

OpenTheo

Mark 8:27 - 8:38



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In this passage, Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus tells his disciples for the first time that he will soon be rejected, killed, and rise again in three days. Despite Peter's correct identification, he later rebukes Jesus for speaking of his coming death and resurrection, which Jesus warns is against God's values. Jesus emphasizes the importance of denying oneself and following him, even to the point of sacrificing one's own life, as Christianity involves a continual renewal of the mind and transformation into the likeness of God's thoughts and values.

Transcript

All right, we are studying through the Gospel of Mark, and we have gotten part of the way through chapter 8, so we will turn again to chapter 8 and look at the material where we left off in our previous time together on this. Last time we saw in chapter 8 the feeding of the 4,000, a miracle that, of course, very much resembled the feeding of the 5,000, but had its own interesting features, perhaps not the least of which was the fact that it was performed in Gentile territory and possibly involved the feeding of Gentiles, whereas the feeding of the 5,000 took place in Galilee and almost certainly to an entirely or almost entirely Jewish group. And so we see Jesus perhaps giving a sort of an inkling of the fact that although it is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs, that is to give what belongs to the Jews to the Gentiles, yet as the woman, the Syro-Phoenician woman said, yes, but there's enough to go around whatever is left over, what the children don't eat, the dogs can have that, can't they? And so perhaps that is how Jesus was making that point by now doing a similar miracle, feeding bread to Gentiles.

I can't say for sure, but that's what I think. And we saw the healing of a man who was blind and was healed in two steps, and it was the only case that we know of of Jesus healing a person in increments in steps. And since I gave that lecture, our student Erin told us an interesting theory her father has about it.

He's an optometrist and many of you probably heard us discussing this at dinner. But her optometrist father, who obviously thinks like a scientist about vision, pointed out that

when we see things, really the smaller part of the phenomenon of sight is the function of our eyes. By far the largest part is the function of our brains.

The eye takes in light and then it breaks it down into little cones and rods that go through the optic nerve by the millions. And almost like it pixelates the whole picture into just random, seeming random, like pixels. And then it comes to the brain and the brain reassembles it and makes sense of it.

And all of that, of course, instantaneously. But the brain the brain doesn't receive a picture from the eyes. The brain receives data from the eyes and then has to interpret it like the eyes, as you put it, are the hardware.

And the vision is really pretty much the software, the data that comes and the software of the brain has to make sense of what comes to it. And so her father, the optometrist. Thought, well, maybe the reason that Jesus had to touch the man one time and the man saw men like trees walking and others, he saw something, but it wasn't clear.

But then the next time Jesus touched him, he saw all things clearly. Perhaps it is that his eyes were healed with the first touch. But the.

The brain's software had to be reformatted or or or the program had to be installed, you know, that the hardware was fixed, but the software had to be installed, the program so that the brain had to be taught how to see. I don't know if that's true now, but that's an interesting thought, you know, the visual images were coming, but they were hazy. They were not clear.

And so maybe that's what happened. It doesn't change anything about the spiritual lessons of it. But I thought it was a fascinating theory.

Now we come to chapter eight and verse twenty seven, which says now Jesus and his disciples went out of the towns of Caesarea, Philippi. To be out to the towns of Caesarea, Philippi, and on the road, he asked his disciples, saying to them, who do men say that I am? And they answered John the Baptist. But some say Elijah and others, one of the prophets.

I find it interesting that no one was saying he was the Messiah, especially in view of the fact that the Jews were in great anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. When John the Baptist had appeared before Jesus became public, the people had come to John, are you the Messiah? They're anticipating the Messiah. And yet Jesus had been around doing these miracles for, you know, a couple of years now, and the opinions about him ranged from, you know, John the Baptist, Elijah to one of the prophets.

But Eli, I mean, the Messiah was not really on the list. At least the disciples were not hearing the people say that. Not the Galileans anyway.

That's where they've been spending their time. Now, down in down in Jerusalem at the feasts, which are eventually recorded in Gospels of John, some of the people were speculating that he might be the Messiah. Even in Galilee at an earlier time, they were when he healed a man, actually cast a demon out of a man who was dumb and blind, and the man spoke and saw people.

Is this not the son of David? I mean, the Messiah. But the religious leaders quickly tried to dispel that notion, said, no, he's casting out demons by Beelzebub, not by not by being the Messiah. In any case, the idea that he was the Messiah had apparently died.

For the most part, among the Galileans, it was not one of the leading theories. And the idea that was John the Baptist who had been beheaded. Seems far more like an unlikely theory, you know, than that he even be the Messiah.

But people were kind of making out to be anything but anything but the Christ, the Messiah. Now, these theories that were given that he might be John the Baptist or Elijah or one of the prophets have a strange, familiar ring to them, because back in Chapter six and verse 14. It said, Now, King Herod heard of him for his name had become well known, and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore, these powers are at work in him.

