

## Our Lord's Example

by Travis Dean

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I would like to begin today by reviewing what we learned the last couple months of 2009. I shared with you in October the vision God has given me as the pastor of the Lancaster Seventh-day Adventist Church. Namely, to equip the members of this church to be **healthy and dangerous Christians**. Healthy means being like Christ. Dangerous means being a threat to Satan and his efforts to deceive and destroy. Next we learned that a healthy and dangerous Christian has **two opposing DNA's**. One is 100% good and one is 100% sinful. God does not take our sinful DNA away. But He has given us the **Holy Spirit** to replace our sinful DNA as the ruling force in our life. A healthy and dangerous Christian is filled with the Spirit. Then we talked some about faith. The way we become healthy and dangerous Christians is through **faith**. The way we become filled with the Spirit is through faith. We don't evolve into healthy Christians through the passing of time or by surrounding ourselves with lots of information. Faith is awakened by seeing Jesus Christ on the cross. And faith grows by learning who He is. The more we get to know Him, the more our faith in Him will grow.

As you may know, I have spent the first week of 2010 being sick. I haven't been the greatest example of a physically healthy Christian. It has brought something to my mind again. Namely, how the Lord has shown what a healthy and dangerous Christian looks like. There is only One who is a perfect example. That is Jesus Christ. I know what a healthy and dangerous Christian looks like because of Him. I don't have a theory or an opinion to follow. I don't have a cleverly written description. I have a Person. I have a REAL, LIVING Person. This is what the twelve disciples had. They watched and listened to Him for less than three years. And when Jesus went back to heaven, He left behind a group of healthy and dangerous Christians. The reason they became known as Christians is because they were so much like Christ. And the reason Christianity is so widespread throughout the world is because they were DANGEROUS Christians. The Holy Spirit used them to defeat Satan over and over again.

**So here is our new journey for the new year: watching and listening to Jesus Christ just like the disciples did.** How are we going to do this? Jesus doesn't live here anymore. Well, we are blessed, because we have His **Word**. And His Word IS living here. And not only that, but we have His **Spirit**. And His Spirit IS living here. There are four accounts in God's Word that record what Jesus did and what He said. We know them as the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of them is unique. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary describes each of them this way: **(1)** Matthew is a sermon reporter (He records a lot of what Jesus SAID); **(2)** Mark is a biographer (He records a lot of what Jesus DID); **(3)** Luke is a historian (He records more information than any of the others); **(4)** And John is a theologian (He expounds on what Jesus said and did; it's like a dissertation or thesis).

We are going to begin our new journey by reading through Mark's account. There are several reasons why I believe Mark's account is an appropriate place to start: **(1)** It was probably written first; **(2)** It is a simple, action-filled account; and **(3)** It is strictly chronological. So I believe it is written in such a way that it will help us visualize what it would have been like to be alive when Jesus was here.

With our remaining time I would like us to get a little acquainted with the author of the Gospel of Mark. Mark was his last name. His first name was John. He seems to have been known mostly by Mark, so we will refer to him by this name as well. I invite you to turn with me to **Acts chapter 12**. Peter has just been released by an angel from prison. It's the middle of the night, so it takes him a while to get his bearings. But notice where he goes as soon as he does. Let's read **verse 12**. This verse tells us several things about Mark. **First**, His

mother's name was Mary, not to be confused with Jesus' mother or the other Mary's mentioned in the gospels. Mark's father is not mentioned, so he may have passed away at an earlier time. **Second**, Mark lived in Jerusalem. The setting here is the Passover, which is mentioned in verse 4. The Passover always took place in Jerusalem. This is where Peter was imprisoned. And this is where Mark lived with his mother. **Third**, His mother's house was a central gathering for the early Christians. Some scholars believe that this is the same house that the Last Supper took place in as well as where the apostles met together before Pentecost. A **fourth** point of interest concerning Mark is that he was Barnabas' cousin. Some of you may have heard of Barnabas. He worked for a while with Paul in the book of Acts. This is mentioned in Colossians, and we will read more about this later.

