

CHAPTER 1

Mark's narrative does not take rise so early as those of Matthew and Luke do, from the birth of our Saviour, but from John's baptism, from which he soon passes to Christ's public ministry. Accordingly, in this chapter, we have,

- I.** The office of John Baptist illustrated by the prophecy of him (v. 1-3), and by the history of him (v. 4-8).
- II.** Christ's baptism, and his being owned from heaven (v. 9-11).
- III.** His temptation (v. 12, 13).
- IV.** His preaching (v. 14, 15, 21, 22, 38, 39).
- V.** His calling disciples (v. 16-20).
- VI.** His praying (v. 35).
- VII.** His working miracles.
 - 1.** His rebuking an unclean spirit (v. 23-28).
 - 2.** His curing Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill of a fever (v. 29-31).
 - 3.** His healing all that came to him (v. 32, 34).
 - 4.** His cleansing a leper (v. 40-45).

MARK 1:1-8

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

We may observe here,

- I.** What the New Testament is — the *divine* testament, to which we *adhere* above all that is *human*; the new testament, which we *advance* above that which was old. It is *the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God*, v. 1.
 - 1.** It is *gospel*; it is God's word, and is *faithful* and *true*; see Revelation 19:9; 21:5; 22:6. It is a *good word*, and well *worthy of all acceptance*; it brings us glad tidings.

2. It is the *gospel of Jesus Christ*, the *anointed Saviour*, the Messiah promised and expected. The foregoing gospel began with the *generation of Jesus Christ* — that was but preliminary, this comes immediately to the business — *the gospel of Christ*. It is called *his*, not only because he is the *Author* of it, and it comes *from him*, but because he is the *Subject of it*, and it treats wholly *concerning him*.

3. This Jesus is the *Son of God*. That truth is the foundation on which the gospel is built, and which it is written to demonstrate; for is Jesus be not *the Son of God*, our *faith is vain*.

II. What the *reference* of the New Testament is to the Old, and its *coherence* with it. The gospel of Jesus Christ *begins*, and so we shall find it *goes on*, just as it is written in the prophets (v. 2); for it *saith no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come* (⁴⁰²Acts 26:22), which was most proper and powerful for the conviction of the Jews, who believed the Old-Testament prophets to be sent of God and ought to have *evidenced* that they did so by welcoming the accomplishment of their prophecies in its season; but it is of use to us all, for the confirmation of our faith both in the Old Testament and in the New, for the exact harmony that there is between both shows that they both have the same divine original.

Quotations are here borrowed from two prophecies — that of Isaiah, which was the *longest*, and that of Malachi, which was the *latest* (and there were above three hundred years between them), both of whom spoke to the same purport concerning *the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ*, in the ministry of John.

1. Malachi, in whom we had the Old-Testament *farewell*, spoke very plainly (³⁹¹Malachi 3:1) concerning John Baptist, who was to give the New-Testament *welcome*. *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face*, v.

2. Christ himself had taken notice of this, and applied it to John (⁴¹¹Matthew 11:10), who was God's *messenger*, sent to *prepare Christ's way*.

2. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, *begins* the evangelical part of his prophecy with this, which points to the *beginning of the gospel of Christ* (²⁹⁰Isaiah 40:3); *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*, v.

3. Matthew had taken notice of this, and applied it to John, ⁴⁰⁸Matthew 3:3. But from these two put together here, we may observe,

(1.) That Christ, in his gospel, *comes among us*, bringing with him a treasure of grace, and a sceptre of government.

(2.) Such is the corruption of the world, that there is something to do to *make room* for him, and to remove that which gives not only *obstruction*, but *opposition* to his progress.

(3.) When God sent his Son into the world, he *took care*, and when he sends him into the heart, he *takes care*, effectual care, to *prepare his way before him*; for the designs of his grace shall not be *frustrated*; nor may any expect the comforts of that grace, but such as, by conviction of sin and humiliation for it, are *prepared* for those comforts, and disposed to receive them.

(4.) When the *paths* that were *crooked*, are *made straight* (the mistakes of the judgment rectified, and the *crooked ways* of the affections), then way is made for Christ's comforts.

(5.) It is in a *wilderness*, for such this world is, that *Christ's way* is prepared, and theirs that follow him, like that which Israel passed through to Canaan.

(6.) The messengers of conviction and terror, that come to prepare Christ's way, are *God's messengers*, whom he sends and will own, and must be *received* as such.

(7.) They that are sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, in such a vast howling wilderness as this is, have need to *cry aloud*, and not spare, and to *lift up their voice like a trumpet*.

