

**Mark 10:1-31**  
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**Overview**

1. 9:14-10:52, focuses on the need for faith and the simplicity of salvation.
  - a) Begins and ends with a healing that depends on faith
    - 1) 9:14-29, Healing & Faith: Demonic Boy and his Father
    - 2) 10:46-52, Healing & Faith: Bartimaeus
  - b) Then an alternation between announcement of the passion and the disciples' failure to appreciate the cost (application of the lesson from the initial chiasm)
    - 1) 9:30-32, Second Announcement of his Passion
    - 2) 9:33-50, Inappropriate Response: Who shall be first?
    - 3) 10:32-34, Third Announcement of his Passion
    - 4) 10:35-45, Inappropriate Response: James and John
  - c) In the center, 10:1-31, three encounters by the way.
    - 1) These illustrate the soils once again:
      - a> Roadside: Pharisees seeking to trap him.
      - b> Good Soil: children with their simple faith.
      - c> Thorny Soil: rich man clinging to his wealth.
    - 2) The first and third, representing inappropriate approaches, have the public-private contrast we have seen before. The disciples need explanation on these to understand the risks. The center one is really all private, a glimpse into the Lord's instruction of his disciples into which the children are included.
    - 3) Before, we had rocky soil (persecution) but no thorny soil; now we have the thorny but no rocky.

**A. Review of the Soils**

1. Mark 4, the basic parable
  - a) 4, 15, Roadside: basic opposition
  - b) 8, 20, Good Ground: bears fruit
  - c) Two intermediate cases that are not openly opposed, but still bear no fruit:
    - 1) 5-6, 16-17, Stony Ground: fails through external persecution
    - 2) 7, 18-19, Thorny Ground: fails through internal lusts
2. General characters throughout the book:

These soils are a prototype for how we are to understand the responses of those around us.

  - a) Roadside: the Jewish leaders, who are impervious to the Gospel.

- b) Stony and Thorny: the multitudes, who are outwardly enthusiastic, but do not stick.
- c) Good: the disciples, including the inner circle of the apostles.

*Several individual episodes in Mark place three of the four side by side. The essential union of the stony and thorny ground is evident when we reflect that no episode has all four; all have opposition, fruitfulness, and one form or the other of apparent but unfruitful allegiance.*

- 3. Mark 5, the Gadarene Demoniac
  - a) 7-13, Roadside: the demon
  - b) 14-17, Thorny: villagers (upset over loss of their herds)
  - c) 6, 18-20, Good: the demoniac
- 4. Mark 7, the teaching on uncleanness. Discourse divided clearly into three parts, with different audiences.
  - a) 1-13, Roadside: the Pharisees, seeking to trip up the disciples.
  - b) 14-16, Stony or Thorny: the multitude. Not clear whether their problem here is internal or external.
  - c) 17-13, Good: the disciples
- 5. Now in Mark 10, we have the same basic template.
  - a) 1-12, Roadside: Pharisees seeking to trap him.
  - b) 13-16, Good Soil: children with their simple faith.
  - c) 17-31, Thorny Soil: rich man clinging to his wealth.

**B. 1-12, Roadside: Pharisees tempting him**

This and the last, both showing a defective response, include private instruction to the disciples as well as public teaching.

1. 1, Setting

- a) Public once again, after the private rebuke of the disciples for their ambition in 9:33-50.
- b) Physical location: Perea, the east bank of the Jordan between the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. This and Galilee west of the Sea of Galilee were the territory of Herod Antipas. Since the trip to Caesarea Philippi, the Lord has been mostly out of Herod's territory and in Philip's (except for the return to Capernaum in 9:33). The importance emerges in the next verse.

2. 2-9, To the Pharisees  
An interchange.

- a) 2, Pharisees.
  - 1) The question is one on which Jewish scholars differed; the school of Shammai held a very strict interpretation of Moses' law in Deut. 24, while the school of Hillel held a very liberal interpretation.