Others said it's Elijah and others said it is the prophet or like one of the prophets. So these are the theories that were being spoken, and these are the context of this was when the disciples had been sent out two by two and were entering various villages of Galilee and were preaching the gospel. And this is when they've been sent out but had not yet come back while they were out.

This report came to Herod about the activities that were that either Jesus was doing, which might be because the apostles on the mission were telling people about what Jesus was doing and and Herod now gets wind of it. And he's worried about it because he's killed John the Baptist. He's afraid that his guilty conscience makes him think that John has come back to haunt him.

And so these were the theories that were still flying around at this time. Now, this question was asked of the disciples at an interesting location, and it's Caesarea Philippi. The town is also called Panias in the pagan times because Pan was a god.

A pan is a creature with the bottom two legs that are goat like legs in the upper part of the body is human. In fact, sometimes demons or even the devil in classical art was depicted as a pan, but Pan was a god of the heathen, I guess the Romans, if not the Greeks, I believe the Romans. And this place was named after Pan.

It's called Panias, but it was no longer called that because Herod Philip had renamed it Caesarea after the Caesar in honor of the Caesar. Caesarea means belonging to the

Caesar. However, there was already a Caesarea in Palestine, and that was on the Mediterranean coast, and that's just the city of Caesarea.

So Philip named this Caesarea Philippi, adding his own name, hyphenated. You know, this is the town of Caesarea, which was established by Philip. Philippi means of Philip.

And so it was called Caesarea Philippi at this time, but it had been a place where many gods had been worshipped in times past. And scholars sometimes think it's significant that Jesus took his disciples there in order to ask who do men say that I am in a place that was loaded with all kinds of historical. Worship of false deities that he would choose that place to be recognized by his disciples as the son of God.

I've been to Panias, one of the few places I've actually been to in Israel. I went to Israel one time. I taught two weeks in a Great Commission school there during a summer program, and one of my former students was running the school, and I just came in as one of the teachers.

But the school was in Jerusalem. I didn't really get outside Jerusalem very much, but I was there two weeks. And the weekend between the two weeks, I and some of the students made a real quick road trip up into the Galilee, as they call it, and saw a few places that were familiar, including Capernaum and Nazareth and so forth.

But we did go to Panias. I thought Panias or Caesarea Philippi was one of the most beautiful places that I saw. It is actually where the headwaters of the Jordan actually come out of the ground there.

The Jordan River, as you know, is a boundary of Israel. The eastern boundary. And it feeds both the Sea of Galilee and later the Dead Sea further south.

And Jordan is where John the Baptist was baptizing. Jordan is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan to come into the Promised Land. You know, it's the Jordan River, very famous, but it begins actually in three different heads.

There's three different places where the Jordan begins, has smaller bodies of water, and they combine into the Jordan River. And the main one is Caesarea Philippi. And when you go there, the water is actually coming out of the ground.

And it was amazing to see this water coming out from apparently underground from the aquifers there. And to think that that water has been coming out there for thousands of years and it's not been exhausted. You know, the Jordan River is fed from this underground source.

And there is at Panaeus this cave, which some people say, and I'm not so sure they're right. This sounds like the kind of thing preachers say when they want to make a good preaching point. But it's awfully hard to document.

At least I have found it hard to document. But many people say that this cave was a place where they used to throw infants, pagans, just to offer infant sacrifices. They throw them into this cave, which had a pit there.

The cave is still there, but the pit seems to be filled in. But they say that this place was called the Gates of Hades. Now, the reason I say that sounds like something a preacher might make up, it may be true, but if it is, it's a great association because that's at this location.

Although Mark doesn't record it, but Matthew's parallel is that this location that Jesus said upon this rock, I'll build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And if, in fact, that place was called the Gates of Hades, then it would make it kind of an interesting association. But I have not been able to confirm that.

But that is the location, nonetheless. Paneus, Caesarea Philippi had a long history of idolatry there and the worship of false gods. And so Jesus takes the disciples up there.

And he asked them who to men say that I am. And they say, well, there's a lot lots of different opinions. None of them are the right one.

But people are talking anyway. People are theorizing about who you are. And Jesus said to them, but who do you say that I am? And Peter answered and said to him, you are the Christ.

The word Christ means the Messiah. You knew that I assume Christ Christos in the Greek means the anointed one. And Messiah, Moshiaich in the Hebrew means the anointed one.

Same word, different language, Messiah Christ. So Peter said, you're the Messiah. And in Matthew's version, which is Matthew 16, he had something of a longer confession that he said, you are the Messiah, the son of the living God.

