

Gospel of Mark 18 – Chapter 9, verses 30 – 50:- Teaching for the Disciples -

This section is specific teaching for the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ – see verses 31 and 35. All the more reason why we, as his followers should read, mark, learn and inwardly digest these verses!

Verses 30 – 32 :-

This is the second of three ‘predictions of the passion’ in the Gospel of Mark (see chapter 8, verse 31 and chapter 10, verses 32 – 34). These predictions come as the Lord Jesus and his disciples journey from the scene of the Transfiguration (Mount Hermon in the far north) to Jerusalem in the south. Here we find the Lord Jesus deliberately making time apart from the crowds to teach his disciples. Again they fail to understand “*and they were afraid to ask him.*” Maybe they were too distracted by their discussion on precedence!

Verses 33 – 37:-

That ‘precedence’ was an issue with the disciples is clear from the number of times it appears in the Gospels. The blatant request by James and John in Mark chapter 10 verses 35 – 37 (or their mother Matthew chapter 20, verses 20 – 28) was perhaps the culmination of such ‘discussions’. This puts in context the ‘foot washing’ at the Last Supper and the comment by the Lord Jesus which follows; see the Gospel of John chapter 13, verses 12 – 17. Ecclesiastical processions, with the order of preference often being seen as ‘the most important at the back’, have always bugged me! BUT when it comes to arguing among the clergy who that should be, in the vestry before the service (which university hood do you wear?) you can count me out!!! (And that really happened before a service in a cathedral when I was present!) The original idea was that the one who walked at the back was the least important. Amen to that! To be “*servant of all*” does mean a willingness to be a servant to the meanest child. A willingness to love the unlovable.

Verses 38 – 41:-

I wonder if John deliberately changed the subject? Maybe the reminder of acts done in the name of the Lord Jesus reminded John of the exorcist that the disciples had seen and who used the name of Jesus. That there is a danger in wrongly using the name of Jesus is apparent in reading Acts chapter 19, verses 13 – 16. However in these verses the Lord Jesus is widening the possibility of blessing, not only for those who work in his name, but also those who help and serve Christian ministry – verse 41.

Verses 42 – 50:-

Verse 42 could refer literally to children. However in context it is likely that the Lord Jesus was thinking of those who were infants in the faith; those who had recently heard of him and his mighty works and were seeking to follow him. This would include the “*man casting out demons . . .*” whose undeveloped faith should be encouraged rather than hindered. The Greek word “*skandalizo*”, translated here as “*causes to sin*” or *causes to fall away*” means “*to place a snare or trap*” in someone’s way, causing them to stumble.

In verse 43 – 48 the same word is used. The followers of the Lord Jesus Christ should remove from their lives anything that causes them to stumble in the Christian life. Remember that our hands, feet and eyes only give outward expression to what is in our hearts – see Mark chapter 7, verses 20 – 23. The two phrases “*enter into life*” and “*enter the kingdom of God*” are used as the opposites of “*hell*” and refer to the life of the saved in the eternal kingdom. Verse 48 uses the language of, and could be a direct quote from, Isaiah chapter 66, verse 24.

Verse 49 needs to read alongside 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verses 11 – 15.

Verse 50 is a direct command to the disciples (and to us) to be permeated with the purifying influence in their lives. The ultimate command refers back to the discussion on the road - “*Be at peace with one another*”. Note that the commands in this verse are both in the present tense. This is calling for an enduring practice, not just a ‘one off’!