

Mark 3:13-19
Jesus Can Use Faithful Christians Who Fail
2/6/22

ILL: Many years ago, a young foreign student flunked out of the **University of Michigan**. And, he was so **ashamed** that he decided to disappear. For the next **4** years he hid in the **unused** attic of an **Ann Arbor** church. He only left the attic at night to live off food and water from the kitchen. And, he never left the building or spoke to anyone. So, no one ever suspected he was there. Then one day, he accidentally made some noise, the police were called, and he was finally discoveredⁱ.

RN: When we fail, does God want us to bury ourselves in **shame**? Or, does He want us to bury ourselves in His **Mercy**? When we fail, does God want us to hide in **regret**? Or, does He want us to hide in His **revival**? When we fail God, does God want us to **quit**? Or, does He want us to **finish**?

AN: When we fail—even fail miserably—God doesn't throw us away. Instead, He calls us to believe that His Merciful will for us can **still happen**.

BI: Jesus makes **12** Faithful men into His **Apostles** even after they **fail** Him, so Jesus can use us, too, if we keep serving Him after our failures.

- I. This morning we'll see why Jesus must "**make**" His **12** Apostles.
- II. And, we'll see which Apostles are the **closest** to Jesus.
- III. Finally, we'll see why Jesus can use Faithful but **flawed** men.

Jesus can use Faithful Christians who fail. [PRAY]

*From **2:1-3:12**, Mark zeroed in on Jesus' authority in **public** scenes. But from **3:13-3:35**, Mark is going to zero in on Jesus' authority in **private** scenes. First, He will deal w/ the men whom we know as His **12 Apostles**. Then, He will deal w/ His other Followers, His enemies, and even His immediate family.*

*In all of this, a crucial division will be made b/t **Insiders** and **Outsiders**. And, this Insider/Outsider division will become progressively more important as Mark's story unfolds for this destiny-dividing reason—You **become** an Insider or an Outsider by how **faithfully** or **unfaithfully** you respond to Jesus. IOW, **Insiders** have a deep, intense, prosperous relationship w/ Jesus. But, **Outsiders** don't.*

(TRN) In (13-15), Jesus "**makes**" His **12 Apostles**.

Mark 3:13–15 (NASB95) ¹³ **And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.** ¹⁴ **And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He [could] send them out to preach,** ¹⁵ **and to have authority to cast out the demons.**

(13) Jesus moves from the lowlands around the **Sea of Galilee** to the hills of central **Galilee**. And, there's strong imagery in Jesus' trip up the mountain.

A. In **OT**, mountains are places of God's presence, Divine revelation, and historic changes in Israel's story. For example, **Jacob** offers **Isaac** on **Mt. Moriah**ⁱⁱ.

1. God gives the **10 Commandments** on **Mt. Sinai**ⁱⁱⁱ. And, **Zechariah** predicts that God will judge the World on the **Mt. of Olives**^{iv}.

B. And, Jesus' trip up the mountain falls into the holy mountain tradition, b/c He's going to make a decision that will change Israel's history as well as World history.

(14-15) Jesus picks **12** men out the **100s** of His Followers and makes them into the core of His new Faith community, the Church, s/t they can further God's work on earth.

A. But, it's vital to see that this choice is an act of Jesus' **sovereign will**. None of these men **earn** this honor. Jesus literally **makes** them Apostles for His own purposes.

B. And, these are Jesus' purposes: He wants them to be **w/** Him, He wants to send them out to **preach**, and He wants them to **cast out** demons.

1. Jesus wants them to be w/ Him, b/c He's going to teach them that **He** is their ultimate good, and His greatness demands **all** their love, **all** their power, **all** their life, and **all** the Truth that's in them.

2. And Jesus wants to send them out to preach, s/t they can **lead** the Church and **evangelize** the World after He returns to His Father at His **Ascension**.

3. And, Jesus wants to delegate His authority to cast out demons, s/t they can **destroy** Satan's kingdom.

C. Empowered in this way, the **12** will forcefully show **3 key** Truths: **1)** The **KOG** has come. **2)** They serve **the Christ**. And **3)** God's power **resides** in the Church (**1 Cor 13:8-10**).

