

Mark 8:31-38

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Date: 22 June 2014

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[0 : 00] So let's begin together reading Mark chapter 8, beginning in verse 31. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, get behind me, Satan. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

[1 : 11] This is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and for our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Let's pray together. Father God, we do thank you this morning for your word. Written so many years ago, having meaning and purpose then that carries now to the present.

Thank you, Father, for the church, for this blessed gathering of those who are yours, that we might come and minister to one another. And I pray, Father, that in these next minutes, that you will love on us through the preaching of your word.

As I was asked before I came up here, if I was ready, I'm desperate, which I believe makes me most ready to preach your word. So please come and speak to us in power from your scriptures. And we pray this in the precious, exalted name of Christ. Amen. Amen. So we have thus far, beginning in Mark chapter 1, preached up through to the second half of Mark chapter 8.

[2 : 25] And Mark has really sped us along up until this point. We've seen primarily Jesus ministering in the region of Galilee to the northwest of the Sea of Galilee. And he's been transitioning away from that now for about a chapter.

And we see him in verse 22 coming to a town called Bethsaida, which is on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee. And now moving off to some villages of the area of Caesarea Philippi, which was north of, about three days journey north of the Sea of Galilee.

He's getting ready to begin his journey to Jerusalem, to his final destination, to the cross. And he's really beginning to turn his attention now to the disciples and to the process of teaching them what it is the kingdom of God is going to look like when it comes in power.

Last week we looked at the amazing observation as Peter, as a spokesman of the disciples, as he makes the proclamation, You are the Christ.

That is the anointed one of God. He seems to get to some degree who it is Jesus is and what all the things he's been doing mean that he is the anointed one of God.

[3 : 37] Yet, he still misunderstands. He has yet to entirely catch up to all the implications of this. And the evidence of this is that Jesus begins to tell him what that means, beginning in verse 31.

It means that he'll come and he'll suffer and he'll die. He'll serve the world in a much different way than the Jews thought he was coming to serve the world. You see, Peter had bought into the cultural misconception.

It wasn't uncommon for Jews of this day to think that Christ would come and reign on earth militarily and politically. This understanding, in some sense, rightly comes from passages like Isaiah 9, 6, and 7, which says, You see, they got in part that Jesus was going to come and he was going to establish peace.

That he was going to rule with justice. That he was going to sit on the throne of David. But they thought this was going to happen in the temporal realm. They thought that he was going to come and sit on a physical throne in their day.

That he was going to overthrow Rome. That he was going to restore them to their future glory. And they missed that what Jesus was going to come and do was going to be accomplished primarily in the spiritual realm.

[5 : 15] Peter wanted Jesus to take the way of power, which is why he rebukes him. Don't say such a thing of the Christ. Don't say that he would go and suffer and be rejected and die.

Don't say such a thing. But Jesus then turns back to him and rebukes him. Calls him Satan. And it's not believed here that Peter was actually Satan or that he was in any way possessed by Satan.

He was being the very mouthpiece of Satan. Satan also wanted Jesus to take the way of power.

Speaking humanistically here. The visible, what we can see of power.

Satan did not want Jesus to go to the cross. He understood the fate that God pronounced upon him in Genesis 3.15. God says to Satan, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. This is the proto-evangelium. The first proclamation of the gospel. That Jesus would crush the head of Satan.

[6 : 23] And Satan knew this would happen on the cross. In Mark chapter 1, in verses 12 and 13, I get a very brief account of Jesus' temptation by Satan in the desert.

There's a much more exhaustive account of it found in Matthew chapter 4, verses 1 through 11. You can turn there if you would like. But let me bring to your attention the very things that Satan was trying to tempt Jesus with.

Verse 3, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. If you have the power of God and you're hungry, you can turn these rocks into loaves.

Take the way of power. Verse 6, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command His angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against the stone.

Call legions of angels to rescue you as you throw yourself off the temple mount. Verse 9, All these I will give you, observing the kingdoms of the world.

[7 : 24] All these I will give you if you will fall down and worship Me. Take the way of power, not the way of sacrifice and submission.

Jesus knew that this was not the way He was meant to live. This was not the way He was to come and serve and to lead. Not in the way of power in humanistic terms, but rather a more powerful way, a supremely powerful way, which was the way of sacrifice and submission.

And He begins to teach that here to the disciples in these coming chapters. We see three passion predictions, all three of them interestingly followed by misunderstandings. The apostles just don't quite seem to be able to wrap their mind around what this means for them.

We see the first one here in chapter 8, verse 31. Later, chapter 9, verse 31. And then finally in chapter 10, verse 33 through 34.

