

46 Mark 8:31-9:1 Of God & Man

Text

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.

32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 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."

34 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. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 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." 9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

The Teaching

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.

32 And he said this plainly.

We have had Peter's good confession in the previous section; and likely the confession of the 12 with Peter speaking on their behalf. "You are the Christ!" Yes! That is it, but what does that mean? When you say "Christ" what do you mean by the term?

Jesus, wanting to give clear instruction regarding the nature of this office begins to teach his disciples. "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."

The disciples have been with Jesus for about 2.5 years - there is not much time left. He has given more than enough evidence to establish himself as an unparalleled authority. He has consistently set himself apart from the other teachers of the day through his insightful, penetrating, authoritative teaching. He has established himself as the real deal over against other supposed miracle workers. All the necessary groundwork has been laid for Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ. And now that that is established, there needs to be some serious education.

The disciples accepted the kingly functions of Christ, although even these were wrongly conceived. But the priestly functions passed them by. Jesus came to make an atonement. Perhaps they could have accepted the priestly function as well, but how was Jesus going to make an

atonement? Would he do it the same way all the other priests did? Would he make an atonement by offering up some animal? If so, exactly what was so special about Jesus?

Daniel 9:24 and 27 state:

24 “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place...**27** And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering.

This coming Prince was going to put an end to sin? How? He was going to bring in everlasting righteousness? In verse 27 it says that he is going to put an end to sacrifice and offering? As a partial answer to the question, "How is Jesus going to make an atonement?" we can say, "Not in the same way as the other priests." Animal sacrifices continue day after day, year after year. But if this Prince is going to put an end to offering and sacrifice, then it cannot be just another animal sacrifice, for that puts an end to nothing. He is going to put an end to sin and bring in everlasting righteousness? Obviously this cannot be just another animal sacrifice! The scriptures look forward to a sacrifice that will end all sacrifices. They anticipate a sacrifice that will bring in everlasting righteousness and put an end to sin! That, my friends, is a tall order.

How is this to be done? Jesus comes as a suffering servant. Isaiah 53 speaks of the Servant of the Lord who comes from the root of Jesse. He will be despised and rejected, and man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

There will be suffering, rejection and death associated with this coming Servant. And it is through his suffering that this Prince will put an end to sacrifice and sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. This is what Jesus is explaining to his disciples in the most explicit terms. There is irony in this prediction. As James Edwards notes, "It is not humanity at its worst that will crucify the Son of God, but humanity at its absolute best."¹

The Rebukes

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 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."

Here Peter reveals the mistaken notions of his Messianic vision. The Jews were surely aware of these suffering and rejection themes in scripture, but they never associated them with Jesus. In a rather amazing display, the Messiah is linked to the servant of Isaiah 53, but it is said that the suffering passages do not refer to the messiah.² Peter cannot fathom a suffering Messiah. It cannot be. He begins to rebuke Jesus. Dear friends, if you ever find yourself rebuking Jesus, stop! That is not going to be a path that ends well for you!

Jesus for his part is not going to stand for this for an instant. Spinning on his heels he says to Peter, "Get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

The Instruction

34 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. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

Jesus was confusing Peter with all this suffering talk. This section on losing your life to keep it is also counter-intuitive. Peter struggled with it, and so do we. Our struggle is of a different sort. Often times when we are going through some difficulty, we are suffering, the question in the back of our mind is, "Where is God?" Some people will state it with a sense of defiance as when the towers fell on 9-11. "Where was God?" Christians, however also ask the same question. If our suffering is because of the gospel, then what we are experiencing at that point is a mysterious union with Christ, not his absence. As his disciples we must take up our cross. As his disciples, we must share in his sufferings. Righteous suffering, therefore, is a sharing in Christ.

Jesus is not an abstraction that we believe in. Jesus puts his sake, and the gospel on the same line. Jesus is the heart of the gospel. At the same time, you cannot just believe in Jesus in some vague undefined way. You must believe in Jesus as he is communicated in the gospel. There is this gospel that contains truths about Jesus. When you say you believe in Jesus, what do you mean? I am astounded when I meet supposed Christians who literally don't go any further than the name Jesus. There is something specific that we are suppose to believe about him. Whoever loses his life for the gospel will save it. Let me then take a moment and address a part of the gospel that is under attack today: repentance.

Jesus, the Gospel & Repentance

Even pastors will suggest that repentance is not necessary for salvation. "You don't need to repent, you just need to trust in Jesus." For what? What do I trust in him for? Do I trust that he will help me through bad times? Do I trust that he can help my marriage? What am I trusting Jesus for? The gospel assumes that we understand that we are sinners and that God is holy and

just. The good news then is that Jesus was crucified for our sins. He was crushed for our iniquities. We, therefore, must repent of our sins and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. This, and nothing else, is what we believe in Jesus for.

To say that you can believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and not repent is wanting to have your cake and eat to too. When you ask for forgiveness you are asking that your sins be taken from you. "Remove these from my account!" this is your plea. Thus to plead that they be removed from your account and to say that there is no way you are going to give them up is a contradiction. It really is to want to have your cake and eat it too. What a strange theology it is to twist the gospel like that!