III. What the *beginning* of the New Testament was. The gospel began in John Baptist; for *the law and the prophets were, until John*, the only divine revelation, but then the *kingdom of God began to be preached*, ^{<216>}Luke 16:16. Peter begins *from the baptism of John*, ^{<412>}Acts 1:22. The gospel did not begin *so soon* as the *birth* of Christ, for he took time to *increase in wisdom and stature*, not so late as his entering upon his public ministry, but half a year before, when John began to preach the same doctrine that Christ afterward preached. His baptism was the dawning of the *gospel day*; for,

1. In John's way of *living* there was the beginning of a *gospel spirit*; for it bespoke great self-denial, mortification of the flesh, a holy contempt of the

world, and nonconformity to it, which may truly be called the *beginning of the gospel of Christ* in any soul, v. 6. He was *clothed with camels' hair*, not with soft raiment; was girt, not with a golden, but with a *leathern girdle*; and, in contempt of dainties and delicate things, his meat was *locusts and wild honey*. Note, The more we sit loose to the body, and live above the world, the better we are prepared for Jesus Christ.

2. In John's *preaching and baptizing* there was the *beginning of the gospel doctrines and ordinances*, and the first fruits of them.

(1.) He preached the *remission of sins*, which is the great gospel privilege; showed people their *need* of it, that they were *undone* without it, and that it might be obtained.

(2.) He preached *repentance*, in order to it; he told people that there must be a renovation of their hearts and a reformation of their lives, that they must forsake their sins and turn to God, and upon those terms and no other, their sins should be forgiven. *Repentance for the remission of sins*, was what the apostles were commissioned to *preach to all nations*, ~~427~~ Luke 24:27.

(3.) He preached Christ, and directed his hearers to *expect him* speedily to appear, and to *expect great things* from him. The preaching of Christ is pure gospel, and that was John Baptist's preaching, v. 7, 8. Like a true gospel minister, he preaches,

[1.] The great *pre-eminence* Christ is *advanced to*; so high, so great, is Christ, that John, though one of the greatest that was born of women, thinks himself unworthy to be employed in the meanest office about him, even to *stoop down*, and *untie his shoes*. Thus industrious is he to give honour to him, and to bring others to do so too.

[2.] The great *power* Christ is *invested with*; He *comes after me* in time, but he is *mightier than I*, mightier than the mighty ones of the earth, for he is able to *baptize with the Holy Ghost*; he can *give* the Spirit of God, and by him *govern* the spirits of men.

[3.] The great *promise* Christ makes in his gospel to those who have *repented*, and have had their sins forgiven them; They shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, shall be *purified* by his graces, and *refreshed* by his comforts. And, *lastly*, All those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his institution, he *baptized with water*, as the manner of the Jews was to

admit proselytes, in token of their *cleansing themselves* by repentance and reformation (which were the duties required), and of God's *cleansing them* both by remission and by sanctification, which were the blessings promised. Now this was afterward to be advanced into a gospel ordinance, which John's using it was a preface to.

3. In the success of John's preaching, and the disciples he admitted by baptism, there was the *beginning of a gospel church*. He baptized *in the wilderness*, and declined going into the cities; but *there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem*, inhabitants both of city and country, families of them, and *were all baptized of him*. They entered themselves his disciples, and bound themselves to his discipline; in token of which, they *confessed their sins*; he admitted them his disciples, in token of which, he *baptized* them. Here were the stamina of the gospel church, the *dew of its youth from the womb of the morning*, ^{PSALM} Psalm 110:3. Many of these afterward became followers of Christ, and preachers of his gospel, and this grain of mustard-seed became a *tree*.

MARK 1:9-13

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

We have here a brief account of Christ's baptism and temptation, which were largely related Matthew 3 and 4.

I. His *baptism*, which was his first public appearance, after he had long lived obscurely *in Nazareth*. O how much *hidden worth* is there, which in this world is either lost in the dust of contempt and *cannot* be known, or wrapped up in the veil of humility and *will not* be known! But sooner or later it *shall be* known, as Christ's was.

1. See how *humbly* he *owned* God, by coming to be *baptized of John*; and thus *it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Thus he *took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh*, that, though he was perfectly pure and unspotted, yet he was *washed* as if he had been *polluted*; and thus *for our sakes he sanctified himself*, that *we also might be sanctified*, and be baptized with him, ^{JOHN} John 17:19.

2. See how *honourably* God owned him, when he submitted to John's *baptism*. Those who *justify God*, and *they* are said to do, who were *baptized with the baptism of John*, he will *glorify*, ^{<417>}Luke 7:29, 30.

