

# Bread & Wine



**FEBRUARY 2007**

## BREAD & WINE

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**Cover Picture:** The cover picture clockwise is John Calvin, Theodore Beza, John Knox and Guillaume Farel with Martin Luther in the center. These are the great Reformers of the sixteenth century.

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## Editorial

*Russ Atmore*

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The affairs of this world are many. At times they are greatly trying, disappointing and a waste of time, money and any effort that we throw at it in order to keep up with it. It was Martin Luther, in his 95 Theses, who said that “Christians are to be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell, and thus be confident of entering heaven through many tribulations, rather than through the false assurance of peace.” (Theses 94, 95). We certainly are confronted with these issues today. It is easy to confuse earthly or political peace with spiritual peace. This produces false security and a false peace. Indeed, we must never mistake peace in the land for peace in the heart. It is through many tribulations that we enter glory. Peace in the heart does not mean exemption from trial and temptation and loss.

There are times when I read modern Christian literature and wonder if I am on the same page or not. Modern books and magazines seem to offer a man made kind of solution to all our problems, both in the world and in the Church. They sprinkle their writings with Christian flavor, but in reality their solution is all self-centered and oriented. I want someone to tell me the truth about myself, though it is painful to hear. I want books to point out my wretchedness and sinfulness causing me to flee to Jesus Christ as my only security in this world and the one to come. I don't want 7 steps to prosperity or 12 ways to know myself or this is my best life now. No, I want truth that is blazing and searing hot. I want my heart and mind to be assaulted with God's truth night and day. The Church seems to have left the safe harbor of Christ and His Word, and now is adrift at sea seemingly quite content offering all kinds of solutions, that in reality are dark and dangerous. We try to address some of these concerns in this issue.

As usual we delve into the depths of a Bible wordsearch that might trap the unwary. To be fore-warned is to be forearmed.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

# **The Church At Present**

*Russ Atmore*

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What is the state of the Church at present is a good question to ask at the present time in the history of the Church. Any Christian worth his or her salt should be aware of the prevailing conditions in the Church. Frankly, there is only one absolutely certainty. It is the statement of our Lord in Matthew 16:18 “....I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” If we did not have this sure word from the Lord Jesus Christ, we could easily say that the church would simply amount to nothing. In my opinion the weakness of the Church today exists primarily in the distinction that is often made between doctrine and experience. I am not discussing the liberals in the Church here, for they represent a brand of the Church unknown in Scripture, and therefore it can be said that they are not representative of the Church. Besides, liberals deny the fundamental truths of the Bible, so how can we consider them a part of the church of Jesus Christ. Nor do I include the sects and cults as part of the Church – they are not. I am concerned with the Church that accepts the fundamental truths of the Bible.

There has been an undeniable drift away from the truth of God’s Word. There is an ever-increasing trend to place ‘experience’ over against ‘doctrine’. Those who argue that doctrine is ‘dry and crusty’ and that experience is ‘life’ know not of what they speak. The Bible over and over asserts that any experience is subject to the Word of God. The false prophets of the Old Testament spoke of experience as that which should guide God’s people. God denounced them (Read Jeremiah 23:9 - 40; 28:1 - 17; Deuteronomy 13:1 – 5). Experience cannot be the same as truth. Every person has different experiences. The claim that is made by some Christians today that God gives them revelation cannot be true, for God’s Word says that God’s revelation is complete and final (Hebrews 1:1 - 3; Revelation 22:18, 19). So, experience is no guarantee of truth. All experience must be subjected to the Bible.

The reason why there is this great difference placed upon experience and doctrine is plain to me. The bottom line is that people simply do not read and study their Bibles. I confess that I do not understand how people can claim to be Christians who have never read the Bible even years after their conversions. If God speaks to us through His Word, and we don’t read the Bible, how then can we claim a relationship with God? I can understand illiteracy or blindness as being good reasons for not being able to read the Bible. Some people have been Christians for years and have never read the Bible through from cover to cover. What does this say about the condition of the Church? The answer is plain, there needs to be a return to the Bible and to the God of the Bible. The situation is desperate, and desperate times call for desperate measures.