So, this is a little bit about who Mark is. We'll now look at what the Bible records of his ministry in the New Testament church. According to Acts 13:1-5 Mark worked with **Paul and Barnabas**. He was their assistant on **Paul's first missionary trip**. This took place around 45-46 AD. According to Acts 15:37-39 Mark also went on a missionary trip with **Barnabas to Cyprus** around 49 AD. From Paul's letter to the Colossians (Colossians 4:10) we know that Mark ministered to **Paul** during Paul's first imprisonment in **Rome**. This was around 62 AD. Paul also mentions in 2 Timothy 4:11 that Mark assisted **Timothy** in Ephesus, where Timothy was the pastor. From **Ephesus** Mark went back to Rome where Paul was imprisoned the second time, and ministered to **Paul** once again. This was around 66 AD. I invite you to turn with me now to **1 Peter 5:13**. **Peter** refers to Mark as his son. Peter is writing from Rome as a prisoner, like Paul. And it was probably about the same time as Paul's second imprisonment. So, Mark may have ministered to both Paul and Peter while in Rome around 66 AD.

There is some speculation as to why Peter calls Mark his son. Some take this literally, but most scholars agree that he is using it in the same way that Paul did when Paul called Timothy his son. Mark was his spiritual son and partner in ministry. It may be that Peter was instrumental in Mark becoming a Christian.

Papias was a leader in the Christian church in the second century. He states that according to the disciple John, Mark received the information for his gospel from Peter. Papias states that Mark was Peter's assistant for quite some time, and that after hearing Peter's sermons enough times, he was able to write the gospel down himself as he heard it from Peter. We have no way of knowing for sure if this was the case, but it is an interesting possibility.

That's about all we know about Mark and his ministry. There's not a lot written about him in Scripture. He was not one of the twelve disciples like Matthew or John. And he was not as well-known as Luke. Most of the time it seems that he was a helper or an assistant. Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and Peter were great leaders. But great leaders need great assistants to be who they are. And that was Mark. He is a unique author of the New Testament. And perhaps an author some of us can relate to more than Peter or Paul.

There is one more thing about Mark that I would like to show you from God's Word today. I invite you to turn with me to **Acts 13:13**. Paul is in the middle of his first missionary tour through Asia Minor and Mark, here referred to by his first name, John, suddenly drops out. He leaves Paul and Barnabas behind, and goes back home to Jerusalem. Later in Acts 15:36-41, Paul is getting ready to go on his second missionary tour with Barnabas. Mark has come back. He wants to go with them again. Barnabas, Mark's cousin, insists that he come. But Paul refuses, because Mark abandoned them on their first missionary tour. Paul and Barnabas end up going separate directions. Barnabas takes Mark with him to Cyprus. Paul takes Silas with him through Asia Minor. Now turn with me to **2 Timothy 4:11**. Paul is in prison. Only Luke is with him. And he thinks of Mark.

He has a different opinion of Mark now. He sees Mark as someone he needs. He no longer thinks of him as a run-away coward. "Get Mark. I'm in prison. I need him. I need his ministry. I need his service."

You may feel like God passed you by when He was handing out the greatest gifts for ministry. You may not feel able to give a Bible study or preach a sermon. You may be afraid to lead out in an evangelistic series. People at the Ohio Conference may not even know you exist. You might wonder if God has a place for you. You might have been involved in ministry in the past, but something happened. And you've left the missionary group and gone back to Jerusalem. I believe God used Mark to write His first gospel account in the New Testament for people like us. God didn't give up on Mark when he resigned and ran away to Jerusalem. He didn't expect Mark to be like Peter or Paul. He made Mark to hold up the hands of the leaders. There are no great leaders without great supporters. Because Mark was a faithful supporter, his gospel account has been recorded in the best-selling book of all time. His name has been written in bold letters in God's own Word. Let us fill the place that God has for us. And someday God will call our name. Surrounded by the vast multitude of the saved, He will say to us, "Well done. Enter into the joy of Your Lord."