(1.) He *saw the heavens opened*; thus he was owned to be the Lord from heaven, and had a glimpse of the glory and joy that were *set before him*, and *secured* to him, as the recompence of his undertaking. Matthew saith, *The heavens were opened to him*. Mark saith, *He saw them opened*. Many have the heavens opened to receive them, but they do not see it; Christ had not only a clear foresight of his sufferings, but of his glory too.

(2.) He *saw the Spirit like a dove descending upon him*. Note, *Then* we may see heaven opened to us, when we perceive the Spirit *descending* and working upon us. God's good work in us is the surest evidence of his good will towards us, and his preparations for us. Justin Martyr says, that *when Christ was baptized, a fire was kindled in Jordan*: and it is an ancient tradition, that *a great light shone round the place*; for the Spirit brings both *light* and *heat*.

(3.) He heard a voice which was intended for his encouragement to proceed in his undertaking, and therefore it is here expressed as directed *to him*, *Thou art my beloved Son*. God lets him know,

[1.] That he *loved him* never the *less* for that *low* and *mean* estate to which he had now *humbled himself*; “Though thus emptied and made of no reputation, yet he is my *beloved Son* still.”

[2.] That he *loved him* much the *more* for that *glorious* and *kind* undertaking in which he had now *engaged himself*. God is *well pleased* in him, as referee of all matters in controversy between him and man; and so well pleased in him, as to be well pleased *with us* in him.

II. His *temptation*. The *good Spirit* that descended upon him, *led him into the wilderness*, v. 12. Paul mentions it as a proof that he had his doctrine from God, and not from man — that, as soon as he was called, he *went not to Jerusalem*, but *went into Arabia*, ^{<417>}Galatians 1:17. Retirement from the world is an opportunity of more free converse with God, and therefore must sometimes be chosen, for a while, even by those that are called to the greatest business. Mark observes this circumstance of his being *in the wilderness* — that he was *with the wild beasts*. It was an instance of his Father's care of him, that he was preserved from being torn in pieces by

the wild beasts, which encouraged him the more that his Father would provide for him when he was hungry. Special protections are earnest of seasonable supplies. It was likewise an intimation to him of the inhumanity of the men of that generation, whom he was to live among — no better than *wild beasts* in the *wilderness*, nay abundantly worse. In that wilderness,

1. The *evil spirits* were *busy with him*; he was *tempted of Satan*; not by any inward injections (the prince of this world had *nothing in him* to fasten upon), but by outward solicitations. Solicitude often gives advantages to the tempter, therefore *two are better than one*. Christ himself was tempted, not only to teach us, that *it is no sin to be tempted*, but to direct us whither to go for succour when we are tempted, even to him that *suffered*, being *tempted*; that he might experimentally sympathize with us when we are *tempted*.

2. The *good spirits* were *busy about him*; the *angels ministered to him*, supplied him with what he needed, and dutifully attended him. Note, The ministration of the good angels about us, is matter of great comfort in reference to the malicious designs of the evil angels against us; but much more doth it befriend us, to have the indwelling of the spirit in our hearts, which they that have, are so *born of God*, that, as far as they are so, *the evil one toucheth them not*, much less shall be *triumph* over them.

◀◀◀ MARK 1:14-22

THE OPENING OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

Here is,

I. A general account of Christ's preaching in Galilee. John gives an account of his preaching in Judea, before this (John 2 and 3), which the other evangelists had omitted, who chiefly relate what occurred in Galilee, because that was least known at Jerusalem. Observe,

1. When Jesus began to preach in Galilee; *After that John was put in prison*. When he had *finished* his testimony, then Jesus *began* his. Note, The silencing of Christ's ministers shall not be the suppressing of Christ's

gospel; if some be laid aside, others shall be raised up, perhaps mightier than they, to carry on the same work.

2. What he preached; *The gospel of the kingdom of God*. Christ came to set up the kingdom of God among men, that they might be brought into *subjection to it*, and might obtain *salvation in it*; and he set it up by the preaching of his gospel, and a power going along with it.

Observe,

(1.) The great *truths* Christ preached; *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*. This refers to the Old Testament, in which the kingdom of the Messiah was promised, and the time fixed for the introducing of it. They were not so well versed in those prophecies, nor did they so well observe the signs of the times, as to understand it themselves, and therefore Christ gives them notice of it; “The time prefixed is now *at hand*; glorious discoveries of divine light, life, and love, are now to be made; a new dispensation far more spiritual and heavenly than that which you have hitherto been under, is now to commence.” Note, God keeps time; when *the time is fulfilled*, the *kingdom of God is at hand*, for the vision is *for an appointed time*, which will be punctually observed, though it tarry past our time.