Never place experience over against or above the Bible. Experience is always subordinate to and subject to the Word of God. This means then, that a return to the Bible will mean a return to doctrine. This leads to knowledge, and it is knowledge of the Triune God that we desperately need today. Hosea 4:6 - 9 tells us that God’s people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. They claim to know God, but in reality they do not. Is not this a perilous position to be in? We must endeavor to ensure that we are not like this. Unless we improve in this area, we contribute to the decline of Christ’s Church. There is no room for excuses, nor can we say this is too strong or challenging. God’s Word is always strong and challenging, no matter which way you look at it. Don’t let your heart become calloused. The writer to the Hebrews warns us of this perilous condition of not hearing

God (Hebrews 12:25). We must let our heads and hearts be ignited by the flame of God’s truth, for only then can our lives be different, and only then will the Church be strong.

In my opinion here are some of the current issues facing the Church today. There is first of all the idea that the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ only makes salvation possible. This means that the Lord Jesus did not secure the salvation of any particular individuals but has left salvation to be determined by the free will of man. This is often referred to as Arminianism and its sister is Amyraldianism (often known as four-point Calvinism or the School of Saumur, or hypothetical universalism). Either the death of Jesus saves us or it does not? This is the issue that the Reformers resolved for us, but the Church today continues to promote the false teachings of Pelagius and Arminius.

Secondly, the doctrine of Justification by faith (the article by which the Church stands or falls, as Luther said.) is currently at the forefront of theological debate. Are we justified by faith in the sense that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us or did Paul mean something entirely different? This debate is often referred to as "the New Perspective on Paul." The New Perspective analyzes and reassesses the patterns of belief by the Pharisees and Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It argues that Judaism did not have a works-righteousness theological system or religion. The problem raised by the New Perspective on Paul argues that the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century did not view a sharp distinction between the Law and the Gospel, but rather their distinguishing mark was their nationality. They viewed themselves solely as God's people, and it was this position or viewpoint of the Jews that made them acceptable before God and not whether they kept the Law as a works-righteousness system. The New Perspective states that Justification has nothing to do with legalism, works or faith, but whether the Gentiles are included or not. The Jews problem therefore was not that they were self-righteous or legalistic, but that they excluded Christianity. They misused the Law, we are told as a means of excluding the Gentiles rather than including them, and thus all the Reformers, especially Martin Luther failed to read Paul in the 1<sup>st</sup> century correctly. The problem according to the New Perspective is that the Jews were nationalistic rather than self-righteous. Yet in the New Testament, both Jesus and the Apostle Paul point to the fact that justification has nothing to do with an identity (as nationalism would), but rather as a state before God that only takes place through the instrumentality of faith, and therefore, justification means being right with God from a legal standpoint and not from a nationalistic standpoint, and that the Jews were precisely self-righteous looking to their works (in addition to heritage) to save them.

Finally, the ongoing debacle and battle over what constitutes true worship is at fever pitch. Churches are always told that unless you change your paradigm model and become seeker-sensitive (the Church is for the unbeliever as well as the believer) you will never attract the world. I have never read in the Bible that the Church is to attract the world, but rather that those who are friendly with the world are the enemies of God (James 4:4). It is important to remember that our music and our attitude toward God must reflect that fact that "our God is a consuming fire" and therefore we must reverence God and offer acceptable worship. It is possible to offer unacceptable worship to God (as did Cain, Nadab and Abihu). In my opinion, I think the issue will (if it has not done so already) contribute finally to the division and breakdown of the Evangelical Church. Thus, the question will be, as it always is, what or who is an Evangelical?

The Christian Church has a responsibility to seek God on these issues. Let us not become like the world in order to win the world. Let us become like Christ. Let us go back to our Bibles dependent on the Holy Spirit to lead us and help us. Let us esteem the Lordship of Jesus and bow in submission to Him. Let us fight the world, flesh, sin and the devil with the whole armor of God. The Church must be called back to her faith. Only then will she be strong. Finally, let us insist on the authority of Holy Scripture. It is our only authority for faith, worship and conduct.