Now, we have only a short response from Jesus here, though a longer one is given in Matthew. Peter did give the right answer and Jesus charged them that they should tell no one about him. This is, of course, what he does so often, he tries to keep things under wraps.

No doubt it was very important that since people were not currently thinking of him as the Messiah, that the disciples should not at this point stir up enthusiasm, a popular enthusiasm that would suggest to people that he is the Messiah, because the people were just always at a hair trigger to explode into rebellion against the Romans as soon as they thought they had a charismatic leader to be the Messiah, to lead them to victory. And so I think Jesus wanted to keep that down after the cross. Then, of course, once he had gone to heaven and the kingdom had been inaugurated and all that.

Then they should announce to the world that he is the Christ, that is the message. But

while he was there, the term Christ was there so much danger of being misunderstood as a political term after he was on the cross, it'd be hard to mistake him for a political leader, more like a political criminal. And therefore, you know, there wouldn't be the danger of the same kind of popular political movement.

Now, Mark leaves out here. Some fairly important stuff that Matthew includes. Because when Peter said, you're the Christ, the son of the living God, Jesus said, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven.

And then he went on to say, and I say to you, you are Peter Petras, the stone. And upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. He said, I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven and you shall open and no one shall shut and you should shut and no one is open will open whatever you bind on earth to be bound in heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth should be loosed in heaven. That's what he actually said, and so it was on this occasion that Jesus showed great admiration for Peter's insight. But of course, he what he admired was not Peter's brilliance, but the brilliance of God in revealing it to Peter.

And it must have been a real relief to Jesus that the disciples were seeing him for who he was when the crowds who were receiving much from him were not getting the message. They were not recognizing him as the promised one. And so I think Jesus expresses his appreciation for Peter in somewhat more detail as it is recorded in Matthew passed over here, mostly in Mark.

Interestingly enough, Mark is Peter's version. And this is often the case when something flattering about Peter is said, often Mark leaves it out because apparently Peter often didn't report those things that were flattering to himself. But he did report the next part, which is not flattering to himself.

It says, and he began, Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed. And after three days rise again, this is the first time Jesus actually spelled this out for the disciples. There were two other times that he would do so in the near future after this.

So on three occasions, Jesus said very specifically, I'm going to be rejected, I'm going to be killed and I'm going to rise again in three days. But the disciples didn't understand him. Peter seemed to understand what he meant, but did not.

He must have thought Jesus was just depressed and that Jesus was just being pessimistic, maybe because no one except the disciples knew that he was the Messiah. Maybe Jesus was feeling discouraged, so Peter wants to lift up his spirits and said, well,

Peter rebuked him, actually. He said he spoke this word openly and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him in Matthew's version.

It says, Peter said, not so, Lord, this shall not be unto you. Although here it actually has Peter rebuking Jesus. Imagine rebuking Jesus.

These guys have been with Jesus a long time, pretty familiar, familiar terms. Of course, Jesus then rebuked Peter in verse thirty three. Now, Peter rebuking Jesus about this, I think the fact that it says rebuke means that Peter thought that Jesus was not only speaking, you know, unrealistically, but was out of line and saying it.

Perhaps he's saying, Lord, you know, you talk that way, you're going to discourage these. You've got these few who believe in you. You start talking about dying and you're going to get this.

You're going to disperse those who are still with you. Don't talk that way. Now, the way it is in Matthew's version, it sounds like Peter's not rebuking Jesus, but trying to encourage him, trying to encourage you saying, you know, it won't happen to you, Lord, don't worry.

I know it looks like people are out to get you, but we're here for you. We're going to stand up for you. You know, don't worry, you won't die.

But whatever Peter's tone was, it was not and I'm sure it was well intended. It was not just a bad suggestion on Peter's part, but it was the devil speaking to offend Christ, to stumble him, that is. And that's what Jesus said.

Verse 33 says, But when he had turned around and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get behind me, Satan, for you're not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. Now, the things of God include a cross for Christ. The things of men almost always involve avoiding that.

The things that men mind, the things that men value are very much in contrast to the thing that God values. In Luke, chapter 16, I think it is, Jesus said, The things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God so that God's value system is the polar opposite of men's value system, generally speaking. I was just checking it out because I'm not sure.

Yeah, it's verse 15, Luke 16, 15. Jesus said, What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination inside of God. So the things that men value are the opposite of what God values.

And we should bear that in mind, especially when we hear aberrations of the gospel presented, especially gospel messages that sound like they cater to what people would want to be the case. Rather than what God would necessarily want. A good news that

tickles the fancy and the desires of the flesh is always to be suspect.

Because it reflects what man values and not what God does. When the gospel is presented simply as the means by which a person can get over a lot of their problems, not least of which is the problem going to hell, but where they can actually go to heaven and they can. All kinds of goodies can be added to the message, depending on the brand of presentation that you're getting, the denomination or whatever.