(2.) The great *duties* inferred from thence. Christ gave them to *understand the times*, that they might know *what Israel ought to do*; they fondly expected the Messiah to appear in external pomp and power, not only to free the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, but to make it have dominion over all its neighbours, and therefore thought, when that *kingdom of God* was *at hand*, they must prepare for war, and for victory and preferment, and great things in the world; but Christ tells them, in the prospect of that kingdom approaching, they must *repent, and believe the gospel*. They had broken the *moral law*, and could not be saved by a *covenant of innocency*, for both Jew and Gentile are concluded *under guilt*. They must therefore take the benefit of a *covenant of grace*, must submit to a *remedial law*, and this is it — *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. They had not made use of the prescribed preservatives, and therefore must have recourse to the prescribed restoratives. By repentance we must lament and forsake our sins, and by faith we must receive the forgiveness of them. By repentance we must give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we must give glory to our Redeemer who came to *save us from our sins*. Both

these must go together; we must not think either that reforming our lives will save us without trusting in the righteousness and grace of Christ, or that trusting in Christ will save us without the reformation of our hearts and lives. Christ hath joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. They will mutually assist and befriend each other. Repentance will quicken faith, and faith will make repentance evangelical; and the sincerity of both together must be evidenced by a diligent conscientious obedience to all God's commandments. Thus the preaching of the gospel began, and thus it continues; still the call is, Repent, and believe, and live a *life of repentance* and a *life of faith*.

II. Christ appearing as a teacher, here is next his *calling of disciples*, v. 16-20. Observe,

1. Christ will have followers. If he set up a school, he will have scholars; if he set up his standard, he will have soldiers; if he preach, he will have hearers. He has taken an effectual course to secure this; for *all that the Father has given him, shall, without fail, come to him*.

2. The instruments Christ chose to employ in setting up his kingdom, were the *weak and foolish things of the world*; not called from the great sanhedrim, or the schools of the rabbin, but picked up from among the tarpaulins *by the sea-side, that the excellency of the power might appear to be wholly of God, and not at all of them*.

3. Though Christ needs not the help of man, yet he is pleased to make use of it in setting up his kingdom, that he might deal with us not in a formidable but in a familiar way, and that in his kingdom the *nobles and governors may be of ourselves*, ~~2621~~ Jeremiah 31:21.

4. Christ puts honour upon those who, though mean in the world, are *diligent in their business, and loving to one another*; so those were, whom Christ called. He found them *employed, and employed together*. *Industry and unity are good and pleasant*, and there the Lord Jesus commands the blessing, even this blessing, *Follow me*.

5. The business of ministers is to *fish for souls, and win them to Christ*. The children of men, in their natural condition, are lost, wander endlessly in the great ocean of this world, and are carried down the stream of its course and way; they are unprofitable. Like leviathan in the waters, they *play therein*; and often, like the fishes of the sea, they devour one another.

Ministers, in preaching the gospel, *cast the net* into the waters, ^{<413>}Matthew 13:47. Some are enclosed and brought to shore, but far the greater number escape. *Fishermen* take great pains, and expose themselves to great perils, so do *ministers*; and they have need of wisdom. If many a draught brings home nothing, yet they must go on.

6. Those whom Christ called, must *leave all*, to follow him; and by his grace he inclines them to do so. *Not that we must needs go out of the world* immediately, but we must sit loose to the world, and forsake every thing that is inconsistent with our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without prejudice to our souls. Mark takes notice of James and John, that they left not only *their father* (which we had in Matthew), but *the hired servants*, whom perhaps they loved as their own brethren, being their *fellow-labourers* and pleasant comrades; not only relations, but companions, must be left for Christ, and old acquaintance. Perhaps it is an intimation of their care for their father; they did not leave him without assistance, they left the *hired servants* with him. Grotius thinks it is mentioned as an evidence that their calling was gainful to them, for it was worth while to keep servants in pay, to help them in it, and their *hands* would be much *missed*, and yet they *left it*.

