

“A Final Look at The Servant in Action in the Gospel of Mark”<sup>\*\*1</sup>

Main Idea: The Gospel of Mark teaches us two important truths about Jesus the Servant, which are summarized in Mark 10:45 and developed throughout the rest of the book.

General Observations: What did Mark teach us about Jesus?

1. Mark gave us the *beginning* of the good news about Jesus (1:1).
  2. Mark emphasized what Jesus did more than what Jesus said.
  3. Mark focused on the last week of Jesus’ life.
  4. Mark presented Jesus as a servant (10:45).
- I. Jesus served by living a perfect life (10:45a; chapters 1-10).
- A. He did not live for Himself but for others.
    1. He called Himself ‘the Son of Man.’
    2. He became a man to do for man what man cannot do for himself.
  - B. He said His life was a ransom payment.
    1. His life revealed God’s righteous standard.
    2. His life satisfied God’s righteous standard.
    3. His life’s merit is imputed to sinners by faith.

**William Ames:** “The obedience of Christ is that righteousness (Romans 5:16) in the name of which the grace of God justifies us, just as the disobedience of Adam was that offense (Romans 5:16) for which God’s justice condemns us. Therefore the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers in justification.”

II. Jesus served by dying a sacrificial death (10:45b; chapters 11-16).

- A. He did not die for Himself but for the sins of others.
- B. He said He gave His life as a ransom payment.
  1. We need His active obedience.
  2. We need His passive obedience.

**J. I. Packer:** His **active obedience** (perfect lifelong conformity to God’s law for mankind, and to his revealed will for the Messiah) qualified Jesus to become our Savior by dying for us on the cross. Jesus’ **passive obedience** (enduring the penalty of God’s broken law as our sinless substitute) crowned his active obedience to secure the pardon and acceptance of those who put their faith in him ( Rom. 5:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21 ; Phil. 2:8 ; Heb. 10:5-10 ).”

**J. Gresham Machen:** “By His **passive obedience** — that is, by suffering in our stead — He paid the penalty for us; by His **active obedience** — that is, by doing what the law of God required — He has merited for us the reward.”

**John Owen:** “First, by the obedience of the life of Christ you see what is intended, —his willing submission unto, and perfect, complete fulfilling of, every law of God, that any of the saints of God were obliged unto. It is true, every act almost of Christ’s obedience, from the blood of his circumcision to the blood of his cross, was attended with suffering, so that his whole life might, in that regard, be called a death; but yet, looking upon his willingness and obedience in it, it is distinguished from his sufferings peculiarly so called, and termed his **active righteousness.**”

Make It Personal: Everything Jesus accomplished was for the benefit of His people!

1. There is hope for those who struggle with guilt.
 

**W. G. T. Shedd:** “Christ’s **active obedience** is his perfect performance of the requirements of the moral law.”
2. There is incentive for righteous living.
 

**J. Gresham Machen:** “We can put it briefly by saying that Christ took our place with respect to the law of God. He paid for us the law’s penalty, and He obeyed for us the law’s commands. He saved us from hell, and He earned for us our entrance into heaven.”
3. There is cause for a life of thanksgiving.

It was 146 years ago this week that the Lord brought WBC into existence. The Lord said He would build His church, and He has and is!

We love the Word of God at WBC, and today we’ve come to the final message in our series in the Gospel of Mark. For our Scripture reading, and as we prepare for the Lord’s table later, I’d like to take us back to the theme verse of the book.

*Scripture Reading: Mark 10:45*

<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2007.

One of the greatest privileges in the world is to introduce someone to Jesus. I'm so grateful for the individuals God used in my life to make His Son known to me. For parents who put me in places where I would hear God's Word, for Pastor Fissel who introduced me to Jesus at age eleven, for Mrs. Yoder, Mr. Moore, Mr. King, Mr. Miller and many other Sunday School teachers and youth workers who built on that foundation during my early teen years, for Pastor Derneln who mentored me through the college years and beyond, emphasizing the importance of having a big and growing view of God through the careful study of His Word.