Three times in these coming chapters, He makes these predictions to teach the disciples what it means for them to follow Him. And three things are made very clear to us in these predictions.

[8 : 33] First, the way of sacrifice. Jesus will suffer and die. He makes the prediction of that. Mark 10, verse 45.

Kind of the summation of this teaching. Jesus 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.

Great high sacrifice of His life. Three times we see it predicted here. Secondly, it is His intention to suffer and die in submission to the will of the Father.

So we see the way of submission, the way of sacrifice. We see the way of submission. He knew that it was God's will for Him to come and to die. Look at His rebuke of Peter in verse 33.

For you are not setting your mind on the things of God. My prediction of my suffering, my being killed, after three days rising again, is the way of God.

[9 : 37] And so He submitted Himself willfully to the will of the Father. John 10, verse 17 and 18. Jesus says, He willfully submits Himself to the will of the Father.

The way of sacrifice, the way of submission. And thirdly, He makes clear to us that He will rise again. After three days. All three points are made in all three of these passion predictions.

He will rise again. He does not leave the disciples, and He does not leave us without hope. He died, but He was resurrected.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central reality of redemptive history. In fact, it's the central reality of all of human history.

And I certainly hope this morning that it is the central reality of your life. The very crux, the very thing on which your entire life hinges. I praise God, and I hope you do with me, that Jesus chose the path of sacrifice and submission so that in Him, our debt has been paid.

[11:05] Chapter 10, verse 24. We have been ransomed for God by Christ. We have been ransomed. It was a common practice. These people would have understood in military conquest somebody of value, a king, a governor of some sort, will be taken captive, and there would be a price put on their head.

A purchase price that would have had been paid for them to go back and be free. This is what has happened for us in Christ. Jesus paid our infinite debt because we have sinned against an infinitely holy God.

Our debt is infinite, and it could only be paid by infinite righteousness that was found in Christ. We have been ransomed if we are found in Him.

What will be true of us if we have been ransomed by Christ? And this is where Jesus takes the teaching beyond simply what will happen to Him, but what will be required for those who want to follow Him.

And here we see the path of conformity to Christ. So Jesus takes the path of sacrifice and submission. We are to take the path of conformity to Christ.

[12:20] This is what it means to be a disciple. A disciple is one who follows and spreads the teaching of one who may be a disciple of. If we desire to follow Jesus, it should be no surprise to us that we will also take the path of sacrifice and submission as we are conformed to His image.

In Matthew 10, 24, in the first half of 25, Jesus says, A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.

This is the great high calling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer spoke of cheap grace. There's much cheap grace being peddled in our day.

The kind of grace that says if you simply recite some prayer and simply walk an aisle, and these things, I believe, people truly become regenerate in the process of this. But we say, Just do this thing, and we're going to check a box, and we're going to give you a plaque, and you can have confidence of your eternal state, but their call of grace is a costly one.

Grace is a free gift to us, but it requires of us our lives. Verse 34 is where He begins to teach this to the disciples.

[13:43] What is it going to mean if you're going to truly follow Me? And He makes this as a broad call. Notice that He calls the crowd to Him at this point. He's been teaching the disciples, and He calls around all those who are around Him.

And remember, He's in Caesarea Philippi. The villages surrounding this area, this is a primarily Gentile area. These people would have been fairly unfamiliar. Maybe had heard some rumor of the work that He'd been doing in Galilee, but this was kind of a retreat for them.

So many of these people may not even know who Jesus is, but He calls them around, and makes a broad gospel call to the crowd. If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

What does He mean by this? The implications of such a statement are going to be unpacked across our lifetimes.

But we should do well. We should try to wrap our brains around it and get our hearts to catch up to it this morning. What does He mean to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him?

[14:49] Well, He builds for us an explanation. After this very important statement, this incredibly, this axiomatic statement that He makes here, He begins to build for us an explanation. Notice the way that verses 35, 36, 37, and 38 all begin.

They begin with the word for. Read it to you one more time. Remember, it's on the heels of this statement. If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For.

And you can read in here the word because. Right? We would more likely, modern English, American speakers would say, because. Right? I'll read it that way, in fact, to serve us. Verse 35. Because whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospels will save it. Because what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Because what can a man give in return for his soul?

Because whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. Jesus lays for us here a logical case.

[15:54] There's a logical progression in this. Right? But of all good logic, we can also take the adverse of the logic. And I think it's going to serve us well this morning to look at it in reverse order.

Let me give you an example. Let me give you an example. I'm feeling a bit jittery. Because I just finished my second cup of coffee. Because I'm tired this morning.