III. Here is a particular account of his preaching in Capernaum, one of the *cities* of Galilee; for though John Baptist chose to preach *in a wilderness*, and did *well*, and did *good*, yet it doth not therefore follow, that Jesus must do so too; the inclinations and opportunities of ministers may very much differ, and yet both be in the *way of their duty*, and both useful. Observe,

1. When Christ *came into Capernaum*, he *straightway* applied himself to his work there, and took the *first* opportunity of preaching the gospel. Those will think themselves concerned not to *lose time*, who consider what a deal of work they have to do, and what a little time to do it in.
2. Christ religiously observed the sabbath day, though not by tying himself up to the tradition of the elders, in all the niceties of the *sabbath-rest*, yet (which was far better) by applying himself to, and abounding in, the *sabbath-work*, in order to which the sabbath-rest was instituted.
3. Sabbaths are to be sanctified in *religious assemblies*, if we have opportunity; it is a *holy day*, and must be honoured with a *holy convocation*; this was the *good old way*, ^{<413>}Acts 13:27; 15:21. On the

sabbath-day, *pois sabbasin* — *on the sabbath-days*; every sabbath-day, as duly as it returned, he *went into the synagogue*.

4. In *religious assemblies* on sabbath-days, the gospel is to be preached, and those to be *taught*, who are willing to learn the *truth as it is in Jesus*.
5. Christ was a non-such preacher; he did not preach *as the scribes*, who expounded the law of Moses by rote, as a school-boy says his lesson, but were neither *acquainted* with it (Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was ignorant of the law), nor *affected* with it; it came not *from the heart*, and therefore came not *with authority*. But Christ taught *as one that had authority*, as one that knew the mind of God, and was commissioned to declare it.
6. There is much in the doctrine of Christ, that is *astonishing*; the more we hear it, the more cause we shall see to *admire it*.

◀103▶ MARK 1:23-28

THE EXPULSION OF EVIL SPIRITS

As soon as Christ began to preach, he began to work miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine; and they were such as intimated the design and tendency of his doctrine, which were to conquer Satan, and cure sick souls.

In these verses, we have,

I. Christ's *casting the devil* out of a man that was possessed, in the synagogue at Capernaum. This passage was not related in Matthew, but is afterward in ◀103▶ Luke 4:33. *There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, en pneumati akatharto* — *in an unclean spirit*; for the spirit had the man in his possession, and led him captive at his will. So the whole world is said to lie *en to ponero* — *in the wicked one*. And some have thought it more proper to say, The *body* is *in the soul*, because it is governed by it, than the soul *in the body*. He was *in the unclean spirit*, as a man is said to be *in a fever*, or in a frenzy, quite overcome by it. Observe, The devil is here called *an unclean spirit*, because he has lost all the purity of his nature, because he acts in direct opposition to the *Holy Spirit* of God, and because with his suggestions he pollutes the spirits of men. This

man *was in the synagogue*; he did not come either to be taught or to be healed, but, as some think, to confront Christ and oppose him, and hinder people from believing on him. Now here we have,

1. The rage which the unclean spirit expressed at Christ; *He cried out*, as one in an agony, at the presence of Christ, and afraid of being dislodged; thus the *devils believe and tremble*, have a horror of Christ, but no hope in him, nor reverence for him. We are told what he said, v. 24, where he doth not go about to *capitulate* with him, or *make terms* (so far was he from being in league or compact with him), but speaks as one that knew his doom.

(1.) He calls him *Jesus of Nazareth*; for aught that appears, he was the first that called him so, and he did it with design to possess the minds of the people with *low thoughts* of him, because no good thing was expected out of Nazareth; and with *prejudices* against him as a Deceiver, because every body knew the Messiah must be of Bethlehem.

(2.) Yet a confession is extorted from him — that he is *the holy One of God*, as was from the damsel that had the spirit of divination concerning the apostles — that they were the *servants of the most high God*, ~~4116~~ Acts 16:16, 17. Those who have only a *notion* of Christ — that he is the *holy One of God*, and have no faith in him, or love to him, go no further than the devil doth.

(3.) He in effect acknowledgeth that Christ was too hard for him, and that he could not stand before the power of Christ; “*Let us alone*; for if thou take us to task, we are undone, thou canst *destroy us*.” This is the misery of those wicked spirits, that they persist in their rebellion, and yet know it will end in their destruction.

(4.) He desires to have *nothing to do* with Jesus Christ; for he *despairs* of being *saved* by him, and *dreads* being *destroyed* by him. “*What have we to do with thee?* If thou wilt let us alone, we will let thee alone.” See whose language they speak, that *say to the Almighty, Depart from us*. This, being an *unclean spirit*, therefore hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a *holy One*; for the *carnal mind is enmity against God*, especially against *his holiness*.