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*"If ever there should come a wretched day when all our pulpits be full of modern thought, and the old doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice shall be exploded, then there will remain no word of comfort for the guilty or hope for the despairing."*

*C. H Spurgeon*

# Atonement

Leon Morris<sup>1</sup>

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The expression "to make atonement" is frequent in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, but rare in the rest of the Bible. The basic idea, however, is widespread. The need for it arises from the fact that man is a sinner, a truth made plain throughout Scripture but infrequent outside the Bible.

In the OT sin is dealt with by the offering of sacrifice. Thus the burnt offering will be accepted "to make atonement" (Lev. 1:4), as also the sin offering and the guilt offering (Lev. 4:20; 7:7) and especially the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Of course, sacrifice is ineffective if offered in the wrong spirit. To sin "with a high hand" (Num. 15:30), i.e., proudly and presumptuously, is to place oneself outside the sphere of God's forgiveness. The prophets have many denunciations of the offering of sacrifice as the expression of a repentant and trustful heart is to find atonement. Atonement is sometimes made by means other than the sacrifices, such as the payment of money (Exod. 30:12-16) or the offering of life (II Sam. 21:3-6). In such cases to make atonement means "to avert punishment, especially the divine anger, by the payment of a koper, a ransom, which may be of money or which may be of life" (see L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 166). Throughout the OT sin is serious; it will be punished unless atonement is sought in the way God has provided.

This truth is repeated and enlarged upon in the NT. There it is made clear that all men are sinners (Rom. 3:23) and that hell awaits them (Mark 9:43; Luke 12:5). But it is just as clear that God wills to bring salvation and that he has brought it in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of his Son. The love of God is the mainspring (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). We are not to think of a loving Son as wringing salvation from a just but stern Father. It is the will of the Father that men be saved, and salvation is accomplished, not with a wave of the hand, so to speak, but by what God has done in Christ: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:19), a reconciliation brought about by the death of Christ (Rom. 5:10). The NT emphasizes his death, and it is no accident that the cross has come to be accepted as the symbol of the Christian faith or that words like "crux" and "crucial" have come to have the significance that they possess. The cross is absolutely central to salvation as the NT sees it. This is distinctive of Christianity. Other religions have their martyrs, but the death of Jesus was not that of a martyr. It was that of a Savior. His death saves men from their sins. Christ took their place and died their death (Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21), the culmination of a ministry in which he consistently made himself one with sinners.

The NT does not put forward a theory of atonement, but there are several indications of the principle on which atonement is effected. Thus sacrifice must be offered, not the sacrifice of animals, which cannot avail for men (Heb. 10:4), but the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9:26; 10:5-10). Christ paid sin's due penalty (Rom. 3:25-26; 6:23; Gal. 3:13). He redeemed us (Eph. 1:7), paying the price that sets us free (I Cor. 6:20; Gal. 5:1). He made a new covenant (Heb. 9:15). He won the victory (I Cor. 15:55-57). He effected the propitiation that turns away the wrath of God (Rom. 3:25), made the reconciliation that turns enemies into friends (Eph. 2:16). His love and his patient endurance of suffering set an example (I Pet. 2:21); we are to take up our cross (Luke 9:23). Salvation is many-sided. But however it is viewed, Christ has taken our place, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Our part is simply to respond in repentance, faith, and selfless living.

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*"There is no death of sin without the death of Christ."*

*John Owen*

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris (1914 – 2006) was Principal of Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia. He wrote often on the Atonement of Christ, publishing an excellent work called *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. This article is taken from the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* by Walter A. Elwell.

