

I. The Nature and Function of Controversy

A. Examples of Current Controversies

1. COVID Pandemic:
2. Social Justice Issues
3. Political Ideologies: CHAZ

B. Nature and Function of Controversies

1. Nature and function of controversy
 - a. More than a debate
 - b. A controversy is a dispute over truth
 - c. An effort to establish the authority of one position over another
 - d. A means for determining acceptable practice
2. In our world of controversy we encounter people raging against one another to establish themselves in power and authority over their own lives, their life situations, and the lives of others.
3. Jesus,
 - a. the Christ, the prophesied Messiah, the God-appointed, God-anointed Deliverer, the One specifically chosen and sent by God to rescue God's people from the peril presented by sin—
 - b. the perfect, holy, loving, gracious, glorious Son of God, God come to us in human form to save us from our sins is no stranger to controversy.
 - c. Having set forth nine (9) proofs that Jesus is the Christ, Mark now serves us a series of five occasions when Jesus' authority under God as the Christ is directly challenged, occasions we recognize as controversies.

C. Jesus and Controversies

1. Controversies in Mark 2:1-3:6
 - a. 2:1-12 The paralytic
 - (1) (Permission)
 - (2) "Why does this man speak like this? . . . Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
 - b. 2:13-17 Tax collectors and sinners
 - (1) (People)
 - (2) "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
 - c. 2:18-22 Fasting
 - (1) (Procedures and Protocols)
 - (2) "Why . . . do your disciples not fast?"
 - d. 2:23-28 Sabbath
 - (1) (Purpose)
 - (2) "Why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"
 - e. 3:1-6 Withered hand
 - (1) (Petulance)

- (2) “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?”
2. Outcomes in Mark 2:1-3:6
 - a. Each controversy serves to establish Jesus as God’s authority over God’s people
 - (1) The authority of Jesus as the Christ is affirmed
 - (2) The character of God as Reconciler is affirmed
 - (3) The need of people for reconciliation is affirmed
 - b. Each of these occasions of controversy reveals more about Jesus, about His understanding of God and people, and about His God-given mission to bring God and lost people back together.

II. Controversy in Mark 2:13-17

A. Scenario

1. Jesus teaching as he walks along the sea of Galilee
2. Calls Levi the tax collector
 - a. Tax collectors/toll collector
 - (1) Collaborate with Rome
 - (2) Steal from their own people
 - b. Detested outcasts
3. Dines with Levi and friends (who are a lot like Levi!)
4. Challenge question and Jesus’ response
 - a. **Mark 2:16-17 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*
 - b. ¹⁷ *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

B. Problem:

1. Tax collectors and sinners are people not only living outside covenant practice and expectations, their lives show no evidence of interest in the terms of relationship God sets forth in the covenant.
2. In the words of Paul in Romans 1:21, *“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*
3. In still other words, they had no personal relationship with God and didn’t care and were shut out of the covenant community.
4. In still more words, these folks are just like every single one of us!

III. Sinners and God’s Impartial Invitation

A. Sinners

1. All who have sinned, all those outside God’s covenant of grace; whose sins are therefore not forgiven.
2. Sin is the universal condition of all humans!
 - a. **Romans 3:9-19 (ESV)** ⁹ *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews*

and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” ¹³ “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” ¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” ¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

3. Sinners are cut off from God
 - a. **Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)** *but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*
 - b. **Proverbs 15:29 (ESV)** *The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.*
 - c. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV)** ⁹ *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*
4. Sinners are subject to God’s judgment
 - a. **Isaiah 1:28 (ESV)** *But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.*
 - b. **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 (ESV)** ⁸ *in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,*

B. Jesus

1. This is the peril presented by sin that cries out to God for a Savior, One who will rescue us from our sin and the judgment that must come upon our sinfulness!
2. Jesus demonstrates the love and mercy of God toward sinners
 - a. He insists on God’s acceptance of sinners in mercy
 - b. He declares God’s mercy toward sinners as His mission
 - c. He affirms God’s mercy toward sinners by His death on the cross
 - (1) **Romans 5:8 (ESV)** *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - (2) Doesn’t just accept us, or advocate for us, or negotiate for us
 - (3) Christ dies for us
 - (a) Takes on Himself our sin and guilt and shame

- (b) Takes our sin and guilt to the cross, where He dies in our place, on our behalf, suffering the punishment, the judgment and condemnation our sin deserves.

d. God approves the person and mission of Christ in His resurrection

IV. Michelangelo and Jesus

A. Michelangelo and *David*

1. Created between 1501 & 1504
2. Originally commissioned for the Cathedral of Florence
3. Begun on 1464 by Agostino di Duccio and later carried on by Antonia Rossellino in 1475
 - a. Both sculptors rejected an 18 foot high block of Carrera marble because of too many imperfections.
 - b. Marble sat neglected for 25 years
4. When Michelangelo began work on the marble, it was both imperfect and badly damaged by the earlier sculptors
5. Michelangelo studied the marble, the patterns, the imperfections, and set to work.
6. Four years later he revealed what some have called the most perfect sculpture in existence.
7. At the hands of the master the rejected becomes a masterpiece

B. Jesus and Sinners

1. Rejected and outcast from God and the world
2. At the hands of the Master the rejected become Masterpieces
 - a. Jesus came to call sinners
 - (1) To faith
 - (2) To forgiveness
 - (3) To follow
 - b. Anyone can come, even you.