

JOHN MARK—OR, HASTE IN RELIGION NO. 3023

A SERMON
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“And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.”
Mark 14:50-52.

THIS little episode in the narrative of the evangelist is very singular. One wonders why it is introduced, but a moment's reflection will, I think, suggest a plausible reason. It strikes me that this “certain young man” was none other than Mark, himself. He was probably asleep, and awakened by a great clamor, he asked what it was about. The information was speedily given, “The guards have come to arrest Jesus of Nazareth.” Moved by sudden impulse; not thinking of what he was doing, he rises from his bed, rushes down, pursues the troopers, dashes into the midst of their ranks as though he, alone, would attempt the rescue, when all the disciples had fled. The moment the young men lay hold upon him, his heroic spasm is over—his enthusiasm evaporates, he runs away, leaves behind the linen cloth that was loosely wrapped about his body—and makes his escape. There have been many, since then, who have acted as Mark did. And it seems to me that this digression from the main narrative is intended to point a moral.

First, however, you will ask me, “Why do you suppose that this certain young man was Mark?” I grant you that it is merely a supposition, yet it is supported by the strongest chain of probabilities, and will sufficiently account for the manner in which he has inserted it. Calvin, following Ambrose and Chrysostom, thinks it was John, albeit few modern critics attach much weight to that conjecture. I find that the more perplexing critics of the modern school ascribe this transaction to Mark for these reasons—it was usual, among the evangelists, to relate transactions in which they themselves took part without mentioning their names. This commonly occurs in the case of John, for instance. He bashfully keeps back his name when there is anything to his credit, and he does the same when it is to the reverse. I could quote one or two instances of this practice in the gospel of Luke, and it is not at all remarkable that such a thing should have occurred in the case of Mark. Whoever it was, the only person likely to know it, was the man himself! I cannot think that anyone else would have been likely to tell it to Mark, and therefore I conceive it to have been he—for he might scarcely have thought it worthy of recording if it had been told him by someone else! And it is not likely that anyone to whom it had occurred would have felt it was much to his credit—and been likely to relate it to Mark with a view to its being recorded!

Again, we know that such a transaction as this was quite in keeping with Mark's general character. We gather his character partly from the Book which he has written—the gospel of Mark is the most impulsive of all the Gospels. You are aware, and I have frequently mentioned it to you, that the word *eutheos*, translated, “straightway,” “forthwith,” “immediately,” is used a very great number of times by this evangelist in his Book. He is a man who does everything straightway—he is full of impulse, dash, fire, flash—the thing must be done, and done at once. His gospel is of that description. You do not find many of Christ's sermons in Mark. He gives you just a sketch, an outline. He had not perseverance enough to take the whole down, and he scarcely finishes the narration of the death of Christ. His Book seems to break off abruptly, yet he is the most picturesque of all the evangelists. There are pieces of imagination and there are Hogarthian touches in the sacred biography he writes, that are not to be found in Matthew, or Luke, or John. The man is a man of fire! He is all enthusiasm. Poetry has filled his soul, and therefore he dashes at the thing. He lacks perseverance, and will hardly finish what he takes in hand, yet there is a genius about him not altogether uncommon to Christian men in this age—and there are faults in him exceedingly common at the present time.

Once more, the known life of John Mark tends to make it very probable that he would do such a thing as is referred to in our text. When Paul and Barnabas set out on their missionary enterprise, they were attended by Mark. As long as they were sailing across the blue waters, and as long as they were on the island of Cyprus, Mark stuck to them. No, while they traveled along the coast of Asia Minor, we find they