- 2) Their objective: "tempting him."
- a> At least, force him into taking sides between the two schools, thus tarring him with a partisan brush.
  - b> Herod Antipas (actually, his wife Herodias) has already proven fatal to prophets who oppose divorce, because Herodias divorced her husband Philip to marry Herod; cf. 6:17-18. The Pharisees may have been attempting to trick Jesus into saying something that would set Herodias against him.
  - c> Thus their apparent interest in his word is no more than the interest of the birds toward the seed scattered by the wayside. They seek it not because they want its fruit within themselves, but in an effort to cut off the source and prevent its spread.
- b) 3, the Lord asks for Moses' *command*. A conservative direction, in two ways:
- 1) He wants a word from Moses, not just from the OT. Some Jews (the Sadducees) took only the five books of Moses seriously.
  - 2) He wants a *command*, a clear authoritative teaching.
- c) 4, their reply:
- 1) Location: Deut. 24. (Key phrase: "write a bill of divorcement.")
  - 2) The nature of the teaching: "Moses *suffered*," not "commanded." Why do they back off from the Lord's strong wording? Probably because their trap depends on his taking the strong position, not their taking it. But in fact this is the best term to use.
    - a> The AV looks like a command; in fact, like three commands:
      - 1> If she finds no favor, let him divorce her.
      - 2> When she leaves, let her marry another.
      - 3> If she leaves the second, the first may not take her back.
    - b> In fact, the Hebrew reads more smoothly as a single command with three conditions:
      - 1> If
        - a: she finds no favor
        - b: and he divorces her
        - c: and she marries another
        - d: and something happens to him
      - 2> THEN the first husband may not take her back again.

c> So in Deut. 24, Moses is not COMMANDING or even AUTHORIZING divorce, but merely making provision for it, telling people what to do if it occurs: he "suffers" it.

d) 5-9, the Lord's reply

1) 5, Explains their verse: it merely makes provision for "the hardness of your hearts."

2) Presents two verses of his own.

a> 6 (quoting Gen. 5:2): Male-ness and female-ness are something that God created, so we must answer to him for how we manage them. Note the following part of the verse that the Lord does not quote, but that his citation would have brought to the mind of his hearers: "he called their (pl.) name 'Adam'." Emphasizes the fundamental unity of the man and wife.

b> 7-8a (quoting Gen. 2:24): It is the Creator's will that this essential unity be reflected in the marriage union. The two now count as "one flesh," one family, before him.

1> cf. Adam's confession in 2:23

2> cf. Laban's statement re. Jacob in 29:14; also 37:27; Jdg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12,13

3> Because man and wife found a family and offspring that are related to one another, their relation cannot be broken. In their offspring they are one flesh. If they separate, it confounds this essential unity.

c> 8b-9, Conclusion: This union between them is something that God has established, both in giving them a common name and in ordaining offspring from the family. Dividing it violates his unity.

3. 10-12, To the Disciples

They are astounded at the severity of the Lord's teaching.

a) He confirms it to them in no uncertain terms. Whichever member initiates a divorce, if they remarry, they are guilty of adultery.

b) Other passages in the gospels show that it is also adultery for the passive member in the divorce to remarry.

c) What about the exception clause in Matthew? "Except for fornication..."

1) Refers to Moses' law in Deut. 22, which indicates that in the case of fornication, the guilty party is to be stoned to death. This method of "putting away" of course leaves the survivor free to remarry.

2) Only in Matt, because he is writing for a Jewish audience that would understand the reference. Mark and Luke, writing for gentiles, leave it out.

4. *Application*: Note the importance of obedience to practical commands of scripture. The most dangerous opposition to the Lord shows itself, not in deviant views of abstract issues, but in refusal to yield to his Lordship.

#### C. 13-16, Good soil: Little Children

The episode highlights two issues concerning reception and children.

1. 13-14, the disciples' failure to receive the children is a direct violation of the Lord's instruction in 9:37. Here at the very center of a section bracketed by the disciples' sinful self-aggrandizement, it arises yet again. NB: The disciples' involvement at the BEGINNING of this example balances their place at the END of the other two.

2. 14-16, the children's reception of the Lord.

- a) This passage is sometimes cited to prove infant baptism (Westminster Confession, ch. 28, art. 4) or the salvation of infants, but note the emphasis that the Lord here places on the fact that these youngsters "come to" and "receive" him. They are not infants, but young people capable of repentance and faith. (But there were infants among them, Lk 18:15 *brefos*)
- b) Their faith is indeed simple and direct, but for that very reason the Lord sets them as an example to all who would believe. The complications and intricacies of modern theological systems are superfluous to the business of salvation and communion with the Lord. The good soil takes the seed and it springs up with new life.