And He's still using people. I'm thankful *for a godly wife* who has taught me about Jesus' sufficiency while dealing with lupus and chronic pain during the past three decades.

I'm certainly grateful *for the WBC family*, and how God continues to use you in each other's lives, including mine, so we can grow in our knowledge of Him. This is our purpose as a church, *to know Him and to make Him known to others*.

That's why this morning another 'thank you' is in order. For three years now, God has been using someone to teach us about His Son. That person is Mark, and we've had the privilege to walk verse by verse through the gospel that the Holy Spirit guided Mark to write. Today, some fifty-four messages later, we are ending our journey, and we want to say together, "Thank you, Mark, for teaching us about Jesus!"

Years ago, I heard Warren Wiersbe give a helpful piece of advice on how to preach through a book in the Bible. Use the first message to tell the people where you're going. Then preach your way through the book. Then, take a final message to remind the people where you've been. That's excellent advice, and we're going to heed it again today.

What have we learned about Jesus from Mark? I'd like to answer that question in two ways, first by offering some general observations and then by pinpointing one specific characteristic of Jesus that we've seen throughout Mark's Gospel.

#### General Observations: What did Mark teach us about Jesus?

1. *Mark gave us the beginning of the good news about Jesus (1:1).* That's what Mark said in the very first verse of his Gospel, Mark 1:1, "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark doesn't tell us anything about the first thirty years of Jesus' life, bypassing His birth, childhood, and early adult life. Instead, Mark tells the story of what Jesus did during His final three years on earth, calling these accomplishments, 'the *beginning* of the good news [lit. the 'gospel'] about Jesus.'

The implication is that the good news didn't end when Jesus returned to heaven. Mark gave us only volume one. If you want to read volume two, you need to check out the book of Acts where you'll see what Jesus did through the preaching of His followers throughout the Roman Empire.

2. *Mark emphasized what Jesus did more than what Jesus said.* Mark's account is action-packed and fast-paced. He doesn't record Jesus' most famous sermons, like The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), The Good Shepherd (John 10), and The Vine and the branches (John 15). Mark wants His readers to *see Jesus in action*.<sup>2</sup>

Mark is writing for a non-Jewish, Roman audience about thirty years after Jesus returned to heaven. That explains why he inserts several explanations about Jewish

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<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly Mark uses the Greek adverb translated 'immediately' some 47 times (also translated 'at once,' 'quickly,' and 'just then').

customs and Hebrew word meanings. Mark wrote, not for the rabbi in the library but for the man on the street, particularly the streets of Rome.

3. *Mark focused on the last week of Jesus' life.* Again, Mark bypassed the first thirty years of Jesus' life altogether. Of the sixteen chapters he did write, the final six chapters tell us what happened in the final seven days of Jesus' life, called the Passion week which began on Palm Sunday and concluded on Resurrection Sunday.

We also see a geographical progression in Mark which achieves the same focus. In chapters 1-6 Mark presents Jesus' ministry in Galilee, then through chapter nine shows Him ministering to other northern regions. In chapter ten he sketches Jesus heading south into Judea and Perea, and then devotes chapters eleven to sixteen to Jesus' redemptive work in Jerusalem.

Mark wants us to know that there's something incredibly significant about Jesus' final week. If we don't understand the significance of His Passion week, then we don't understand the significance of Jesus. Was Jesus a great teacher? Yes, but there have been other great teachers. That's not what sets Jesus apart. This does. It's the work He accomplished in those final hours, namely His cross-work and His resurrection-work. More about that in a moment.

4. *Mark presented Jesus as a servant (10:45).* It's estimated that one out of every three people living in Italy in the first century was a slave. In a world that prides itself in power, the image of a slave isn't highly regarded. But that's the image Jesus chose for Himself as revealed in what is perhaps the key verse of the book.