had John Mark to be their minister—but the moment they went up into the inland countries, among the robbers, and the mountain streams—as soon as ever the road began to be a little too rough, John Mark left them! His missionary zeal had oozed out. At a later period, Mark was the cause of a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas. Paul would not have Mark with him any longer. He could not tame him—he did not believe in these impulsive people who could not hold on under difficulties. But Barnabas, knowing him better—for Mark was his sister’s son—and feeling a kinsman’s lenity to his faults, insisted upon it that they should take John Mark. The altercation grew so violent between Paul and Barnabas that they separated on this account, and would not proceed together on their divine mission! Yet Barnabas was right, but I think that Paul was not wrong. Barnabas was right in his mild judgment of Mark, for he was a sound believer at bottom, and notwithstanding this fault, he was a real, true-hearted disciple. We find him afterwards reconciled entirely to the apostle Paul. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Take Mark, and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” And we find Paul affectionately mentioning, “Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas,” which shows, on the one hand, the apostle’s Christian candor and kindness, and on the other hand, that Mark had retrieved his character by perseverance.

Tradition says that Mark became the Bishop of Alexandria. We do not know whether that was correct or not, but it is likely enough that he was. Certainly he was with Paul at Rome, and the latter part of his life was spent with Peter at Babylon. See what a man he is. He goes to Rome, but he cannot stay there long. He has done his work in Rome. He is one of your fidgety people who do things all of a sudden, so away he goes to Alexandria! But I think he must have found a very congenial friend in Peter. He would be a blessing to Peter, and Peter would be a blessing to him, for Peter’s disposition was cast in something of the same mold as his own. You may have noticed that Mark gives the most explicit account of Peter’s fall. He enters very fully into it. I believe that he received it from Peter *viva voce*, and that Peter bade him write it down. And I think the modest spirit of Mark seemed to say, “Friend Peter, while the Holy Spirit moves me to tell of your fault, and let it stand on record, He also constrains me to write my own as a sort of preface to it, for I, too, in my mad, hare-brained folly, would have run, unclothed as I was, upon the guard to rescue my Lord and Master, yet, at the first sight of the rough legionaries—at the first gleam of their swords—away I fled, timid, faint-hearted, and afraid that I should be too roughly handled.” For these reasons the supposition that this “certain young man” was John Mark appears to me not to be utterly baseless. There is no hypothesis in favor of any other man that is supported by equal probabilities. Very well, then. We will assume that he was the man, and use the incident as the groundwork of our discourse. We have some counterparts of him, here, and we shall try to expose them, and make use of Mark’s blunder for their correction, in respect both to *hasty following*, and *hasty running away*.

I. First, here is HASTY FOLLOWING.

John Mark does not wait to robe himself, but, just as he is, he dashes out for the defense of his Lord. Without a moment’s thought, taking no sort of consideration, down he goes into the cold night air to try and deliver his Master! Fervent zeal waited not for chary prudence. There was something good, and something bad in this—something to admire as well as something to censure.

Beloved, *it is a good and right thing for us to follow Christ, and to follow Him at once*. And it is a brave thing to follow Him when His other disciples forsake Him and flee. It is a bold and worthy courage to take deadly odds for Christ, and to rush, one against a thousand, for the honor of His dear hallowed name. Would that all professors of religion had the intrepidity of Mark! Would that all who have been careless about religion might emulate his haste, and be as precipitate in flying to Christ by faith as he was in running to the rescue in that hour of assault! The most of men are too slow—fast enough in the world, but, ah, how slow in the things of God! I declare that if corporations and companies were half as concerned about worldly things as the Church of God is about spiritual things, instead of a railway accident every three or four months, we would have one every hour! And instead of a revolution every one or two centuries, it would be well if we did not have one every year, for, of all the lazy things in the world, the Church of Christ is the most sluggish! Of all people that dilly-dally in this world, I think the professed servants of God are the guiltiest.

