

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST AND THE GLORY OF FOLLOWING HIM FOREVER.

Introduction

Our text this morning comes from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 8, verses 34-38.

In Mark's account of Jesus' life and ministry he notes the incredible healings and miracles of Jesus. Within those threads is that of the supremacy of Jesus being recognized by healing physical ailments, people, and the weather. Following these displays of Christ's supremacy is the recognition of his deity; he is displaying that He in fact is God.

In the text we find ourselves in this morning Jesus is instructing His disciples and the crowds about the importance of following Jesus. He sets the Christian mandate over against their own desires and intuition.

This text has immediate implications on our life, in that, if you are like me you struggle with control. You feel as though your way is best. This text reminds us of the **supremacy of Christ and the glory of following Him forever.**

Text

Mark 8:34-38

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 gospel's 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."

Context

Our text does not occur in isolation. We know that when we open our Bibles we have 66 books that reveal to us the direct revelation of God. More applicable to our text, we know there are 4 Gospels, known as the synoptic Gospels that provide details on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. When we get to Mark 8:34 we understand that something took place before, and something is taking place afterward.

Our text this morning is a continuation from Mark 8, where Jesus feeds the 4,000 (Mark 8:1-10), instructs the disciples to avoid the Pharisees (Mark 8:11-21), Heals a blind man (Mark 8:22-26). Upon these displays of his deity, Jesus asks his disciples about who he is where Peter, in verse 30, responds ***"you are the Christ."***- Mark 8:29

What would then necessitate the admonishment of his disciples? Enter the context of Mark 8:31-33.

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."

Often we feel as though an alternate suggestions to God's plan is *helpful* for him. We are merely in the *helping* God business, right? Wrong!

This is so wrong that Jesus stern rebuke is not simply that, it is demonic! When Jesus rebukes Peter he says, get behind me Satan! *You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.*

That is why Jesus points them to the cross. It centers the Christian conscience on the suffering of our first brother, Jesus Christ, and reminds us that we have salvation only through our suffering shepherd. We, as the prophet Isaiah says are like sheep, we all have gone astray. We are so quick to turn to our own way of thinking. Paul in **Galatians 1:6** gets at this aspect of our waywardness in this way,

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ

Whether by making conscious decisions against God, or by subconsciously forgetting God we are too quick to abandon our God. That is why Jesus calls those in our passage, and us today to heed his message.

Our text, though it is only 4 verses can be split into 4 sections. The first, **The Cost of Following Him is the Cross** (v. 34). The second, **The Reward of**

Following (v.35), The worth of our Souls (v. 36-37), and lastly The Consequences of Abandonment (v. 38),

The Cost of Following Christ (v.34)

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.

Verse 34 serves as the grounding of our passage. It is here that all of the forthcoming claims will be solidified. And, it is here where Jesus transitions from an intimate conversation with his disciples as seen in verses 27 through 33, to pan out and include all of his followers. A simple application of this is simply that Jesus' command of taking up His cross is not relegated to the *upper echelon* of Christianity, but that it is for **all** who claim the name of Christian. This is in view with the word "anyone."

If anyone desires to do what? Come after me, or follow me, align themselves with me Jesus says...

- 1. Let Him deny Himself.**
- 2. Take up your cross and follow Me.**

A cost of following Christ is **self-denial**. It is important to note the context of this. Peter in verse 32 has rebuked Jesus at Jesus' statement of suffering and sacrifice. Jesus' harsh response is "get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Later NT writers would say it this way,

20 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.—Galatians 2:20

This runs in the face of what is ingrained in our consciences. Society even tells us to “be your own person”, to “create your destiny” This was not the way it was intended, however. God created us to worship and adore Him perfectly in the Garden. Yet, our first parents Adam and Eve sinned. They desired to be like God. They wanted the honor that was due Him alone. In fact, this is the same prognosis of the angel Lucifer. He desired to be equal with God.

