow struck at the prolific source of evil in the world; there was the expression of God's rich grace now to the world; there was the active witness of the beneficence of divine mercy in dealing with the miseries everywhere occurrent in the world. These are, I think, the characteristics of the service, but then there remains a striking part of the conclusion, which I venture to think none but Mark could have written. No doubt the Holy Ghost was the true author of all that Mark wrote; and certainly, the conclusion is one that suits this gospel, but no other. If you cut off these words, you have a gospel without a conclusion. Accepting these words as the words of God, you have, I repeat, a termination that harmonizes with a truly divine gospel; but not merely that — here you have a divine conclusion for Mark's gospel, and for no other. There is no other gospel that this conclusion would suit but Mark's; for observe here what the Spirit of God finally gives us. He says, "After the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven." You might have thought, surely, that there was rest in heaven now that Christ's work on earth was done, and so perfectly done; more particularly as it is here added, "and he sat on the right hand of God." If there is such a session of Christ spoken of in this place, the more it might be supposed that there was a present rest, now that all His work was over; but not so. As the gospel of Mark exhibits emphatically Jesus the workman of God, so even in the rest of glory He is the workman still. Therefore, it seems written here that, while they went forth upon their mission, they were to take up the work which the Lord had left them to do. "They went forth and preached *everywhere*" — for there is this character of largeness about Mark. "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Thus Mark, and no one else, gives us the picture most thoroughly, the whole consistent up to the last. Would a forger have kept up the bold thought of "the Lord working with them," while every other word intimates that He was then at least quiescent?

Thus have we glanced over the gospel of Mark, and have seen that the first thing in it is the Lord ushered into His service by one who was called to an extraordinary work before Him, even John the Baptist. Now, at last, when He is set down at the right hand of God, we find it said that the Lord was working with them. To allow that verses 9 to the end are authentic scripture, but not Mark's own writing, seems to me the lamest supposition possible.

May He bless His own word, and give us here one more proof that, if there be any portion in which we find the divine hand more conspicuous than another, it is precisely where unbelief objects and rejects. I am not aware that in all the second gospel there is a section more characteristic of this evangelist than the very one that man's temerity has not feared to seize upon, endeavouring to root it from the soil where God planted it. But, beloved friends, these words are not of man. Every plant that the heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. This shall never be rooted up, but abides for ever, let human learning, great or small, say what it will.