2. The victory which Jesus Christ obtained over the unclean spirit; *for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of*

the devil, and so he makes it to appear; nor will he be turned back from prosecuting this war, either by his flatteries or by his menaces. It is in vain for Satan to beg and pray, *Let us alone*; his power must be broken, and the poor man must be relieved; and therefore,

(1.) Jesus *commands*. As he taught, so he healed, *with authority*. Jesus *rebuked him*; he chid him and threatened him, imposed silence upon him; *Hold thy peace*; *phimotheti* — *be muzzled*. Christ has a muzzle for that unclean spirit when he *fawns* as well as when he *barks*; such acknowledgments of him as this was, Christ *disdains*, so far is he from *accepting* them. Some confess Christ to be the *holy One of God*, that under the cloak of that profession they may carry on malicious mischievous designs; but their confession is doubly an abomination to the Lord Jesus, as it sues in his name for a license to sin, and shall therefore be put to silence and shame. But this is not all, he must not only *hold his peace*, but he must *come out of the man*; this was it he dreaded — his being restrained from doing further mischief. But,

(2.) The unclean spirit *yields*, for there is no remedy (v. 26); He *tore him*, put him into a *strong convulsion*; that one could have thought he had been pulled in pieces; when he would not *touch* Christ, in fury at him he grievously disturbed this poor creature. Thus, when Christ by his grace delivers poor souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without a grievous toss and tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will *disquiet* those whom he cannot *destroy*. He *cried with a loud voice*, to frighten the spectators, and make himself seem terrible, as if he would have it thought that though he was conquered, he was but just conquered, and that he hopes to rally again, and recover his ground.

II. The impression which this miracle made upon the minds of the people, v. 27, 28.

1. It astonished them that saw it; *They were all amazed*. It was evident, beyond contradiction, that the man was possessed — witness the tearing of him, and the *loud voice* with which the *spirit cried*; it was evident that he was *forced out* by the authority of Christ; this was surprising to them, and put them upon considering with themselves, and enquiring of one another, “*What is this new doctrine?*” For it must certainly be of God, which is thus confirmed. He hath certainly an authority to command us, who hath ability to *command even the unclean spirits*, and they cannot resist him, but are

forced to obey him.” The Jewish exorcists pretended by charm or invocation to drive away evil spirits; but this was quite another thing, *with authority he commands them*. Surely it is our interest to make *him* our Friend, who has the control of infernal spirits.

2. It raised his reputation among all that heard it; *Immediately his fame spread abroad into the whole adjacent region of Galilee*, which was a third part of the land of Canaan. The story was presently got into every one's mouth, and people wrote it to their friends all the country over, together with the remark made upon it, *What new doctrine is this?* So that it was universally concluded, that he was a *Teacher come from God*, and under that character he shone more bright than if he had appeared in all the external pomp and power which the Jews expected their Messiah to appear in; and thus he *prepared his own way*, now that John, who was his harbinger, was clapped up; and the fame of this miracle spread the further, because as yet the Pharisees, who *envied* his fame, and laboured to *eclipse* it, had not advanced their blasphemous suggestion, that he *cast out devils* by compact with the *prince of the devils*.

◀▶ MARK 1:29-39

CHRIST HEALING MANY PATIENTS

In these verses, we have,

I. A particular account of one miracle that Christ wrought, in the cure of Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever. This passage we had before, in Matthew. Observe,

1. When Christ had done that which *spread his fame* throughout all parts, he did not then sit still, as some think that they may *lie in bed* when their *name is up*. No, he continued to *do good*, for that was it he aimed at, and not his own honour. Nay, those who are in reputation, had need be busy and careful to keep it up.

2. When he *came out of the synagogue*, where he had taught and healed with a divine authority, yet he conversed familiarly with the poor fishermen that attended him, and did not think it below him. Let the same mind, the same lowly mind, be in us, that was in him.

3. He went into Peter's house, probably invited thither to such entertainment as a poor fisherman could give him, and he accepted of it. The apostles left all for Christ; so far as that what they had should not hinder them from him, yet not so, but that they might use it for him.

4. He cured his mother-in-law, who was sick. Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for his entertainment. Observe, How complete the cure was; when *the fever left her*, it did not, as usual, leave her *weak*, but the same hand that *healed* her, *strengthened* her, so that she was able to *minister* to them; the cure is in order to that, to fit for action, that we may minister to Christ, and to those that are *his* for his sake.