We must recognize the ways in which we desire to aspire to the level of gods; whether it is taking control of our situations at work desiring for promotions; adding unbiblical rule keeping to the call to follow Christ; or an over-infatuation of how people perceive you in Campbellsburg.

The Gospel tells us to pursue none of these things. Rather it tells us to **take up our Cross and follow Him**. The Gospel of Luke even adds the emphasis of *daily*.

It is important to note the scorn that surrounded the cross. It was a universal symbol of derision. As one writer notes,

How vastly different was the symbol of the cross in the first century! An image of extreme repugnance, the cross was an instrument of cruelty, pain, dehumanization, and shame. The cross symbolized hated Roman oppression and was reserved for the lowest social classes. It was the most visible and omnipresent aspect of Rome's terror apparatus, designed especially to punish

*criminals and quash slave rebellions.*¹

This is what Jesus calls us to. Enduring scorn, rebuke, and all that comes with following Jesus, we take up our cross.

It is important to note the false perception and understanding of the cross in our society. We will hear things like, “well, it’s my cross to bear.” Normally this statement is one that leaves devoid the reality and gravity of the cross our savior bore. We must be mindful of the misconception and rightly understand what it means to follow Christ.

Again I turn to Edwards, he says,

*The image of the cross signifies a total claim on the disciple’s allegiance and the total relinquishment of his resources to Jesus (10:17–31).*²

Does this description embody your commitment to following Christ? If not there is sin that needs to be repented of. There is a sinful self-worship that is taking the place of our complete commitment to Jesus.

This aspect of denying self, taking up our cross and following Jesus are fruits of a new heart. As Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, Jesus praising him saying that it was not a revelation of man but of the Father.

So to the ability to obey can only come from God the Father making us new creations and giving us a new heart. Then and only then are we able to follow

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 256.

² *Ibid.*

Christ in obedience. If you are here this morning and you have never turned from your sin and trusted in Christ, you may find these aspects of following Christ either **unappealing** or **impossible** to attain.

If you fall into the first category I pray that by the end of this sermon you will see the glory and beauty of following Christ forever; that you will deny yourself by repenting of sin, will trust Christ as the only means of salvation and be saved.

If you fall into the second category, that being following Christ like this seems impossible, that you will indeed see that it is impossible except for by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us continue through the text from the **Cost** of following Christ, to the **Reward** of following Christ.

The Reward of Following Christ (v.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.

This mandate, as a reminder, is grounded in the previous verse, so keep in mind the call of a disciple is to **deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus**. From that mandate flows our current verse.

Jesus sets this up as an either or not a both and. There is not a middle ground of marginal cross-bearing and worldly living. That is not an option. How often do we seek a compromise in our walk with the Lord? I may be the most guilty of this, more so than anyone in the room. We believe that our insight can lend aid to the omnipotent creator of the universe. We can't. Reminding ourselves

of passages such as Isaiah 55:9

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

and Job 38:4

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

remind us of our foolish ways in respect to the holy perfection of God.

Again, we see a dichotomy between the **self** and **our savior**. Jesus says there are two outcomes, if you try to save your life you will lose it, if you lose your life for my sake you will save it. But what does he mean?

The one who plays it safe and considers his existence more important than Jesus will lose both Jesus and eternal life.³

1. Save it? You will Lose it.

Modern medicine and technological advances are making prolonged living more reality than fiction. There are some who have pursued all kinds of healthy living alternatives and modern advances in an effort to prolong their life expectancy. But to what end? There is no modern advances that will prolong your life for ever. Therefore all efforts to this end are ultimately in vain and show a lack of faith in Christ.

³ Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Mark* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014).

Now, I hardly think that in Campbellsburg Indiana you are pursuing some of these advances. But I may be surprised.

When Jesus shared with the woman at the well in John 4, he said that if she tasted the living water that is only in Him, she would never thirst again.

As notable 20th Century theologian C.S. Lewis says in his classic work Joyful Christian,

If you aim at heaven you get earth thrown in. If you aim at earth you get neither.