How slothful are the ungodly, too, in divine things! Tell them they are sick, and they hasten to a surgeon. Tell them that their title-deeds are about to be attacked, and they will defend them with legal power—but tell them, in God’s name, that their soul is in danger—and they think it matters so little, and is of so small import that they will wait on, and wait on, and wait on, and doubtless continue to wait on till they find themselves lost forever! Let me stir up those who have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to look diligently to their eternal state! You have tarried long enough! The time that you have been out of Christ is surely long enough for the lusts of the flesh. What fruit have you gathered in your impenitence

and sin? How much have you been profited by neglecting Christ, and minding worldly things? Has it not been all a dreary toil? It may have been decked out with a few transient pleasures, but putting the ungodly life into the scale, what does it come to? “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Do you not confess this? Why, then, tarry any longer? Have you got any happiness in being an enemy to God? Then why not be reconciled to Him? Oh, that the Spirit of God would make you see that the time past has sufficed you to have worked the will of the flesh!

Besides, *how little time you have to spare!* Even if you have much, Jesus demands that you repent now. “The Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” The gospel invitation is not for tomorrow, but for today. The warnings of the gospel all bid you shun procrastination. Is not this Satan’s great net in which men, like the silly fishes of the deep, are taken to their eternal destruction? O you dove, pursued by the hawk, tarry not, but fly at once to the dovecote—to the wounds of Jesus, and find shelter there! Jesus calls you. Come to Him while He calls you. Why will you delay? His cause needs you. Young men, there are some of you who will spend the best of your days in Satan’s cause—and when we get you, as we hope we shall—we shall have to baptize into Christ your shriveled ego, your palsied weakness! Let it not be so, I pray you. In these days of error and sin, Christ needs for His kingdom men who are strong and vigorous, young men who are strong, as John says, and “have overcome the wicked one.” Gladly would I turn recruiting sergeant, and enlist you for my Master! Oh, that you were on His side now! You cannot be too hasty here. If now the weapons of your rebellion are thrown down. If now you “kiss the Son, lest He be angry,” you will have waited already too long! You will not—you cannot come to Christ too soon. Hark! Hark! I hear the chariot wheels of Death! He comes! He comes! And the axles of his chariot are hot with speed. He stands aloft, driving his white horse. The skeleton rider brandishes his awful spear, and you are the victim! God has spared you up till now, but He may not bid you spend another Sabbath here. I hear the mowers scythe everywhere, as I pass along, making ready to cut down the grass and the flowers thereof. Death’s scythe is being sharpened! He reaps his harvest every day, and whether you are prepared or not, you must be cut down when God’s time shall come!

Fly, then, I pray you! And though you are, like John Mark, unfit and unprepared, remember that you may come to Christ naked, for He can clothe you! You may come to Christ filthy, for He can wash you! You may come all unholy, and defiled to Jesus, for He can put away your sin! Come! The Spirit of God seems to me to say to you, “Come.” I pray that He may bid you to come, and “lay hold on eternal life.” I do not know how it is, I sometimes feel for many of my hearers—especially for those of you whose faces I have seen for years—an awful earnestness even when I am not in this pulpit. And I think then that if I could get at your ear, I would plead with you. Think how many like you I have buried! How often do I stand at the grave’s mouth, till sometimes, when, week after week, and twice each week, I stand there, I fancy myself talking to dying men, and not to living men at all—talking to a company of shadows that come and go before me—and I stand still, myself a shadow, soon to flit like the rest. Oh, that I could talk to you as I then feel, and pour out my soul to you! We need a Baxter to bring men to immediate decision—Baxter with weeping eyes, and burning heart—Baxter who says, “I will go down on my knees to entreat you to think upon eternal things.” Baxter, who cries and groans for men till they cry and groan for themselves! Why will you die? Why will you let that fatal procrastination kill you? Why will you put off seeking the Savior until your day is over? Why will you still waste the candle which is so short? Why will you let the day go when the sun already dips beneath the horizon? By the shortness of time, by the sureness of death, by the certainty of eternal judgment, I beseech you to fly to Jesus, and to fly to Jesus *now*, even though it should be in the hurry of John Mark!