## Justification Made Plain (or Just what is Justification?)

C. H. Spurgeon<sup>1</sup>

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Now, what is the meaning of justification? Divines will puzzle you, if you ask them. I must try the best I can to make justification plain and simple, even to the comprehension of a child. There is not such a thing as justification to be had on earth for mortal men, except in one way. Justification, you know, is a forensic term: it is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the bar of justice to be tried. There is only one way whereby that prisoner can be justified, that is, he must be found not guilty. And if he is found not guilty, then he is justified, that is, he is proved to be a just man. If you find that man guilty, you cannot justify him. The Queen may pardon him, but she cannot justify him. The deed is not a justifiable one, if he were guilty concerning it, and he cannot be justified on account of it. He may be pardoned, but not royalty itself can ever wash that man's character. He is as much a real criminal when he is pardoned as before. There is no means among men of justifying a man of an accusation which is laid against him, except by his being proved not guilty. Now, the wonder of wonders is, that we are proved guilty, and yet we are justified: the verdict has been brought in against us—guilty—and yet notwithstanding, we are justified. Can any earthly tribunal do that? No, it remained for the ransom of Christ to effect that which is an impossibility to any tribunal upon earth. We are all guilty. Read the 23rd verse, immediately preceding the text: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” There the verdict of guilty is brought in, and yet we are immediately afterwards said to be justified freely by his grace.

Now, allow me to explain the way whereby God justifies a sinner. I am about to suppose an impossible case. A prisoner has been tried and condemned to death. He is a guilty man; he cannot be justified because he is guilty. But now, suppose for a moment that such a

thing as this could happen—that some second party could be introduced, who could take all that man's guilt upon himself, who could change places with that man, and by some mysterious process, which of course is impossible with men, become that man or take that man's character upon himself. He, the righteous man, putting the rebel in his place and making the rebel a righteous man—we cannot do that in our courts! If I were to go before a judge, and he should agree that I should be committed for a year's imprisonment, instead of some wretch who was condemned yesterday to a year's imprisonment, I could not take his guilt. I might take his punishment, but not his guilt. Now, what flesh and blood cannot do, that Jesus Christ by his redemption did. Here I stand, the sinner. I mention myself as the representative of you all I am condemned to die God says, “I will condemn that man, I must, I will — I will punish him.” Christ comes in, puts me aside, and stands himself in my stead. When the plea is demanded, Christ says, “Guilty;” takes my guilt to be his own guilt. When the punishment is to be executed, forth comes Christ. “Punish me,” he says; “I have put my righteousness on that man, and I have taken that man's sins on me. Father, punish me, and consider that man to have been me. Let him reign in heaven; let me suffer misery. Let me endure his curse, and let him receive my blessing.” This marvelous doctrine of the changing of places of Christ with poor sinners is a doctrine of revelation, for it never could have been conceived by nature. Let me, lest I should have made a mistake, explain myself again. The way whereby God saves a sinner is not, as some say, by passing over the penalty. No; the penalty has been all paid. It is the putting of another person in the rebel's place. The rebel must die. God says he must. Christ says, “I will be substitute for the rebel. The rebel shall take my place; I will take his.” God consents to it. No earthly monarch could have power to consent to such a change. But the God of heaven had a right to do as he pleased. In his infinite mercy he consented to the arrangement. “Son of my love,” said he, “you must stand in the sinner's place; you must suffer what he ought to have suffered, you must be accounted guilty, just as he was accounted guilty, and then I will look upon the sinner in another light. I will look at him as if he were Christ; I will accept him as if he were my only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. I will give him a crown in heaven, and I will take him to my heart for ever and ever.” This is the way we are saved. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

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<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from *Justification by Grace*, a Sermon Delivered by Charles Spurgeon on Sabbath Morning, April 5, 1857, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

And now, let me further go on to explain some of the characteristics of this justification. As soon as a repenting sinner is justified, remember, he is justified for all his sins. Here stands a man all guilty. The moment he believes in Christ, his pardon at once he receives; and his sins are no longer his. They are cast into the depths of the sea. They were laid upon the shoulders of Christ, and they are gone. The man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved. "What!" say you, "do you mean that literally?" Yes, I do. That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Man ceases to be regarded by divine justice as a guilty being; the moment he believes on Christ, his guilt is all taken away. But I am going a step further. The moment the man believes in Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God's esteem; but what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious, for in the moment when Christ takes his sins, he takes Christ's righteousness; so that when God looks upon the sinner who but an hour ago was dead in sins, he looks upon him with as much love and affection as he ever looked upon his Son. He himself has said it: "As the Father loved me, so have I loved you." He loves us as much as his Father loved him. Can you believe such a doctrine as that? Does it not pass all thought? Well, it is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine whereby we must hope to be saved. Can I to any unenlightened person illustrate this thought better? I will give him the parable we have given to us in the prophets—the parable of Joshua the high-priest. Joshua comes in, clothed in filthy garments; those filthy garments representing his sins. Take away the filthy garments; that is pardon. Put a miter on his head; clothe him in royal raiment; make him rich and fair; that is justification. But where do these garments come from? And where do those rags go to? Why the rags that Joshua had on go to Christ, and the garments put on Joshua are the garments that Christ wore. The sinner and Christ do just what Jonathan and David did. Jonathan put his robes on David, David gave Jonathan his garments. So Christ takes our sins, we take Christ's righteousness, and it is by a glorious substitution and interchange of places that sinners go free and are justified by his grace.