If you have sinned against your brother, and if you go to him and confess your sin and beg his forgiveness, is not repentance and sorrow assumed? Would you with any seriousness acknowledge your sin and ask someone to forgive you when you are not in the least bit sorry? "I acknowledge that what I did to you was sin, but I am not sorry for it, and I am planning on doing it again, will you forgive me?" What do you think? Is it not obvious how duplicitous this is?

Dear friends, sin cannot simply be forgiven - not by a holy and just God. Justice will not allow for evil to go unpunished. It must be dealt with. To be forgiven, our sin must be transferred to Christ. It must be taken from us and nailed to the cross. If we refuse to be separated from our sin, then we must pay the debt ourselves. We cannot desire to keep them and desire their removal at the same time. We must desire sins removal (repentance) and we must look to Jesus for its removal (faith). You cannot have real faith without having real repentance.

When Jesus emerged out of his wilderness testing, he came proclaiming "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." When Jesus sent out the 12 what did they proclaim? Chapter 6 verse 12, "So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent." Why are woes pronounced upon Chorazin and Bethsaida? Because they did not repent (Lk 10:13). Why does Jesus say in Luke 13:13, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Does he not know that you can believe and be saved and never repent? No, Jesus does not know that. And if he does not know that, then neither should you!

In Acts 3:19 we are told that we should "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out." The removal of sins is tied to repentance. But also notice that the verse says to turn again. What is that about? Paul preached in Acts 16 that people "should repent and turn to God." Repent, literally means to change your mind. Some have suggested that all we need to do is change our mind about Jesus. But this is clearly not the correct understanding of repentance. We are never told to repent of Jesus, that is change our mind about Jesus. We are told to repent of our sins. We must change our mind about our sins.

To repent means to turn around. It is a 180 degree turn. Thus we see Paul saying that we must repent and turn to God. Dear friends, if you do not turn away from your sins, have you turned to God? If we continue to walk in the path of sin then we are not walking toward God are we? To turn to God is to turn away from our sin. To come to faith in Jesus is to repent. I have labored this point because it is an important one. We must understand the gospel! "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." This is important ladies and gentlemen. Jesus emphasizes it himself in verse 36.

The Worthiness of Jesus

36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 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."

This passage continues what was begun in verse 34. If we want to come after Christ, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. Verse 35-38 substantiates what was just said. There are 4 F-O-U-R for F-O-R. "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." All of these give reason for why we should take up our cross and follow him.

The first reason is summed up well by William Carry, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." By living in such a shortsighted way and refusing to take up our cross, we will lose the very thing we wish to preserve.

Perhaps a person will answer, "So be it. If I lose it I lose it, and that loss is not worth this suffering." The next two "fors" take up that response. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet lose his soul? And what can a man give in return for his soul? Our soul is the most valuable part of our being and existence. If we lose our soul nothing else matters. Our soul is the core of who we are. I have heard people say that they know they are going to hell, but living how they want now is worth it. No it isn't! You can live in the fast lane your entire life and that is of no value in return to your soul! You may live the high life all your life, you may gain the whole world but lose your soul. That is a very poor trade. Even on a very shallow level that is a poor trade. Live the good life for 75 years and then pay for your sins for eternity. That is a dumb idea. Be willing to partake in suffering for these 75 years, and live in eternal bliss. That really is a no brainer. But there is more to it than that.

The fourth "for" is in verse 38 "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." Christ is our great reward. As the song says, "better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere." Even if it were not an eternity of bliss, if it were only a few days of bliss, still it would be worth it because Christ is worth it. Whoever is ashamed of the Son, so also will the Son be ashamed of him. To feel the pleasure of the Son rather than his shame, is worth it all. We take up our cross to feel his pleasure.

9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Finally, in chapter 9 verse 1 we see this statement by Christ loosely connected with what just went before. The way of suffering and shame is actually the way to glory. The kingdom of God starts in a very different form that we expect, but it will grow to a glorious end. There are people standing here who will get a glimpse of that glory. The kingdom will come with power! All of this has been in the context of the sufferings and death of Christ. There will be great suffering, and there will be the shame of the cross, but there will also be the resurrection. There will be a demonstration in Jesus that death has been defeated. It will not be able to hold those who follow after Christ. He is the first-fruits. His resurrection is a display of the power of this kingdom. I think that it is his resurrection and ascension that is primarily in view.

Some people take it to be Pentecost, others take it to be the transfiguration. The transfiguration does fit within the context here, and it looks forward itself to Christ's final glorification. So it is possible that the transfiguration is also in view here. Either way, the end seems to be Christ's resurrection and ascension.

As a closing application, we need to take a step back and see Christ for who he really is. It is easy to fault Peter for misunderstanding the role of Christ. However, we are guilty of a similar misunderstanding. Peter's mistake was to see Christ as a political office that was all victory and no suffering. But here is what Peter did well: he lived what he believed. He was no perfect, but by way of comparison to us, Peter lived what he believed. We will confess orthodox things about Christ, but we then fail to live according to that confession. We are the son who said yes to his father but did not obey. We do not confess Jesus to be only a political figure, but often times our behavior reflects a level of reverence and obedience that not not ascend to the level of our Divine confession.

1 Edwards, The Gospel According to Mark, 254

2 IBID 253