Now I change my note, for there is a haste that we must reprove. The precipitate running of Mark suggests an admonition that should put you on your guard. He came all of a sudden by his religion, and there are some people who do this who might as well have no religion at all. That, however, was not the case with Mark. He was a genuine Christian character, yet, with nine out of ten of these people, I am afraid it is far otherwise. Let me address some here who have all of a sudden come to Christ. I do not want to throw doubts in their way as to their sincerity, but I do want to incite them to examine themselves.

I am afraid *some people make a hasty profession through the persuasion of friends.* You walk with your friend, and he says, “I have joined the church—why don’t you do so?” He is not wise enough to put to you pointed questions which would let him see whether you are converted or not, but he unwisely presses you to make a profession when there is no grace in your heart. I pray you, as soon as you know Christ, speak out for Him, and come out and show your colors. But I also beseech you never profess to

follow Christ merely through the persuasion of friends! I trust no pious mother would ever recommend you to do so. I am sure no wise father would ever urge it upon you. They would bid you fly to Christ at once, but, as to making a profession of faith, they would have you see first whether the root of the matter is in you—and when they are persuaded, and you are persuaded that it is—they will throw no stumbling blocks in your way.

Young people, I pray you, do not be deceived in this matter. How many have we seen, in revival times, who have been induced to come forward to “the penitent form,” as it is called. That night, oh, how much they felt because their natural sensibilities were strongly worked upon! But the next morning, oh, how little have they felt! When the agencies that stimulated them have been withdrawn—when the meetings that stirred the embers, and the preacher that fanned the flame no longer exert any transient spell over them—their disenchanted souls sink down into a profound stupor! In many churches there are so few making profession of religion that there is not much danger of this evil—but here, where we receive so many every week, there is need for wise discrimination! I do beseech you never to sit down with a religion that comes to you merely through your being talked to by your acquaintances—

*“True religion’s more than notion—
Something must be known and felt.”*

Nor are there a mere few *who get their religion through excitement*. This furnishes another example of injudicious haste. They hear religion painted as being very beautiful. They see the beauty of it. They admire it—they think what a lovely thing it must be to be a Christian. Feeling this, and misled by a sort of excitement in their minds, they conclude that this is repentance. A false confidence they write down as faith! They eagerly infer that they are the children of God, whereas, alas, they are but the dupes of their own emotion—and still “the children of wrath, even as others.” Beware, I pray you, of a religion which lives upon excitement! We ought to be filled with enthusiasm. A fervent love should make our hearts always glow. The zeal of God’s house should be our master-passion. Men never do much in politics till they grow warm upon a question, and in religion the very highest degree of excitement is not only pardonable, but praiseworthy. What, then, is it, which we deprecate? Not the emotions of spiritual life, but an exclusive dependence upon impulse! If you try to live upon the spell of a man’s words, upon the imposing grandeur of a multitude assembled together, upon the fascination of congregational sing-ing, or even upon the heart-thrilling fervor of prayer meetings, you will find the lack of substantial food and the danger of an intoxicated brain! As it was with the quails which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, God’s bounties may be fed upon to your injury. No, dear friends, there must be the real work of the Holy Spirit in the soul or else the repentance we get will be a repentance which needs to be repented of!

I well know a town where there was a certain eminent revivalist whom I greatly respect. It was said that half the population had been converted under his ministry, but I do not think that if the numbers were counted at the present moment, there would be found a dozen of his converts. This revival work, where it is real and good, is God’s best blessing, but where it is flimsy and unreal, it is Satan’s worse curse! Revivalists are often like the locusts. Before them, it may not be quite an Eden, but certainly, behind them, it is a desert when the excitement is over. I like rather to see the Word so preached that men are brought under its power by the force of the truth, itself, and not by excitement—by the truth of God being laid down in so clear a manner as to enlighten the judgment, rather than by perpetual appeals to the passions, which ultimately wear out the sinews of mental vigor, and make men more dull in religion than they were before.