1. As such, Jesus will show us that being His Follower means **being w/** Him, **being taught by** Him, **being changed by** Him, and **being obedient to** Him.

D. Now, these men **plus Paul** will be the **NT's** chief missionaries. And, God will use some of them plus Paul to **record** what they've seen and what they've heard.

1. They will **hear** Jesus teach how God reunites sinners to Himself through Jesus. And, all but **Judas Iscariot** will see Jesus **rise** from the dead and ascend into Heaven.

2. And, **God's Holy Spirit** will guide them as they write, so there will be **no** errors. And, God's Holy Spirit will **remind** them of every Truth that Jesus wants taught.

3. Then, God's Holy Spirit will scatter them across the ancient world to tell the good, the bad, and the ugly that Jesus came to free them from sin and God's wrath.

E. Perhaps, **Millions** will hear their message. Many will gladly receive it. But, more will hate them, abuse them, hunt them, torture them, and murder them.

1. All of them, except John, the Follower whom Jesus loves, Jesus' cousin, and James the Great's brother, will be **murdered**.

2. And, their shed blood will testify that their message is True, b/c nobody is abused, hunted down, tortured, and cruelly murdered for a story **he knows to be a lie**.

F. **And, here's their message:** God sent Jesus Christ, His Only Begotten Son, the Lamb of God born of a virgin, to die on a cross and satisfy God's wrath for our sins.

1. And, God accepted Jesus Christ's sacrifice by **raising** Him from the dead **3** days later, and then He exalted Jesus Christ to His right hand in Heaven **40** days after that.

2. And, from this place of Divine authority, Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah, will come again to **judge** the living and the dead.

3. And, God has ordered every nation to turn from their sins and **trust** in Jesus Christ w/ **all** their love, **all** their power, **all** their life, and **all** the Truth that's in them (Acts 27:30-31).

4. B/C there is **no other name** under Heaven that can save anyone from God's wrath, except the Graced, holy, and precious name of God's Divine Son, **Jesus Christ**^v.

G. ILL: When **Julius Caesar** landed in **Britain** w/ his legions, he took a bold step to ensure the success of his military venture. He ordered his men to march to the edge of the **Dover Cliffs**. Then, he ordered them to look down. And, they were shocked to see every one of their ships **burning!** Caesar had cut off any possibility of **retreat**. So, his legions were **unable** to return to the continent, and there was nothing left for them to do but to **advance and conquer!** And, that's exactly what they did^{vi}.

H. APPL: When we Trust in Christ, we must fearlessly cut off every way back to the world, the flesh and the devil, b/c Faith in Jesus Christ requires **all** our love, **all** our power, **all** our life, and **all** the Truth that's in us.

Jesus wants **all** of us even our weakness, b/c Jesus can use Faithful Christians who fail.

(TRN) In (16-17), Mark records the names of the **3 Apostles** closest to Jesus.

Mark 3:16–17 (NASB95) ¹⁶ *And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), ¹⁷ and James, the [son] of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder")—*

(16-17) Jesus calls **12 Apostles**. And, this is relevant, b/c it alludes to **Israel's 12 Tribes**. IOW, Israel's destiny is woven into what Jesus is doing w/ these **12** men.

A. The number **12** reminds Jews that Israel will only fulfill its destiny in relationship w/ and obedience to Christ. What's more, **12** reminds **Gentiles** of this essential Truth:

1. God is working out His plan for their Salvation through the Jews^{vii}. IOW, God's plan begins w/ **Abraham** and ends in **Jesus**, no one and nothing else.

B. Then, starting w/ **Simon**, Mark does an Apostolic role call: Simon is the chief of the **12**, b/c He's **1st** on Mark's list. That is, Mark's sentence structure gives Simon eminence. What's more, Jesus calls him Peter, which means "**rock.**" *Here's why—*

C. Jesus names reckless Simon, "**Peter,**" this is "**the Rock,**" b/c of the service that Simon Peter will perform for the early Church.