"But," says one, "No one is justified like that till he dies." Believe me, he is.

*"The moment a sinner believes  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives;  
Salvation in full, through his blood."*

If that young man over there has really believed in Christ this morning, realizing by a spiritual experience what I have attempted to describe, he is as much justified in God's sight now as he will be when he stands before the throne. Not the glorified spirits above are more acceptable to God than the poor man below who is once justified by grace. It is a perfect washing, it is perfect pardon, perfect imputation. We are fully, freely, and wholly accepted through Christ our Lord.

Just one more word here, and then I will leave this matter of justification. Those who are once justified are justified irreversibly. As soon as a sinner takes Christ's place, and Christ takes the sinner's place, there is no fear of a second change. If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid; and it will never be asked for again. If you are pardoned, you are pardoned once for ever. God does not give man a free pardon under his own sign-manual, and then afterwards retract it and punish man: that be far from God so to do. He says, "I have punished Christ; you may go free." And after that, we may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" that "being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And now I hear one cry, "That is an extraordinary doctrine." Well, so some may think; but let me say to you, it is a doctrine professed by all Protestant churches, though they may not preach it. It is the doctrine of the Church of England, it is the doctrine of Luther, it is the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church: it is professedly the doctrine of all Christian churches. And if it seems strange in your ears, it is because your ears are estranged, and not because the doctrine is a strange one. It is the doctrine of holy writ that none can condemn whom God justifies and that none can accuse those for whom Christ hath died; for they are totally free from sin. So that, as one of the prophets has it, God sees no sin in Jacob or iniquity in Israel. In the moment they believe their sins being imputed to Christ, they cease to be theirs, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that they are accepted.

*“Anyone can escape responsibility for his or her wrongdoing simply by claiming the status of a victim. Thus sin is no longer viewed as it really is – sin!”*

*John MacArthur*

# Soul Idolatry

David Clarkson<sup>1</sup>

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*"You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or covetous person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a such a person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world." Ephesians 5:5*

A covetous man is an idolater. Not only the covetous, but the immoral, are idolaters. Idolatry is to give that honor and worship to 'the creature', which is due to the Creator alone. When this worship is communicated to other things, whatever they are, we thereby make them idols, and commit idolatry. Now this worship due to God alone, is not only given by the savage heathen to their stick and stones—and by papists to angels, saints and images—but also by carnal men to their lusts.

There is a twofold worship due only to God—

1. External, which consists in acts and gestures of the body. When a man bows to or prostrates himself before a thing, this is the worship of the body. And when these gestures of bowing, prostration are used, not out of a civil, but a religious respect, with an intention to testify divine honor, then it is worship due only to God.

2. Internal, which consists in the acts of the soul and actions answerable thereto. When the mind is most taken up with an object and the heart and affections most set upon it, this is 'soul worship'—and this is due only to God. For He being the chief good and the chief end of intelligent creatures, it is His due, proper to Him alone, to be most minded and most loved. It is the honor due only to the Lord to have the first, the highest place, both in our minds and hearts and endeavors.

Now according to this distinction of worship, there are two sorts of idolatry—

1. Open, outward idolatry, when men, out of a religious respect, bow to, or prostrate themselves before anything besides the true God. This is the idolatry of the heathen, and in part, the idolatry of papists.

2. Secret and soul idolatry, when the mind is set on anything more than God; when anything is more valued than God, more desired than God, more sought than God, more loved than God. Then is that soul worship, which is due only to God.