Beware, I pray you, of getting the mere religion of poetry, enthusiasm, and rhapsody. Many profess Christ, and think to follow Him without counting the cost. They fancy the road to heaven is all smooth, forgetting that the way is rough, and that there are many foes. They set out, like Mr. Pliable, for the Celestial City, but they stumble into the first bog, and then they say that if they can but get out on the side nearest to their own house, Christian may have the brave country all to himself for them! Oh, the many we have seen, at divers times, that seemed to run well, but they ran in the strength of the flesh, and in the mists of ignorance! They had never sought God’s strength. They had never been emptied of their own works, and their own conceits, and consequently, in their best estate they were vanity! They were like the snail that melts as it crawls—not like the snowflake upon the Alps which gathers strength in its descent till it becomes a ponderous avalanche! God make you to be not meteors, but stars fixed in their place! I want you to resemble not the *ignis fatuus* of the morass, but the steady beacon on the rock! There is a phosphorescence that creeps over the summer sea, but who is ever lighted by it to the port of peace? And there is a phosphorescence which comes over some men’s minds—very bright, it seems, but it is of no value—it brings no man to heaven!

Be as hasty as John Mark, if it is a sound haste, but take care that it is not a spasm of excitement—a mere fit—otherwise, when the fit is over, you will go back to your old haunts, and your old habits with shame. You will be like Saul among the prophets one day, and hating the anointed king the next! So much, so earnestly would I warn you against hasty followings of Christ!

II. It only remains for me to notice briefly THE HASTY RUNNING AWAY.

I do not know that the persons who are readiest to run away are always those who were the fastest to make their profession. I am inclined to think not. But some who do run well at first, have hardly breath enough to keep the pace up, and so turn aside for a little comfortable ease—and do not get into the road again. Such are not genuine Christians—they are only men-made, self-made Christians—and these self-made Christians never hold on, and never *can* hold on because time wears them out, and they turn back to their formed state.

There are two kinds of desertion which we denounce as hasty running away—the one temporary, the other final. To the members of the church, let me speak upon the former. My dear brothers and sisters, especially you who are young in years, and have lately been added to our number, I pray you watch against temporary running away from the truth of Christ. Think what a fool Mark made of himself. Here he comes. Here is your hero. What wonders he is going to do! Here is a Samson for you. Perhaps he will slay his thousand men. But no, he runs away before he strikes a single blow! He has not even courage enough to be taken prisoner, and to be dragged away with Christ to the judgment seat, and bear a patient witness there! He turns tail at once, and away he flies! How simple he looked! How everybody in the crowd must have laughed at the venturesome coward—the dastardly bravo! And what a fool will you seem if, after uniting yourself with the church, and seeming to be a servant of God, you shall give way under temptation! Some young man in the same shop laughs at you, and says, “Aha, aha, you are baptized, I hear!” And you tremble, like Peter, under the questioning of the little maid, or your employer sees something wrong, and he makes some rough remark to you, “Well, this is a fine thing for a Christian soldier!” Cannot you face the enemy for the first time? “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

A religion that cannot stand a little laughter must be a very rotten one. We know some people whose religion is on so unsound a basis—whose profession is so hollow, and whose position is so shaky—that they make a great noise when we touch them! Their system is of human construction, and rotten—and they know it—therefore are they angry if we do but allude to it! Were it sound and good, then whatever we might say would never frighten them. But, sirs, how many who have made a fair show in the flesh have been personally and individually tried and found wanting? “Tekel” has been written on the wall concerning them! Their first setting out was hasty, and they have been turned aside through a little laughter.