#### D. 17-31, Thorny Soil: Rich Man

Like the first of the three episodes, this one is initiated by a public confrontation, and the Lord afterward draws the Twelve apart for further instruction. We have seen the hostility of the Pharisees and the simple faith of children. Now we consider a more subtle and difficult case, that of someone with divided allegiance. The clearest example yet of thorny soil, drawn away by "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things."

1. 17-22, Public

- a) 17, First Question (Two Parts)
  - 1) "Good teacher"
  - 2) "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"
- b) 18-19, First Answer (Two Parts)

- 1) 18 responds to "Good Teacher."
  - a> "Do you realize the implications of this title?" The Lord is not denying his deity, but challenging the inquirer's careless use of the term.
  - b> Suggests that the Lord wishes to emphasize the importance of a right relation to God.
  
- 2) 19 responds to "What must I do?"
  - a> Answer: the commandments. The Lord is not teaching works salvation, but trying to lead him to repentance. Before we confront people with faith as the mechanism of salvation, they must understand their need for salvation.
  
  - b> NB: The Lord mentions only the second table of the law, the commandments concerning our duty to our fellow man. Either the first table is not important, or the Lord will deal with it later. The first alternative is not credible, especially in light of the emphasis of v.18; the second is the key to the sequel.
  
- c) 20, Second Question (explicit in Mt, "What lack I?"). In spite of his correct Jewish life, he still feels insecure. Something must be missing. Two suggestions:
  - 1) After our analysis of the Lord's previous answer, we recognize that the question of the first four commandments has not yet been addressed.
  
  - 2) The formal, legalistic reading of the commandments by the Jews would let someone claim to keep them whose heart was far from them; cf. the contrasts in Matt. 5. One wonders just how enthusiastically he has kept even the last six.
  
- d) 21, Second Answer
  - 1) 21a, The Lord's response: compassion. Do not confuse with God's love for him; the Lord here is giving us an example for our interaction with the lost, which must be one that sympathizes with their miserable condition.
  
  - 2) 21b, the requirement: give away your wealth and follow me. Probes both areas of lack that we have anticipated.
    - a> Sell and give to the poor: probes the accuracy of his claim to have kept the second table of the law. Does he really love his fellow man, or just satisfy the superficial requirements of the law?
  
    - b> Sell ... and follow me: brings the focus to bear on the first table. Recall Col. 3:5, "covetousness, which is idolatry." His money is the true focus of his love. It is his idol. If forced to choose between it and the

Messiah, which will he choose?

- e) 22, The Questioner's Final Response. He fails the test, and shows his true heart.
- f) *Application*: Does this mean we must sell all that we have? The practice in the NT varies.
  - 1) In Jerusalem in the early days, faced with widespread poverty, the church did pool its goods for the relief of the poor (2:45; 4:34).
  - 2) But in Corinth, individuals retained control over their own purses (16:1).
  - 3) Conclude: this is something concerning which the Spirit of God may lead different people differently. This man's attachment to his wealth was such that for him it was his bankbook or his soul. We need to let the Lord search our hearts.

2. 23-31, Private

As with the Pharisees' question, the Lord turns the conversation into a teaching opportunity with the Twelve.

a) 23-28, Disciples in General

- 1) 23-24, Diagnosis of the problem: those who *have* riches (23) grow to *trust* in them (24). This explanation confirms our analysis of the Lord's requirement in 21.
- 2) 25-27, Implications of the Teaching: people cannot attain to salvation on their own.
  - a> 25, Proverb of the camel and the needle: appears to be a folk saying about something that is impossible. The Lord does not say, "Only the very very good can do it." He says, "It's impossible."
  - b> 26, the disciples' question highlights this: "Who then can [lit. is able to] be saved?" "Lord, you've just made salvation impossible!"
  - c> 27, the Lord confirms that salvation is impossible, unless God intervenes. God is the only one who can deliver sinful people from the bondage in which their own lusts hold them.

b) 28-31, Peter

- 1) 28, Peter's question seems to emerge from the intersection of the Lord's earlier words to the rules ("sell ... follow ... treasure in heaven") and the more recent ones about the impossibility of salvation. "But Lord, we have done just

what you told him to do. Are we OK?"

2) 29-31, the Lord's reply:

a> 29, What we may lose: everything of worldly value. Cf. Luke 14:25-33. We are called on to hate these things in comparison with our love for Christ; to take up our cross; to forsake all for him. Nothing less will satisfy his call. You can't be a Christian on the side.

b> 30, What we shall gain:

1> Hundredfold restoration: probably to be understood of what we enjoy in the fellowship of other believers. NB: this imposes an obligation on us to provide this wealth toward other believers.