Mark 10:45 (ESV) says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." That's a shocking statement! Jesus called Himself a *servant*. What did He mean by saying He came to serve? How did He serve? Who did He serve? Why did He come as a servant? We've seen the answer in Mark's Gospel.

The Gospel of Mark shows us that Jesus served in two very specific ways. We *hear* Jesus identify these two ways in Mark 10:45 and we *see* Jesus accomplish them in the flow of Mark's Gospel. I'll state them both and then we'll look at them individually:

1. Jesus served by *living a perfect life* (10:45a; chapters 1-10).
2. Jesus served by *dying a sacrificial death* (10:45b; chapters 11-16).

#### I. Jesus served by living a perfect life (10:45a; chapters 1-10).

Notice the first part of Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." His own words lead us to two observations about His life.

**A. He did not live for Himself but for others.** That's what a *servant* does. He lives to please and work for someone else. Jesus did not come to recruit people to serve Him, rather He said He came to serve others.

Who are the "others" He came to serve? We find a clue in the title Jesus used in reference to Himself.

1. *He called Himself 'the Son of Man.'* This is the title Jesus uses most commonly in the Gospels (81 times). He is the Son of *man*. The Son of God became a *man*. Why?

2. *He became a man to do for man what man cannot do for himself.* What is it that man cannot do for himself? The answer? He cannot live the life that his Maker commands and requires. And what specifically does God command and require?

Jesus answered that question in Mark 12:30-31. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart...Love your neighbor as yourself." That's the essence of God's law. That's what God requires of us, that we love Him supremely and love our fellow man selflessly.

So, how is mankind doing? Not well. In fact, he failed the assignment. I have. You have. We all fall short of loving God supremely and loving others selflessly. In other words, we are law-breakers, and the sentence has been pronounced. Death. Spiritual death. Eternal separation from God.

Is there hope for law-breakers like us? According to Jesus, there is. He says He came, not to be served but *to serve*, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Look at the life of Jesus in the book of Mark and what do we see? We see the life of a person who loved God supremely and loved others selflessly. We see Jesus getting up early to begin His day in prayer (1:35). Why? Because He loved God supremely. We see Jesus heal a paralytic (2:11). Why? Because He loved man selflessly. We see Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple (11:15). Why? Because He loved God supremely. We see Jesus feeding hungry people (6:41). Why? Because He loved man selflessly. Ultimately, we see Jesus agonizing in the garden, crying out, “Not my will but yours be done (14:36).” Why? Because He loved God supremely.

And ultimately, we see Jesus enduring horrid pain and mockery on a cross (15:24). Why? Because He loved God and man selflessly. In event after event after event that’s what we see in Mark’s Gospel. We see Jesus doing what fallen man cannot do, keeping God’s law perfectly, loving God supremely and loving man selflessly.

But why? Why did Jesus live such a life? He tells us.

**B. He said His life was a ransom payment.** Notice carefully the final phrase in Mark 10:45 (NIV), “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and *to give his life as a ransom for many.*”

He didn’t say that His *death* was a ransom payment. He said He gave *His life* as a ransom. A ransom is the price necessary to set a hostage free. What does it take to set sinners like us free?

We have two fundamental problems. One is something we *did*. We have sinned, and Jesus took care of that problem by dying on the cross. But our second problem is something we *did not do*. We have failed to keep God’s law. Which of us has loved God supremely and loved man selflessly? No one has. We have not only sinned, but we have failed to live the right kind of life that God requires. “Be perfect,” Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “as you Father in heaven is perfect.”

Are you perfect? To enter God’s presence we must possess perfection, righteousness. But according to Romans 3:10, “There is no one righteous, not one.” Your problem and mine is bigger than we might think. It’s not just that we’ve sinned against God. It’s that we *lack the righteousness*, the perfect obedience to His Law, that He requires.

You say, “I don’t follow you. What exactly does *righteousness* look like?” Okay, here is the clearest answer. If we want to see righteousness, look at Jesus.

1. *His life revealed God’s righteous standard.* Jesus made this astounding claim, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them *but to fulfill them* (Matt. 5:17).” By His perfect life Jesus personified the Law. He revealed God’s righteous standard. But that’s not all.