II. A general account of many cures he wrought — diseases healed, devils expelled. It was on the *evening of the sabbath*, when the *sun did set*, or *was set*; perhaps many scrupled bringing their sick to him, till the sabbath was over, but their weakness therein was no prejudice to them in applying to Christ. Though he proved it *lawful to heal on the sabbath days*, yet, if any stumbled at it, they were welcome at another time. Now observe,

1. How *numerous* the patients were; *All the city was gathered at the door*, as beggars for a dole. That *one cure* in the synagogue occasioned this crowding after him. Others speeding well with Christ should quicken us in our enquiries after him. Now the *Sun of righteousness rises with healing under his wings*; to him shall the *gathering of the people be*. Observe, How Christ was flocked after in a *private house*, as well as in the *synagogue*; wherever he is, there let his servants, his patients, be. And in the *evening of the sabbath*, when the public worship is over, we must continue our attendance upon Jesus Christ; he healed, as Paul preached, publicly, and from house to house.

2. How *powerful* the Physician was; he *healed all* that were brought to him, though ever so many. Nor was it some one particular disease, that Christ set up for the cure of, but he healed those that were *sick of divers* diseases, for his word was a *panpharmacon* — *a salve for every sore*. And that miracle particularly which he wrought in the synagogue, he *repeated in the house* at night; for he *cast out many devils*, and *suffered not the devils to speak*, for he made them *know who he was*, and that silenced them. Or, He *suffered them not to say that they knew him* (so it may be

read); he would not permit any more of them to say, as they did (v. 24), *I know thee, who thou art*.

III. His *retirement* to his *private devotion* (v. 35); *He prayed*, prayed alone; to set us an example of secret prayer. Though as God he was *prayed to*, as man he *prayed*. Though he was glorifying God, and doing good, in his public work, yet he found time to be alone with his Father; and thus *it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Now observe,

1. The time *when* Christ prayed.

(1.) It was *in the morning*, the morning after the *sabbath day*. Note, When a sabbath day is over and past, we must not think that we may intermit our devotion till the next sabbath: no, though we go not *to the synagogue*, we must go to the *throne of grace*, every day in the week; and the morning after the sabbath particularly, that we may preserve the good impressions of the day. This *morning* was the morning of the *first day of the week*, which afterward he sanctified, and made remarkable, by another sort of *rising early*.

(2.) It was early, *a great while before day*. When others were asleep in their beds, he was *praying*, as a genuine Son of David, who seeks God *early*, and *directs his prayer in the morning*; nay, and *at midnight will rise to give thanks*. It has been said, *The morning is a friend to the Muses — Aurora Musis amica*; and it is no less so to the *Graces*. When our spirits are most fresh and lively, then we should take time for *devout exercises*. He that is the *first and best*, ought to have the *first and best*.

2. The place *where* he prayed; He *departed into a solitary place*, either out of town, or some remote garden or out-building. Though he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory, yet he retired, to set us an example to his own rule, *When thou prayest enter into thy closet*. Secret prayer must be made secretly. Those that have the most business in public, and of the best kind, must sometimes be *alone with God*; must retire into *solitude*, there to converse with God, and keep up communion with him.

IV. His *return* to his *public work*. The disciples thought they were *up early*, but found their Master was up *before them*, and they enquired which way he went, *followed him to his solitary place*, and there *found him at prayer*, v. 36, 37. They told him that he was much wanted, that there were

a great many patients waiting for him; *All men seek for thee*. They were proud that their Master was become so popular already, and would have him appear *in public*, yet more in that place, because it was *their own city*; and we are apt to be partial to the places we know and are interested in. “No,” saith Christ, “Capernaum must not have the monopoly of the Messiah's preaching and miracles. *Let us go into the next towns, the villages that lie about here, that I may preach there also, and work miracles there, for therefore came I forth*, not to be constantly resident in one place, but to *go about doing good*.” Even the *inhabitants of the villages in Israel shall rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord*, ^{<11>}Judges 5:11. Observe, Christ had still an eye to the end *wherefore he came forth*, and closely pursued that; nor will he be drawn by importunity, or the persuasions of his friends, to decline from that; for (v. 39) he *preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee*, and, to illustrate and confirm his doctrine, *he cast out devils*. Note, Christ's doctrine is Satan's destruction.

^{<11>}MARK 1:40-45

THE HEALING OF A LEPER

We have here the story of Christ's *cleansing a leper*, which we had before, ^{<11>}Matthew 8:2-4. It teaches us,

1. *How to apply ourselves to Christ*; come as this leper did,

(1.) With great *humility*; this leper came *beseeking him, and kneeling down to him* (v. 40); whether giving divine honour to him as God, or rather a less degree of respect as a *great Prophet*, it teaches us that those who would receive grace and mercy from Christ, must ascribe honour and glory to Christ, and approach to him with humility and reverence.