Because I went to bed late and I woke up early. Because I don't always manage my time well. This works the other way around as well. I don't always manage my time well.

So I went to bed late and I woke up early. So I'm tired this morning. So I just finished my second cup of coffee. So I'm feeling a bit jittery. And we can see that we can come to the very same conclusions in either direction.

And this is the way that Jesus builds this case. So let's look at it beginning in verse 38. Now we must ask, what is the opposite of being ashamed?

[17:04] If the outcome of being ashamed of the Son of Man, of Jesus Christ, is that He'll be ashamed of us when He comes in the glory of His Father, what is the opposite of that?

What should we be? If we ought not be ashamed of Him, what should we be? We should be proud of Him. We should love Him. We should treasure Him.

We should see Him for who He really is and exalt Him. We should love the name of Jesus Christ. And He's not speaking here of our momentary failings.

We're not always proud in every moment. Sometimes we shy away from an opportunity to speak His name or to share Him. He's not speaking about that. He's speaking about the way in which our lives are oriented. Is our lives oriented in a direction that says, I am proud of Jesus Christ, my prophet, my priest, and my king.

And if we are not proud of Him, He will not be proud of us. If we are proud of Him, He will be proud of us. Now, when He speaks here of coming in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, we can get our minds all way off in left field.

[18:18] This does not necessarily refer to a second coming of Christ, although I believe it does include His second coming. But it speaks rather to a different situation. A day when He will rule with absolute sovereignty.

I would argue, but not with the time I have today, that He does, in fact, now rule with absolute sovereignty. His words seem to serve as an allusion to Daniel's prophetic vision.

Found in Daniel chapter 7. You should turn there with me while I take a sip of water. Daniel chapter 7, verses 9 and 10, and then 13 and 14.

This is Daniel's vision. As I looked, thrones were placed. And the Ancient of Days, this is God the Father, took His seat. His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames. Its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before Him. A thousand thousands served Him.

[19:33] And ten thousand times, ten thousand stood before Him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. And then verse 13. I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a Son of Man.

You see why Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man. And He came to the Ancient of Days, and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away. And His kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed. This is true now in this day.

Jesus is our advocate with the Father. Even now, as we sit in this room, He is seated at the right hand of the Father, always making intercession for us.

Hebrews 7, verses 23 and 25, these words are so precious. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.

[20 : 40] The old former priestly line, it was flawed because these men were men, and they died. But He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever.

Consequently, He, this is Jesus, is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

If we are proud of Jesus Christ, He is proud of us, and He intercedes for us, that when God looks at us, He sees Jesus.

We are clothed in His righteousness. We have been ransomed, because Jesus came to serve, and not to be served. Verse 37, For what can a man give in return for his soul?

For what can a man give? What can a man possibly have that would be an equal trade for his soul? And the clear answer to this is nothing. Nothing. Because God's holiness is infinite, our sin is infinite, and the only infinite, the only thing that can pay the price is the infinite righteousness of Christ for this infinite debt that we have.

[21 : 52] Psalm 49, verses 7-9, Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit.

Our debt can be paid by none other than Christ. And if you don't believe this to be true, you don't understand sin. You don't understand the great offense that it is to a holy God.

If we are proud of Christ, He has paid our debt. We are part of the many that He speaks of that have been ransomed. Verse 36, For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

What wonderful rhetoric. Nothing. It gains a man nothing to have everything in the world but to not have Himself. We are created in the image of God.

But sin has absolutely and utterly destroyed our image-bearing capability, our very being. We are so unhuman when we live in sin.

[23 : 07] But in Christ, that image-bearing capacity has been restored. We don't do it perfectly. We still carry around our flesh. We do still sin, but the capacity has been restored.

We have made beautiful. Once again, we have life. Proper life. True life. Because Jesus has restored that ability in us.

What in the world would be worth trading for that? Nothing. It's a rhetorical question. Nothing. The person who is proud of Christ should share in the attitude of Paul.

Philippians 3. Verse 7. Paul's speaking of his religious pedigree. He says, But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

And then he goes on. He elaborates. Verse 8. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.

[24 : 06] Trash. In order that I may gain Christ. Christ and the life that we have in Him is a much more precious thing than anything this world could possibly afford us.

Here we have Peter who wants Jesus to take the way of power. He wants to be a lieutenant in His army. He wants to reign with Him politically. Jesus is saying to them, No.

Rather than that, you're going to suffer. You're not going to have things in this world because you're going to be part of a greater kingdom. A kingdom that has been ushered in and has yet to fully arrive.

Verse 35. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it.