Do you not see, dear friends, that this will always render you very untrustworthy? If you shrink in this way, the church will never trust you. I hope you will be a leader in God’s Israel one day, young man. We are looking to you, if not to be a preacher, yet to be a church officer one day. But who will ever ask you to do anything when you cannot keep steadfast and hold your own position? He who has not grace enough to prevent his running away in the time of tribulation is not at all likely to be made a leader of God’s host! The church will retain you, as it retained Mark, but it will always look upon you with a sort of suspicion. We shall always say, “Where is So-and-So? We know where he was yesterday, but where is he today?” Therefore, abstain from these inconsistencies for your own character’s sake.

Besides, how much damage you do the church with which you are connected! All the persecutors and infidels outside the church’s walls can never harm us so much as inconsistent people inside. “Ah,” they say, “there is one of the people who go to the prayer meeting,” when they see a man in the pot-house who sits at the communion table. “Ah, there is one of your religious people! He can cheat as well as anybody else! He knows how to thumb the yard measure. He knows how to give short weight! He knows how to promise to pay on a certain day, and then get into the Bankruptcy Court! The servants of Christ are no better than other people. They make a great fuss about their purity, but see what they will do!”

And then see what harm this will do to Christ’s Church, itself. How many who love God will sit down, and weep when they see such inconsistencies in you! Good captains can endure wounds—they can even bear defeat—but they cannot bear to see cowardice on the part of their troops! They cannot bear to see their men running away! If “the men of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle,” then their leader weeps, for the glorious cross of Christ is dishonored, the escutcheon is sullied,

and the banner is trailed in the mud! May the Lord so keep us that our garments shall be always white; that though before God we may have many sins to confess, we may stand like Job and say, “Lord, You know that I am not wicked.” May your testimony be so clear concerning the religion of Christ that those who watch for your stumbling, and who hate you with a perfect hatred, may nevertheless find nothing against you, but may be constrained to say, “These are the servants of the living God, and they serve Him, indeed, and of a truth.”

I urge you not to flee or to flinch. Some of us have had much lying and slander to bear in our time, but are we a whit the worse? No, and if we had to choose whether we would bear it again, would we not do so? We may have had to be laughed at, and caricatured, but all that breaks no bones, and should not make a brave man wince! Who can be afraid or alarmed when his war cry is, “The Lord of hosts,” and when the banner of God’s own truth waves over his head? Be of good courage, my brothers and sisters, and you shall yet win the victory! In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace! Value the Holy Spirit above all things. Realize your entire dependence upon Him. Pray for fresh grace. Venture not into the world without a fresh store of His hallowed influence. Live in the divine love. Seek to be filled with that blessed Spirit, and then, my brothers and sisters, even if the strong man armed shall lay hold of you, you will not flee away—shame shall not overtake you, dismay shall not frighten your souls—and you shall stand in unblemished integrity to the end as the true servants of Jesus Christ!

And now, in concluding, *what am I to say of a final apostasy?* None of God’s people ever pursue their wanderings to this terrible issue! No vessel of mercy was ever finally wrecked! No elect souls can run to this fatal length of wickedness! But there are many in the visible church who do draw back to perdition. Many who profess to belong to Christ are branches that bear no fruit, and therefore are cut off, and cast into the fire! That may be the condition of some here present. It may be the lot of some of you who “have a name to live, and are dead.” Let me plead with you. Oh, what a dreadful thing it will be if you apostatize after all! Shall I live to see you go back into the world? I would sooner bury you! Shall I live to see some of you who have professed to find the Lord under my ministry, at last sinning with a high hand, and an outstretched arm—and living worse than you did before? God spare us this evil thing! Let Him chastise His servant in any way He thinks fit but, O Lord, if possible, let not this be the rod—to see professors become false!