2> "With persecutions." We must not be misled in this regard. We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, 1 Pet 4:12.

3> Eternal life in the age to come. What the questioner wanted in the first place.

c> 31, the summary paradox. Those who are now first by the world's standards will be last in God's reckoning; those whom the world despises shall one day be first.

### Analysis

A. 10:1-12, Roadside: Enemies tempting him: Divorce and Remarriage (public + private)

#### 1. Setting

- a) 10:1 Kai\ e)kei^qen a)nasta\s e)/rxetai ei)s ta\ o(/ria th^s )Ioudai/as [kai\] pe/ran tou^ )Iorda/nou,
- b) ? kai\ sumporeu/ontai pa/lin o)/xloi pro\s au)to/n,
- c) \* kai\ w(s ei)w/qei pa/lin e)di/dasken au)to/s.

#### 2. To the Pharisees

- a) 2 kai\ proselqo/ntes Farisai^oi e)phrw/twn au)to\n
  - 1) ei) e)/cestin a)ndri\ gunai^ka a)polu^sai,
  - 2) peira/zontes au)to/n.
- b) 3 o( de\ a)pokriqei\s ei)^pen au)toi^s,
  - 1) Ti/ u(mi^n e)netei/lato Mwu+sh^s;
- c) \* 4 oi( de\ ei)^pan,
  - 1) )Epe/treyen Mwu+sh^s bibli/on a)postasi/ou gra/yai kai\ a)polu^sai.
- d) \* 5 o( de\ )Ihsou^s ei)^pen au)toi^s,
  - 1) Pro\s th\n sklhrokardi/an u(mw^n e)/grayen u(mi^n th\n e)ntolh\n tau/thn.
  - 2) 6 a)po\ de\ a)rxh^s kti/sews a)/rsen kai\ qh^lu e)poi/hsen au)to/s:



- 3) 7 e(/neken tou/tou
  - a> katalei/yei a)/nqrwpos to\n pate/ra au)tou^ kai\ th\n mhte/ra
  - b> [kai\ proskollhgh/setai pro\s th\n gunai^ka au)tou^],
  - c> 8 kai\ e)/sontai oi( du/o ei)s sa/rka mi/an:
- 4) w(/ste ou)ke/ti ei)si\n du/o a)lla\ mi/a sa/rc.
- 5) 9 o(\ ou)^n o( qeo\s sune/zeucen a)/nqrwpos mh\ xwrize/tw.

3. To the Disciples

- a) \* 10 Kai\ en th| oi)ki/a| pa/lin oi( maqhtai\ autou peri\ tou/ autou e)phrw/thsan au)to/n.
- b) \* 11 kai\ le/gei au)toi^s,
  - 1) (\Os a)\n a)polu/sh| th\n gunai^ka au)tou^ kai\ gamh/sh| a)/llhn moixa^tai e)p' au)th/n,
  - 2) 12 kai\ e)a\n gunh apolush| to\n a)/ndra au)th^s kai gamh/qh| a)/llw| moixa^tai.

B. 10:13-16, Good soil: Little Children: successful

- 1. \* 13 Kai\ prose/feron au)tw^| paidi/a i(/na au)tw^n a(/yhtai:
- 2. \* oi( de\ maqhtai\ e)peti/mwn tois prosferousin
- 3. 14 i)dw\n de\ o( )Ihsou^s h)gana/kthsen kai\ ei)^pen au)toi^s,
  - a) )/Afete ta\ paidi/a e)/rxesqai pro/s me,
  - b) mh\ kwlu/ete au)ta/,
  - c) tw^n ga\r toiou/twn e)sti\n h( basilei/a tou^ qeou^.
  - d) 15 a)mh\n le/gw u(mi^n,
  - e) o(\s ea)\n mh\ de/chtai th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^ w(s paidi/on, ou) mh\ ei)se/lqh| ei)s au)th/n.
- 4. 16 kai\ e)nagkalisa/menos au)ta\, tiqei\s ta\s xei^ras e)p' au)ta/, eulogei auta