2. *His life satisfied God’s righteous standard.* For instance, at His baptism Jesus said this in Matthew 3:15, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this *to fulfill all righteousness.*” Why did Jesus say He was baptized? For the same reason He did every other righteous act in His life (and Mark records many). To satisfy God’s standard of righteousness.

“Did He succeed?” one might ask. We hear the Father’s answer in Mark 1:11. These are His words spoken right after Jesus was baptized. “You are my Son, whom I love; with you *I am well pleased* (Mark 1:11).”

You say, “Okay, I agree that Jesus’ life revealed God’s righteous standard. And I can see how His perfect life satisfied God’s righteous standard. But how does that help me? I am *not* righteous. Looking at Jesus’ life only reminds me of my shortcomings for I am not like Him!”

It’s true that we are not like Him, and that fact would lead us to despair, were it not for the following. Jesus said that He came “*to give His life as a ransom for many.*”

If all we do is look at His life, we’ll experience condemnation for His life reveals our failures. He says He lived and gave that life as a ransom, a payment necessary to set people free. The words I’m about to say are the most beautiful, hope-giving news a sinner could ever hear.

3. *His life’s merit is imputed to sinners by faith.* Mark’s gospel account tells us *what* Jesus did. He lived a righteous life. If we’re to understand *why* He did so, we must go to the epistles.

Consider carefully Paul’s explanation in Romans 5:19, “For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous.” Because of Adam’s sin all of his descendants enter the world as sinners. That’s the bad news. Here’s the good news. Because of Jesus’ perfect obedience many are made righteous. The merit of His perfect life is given to sinners.

To all sinners? No. Which sinners benefit from Jesus’ righteous life? We must go back two verses to find the answer. Romans 5:17 says, “For if, by the trespass of the one man [Adam], death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who *receive* God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

Who benefits from Jesus’ perfect life? Does everyone? No. Those who *receive the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ* benefit.

The merit of Jesus’ life is a gift. As with any gift, it must be *received*. Have you received this wonderful gift?

This is gospel truth. If you, my friend, have received Christ as your Savior, God has declared you to be righteous. He has imputed to your life the very merit of Jesus’ righteous life.

I’m thankful for how the Lord has gifted other people who can help us understand His Word, and I’ll be sharing some quotes from them throughout this message. Listen to this helpful explanation by one of the Puritans, William Ames: “The obedience of Christ is that righteousness in the name of which the grace of God justifies us, just as the disobedience of Adam was that offense for which God’s justice condemns us. Therefore the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers in justification.”<sup>3</sup>

Here’s another helpful explanation, by Jonathan Edwards: “Christ came into the world to fulfill and answer the covenant of works, that is, the covenant that is to stand forever as a rule of judgment. And that is the covenant that we had broken, and that was the covenant that must be fulfilled.”<sup>4</sup>

Some people say doctrine isn’t practical. Actually, there’s nothing more practical. It changes the way we live...*and die*.

J. Gresham Machen was a professor who left Princeton Seminary about a hundred years ago when modernism crept in and began to turn that training ground for pastors away from sound doctrine. He helped start Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

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<sup>3</sup> Ames, William. *The Marrow of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books: 1997) Page 162.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards, Jonathan, *Works*, vol 1 (Carlisle, Banner of Truth Trust: 1992) Page 575.

During Christmas break in 1936, at the age of 55, he took the train from Philadelphia to the 20-below-zero winds of North Dakota to preach in a few Presbyterian churches at the request of pastor Samuel Allen. While there Machen became deathly sick with pneumonia and was placed in a hospital. John Piper tells what happened:

“The following day—New Year’s Day, 1937—he mustered the strength to send a telegram to John Murray his friend and colleague at Westminster. It was his last recorded word: ‘I’m so thankful for [the] active obedience of Christ. No hope without it.’ He died about 7:30 p.m.”<sup>5</sup>

What was on Machen’s mind and brought him hope as he faced death? He says it was *the active obedience of Christ*. Contrast that with the thinking of the average person on the street who, when asked why they think they’re going to heaven responds, “Because I’ve tried to live a good life.”

