

出乎意料的救恩——马可福音 2:13-17 Astonishing Saving Grace – Mark 2:13-17

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Mark 2:13-17.
- Teaching text: Mark 2:13-17 (NASB1995)

14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him. **15** And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. **16** When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?” **17** And hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

- The basic principle of God’s work: humbling the proud, exalting the humble (Ref. Proverbs 18:12; 29:23; Psalm 138:6, Isaiah 26:5-6; Ezekiel 21:26; Philippians 2:6-11; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). In today’s passage, Jesus calls a sinner who, by social standard, is the worst kind of sinner, the scum of society, the lowest, most despicable kind of person.
- Outline:
 - Title: Astonishing Saving Grace
 - 1. Savior’s Public Ministry (v13)
 - 2. Savior’s Personal Calling (v14)
 - 3. Sinner’s Joyful Response (v15)
 - 4. Legalists’ Cold-hearted Response (v16)
 - 5. Savior’s Job Description (v17)

Savior’s Public Ministry (v13)

- “And He went out again by the seashore”: Last time Jesus was at the seashore is in 1:16, where He was also calling His disciples.
- “people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.” This is part of Jesus’s daily ministry. Always surrounded by people, teaching wherever he went (Ref. Mark 1:21, 4:1; 6:2, 6:34, 8:31, 10:1; 1:17; 12:35; 14:49).

Savior's Personal Calling (v14)

- “As He passed by”: It shows that Jesus was walking while teaching, because he wanted to meet someone. This is the reason why he came to the seashore in the first place. There is a tax booth on the seashore, and there is a person in the tax booth that is waiting for his call.
- “Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth”, Levi is Matthew, Matthew might be Levi’s new name after he came to Christ. In that society, tax collector is the most despised scum of the society, the worst of all sinners, often named with prostitutes (Matthew 21:31-32). When Matthew himself describes how he was called, he used his new name as the apostle (Matthew 9:9), reminding the readers that he too has a shameful past, so we can see what amazing grace he received from Jesus.
- Background: Two kinds of tax collector - the Gabbai vs the Mokhes. The Gabbai is in charge of those official taxes required by the government (land tax, housing tax, income tax, etc.). There is little room for corruption. The Mokhes, though, is known for extortion. They impose various taxes on major roads (road tax, bridge tax, wheel tax, etc). Within the Mokhes circle, there is the chief tax-collector (Zacchaeus, Luke 19) and the common tax collector. The former works behind the scene and does not get money from people directly. The latter are those who sit in tax booths and get money out of everyone’s pocket, and they often recruit a bunch of worthless folks to help them. Levi, sitting in the tax booth, is this latter kind, a common tax collector, the kind that everyone hates and despises. From a religious perspective, tax collectors are obviously excluded from God’s people. Only when a person is so filled with greed will he forsake all his dignity to become a tax collector. It’s like selling his soul for some earthly gain.
- “Follow Me!” How would a person who’s used to being hated and despised react to this calling?
- “And he got up and followed Him”: The Holy Spirit has obviously worked in his heart. He must’ve already heard about Jesus, and, like everyone else, he must want to see Jesus up close, but he dare not join the crowd, for they’ll throw him out. Perhaps he has already heard Jesus preaching the gospel from afar, and the Holy Spirit quickens his conscience and causes him to feel the guilt and shame of his sin. Is there any hope for such a wretched sinner as I? Even if I want to repent and turn to God. Will God accept me?

That’s why Matthew’s response to Jesus’ call is so natural without any hesitation – because he knows he is a sinner who needs Jesus’ salvation from sin. Jesus’ call implies the forgiveness of sin, and so he is immediately overjoyed.

Insight: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,” and the next line goes, “That saved a wretch like me.” God is the Savior of wretches. Are you a wretch? Is there anyone who you think is too wretched to be saved?

Sinner's Joyful Response (v15)

- “He was reclining at the table in his house”: This is a joyous celebration. In Jewish culture, the host would recline at the table with the guests in a half lying down posture to have a meal together. According to Luke, Levi “held a great banquet for Jesus at his house.” A big feast!

Reason 1: thanking Jesus 2. celebrating his new life 3. Introducing Jesus to his friends.

- “many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples”: Matthew invites a bunch of wretches, for they’re his only kind of friends. No normal person would want to be his friend. If the Lord can save me, He can save them too.
- “For there were many of them, and they were following Him”: Not that they were already followers, but they started to follow Jesus after seeing Him by Matthew’s invitation. No doubt, Jesus taught the gospel to them, probably in a different tone than when He preached to religious leaders, for these wretches already knew that they were sinners. A bunch of wretched scums were added to Jesus’ followers from this point on.

Legalists' Coldhearted Response (v16)

- “scribes of the Pharisees”: They’re the stereotypical legalists. The word Pharisee means separated, and that’s what they are proud of, being separated from anything that looks sinful so as to appear very holy. The scribes are the scholars of the Pharisees who specialize in the law, and so they are the elites of the elites. They’re the ones who established the entire legal systems for the Pharisees. Eating with tax collectors is something they would never accept. According to them, Jesus’ moral standard is just too low. His saving grace is like a scandal to them.

The fundamental reason: They are prideful and self-boasting and simply would not admit their sins. They wouldn’t admit they need a savior just as much as these scums. And, cunningly, they hide that dirty heart under an appearance of external piety, as if it is Jesus whose moral standard is way too low! How can He hang out with sinners! The amazing grace becomes a huge scandal.

True standard of Jesus: Be perfect as the heavenly Father (Matt 5:48). His standard is perfect holiness in heart and mind and word and deed which must all be perfect expressions of loving God and man. They don’t like this standard, so they make up all kinds of external rules to replace the real kind of love for God and man.

Savior's Job Description (v17)

- “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician...” This statement on one hand shows Jesus’ compassion as the spiritual physician, on the other hand, it condemns the prideful Pharisees of their cold-heartedness. If they know these people are very sick spiritually, and if

they have a little bit of love in their heart, wouldn't they want them to be healed? Their cold heart has no compassion at all.

- “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners”: Not that anyone is righteous, but the self-righteous Pharisees are blind to their own sins. The job of the Savior is to call sinners and to heal their souls. Jesus is the great Physician that heals the soul of sinners.
- The analogy of physicians shows the most fundamental need of sinners. not just forgiveness, but also healing of the soul. “No sin-sick soul is too far gone for Him. It is His glory to heal and restore to life the most desperate cases.”

Key point: To be saved, a person must admit that he is vile, evil, dirty, filthy, rebellious, corrupt, desperate, and helpless. Without Jesus, you are not good, righteous, loving, no matter what others say of you. Without Jesus, you are not a good person, you are damned, in need of salvation.

Summary: He who is forgiven much loves much, he who is forgiven little loves little. If your love for Jesus is growing cold, that's because you have forgotten how much he has forgiven you! Remember your sinfulness before salvation? Do you see your current daily struggle with sins? Salvation is for sinners, not for the righteous.

Salvation is not earned by those who are good enough, but received freely by those who know they're not good and repent to follow Jesus.

There are only two responses to the salvation of Jesus; Receive it with joy and follow Him willingly; or dismiss it and sneer at it. This astonishing salvation gives Matthew immense joy, but revealed the vileness of the Pharisees' heart. What does it do to you?