Hence, "secret idolaters" shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. Soul idolatry will exclude men out of heaven as well as open idolatry. He who serves his lusts is as incapable of entering heaven, as he who worships idols of wood or stone!

Before we come to confirm and apply this truth, it will be requisite to make a more clear discovery of this secret idolatry. In order thereunto, observe, there are thirteen acts of soul worship—

1. **ESTEEM.** That which we most highly value, we make our God. For esteem is an act of soul worship. Worship is the mind's esteem of a thing as most excellent. Now the Lord demands the highest esteem, as an act of honor and worship due only to Himself. Therefore, to have an high esteem of other things, when we have low thoughts of God, is idolatry.

2. **MINDFULNESS.** That which we are most mindful of—we make our God. For to be most remembered, to be most minded, is an act of worship which is proper to God, and which He requires as due to Himself alone (Ecc. 12:1). Other things may be minded; but if they be more minded than God, it is idolatry—the worship of God is given to the creature. When you mind yourselves, mind your estates and worldly interests, mind your profits or pleasures more than God—you set these up as idols in the place of God.

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<sup>1</sup> David Clarkson (1622 – 1686) was co-pastor with the famous John Owen of a congregation in Leadenhall Street, London. He preached Owen's funeral sermon in 1683, and assumed sole pastorship of the church.

3. INTENTION. That which we most aim at, we make our God. For to be most intended is an act of worship due only to the true God. For He being the chief good—He must be the chief end.

4. RESOLUTION. What we are most resolved for, we worship as God. Resolvedness for God, above all things, is an act of worship which He demands as due to Himself alone. To communicate it to other things is to give the worship of God unto them, and so to make them gods.

5. LOVE. That which we most love—we worship as our God. For love is an act of soul-worship. To love and to adore are sometimes both one. That which one loves—he worships. Love to the creature, whenever it is inordinate, it is an idolatrous affection.

6. TRUST. That which we most trust we make our God. For confidence and dependence is an act of worship, which the Lord calls for as due only to Himself. And what act of worship is there which the Lord more requires than this soul-dependence upon Him alone? "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" (Prov. 3:5).

7. FEAR. That which we most fear, we worship as our God. For fear is an act of worship. He who fears, worships that which is feared—which is unquestionable when his fear is transcendent. The whole worship of God is frequently in Scripture expressed by this one word "fear" (Mat. 4:10; Deu. 6:13); and the Lord demands this worship, this fear, as due to Him alone (Isa 50:12, 19). That is our God which is our fear and dread (Luke 12:4, 5). If you fear others more than Him, you give that worship to them which is due only to God—and this is plain idolatry.

8. HOPE. That which we make our hope we worship as God. For hope is an act of worship—and worship is due only to God. It is His prerogative to be the hope of His people (Jer. 17:13; Rom. 15:13). When we make other things our hope, we give them the honor due only to God. It is a forsaking of the Lord the 'Fountain'—and setting up of 'broken cisterns' into His place (Jer 2:13), hereby worshiping them as God. Those who make their own righteousness the foundation of their hope—they exalt it into the place of Christ and honor it as God.

9. DESIRE. That which we most desire—we worship as our God. For that which is chiefly desired, is the chief good, in the estimation of the one who desires it. And what he counts his chief good, that he makes his god. Desire is an act of worship—and to be most desired is that worship, that honor, which is due only to God. To desire anything more, or as much, as the enjoyment of God—is to idolize it, to prostrate the heart to it, and worship it as God alone should be worshiped.

10. DELIGHT. That which we most delight and rejoice in—that we worship as God. For transcendent delight is an act of worship due to God alone. That which is our delight above all things, we glory in it—and this is the prerogative which the Lord demands (1 Cor. 1:31; Jer. 9:23, 24). To rejoice more in our wisdom, strength, riches, than in the Lord—is to idolize them. To take more delight in relations, wife, or children, in outward comforts and accommodations, than in God—is to worship them, as we ought only to worship God. To take more pleasure in any way of sin, uncleanness, intemperance, earthly employments—than in the holy ways of God—than in those spiritual and heavenly services wherein we may enjoy God—is idolatry.