1. Peter will become a rock-steady leader of the early Church, especially during times of bloody persecution.

D. But, in and of himself, Simon is incapable of this. Time and time again, even after Jesus' **Ascension** into Heaven, Peter will **fail** at being the Rock.

1. But, God's Grace will transform Simon into the Rock. IOW, Jesus will make the man fit the job, not make the job fit the man.

2. And, **failing** Peter will become an outstanding example of what Jesus' power can do in a humble **persevering** heart.

E. Next, there are **James and John, Zebedee's** boys. And since James follows Peter, he's probably **2nd** in command. They're Jesus' **cousins** on His Mom's side. Their Mom, **Salome**, is Jesus' **aunt**.

1. Jesus calls His cousins the "**Sons of Thunder**^{viii}." And, this title means "**the loud ones**" or "**the hot-tempered ones.**"

2. B/f Jesus' Ascension, James and John are hot-headed, mouthy wheeler-dealers. But, again, God's Grace will shape them into **fearless** witnesses for Jesus Christ.

F. Now, Jesus probably has nicknames for the other Apostles, but we don't know them. And, this nicknaming is far-reaching, b/c it sets Jesus' expectations for these men.

1. These are high expectations, and they're good. But more critically, they're also **do-able**, b/c Jesus will equip His Apostles w/ the **enabling** presence of God's Holy Spirit.

2. And, we're the same. When Jesus saves us, He restores God's image in us and calls us **God's Children**, and **kings and priests** to His Father (Rv 1:6).

3. So, when His Grace fills us w/ God's life, we enforce God's rule through prayer and service, as we bring men, women, and children to God through **evangelism**.

G. ILL: In **1947**, when **Dr. Paul Brand** began his pioneering work in **India**, he was the **only** orthopedic surgeon in the world working among **15 million** lepers. He and his wife, **Margaret**, also a physician, performed dozens of surgical procedures on some of these patients, transforming rigid claws into usable hands through tendon transfers, remaking feet, preventing blindness, transplanting eyebrows, and making new noses.

When he spoke of his patients' family histories, the **rejection** they had felt as the disease manifested itself, the trial-and-error treatments they underwent as doctor and patient experimented together, he would wipe away tears as he recalled their pain. To him these people were **somebodys**. They were made in the God's image, and Brand devoted his life to restoring that image that disease had badly scarred^{ix}.

H. APPL: When Jesus saves us, He also restores God's image in us. So, we can Trust that we are **God's Children, God's Kings and God's Priests**.

Jesus **heals** God's image in the scarred, b/c Jesus can use Faithful Christians who fail.

(TRN) In (18-19), Mark finishes his Apostolic **roll call**.

Mark 3:18–19 (NASB95) ¹⁸ *and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot;* ¹⁹ *and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.*

(18-19) Mark continues his Apostolic roll call: **Andrew** is Peter's brother, and he introduces Peter to Jesus. **Tradition** says that he'll spread the Gospel in **Scythia** north of the **Black Sea**. And, he'll be crucified there on an **X-shaped** cross.

A. **Philip** meets Jesus beyond the **Jordon River** during the **Baptizer's** ministry. He brings **Nathaniel AKA Bartholomew** to Jesus. **Tradition** says that he'll spread the Gospel in **Asia Minor**, and he'll be crucified there **upside down**.

B. Modern scholars identify Bartholomew as **Nathaniel**. Jesus says this about him: **"Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile^x."**

1. **Tradition** says that he'll preach the Gospel in **Armenia and India**. And, he'll be crucified **upside down** after being **skinned alive**.

C. **Matthew** is **AKA Levi** the tax collector to whom Jesus says, **"Follow Me^{xi}!"** Matthew will write the Gospel named for him. **Tradition** says that he'll spread the Gospel in **Judea**, and he'll be **martyred** there.

D. **Thomas** is best known for doubting Jesus' **physical Resurrection** from the dead. But, he's also among the **first** to state that **Jesus is God**. **Tradition** says that he'll spread the Gospel to **India**, and he'll be **martyred** there.