Whose merit are *you* trusting in, dear friend? Is it Christ’s alone, or your own?

My mother died of Parkinson’s disease ten years ago. I remember being with her one day several months before she died. She opened up to me about the guilt she was feeling. “I’m not very pleasant to be around, especially with your father.”

“Have you ever heard of J. Gresham Machen?” I asked her, and proceeded to tell her his story, particularly about what brought him confidence as he faced death. “Mom, I have good news for you, all because of the active obedience of Christ.”

Mom then went in the other room, and dad entered. After sitting down next to me, he too opened up and said, “I feel really badly about how I’m treating your mom at times.” After listening, I said, “Dad, have you ever heard of J. Gresham Machen?” And once again, we found comfort in the active obedience of Christ.

I’m so thankful that Mark taught us about the life of Jesus Christ. He showed us in this action-packed gospel that Jesus truly served us by living a perfect life.

He resisted temptation in chapter one (I so often give in). He touched and healed a leper in chapter one (how many times have I refused to help the lepers of society?). He obeyed His Heavenly Father in chapter three (instead of caving in to His earthly family’s pressure, like I’m prone to do).

In chapter four He’s sleeping in a boat in the midst of a storm (how often I’ve given way to fear during the storms of life rather than trusting God). He fed hungry people in chapter six (I’ve ignored the hungry countless times). He challenged the religious establishment in chapter seven (I’m prone to tone it down so people will like me). He was patient with people in chapter nine (I’m often impatient).

Indeed, I look at Jesus’ life in the pages of Scripture and see many other expressions of righteousness. I see His holy zeal for justice, His love for prayer, His love for the Word of God, His purity with women, all in contrast with my tendency to unrighteousness.

No wonder Machen on his deathbed was thankful for Christ’s obedience! Jesus served us by living a perfect life in our place.

But there’s more. There’s a second way in which He said that He served us.

## II. Jesus served by dying a sacrificial death (10:45b; chapters 11-16).

Listen again to Jesus in Mark 10:45 (NIV), “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus here makes two facts perfectly clear about His death.

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<sup>5</sup>[www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1464\\_J\\_Gresham\\_Machens\\_Response\\_to\\_Modernism](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1464_J_Gresham_Machens_Response_to_Modernism)

**A. He did not die for Himself but for the sins of others.** Jesus didn't die for His own sin, for He never sinned. He said His death was for the benefit of others. How so?

**B. He said He gave His life as a ransom payment.** Let this sink in. His perfect and righteous life (the life Mark presents for us in chapters 1-10), He chose to give as a ransom payment for sinners. Amazing, isn't it?

Mark devotes chapters 11-16 to provide the critical details concerning Jesus' final week, when the payment was made, with this climax. We read in 15:34, "At the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

There on the cross, the sinless Savior died in the place of sinners. His death provided the necessary payment for their forgiveness and liberation.

Beloved, there were two aspects to Jesus' obedience, and we need them both.

1. *We need His active obedience.* That's what Machen cherished on his deathbed. It's called 'active obedience' or 'active righteousness' because it is the righteousness that Jesus achieved and accomplished by means of His perfect life. Sometimes theologians refer to it as an *alien* righteousness to emphasize that this righteousness is not innate to us, but has come upon us from outside ourselves.

Isaiah pictures it as a robe in Isaiah 61:10, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness..."

When I was born, I was wearing filthy, sin-stained rags. That was the wardrobe that was on my shoulders when I entered the world, and so for you as well. And to that sin-stained wardrobe that I inherited from Adam, I added more stains, by my own sins.

But God! On the day that I trusted in Christ, God stripped off that old garment of sin and put a robe of righteousness on my shoulders. Where did He obtain this robe? Where did it come from? It belonged to His own Son, none other than the Lord Jesus Himself.