Or, in another way

The one for whom the way of Jesus is more important than his own existence will secure his eternal being; but the one whose existence is more important than Jesus will lose both Jesus and his existence.⁴

That is the reality. If your life on earth is more important than glorying in Christ **you will lose it. But**, whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

2. Lose it (for my sake)? You will save it.

There is an adverse affect to losing one's life for the gospel that runs directly against our intuition. That is why it must be taught, hence why Jesus belabors the point with those He is speaking to. Here in lies the guarantee. If you live a

⁴ The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel according to Mark Messiahship and Discipleship (8:31–9:1)

life prioritized by the gospel you will have eternal life! This is an incredible promise.

Considering the supremacy Christ, to this point, has shown is one that far surpasses any earthly pursuit, suffering, or tyrant.

There is a glory in following Christ forever. One that is rooted in the Supremacy of Christ and that if we live sacrificed to him He will save our lives from eternal punishment and raise us up for eternal life. This is the life of a faithful disciple of Christ.

The Worth of your Soul (v.36-37)

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?

Jesus continues with a set of questions that are intimately connected, and they are questions that need to be answered.

The rich young ruler had to answer this question and he went away very sad (Luke 18:22-23). This young man had it all. He had gained the world in the eyes of others but ends up bankrupt.

How much is your soul worth? How much do you value Christ-likeness? Are you willing to bankrupt your soul to gain some piece of notoriety in this world?

You are of infinite value. In Genesis 1:26 we see that we are made in the image of God. The writer of Ecclesiastes states that eternity has been written on our hearts. We were made for eternal communion with God! Unfortunately this communion was broken only three chapters into the Bible.

But, as we see throughout scripture, our King is coming and it will perfectly rule and will establish His kingdom, one that will last forever. This is begun with the incarnation of Christ. God sent His son, as Mark accounts, came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He would grant eternal life to those who trust Christ (Ephesians 2:4) because he is rich in mercy, He made us alive in Christ (Eph. 2:5).

At what cost?

Earthly gain comes at the cost of your soul. But in this passage the word **order** denotes that it is not a passive result, but rather is an active result of **forfeiting**. When we choose the pleasures of this world we, piece by piece, forfeit our soul. It is the kind of forfeiting that Paul in Romans conveys as a handing over of one self to the desires of life and this world.

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. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.⁵

⁵ Romans 1:21–23 ESV

You can't get it back.

For what can a man give in return for his soul?

The simple answer is nothing. And therefore the infinite value of Christ's atoning work on our behalf cannot be overemphasized. As we see later in the New Testament, Jesus purchases us with His blood! There is nothing he wouldn't do to purchase our souls from eternal torment and separation from him in hell even to the point of death on a cross! And because of that He holds our eternal destinies in his hands.

And thus we see the Supremacy of Christ, as Edwards remarks

It takes the word of Jesus to teach the infinite worth of the human soul, and he alone is sufficient to preserve it.⁶

The Consequences of Abandonment (v.38)

Mark 8:38 ESV

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.”

As Jesus has flowed his statements from physical life, to eternal soul he now

⁶ The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel according to Mark Messiahship and Discipleship (8:31–9:1)

reminds us of the great consequences of abandoning Him, or being ashamed of Him on earth. Being ashamed of Christ leads to shame from Christ on that final day when he returns.

Jesus is getting at the eternal gravity of a life of biblical discipleship. If you do not follow Christ in a sacrificial dying of ourselves we are not worthy to bear his name.

Will we hear on that day “well done my good and faithful servant, enter into my rest?” or will we hear, “depart from me I never knew you?”

Conclusion

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in his classic work *The Cost of Discipleship*,

When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. . . . But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call.⁷

The **cost** of following Christ is dying to ourselves, the **reward** of following Jesus is that in losing our lives for Him we gain eternal life! We see the **worth of our souls**, and we see the weighty **consequences** of being ashamed of Christ.

Through it all we see that Christ is supreme and there is glory in following Christ forever!

⁷ Exalting Jesus in Mark The Normal Christian Life: Following and Serving the King 8:27-38 (171)

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