(2.) With a firm belief of *his power*; *Thou canst make me clean*. Though Christ's outward appearance was but *mean*, yet he had this faith in his power, which implies his belief that he was *sent of God*. He believes it with application, not only in general, *Thou cast do every thing* (as ^{<11>}John 11:22), but, *Thou cast make me clean*. Note, What we believe of the power of Christ we must bring home to our particular case; *Thou canst do this for me*.

(3.) With submission to the will of Christ; *Lord, if thou wilt*. Not as if he had any doubt of Christ's readiness in general to help the distressed, but, with the modesty that became a poor petitioner, he refers his own particular case to him.

2. *What to expect from Christ*; that according to our faith it shall be to us. His address is not in the form of prayer, yet Christ answered it as a request. Note, Affectionate professions of faith in Christ, and resignations to him, are the most prevailing petitions for mercy from him, and shall speed accordingly.

(1.) Christ was *moved with compassion*. This is added here, in Mark, to show that Christ's power is employed by his pity for the relief of poor souls; that his reasons are fetched from within himself, and we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our *misery* makes us the objects of his *mercy*. And what he does for us he does with all possible tenderness.

(2.) He *put forth his hand, and touched him*. He *exerted* his power, and directed it to *this* creature. In healing souls, Christ *toucheth them*, ^{◀10B▶}1 Samuel 10:26. When the queen toucheth for the evil, she saith, *I touch, God heals*; but Christ *toucheth and healeth too*.

(3.) He said, *I will, be thou clean*. Christ's power was put forth in and by a *word*, to signify in what way Christ would ordinarily work spiritual cures; *He sends his word and heals*, ^{◀9AZ▶}Psalm 107:20; ^{◀8RB▶}John 15:3; 17:17. The poor leper put an *if* upon the will of Christ; *If thou wilt*; but that *doubt* is soon put *out of doubt*; *I will*. Christ most readily *wills* favours to those that most readily *refer themselves* to his will. He was confident of Christ's *power*; *Thou canst make me clean*; and Christ will show how much his power is drawn out into act by the faith of his people, and therefore speaks the word as one having authority, *Be thou clean*. And power accompanied this word, and the cure was perfect in an instant; *Immediately his leprosy vanished*, and there remained no more sign of it, v. 42.

3. *What to do when we have received mercy from Christ*. We must with his favours receive his commands. When Christ had cured him, *he strictly charged him*; the word here is very significant, *embrimesamenos* — *graviter interminatus* — *prohibiting with threats*. I am apt to think that this refers not to the directions he gave him to conceal it (v. 44), for those are mentioned by themselves; but that this was such a charge as he gave to

the impotent man whom he cured, ^{<454>}John 5:14, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*; for the *leprosy* was ordinarily the punishment of some particular sinners, as in Miriam's, Gehazi's, and Uzziah's, case; now, when Christ healed him, he *warned* him, he *threatened* him with the fatal consequence of it if he should *return to sin* again. He also appointed him,

(1.) To *show himself to the priest*, that the priest by his own judgment of this leper might be a witness for Christ, that he was the Messiah, ^{<415>}Matthew 11:5.

(2.) Till he had done that, not to *say any thing* of it to *any man*: this is an instance of the *humility* of Christ and his self-denial, that he did not seek his own honour, *did not strive or cry*, ^{<342>}Isaiah 42:2. And it is an example to us, not to *seek our own glory*, ^{<157>}Proverbs 25:27. He must not *proclaim* it, because that would much increase the crowd that followed Christ, which he thought was too great already; not as if he were unwilling to *do good to all*, to as many as came; but he would do it with as little *noise* as might be, would have no offence given to the government, no disturbance of the public peace, not any thing done that looked like ostentation, or an affecting of popular applause. What to think of the leper's *publishing* it, and *blazing it abroad*, I know not; the concealment of the good characters and good works of good men better become *them* than *their friends*; nor are we always bound by the modest commands of humble men. The leper ought to have observed his orders; yet, no doubt, it was with a good design that he *proclaimed* the cure, and it had no other ill effect than that it increased the multitudes which followed Christ, to that degree, that he *could no more openly enter into the city*; not upon the account of persecution (there was no danger of that yet,) but because the crowd was so great, that the streets would not hold them, which obliged him to go into *desert places*, to a *mountain* (^{<413>}Mark 3:13), to the *sea-side*, ^{<401>}Mark 4:1. This shows how *expedient* it was for us, that Christ should *go away*, and *send the Comforter*, for his bodily presence could be but in one place at a time; and those that *came to him from every quarter*, could not get *near him*; but by his spiritual presence he is with his people wherever they are, and comes to them to *every quarter*.