The robe symbolizes Jesus' perfect, righteous life. And God puts that robe on all His adopted sons and daughters. This is your robe, my friend, if you have repented and are now trusting in Christ. You possess the merit of His active obedience. When God looks at you, He sees you as though you lived the perfect life His Son lived.

2. *We need His passive obedience.* 'Active' speaks of what Jesus *did*. 'Passive' speaks of what Jesus *experienced*, what was *done to Him*. We need both aspects.

J. I. Packer explains: "His [Jesus'] **active obedience** (perfect lifelong conformity to God's law for mankind, and to his revealed will for the Messiah) qualified Jesus to become our Savior by dying for us on the cross. Jesus' **passive obedience** (enduring the penalty of God's broken law as our sinless substitute) crowned his active obedience to secure the pardon and acceptance of those who put their faith in him ( Rom. 5:18-19 ; 2 Cor. 5:18-21 ; Phil. 2:8 ; Heb. 10:5-10 )."<sup>6</sup>

There's a good definition of Jesus' *active* obedience: His 'perfect lifelong conformity to God's law for mankind.' I have not lived a life of perfect conformity to God's law, nor have you. And without it, we cannot enter God's presence. But Jesus did. And on the basis of Jesus' *active obedience*, God accepts those who believe in Him.

There's a good definition of Jesus' *passive obedience*. Jesus 'endured the penalty of God's broken law as our sinless substitute.' That's why He went to the cross, to endure the penalty we deserved to pay for breaking God's law.

J. Gresham Machen puts it this way: "I think I can make the matter plain if I imagine a dialogue between the law of God and a sinful man saved by grace.

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<sup>6</sup>Packer, J. I. (1995, c1993). *Concise theology : A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

‘Man,’ says the law of God, ‘have you obeyed my commands?’

‘No,’ says the sinner saved by grace. ‘I have disobeyed them, not only in the person of my representative Adam in his first sin, but also in that I myself have sinned in thought, word and deed.’

‘Well, then, sinner,’ says the law of God, ‘have you paid the penalty which I pronounced upon disobedience?’

‘No,’ says the sinner, ‘I have not paid the penalty myself; but Christ has paid it for me. He was my representative when He died there on the cross. Hence, so far as the penalty is concerned, I am clear.’

‘Well, then, sinner,’ says the law of God, ‘how about the conditions which God has pronounced for the attainment of assured blessedness? Have you stood the test? Have you merited eternal life by perfect obedience during the period of probation?’

‘No,’ says the sinner, ‘I have not merited eternal life by my own perfect obedience. God knows and my own conscience knows that even after I became a Christian I have sinned in thought, word and deed. But although I have not merited eternal life by any obedience of my own, Christ has merited it for me by His perfect obedience. He was not for Himself subject to the law. No obedience was required of Him for Himself, since He was Lord of all. That obedience, then, which He rendered to the law when He was on earth was rendered by Him as my representative. I have no righteousness of my own, but clad in Christ’s perfect righteousness, imputed to me and received by faith alone, I can glory in the fact that so far as I am concerned the probation has been kept and as God is true there awaits me the glorious reward which Christ thus earned for me.’

“Such, put in bald, simple form, is the dialogue between every Christian and the law of God. How gloriously complete is the salvation wrought for us by Christ! Christ paid the penalty, and He merited the reward. Those are the two great things that He has done for us.”

“Theologians are accustomed to distinguish those two parts of the saving work of Christ by calling one of them His passive obedience and the other of them His active obedience. By His passive obedience — that is, by suffering in our stead — He paid the penalty for us; by His active obedience — that is, by doing what the law of God required — He has merited for us the reward.”<sup>7</sup>

So good! Dear friends, if all we needed was forgiveness, then Christ could have come to earth on a parachute on Good Friday, died on the cross, and returned to heaven on Resurrection Sunday. But He didn’t. Why did He live thirty-three years of perfect life *first* and then go to the cross? Here is why. Because we need *both* righteousness *and* forgiveness. Righteousness, which God offers us by means of Jesus’ active obedience. And forgiveness, which God grants us on the basis of His Son’s passive obedience. Jesus served us by living a **perfect life** AND by dying a **sacrificial death**.