11. ZEAL. That for which we are most zealous, we worship as God. For such a zeal is an act of worship due only to God. Therefore, it is idolatrous to be more zealous for our own things—than for the things of God—to be eager in our own cause; and careless in the cause of God—to be more vehement for our own pleasure, interests, advantages; than for the truths, ways, honor of God—to be fervent in following our own business, promoting our designs; but lukewarm and indifferent in the service of God.

12. GRATITUDE. That to which we are most grateful, that we worship as God. For gratitude is an act of worship. We worship that for which we are most thankful. We may be thankful to men, we may acknowledge the helpfulness of means and instruments—but if we rest here and rise not higher in our thanks and acknowledgments—if the Lord is not remembered as Him without whom all these are nothing—it is idolatry. To ascribe that, which comes from God unto the creatures, is to set them in the place of God and so to worship them.

13. When our care and industry is more for other things, than for God—this is idolatrous. No man can serve two masters. We cannot serve God and mammon—God and our lusts also—because this service of ourselves and of the world, takes up that care, that industry, those endeavors, which the Lord must have of necessity, if we will serve Him as God. And when our time and endeavors are laid out for the world and our lusts, we serve them as the Lord ought to be served—and so make them our gods. When you are more careful and industrious to please men or yourselves, than to please God—when you are more careful to provide for yourselves and posterity, than to be serviceable unto God—when you are more careful as to what you shall eat, drink, or be clothed, than how you may honor and enjoy God—when you are more careful to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof, than how to fulfill the will of God—when you are more industrious to promote your own interests, than the designs of God—when you are more careful to be rich, or great, or respected among men, than that God may be honored and advanced in the world—when you are more careful how to get the things of the world, than how to employ them for God—when you rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of carefulness, that your outward estate may prosper, while the cause, and ways, and interests of Christ have few or none of your endeavors—this is to idolize the world, yourselves, your lusts, your relations, while the God of heaven is neglected! And the worship and service due unto Him alone is hereby idolatrously given to other things!

He who makes Christ his chief aim, if at length he finds Him whom his soul loves—this quiets his heart—whatever he lacks, whatever he loses besides. He counts this a full recompense for all his tears, prayers, inquiries, waitings, endeavors.

*"Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry!"* 1 Corinthians 10:14

# Called to Discipleship & Eating with Sinners (Mark 2:13 – 17)

Russ Atmore

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## Scripture

Mark 2:13 – 17

## Key Verse

“...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Mark 2:17c

## Theme

Jesus calls us as sinners to be his true disciples.

## Exposition

We see Jesus in this passage of Scripture moving back to the sea (of Galilee) again, and as usual, due to his great popularity, the crowds have increased, and He spends some time teaching them. At this stage, Jesus has called four disciples. These were Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, and the two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. It is possible that Philip and Nathanael had also been called (see John 1:35 – 51). In verse 14, as Jesus is making his way in the region of the Sea of Galilee, probably along a road where merchants traveled on, He comes upon Levi (Matthew – see Matt. 9:9ff), the son of Alphaeus sitting at a tax booth collecting taxes or tariffs from the merchants for the Roman government. We do not know if Jesus gave Levi a second name (Matthew) or whether he possessed both already. Luke refers to Levi as a “publican” (Luke 5:27) and Matthew 10:3 refers to him as “Matthew the publican.” There is little doubt between the three gospel accounts that we are dealing with the same man. Levi is probably collecting taxes on those who traveled the road from

Syria to Egypt representing Rome. He would not have been liked by his fellow Jews. In fact, they would have viewed him with distaste, as someone who was a traitor. The word “publican” refers to the collection of “public” taxes on either imports or exports into and from the region. Publicans generally acquired the reputation of being extortionists and thus held in very low esteem (see Matt. 9:10, 11; 11:19; 21:31, 32; Luke 5:30; 7:34; 15:1; 19:7)

As Levi is sitting at his booth, Jesus comes by and calls to him to follow Him. In response, Levi, we are told got up and followed the Lord. Matthew’s account reports that he got up and followed the Lord (Matt. 9:9), but it is Luke’s account that tells us that Matthew upon hearing the call of the Lord to follow Him, left everything (Luke 5:28). Thus, Luke tells us the cost of discipleship. Discipleship always has a cost to it. There is a price to pay. In the New Testament that price is described as cross-bearing or the way of death. Matthew left his lucrative business, and in one sense his call and the price that he paid was far greater than the other four disciples. His cost was the loss of everything. There was no going back to the life of tax collecting. It was over.