E. **James, Alphaeus'** boy, is mentioned in every list of the Apostles, but **nothing** is known about him.

F. **Thaddaeus** is also mentioned in every list of the Apostles, but **nothing** is known about him either.

G. **Simon the Zealot** was a member of a **fanatical** Jewish group who opposed the Romans. They're called the **Zealots**, and they **violently hate** the Romans.

1. **Tradition** says that he'll spread the Gospel in **Egypt and Persia**, and pagan priests will **saw him in half**.

H. **Judas Iscariot** is the Apostle who **betrays** Jesus and then commits **suicide**. Iscariot means **"man from Kerioth."**

1. So, Judas is the only **non-Galilean** in the bunch. Kerioth is an old **Moabite** fortress town **20** miles east of the **Dead Sea**.

2. But, the name Kerioth can also come from the Latin word **sicarius** that means **"dagger man,"** or contract **"killer."**

3. So, it's possible that Judas and Simon the Zealot were once linked to the political assassins called the **Sicarii**. They murder Romans and their sympathizers w/ daggers.

I. Now, this Apostolic roll call is important for **3** reasons: **1)** The Church is eternally indebted to men that we know very little about.

1.1 IOW, God is no respecter of persons, and Jesus uses Faithful men—**whom the World ignores**—to usher in the Christian era.

2) Faithful men from all walks of life—not leaders from the reigning religious institutions—make up this Apostolic corps.

2.1 They're middle-class businessmen, a collaborator w/ Israel's Roman conquerors, and possibly **2** formerly violent political radicals.

2.2 As such, their **cooperation** shows that God has joined them together, b/c no financial, political, or religious factor on earth could force them to do so.

3) Since Mark has included Judas Iscariot's name, this roll call shows that Mark is a Truthful historian. Mark hasn't covered-up Judas and the scandal he caused.

3.1 Instead, Mark includes Judas to show that this isn't a perfect group of men. Rather, it's a group of flawed men, who can and do fail Jesus dramatically.

3.2 IOW, Jesus gives flawed and failing men the opportunity to accomplish His will; He just requires them to be Faithful—even after they fail to do so.

3. **READ THAT** Jesus Christ will prevail despite our flaws, faults, and foibles **if** we **repent** of them and **keep on** trying to serve Him.

J. ILL: When the **evils of slavery** still existed in the **US**, one day a **Plantation Owner** went duck hunting w/ his **Slave**. The Plantation Owner was an **atheist**, but his slave was a **strong Christian**. On the way, the carriage wheel lost a rim, and the Owner ordered his Slave to **hammer it** back on. As he did so, the slave accidentally **hit** his finger. And, he said some words that he instantly **regretted**. So, he quickly knelt and asked for **forgiveness** and said, "**Lord, sometimes it's difficult to live the Christian life.**" Then, Owner said, "**Sam, you're a Christian. Tell me why do you struggle so much to live it? I'm an atheist, and I don't have problems like you do. Certainly, atheism is a more peaceful life than the Christian life.**"

Sam had **no** answer, but just then some ducks flew overhead. The Owner raised his gun and shot **2** ducks out of the air. And, he said, "**Sam, go after the wounded one, not the dead one.**" Sam spotted the struggling bird and shouted, "**I've got an answer for you, Sir. You said Christianity is no good, b/c I must struggle. Well, I'm the duck w/ the broken wing, and the devil's after me. So, I'm alive and must struggle to get away from him. But, you, Sir, you're the dead duck!**"^{xii}

K. Application: Sometimes, we're successful at living for Christ and, sometimes, we're not. But, Christ's Grace will **override** our failures if we **struggle** to serve Him.

Jesus **empowers** us to struggle, b/c Jesus can use Faithful Christians who fail.

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- i "Attics Are for Mice," INFOsearch Pro ver 4.3P.
ii Gen 22:2
iii Ex 19-20
iv Zech 14:4
v Acts 4:12
vi "Burning Your Boats," INFOsearch Pro ver 4.3P.
vii Jn 4:22
viii Mk 9:38; 10:35-39; Lk 9:54
ix Philip Yancey, "The Leprosy Doctor," Christianity Today, November 2003, 112.
x Jn 1:47
xi Mk 1:14
xii "A Sign of Life," INFOsearch Pro ver 4.3P.

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