This is one of the reasons (and there are others) that Mark gave us a record of the *life* of Jesus and not just His death. We need the merit of Jesus’ life AND His death.

John Owen, another wonderful Puritan, offers this helpful clarification: “First, by the obedience of the life of Christ you see what is intended, —his willing submission unto, and perfect, complete fulfilling of, every law of God, that any of the saints of God were obliged unto. It is true, every act almost of Christ’s obedience, from the blood of his circumcision to the blood of his cross, was attended with suffering, so that his whole life might, in that regard, be called a death; but yet, looking upon his willingness and

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<sup>7</sup> J. Gresham Mehan, “The Active Obedience of Christ,” [www.the-highway.com/atone2\\_Machen.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atone2_Machen.html)



obedience in it, it is distinguished from his sufferings peculiarly so called, and termed his **active righteousness**. This is, then, I say, as was showed, that complete, absolutely perfect accomplishment of the whole law of God by Christ, our mediator; whereby he not only 'did no sin, neither was there guile fold in his mouth,' but also most perfectly fulfilled all righteousness, as he affirmed it became him to do. Secondly, that this obedience was performed by Christ not for himself, but for us, and in our stead."<sup>8</sup>

Make It Personal: Everything Jesus accomplished was for the benefit of His people!

He lived perfectly, and we benefit from it! He died horribly, and that too was for our gain! He did it all for those His Father had given Him, for those who would believe upon Him. So let's consider three, beautiful implications.

1. *There is hope for those who struggle with guilt.* What is the solution for a guilty conscience? Some people try to ignore guilt. Others try to drown it out with a bottle. Still others try to crowd it out by filling their lives with the 'stuff' of life (and it could be good stuff, like family, and service to others). But it doesn't work. The guilt remains. The conscience will not rest.

Beloved, there is only one solution for guilt. It's the one God designed and it's sure to work! Are you plagued by guilt? Then admit your sin today to the Law-giver, and put your total trust in the Law-keeper, Jesus the Christ!

Contemplate this important sentence by W. G. T. Shedd, "Christ's **active obedience** is his perfect performance of the requirements of the moral law."<sup>9</sup> Let those words sink in. *Perfect performance.* Do those words describe your life? No, they don't. But they do describe Jesus' life. And they describe the way God looks at those who believe in His Son. So, if you are in Christ, and you are if you've asked Him to save you, then God says that you are *forgiven* and *righteous*.

But there's more. Not only is there hope for those who struggle with guilt, but incentive too. For what?

2. *There is incentive for righteous living.* We used to be slaves to sin, but if we're in Christ that's no longer true. We can live righteous lives. Yes, we can! Indeed, if we've grasped what Christ accomplished for us, we'll *want* to live righteous lives! And why? This brings us to the third and final implication.

3. *There is cause for a life of thanksgiving.* Ponder a final comment by J. Gresham Machen: "We can put it briefly by saying that Christ took our place with respect to the law of God. He paid for us the law's penalty, and He obeyed for us the law's commands. He saved us from hell, and He earned for us our entrance into heaven. All that we have, then, we owe unto Him. There is no blessing that we have in this world or the next for which we should not give Christ thanks."<sup>10</sup>

**Closing Song:** #188 "*At the Cross*" (all four verses)

**Communion**

**Closing charge:** Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

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<sup>8</sup> Owen, John. Works, vol 3 (Carlisle, Banner of Truth Trust: 1992) Pages 204-205.

<sup>9</sup> Shedd, W.G.T. Dogmatic Theology, (Phillipsburg, P & R Publishing: 2003) Page 720.

<sup>10</sup> J. Gresham Machen, "The Active Obedience of Christ," [www.the-highway.com/atone2\\_Machen.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atone2_Machen.html)