



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 105 - Hit the Ground Running (The Gospel of Mark)

In the first third of the second century, Papias—the bishop of Hierapolis in present-day Turkey—identified John Mark of Acts 13 as the Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Assuming Papias was correct, we see a big similarity between the writer of the second Gospel and the reluctant judge Gideon (see Judges 6-8) in that both were cowardly. In the book of Acts we see John Mark join Paul and his cousin Barnabas on their first missionary journey only to abandon them in the middle of the trip (see Acts 13:13). This event prompted a division between Paul and Barnabas when Barnabas wanted to take him along on their second journey (see Acts 15:36-40). It is also possible that Mark was the young man who fled the garden naked when Jesus was arrested (see Mark 14:51-52).

- How might it seem strange that God would use such a cowardly, young man to record one of the Gospels of Jesus Christ?
- How does Mark's cowardice compare to the disciples' reaction to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion?
- How does Mark's story encourage us when we fail to serve Christ faithfully because of our fears?

Years later Paul wrote to Timothy, "... Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11b). Clearly Mark had matured and become a valuable helper. We see Mark again in Peter's first letter where he mentions Mark being with him in Rome (see 1 Peter 5:13). According to tradition it was here with Peter that Mark got the material to write his Gospel.

- How has your faith matured through the years?
- Which people do you consider to be helpful for your faith?
- How can you be more helpful to those around you?

Mark's Gospel shows Jesus as a Man of action frequently using words like "immediately." We see that same Man of action going out to meet Judas and those who have come to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Mark 14:41-42). Jesus carried out His work and won our complete salvation through His suffering and death on the cross and His glorious resurrection on the third day.

- So much of life is filled with waiting, wondering and worrying. What encouragement does it give to realize that Jesus is active and does not hesitate to go to work for us?
- How can we be men of action, without being too impulsive?