Remember that if you do apostatize, you have increased your guilt by the profession you have made—and impressed your character with a more terrible defilement! When the unclean spirit went out of the man, and afterwards returned, he brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they entered in and dwelt there—and the last state of that man was worse than the first! It would have been better for you never to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn aside to those crooked paths. Think what the dying bed of an apostate must be. Did you ever read “The Groans of Spira?” That was a book, circulated about the time of the Reformation—a book so terrible that even a man of iron could scarcely read it. Spira knew the gospel, but yet went back to the Church of Rome. His conscience awoke on his dying bed, and his cries and shrieks were too terrible to be endured by his nurses! And as to his language—it was despair written out at full length in capital letters! My eminent predecessor, Mr. Benjamin Keach, published a like narrative of the death of John Child, who became a minister of the gospel, but afterwards went back to the church from which he had seceded—and died in the most frightful despair. May God keep you from the deathbed of any man who has lived as a professing Christian, yet who dies an apostate from the faith!

But what must be the apostate’s doom when his naked soul goes before God? How can he bear that awful sentence, “Depart, you cursed one; you have rejected Me, and I reject you; you have departed from Me—I also have cast you away forever, and will not have mercy upon you”? What will be this poor wretch’s shame at the last great day when, before the assembled multitudes, the apostate shall be unmasked? I think I see the profane and open sinners who never professed religion, lifting themselves up from their beds of fire to point at him. “There he is,” says one, “will he preach the gospel in hell?” “There he is,” says another, “he rebuked me for cursing, yet he was a hypocrite himself.” “Aha,” says another, “here comes a psalm-singing Methodist, one who was always at his meetings! He is the man who boasted of his religion, yet here he is!” No greater eagerness will ever be seen among Satanic tormentors than in that day when devils drag the hypocrite’s soul, and the apostate’s spirit down to hell! Bunyan pictures this with massive but awful grandeur of poetry when he speaks of the back way to hell. The devils were binding a man with nine cords, and were taking him from the road to heaven—in which he had professed to walk—and thrust him through the back door of hell. Mind that back way to hell, professors! You professors of religion who have been in the church for years, “examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith.”

Examine yourselves, whether you are deceived. Look well to your state! See whether you are really in Christ, or not. It is the easiest thing in the world to give a lenient verdict when you, yourself, are to be tried! But oh, I implore you, be just and true here! Be just to all, but be especially rigorous in judging yourself. Remember, if it is not a rock on which you build, your house will fall, and great will be the fall of it! Oh, may the Lord give you sincerity, constancy, and firmness—and in no day, however evil, may you be tempted to turn aside! Rather, may you hold fast by God, and His truth—by Christ and His cross, come what may!

My soul longs, however many years God may spare me to walk in and out among you, to find you as earnest for God, and as loving towards Christ as you are this day. I glory in you among all the churches. God has given you the spirit of faith and prayer, of earnest zeal and a sound mind. Unto Him be the glory! But, as a church, do not backslide. Let not our fervor diminish! Let not our zeal die out! Let us love one another more tenderly than ever. Let us cling fast to one another. Let us not be divided! Let no root of bitterness springing up, trouble us. Firm and steadfast, shoulder to shoulder, like a phalanx of old, let us stand fast, and so repel the foe, and win the kingdom for Jesus Christ our Lord! “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

PUBLISHERS’ NOTE: No Exposition of the passage of Scripture read by Mr. Spurgeon before he preached the foregoing Sermon appears to have been preserved, and the subject on which he spoke was so unusual that no other Exposition would have been appropriate to accompany it. As the preacher, in his introduction, referred to various portions of the New Testament where allusion is made to Mark or Marcus, it has been deemed advisable to reprint all the references to John Mark, so that readers may examine them in the light of Mr. Spurgeon’s message. Under the circumstances, they are printed without note or comment—

Acts 12:11-25. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter’s voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, You are mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James and the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him and, having made Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king’s country. And upon a set day Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man! And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 13:5. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their minister.

Acts 13:13. Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphilia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 15:35-41. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention

was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Colossians 4:10-11. *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner salutes you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom you received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him) and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the Kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

2 Timothy 4:11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

Philemon 23, 24. *There salute you Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers.*

1 Peter 5:13. *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, salutes you; and so does Marcus my son.*

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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