C. 10:17-31, Thorny Soil: Rich Man: unsuccessful

1. 17-22, Public

- a) 17 Kai\ e)kporeuome/nou au)tou^ ei)s o(do\n prosdramw\n ei(^s kai\ gonupeth/sas au)to\n e)phrw/ta au)to/n,
  - 1) Dida/skale a)gaqe/,
  - 2) ti/ poihs/sw i(/na zwh\n ai)w/nion klhronomh/sw;
- b) \* 18 o( de\ )Ihsou^s ei)^pen au)tw^|,
  - 1) Ti/ me le/geis a)gaqo/n;
  - 2) ou)dei\s a)gaqo\s ei) mh\ ei(^s o( qeo/s.
  - 3) 19 ta\s e)ntola\s oi)^das:
    - a> Mh\ foneu/sh|s,
    - b> Mh\ moixeu/sh|s,
    - c> Mh\ kle/yh|s,
    - d> Mh\ yeudomarturh/sh|s,
    - e> Mh\ a)posterh/sh|s,
    - f> Ti/ma to\n pate/ra sou kai\ th\n mhte/ra.
- c) \* 20 o( de\ e)/fh au)tw^|,
  - 1) Dida/skale,
  - 2) tau^ta pa/nta e)fulaca/mhn e)k neo/thto/s mou.
- d) 21 o( de\ )Ihsou^s e)mble/yas au)tw^| h)ga/phsen au)to\n
- e) \* kai\ ei)^pen au)tw^|,
  - 1) (/En se u(sterei^:
  - 2) u(/page

- 3) o(/sa e)/xeis pw/lhson
  - 4) kai\ do\s [toi^s] ptwxoi^s,
  - 5) kai\ e(/ceis qhsauro\n e)n ou)ranw^|,
  - 6) kai\ deu^ro a)kolou/qei moi.
- f) 22 o( de\ stugna/sas e)pi\ tw^| lo/gw| a)ph^lqen lupou/menos,
- 1) h)^n ga\r e)/xwn kth/mata polla/.

2. 23-31, Private

a) 23-28, Disciples in General

- 1) 23 Kai\ peribleya/menos o( )Ihsou^s le/gei toi^s maqhtai^s au)tou^,
- a> Pw^s dusko/lws oi( ta\ xrh/mata e)/xontes ei)s th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^ ei)seleu/sontai.
- 2) \* 24 oi( de\ maqhtai\ e)qambou^nto e)pi\ toi^s lo/gois au)tou^.
- 3) o( de\ )Ihsou^s pa/lin a)pokriqei\s le/gei au)toi^s,
- a> Te/kna,
- b> pw^s du/skolo/n e)stin tous pepoiqotas epi xrhmasin ei)s th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^ ei)selqei^n:
- c> 25 eu)kopw/tero/n e)stin ka/mhlon dia\ [th^s] trumalia^s th^s r(afi/dos dielqei^n h)\ plou/sion ei)s th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^ ei)selqei^n.
- 4) \* 26 oi( de\ perissw^s e)ceplh/ssonto le/gontes pro\s e(autou/s,
- a> Kai\ ti/s du/natai swqh^nai;
- 5) 27 e)mble/yas de au)toi^s o( )Ihsou^s le/gei,
- a> Para\ a)nqrw/pois a)du/naton a)ll' ou) para\ qew^|,
- b> pa/nta ga\r dunata\ esti para\ tw^| qew^|.

b) 28-31, Peter

- 1) \* 28 )/Hrcato o( Pe/tros legein au)tw^|,
- a> )Idou\ h(meis a)fh/kamen pa/nta
- b> kai\ h)kolouqh/kame/n soi.
- 2) \* 29 e)/fh o( )Ihsou^s,
- a> )Amh\n le/gw u(mi^n,
- b> ou)dei/s e)stin o(\s a)fh^ken oi)ki/an h)\ a)delfou\s h)\ a)delfa\s h)\ mhte/ra h)\ pate/ra h)\ te/kna h)\ a)grou\s e(/neken e)mou^ kai\ e(/neken tou^ eu)aggeli/ou,
- 30 e)a\n mh\ la/bh| e(katontaplasia/ona nu^n e)n tw^| kairw^| tou/tw| oi)ki/as kai\ a)delfou\s kai\ a)delfa\s kai\ mhte/ras kai\ te/kna kai\ a)grou\s meta\ diwgmw^n, kai\ e)n tw^| ai)w^ni tw^| e)rxome/nw| zwh\n ai)w/nion.
- c> 31 polloi\ de\ e)/sontai prw^toi e)/sxatoi kai\ [oi( e)/sxatoi prw^toi.