And this statement is paradoxical. It's an apparent paradox. Interestingly, to save your life you have to lose your life. But if you lose your life, you saved your life. This is the very definition of paradox.

[25 : 07] It's a statement that contradicts itself. An example of this would be this statement is false. This statement is false.

If the statement is true, then the statement is false, thereby making the statement true. You see how it goes around in circles. This is a paradox. Which is why I'm very careful to say that this is an apparent paradox.

It's an apparent paradox. To us, on our level, the capacity of our minds, this is a difficult thing to understand. But should we be surprised that God has asked us to live lives that are paradoxical in this sense?

When He came, the Son of the Most High God, as a baby, born in a stable and laid in a manger. He was raised as the son of a carpenter in the nothing town of Nazareth.

The Christ, our anointed prophet, priest, and king, emptied Himself and became a selfless servant. Jesus' life was an apparent paradox.

[26 : 16] The One who came to save the world did so by sacrificing Himself. Himself. We must lose our lives in order to save our lives.

Now, Jesus is not suggesting that we must simply bear some discomfort with patience in this life.

So, so often you hear somebody say, well, I guess this is just my cross to bear.

Right? This is not what Jesus is talking about here. Although it is true, it's a reality of the Christian experience that there are things we're going to suffer and we ought to suffer well in those things.

This is true, but it's not right to say this is, oh, this is my cross to bear because what happened on a cross? You died. You died on a cross. They didn't let you suffer for a while and then take you down and say, oh, your punishment's been paid.

You died on a cross. He is saying that if we are to follow Him and thereby save our lives, we must choose the path of conformity to His sacrifice and submission by abandoning our own identity and self-determination.

[27 : 25] It is no longer I who live, Galatians 2.20, but Christ who lives in me. Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Because we have been ransomed by Christ, we now identify with Him in all things.

I put down Nathan and Nathan's desires and Nathan's self-determination and I pick up the way of Christ. I follow Him wherever He will go. Remember, He has yet to be crucified.

He has simply predicted that it would happen. He's on His way to do this. We know now, but they didn't know then that He was going to have to carry His own cross to the hill of Golgotha and what Jesus is saying is you should follow me there.

You should follow me there and identify with me as Paul says, Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. My old self has been put to death. I now am a new creation and in all things I give myself to God.

[28 : 34] Thus verse 34, back to the beginning, this axiomatic statement, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

The redeemed ones of God, those who have been ransomed by Christ, will live in conformity with Christ and give our lives to Him.

It becomes a necessary outcome of who we are. We don't follow Jesus in order that we might be found disciples of Him. We are disciples of Him. Therefore, we follow Him.

And this necessarily includes all of who we are. As Americans, we're very familiar with the Industrial Revolution, which specialized things for us.

We specialize things. Different of us have different tasks in the world. Some install the cog. Some put the wheel on. We all serve different roles.

[29 : 33] And specialization has worked itself in to our very being. And unfortunately, it causes us to segment out our lives. So some of you might be an employee.

Let's say a teacher. I know we have a number of teachers. A teacher, right, who has a wife and who has children, attends a church, is a Christian. We tend to make these things part of who we are rather than being a Christian, being a disciple of Christ, influencing all of who we are.

It is the umbrella that arcs over everything. I am a Christian who is a teacher. I am a Christian who is a father. I am a Christian who is a husband. It includes all of who we are.

It includes where we live. It includes the houses we live in, the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, the vacations we take. It includes the way we speak, the way we feel, the way we act, where we work, the effort we put into our work, how we spend our free time that belongs to Christ, how we relate to the church, give to the church, serve the church, how we relate to the world, give to it, serve it.

It includes every aspect. We could spend days including all of the things and this is why I believe that this statement he makes to us in verse 34, if we are going to follow him, we are going to deny ourselves, take up our cross, has such massive implication.

[30 : 57] Massive implication. And it's so fitting that just after he is taught and Peter has come to this realization that he is the Christ, that he begins in this way.

You're setting your mind on the things of God, not on the things of man. Let me tell you about the things of God. This is what serving in the kingdom looked like. Jesus chose the path of sacrifice and submission.

But he did it for the eternal joy that was set before him. Hebrews chapter 12. Momentary suffering. Momentary in this world.

It's a very small trade for us to trade things that we cannot hold on to for something that is infinite and glorious forever and ever that we might someday reign with Christ.

This is a reality and it has meaning for each and every day. Every little decision that we make, all of it matters. that we might serve him and love him and so prove that we are his disciples.

[32 : 04] So one application question for you today and then I'll close in prayer. Will you choose the path of conformity to Christ?

Let's pray. Let's pray.