Matthew desires that the Lord come to his house, and as Sinclair Ferguson says, he threw a “conversion party.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus is the invited guest who reclines at a table full of other invited guests who were themselves tax collectors in addition to others that the Pharisees and their scribes called “sinners” (Luke 5: 29, 30). Mark states that the many guests were also among those who followed Jesus (Mark 2:15). It should be assumed that the Pharisees and their scribes were not at Matthew’s house by invitation, but were probably observing from a distance, keeping their eyes on Jesus. In their estimation, these guests were sinners because they refused to submit to

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *Let’s Study Mark* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999, reprinted 2002), 29.

the Pharisees interpretation of the Law. A strict application of this would also mean that Jesus and his disciples would have been viewed by the Pharisees as sinners, and I think this is probably how they viewed the Lord or at the very least they just did not know what to make of our Lord – certainly their antagonism was to grow significantly. In this sense then they ask their question of Jesus’ disciples concerning the Lord in verse 16, “why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” I think it is true that the people at Matthew’s house should be regarded as sinners. This is how Jesus views them when He comments on his mission to them in verse 17 – He came to call sinners those who were sick and in need of a divine physician. The relationship that exists here between Jesus and the guests is not to be viewed as bad. There are times when fellowship with the world is very bad, but here Jesus meets with Matthew as his guest and also because there was a very pressing need to be met. The guests were in need of salvation, and they had come to hear Him. Jesus relationship to the “sinners” is on the ground of their need of curing and not as a partner in their evil deeds.

He rejects the criticism of these other guests by the Pharisees and scribes by delivering a statement that points out their own shortcomings in caring for the sick, on the basis that they regarded themselves as physicians (because they were Pharisees they saw themselves as spiritually healthy). The Pharisees should have understood that since they considered themselves spiritual, that their business should have been to care for the sick spiritually, but they were blind. Jesus stresses that this concern for the sick is really spiritual because He states that he came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). Mark’s Gospel does not contain the words “to repentance.” What Jesus has in mind is salvation, not just mere observance of a moral code that misguided people and offered bondage rather than healing.

### **Application**

The invitation to salvation is not made to those who consider themselves righteous or worthy. It is made instead to people who regard themselves as unworthy and in desperate need. Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost (Luke 19:10), the spiritually destitute, beggars, thirsty, and hungry ones. If the Pharisees were really concerned for the sick and lost, then their separation to God should have led them to love for these tax collectors and sinners. Modern surgeons clean themselves thoroughly before surgery so that they can impart cleanness to the diseased. So too, Jesus imparts holiness to sinners. He is not contaminated by them, but rather He seeks to make them holy by bringing them to Himself. The Pharisees were not. What are we more concerned with?

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*“Self-love keeps all our senses bound in such a manner that brotherly love is altogether banished. Piety is the root of charity.”*  
*John Calvin*

# Bible Quiz

Kaitlin Atmore

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R N A S X E A O A H A K T  
 A H A S U E R U S E S H E  
 Z A X D K R Z E S X O I Z  
 Z J D I N Z Y E J H O S B  
 E E H V I A A C H R U A S  
 N H S A I A S E E I S I A  
 D O H D A U Z A R R D A Z  
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 C A A I K O Z H O L B S O  
 U P A Z H A I S O J U E B  
 B H I A H O A M J H R A E  
 E A D S T I O B U A H P S  
 N T T E O N S S A A S S I

Please find the following  
**KINGS OF THE BIBLE**

|                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| Solomon        | David  |
| Saul           |        |
| Ahasuerus      | Darius |
| Nebuchadnezzar |        |
| Artaxerxes     | Ahaz   |
| Hezekiah       |        |
| Uzziah         | Ahab   |
| Jehoshaphat    |        |
| Zedekiah       | Josiah |
| Cyrus          |        |