Maybe you can throw in there healing and wealth and all kinds of goodies, the things that men love, valuing the things of man. And Jesus said that's Satan talking. What God values is a man laying down his life.

For the cause of the kingdom of God and Jesus was going to be the first to do it a few verses later, he's going to tell the disciples they have to do it because he's going to say in verse 34, if anyone come after me, let him take, deny himself and take up his cross. Now, that's not savoring the things of man that's savoring the things of God. That a person would lose his life for God's sake is not what people want.

That's not the message men would want to hear, generally speaking. And so Peter is got his values mixed up. And Jesus is saying, listen, I'm telling you, I'm going to die, I'm going to be rejected, I'm going to be condemned, all that.

And Peter says, no, that's not what you deserve. That's not what you should get. God will be on your side.

God will deliver you. You need to have more positive confession, not this negative pessimism going on. And Jesus said, you're talking like the devil to me.

Interesting, he'd say, get by me, Satan, because he says you're not mindful of the things of God, but the things of you think the devil. Right. He just called him Satan.

He should say, you're not mindful of the things of God, you're mindful of the things of the devil. But he didn't say that, although it would have been true. He said, you're not mindful of the things of God, you're mindful of the things of men, which is suggesting that the things that men are naturally mindful of are the things that the devil promotes, the thing the devil is for.

Man is more naturally aligned with the devil's agenda than with God's agenda. And so there's many, many times in the New Testament that Jesus and Paul and the other apostles talk about the great value of being faithful unto death, of suffering persecution for righteousness sake and so forth, because that's the things that God values. Man and God value different things.

Remember, Peter talking about women and what makes them attractive is let not their adornment be the outer adorning of what he say, silver and gold and plaiting the hair

and so forth and clothing. Don't let that be their outward adorning, but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit. And he says, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Everybody knows that outward adorning is typically what men value in a woman as outward beauty, but he says the Christian woman should be more concerned about what God what God values the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. Peter says this is this discussion in First Peter, chapter three, verses one through six. And so the things of God, the things God values and things man values are not the same.

And and the person who becomes a Christian has got to take that into consideration. When people who are half converted or barely converted or maybe just converted and their minds have not been renewed at all, they read the Bible, they find all kinds of things that bother them about what God did. God, you know, having all the Canaanites killed.

You know, God having a man killed for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. There's all kinds of things that bother people when they read the Bible, because God's doing what he sees fit. In these cases, and it's not what we see fit.

Because are we value the things of man, we take the side of people against God. It's weird in the Bible, we see God judging sinners and our natural tendency is to take the side of the sinners and saying, God, you know that those are those are people there like us. I feel their pain.

You know, I don't really see why you're doing that. Where the renewing of our minds is that we take God's side of the thing, that's kind of what conversion means. Conversion means change.

What changes? Well, one thing that changes whose side you're on, for one thing, when you're not a Christian and you become a Christian, one thing that changes, you're now on God's side instead of on man's side. Because man is at war with God. Man's values are the opposite of God's values.

And that's why Paul says we need to be not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, because our minds are wrong when we start out and they remain wrong in many ways, even after we get converted, they just have to get transformed into process. Our minds have to be bathed by the word of God. We need to have our we need to receive with meekness the implanted word, James says.

We need like newborn babes desire the milk of the word that we might grow thereby. And that growth is measured in transformation of our thoughts into the likeness of God's thoughts, value in what he values. And we don't do that perfectly.

I don't know that anyone does, but that's the project. Peter had been with Jesus for at least a year and a half, maybe two years at this time. And he still, as Jesus put it, you're mindful of the things of man, not the things of God.

And so Peter stood rebuked, not least of all because he was referred to as Satan. Now, it's not clear how Jesus meant that. Certainly, we are not to understand that Peter was demon possessed or Satan possessed, like Judas later is said to have been.

But his mouth became the mouthpiece of Satan. And this is one of the devices of Satan that we are not ignorant of. Remember, it says in the second chapter of Second Corinthians, it says, lest the devil should take advantage of us because we are not ignorant of his devices.

Well, he has devices and we shouldn't be ignorant of them. One of his devices is simply this. We see it here.

We saw it when we studied Job. Because when the devil wants to get through to a godly man, he'll speak sometimes in disguise as a trusted friend. In Job's case, it was his wife.

Say, why don't you just curse God and die? Well, that's a familiar ring to it. That's what the devil was trying to get Job to do, is curse God. And now his own beloved wife is speaking for Satan.

In this case, a loyal disciple of Jesus is the mouthpiece. Because the devil knows that if he just stepped out of the closet and said, hey, I'm the devil, I've got some suggestions for you. I've got a wonderful plan for your life that we're going to say, hey, wait, I know you're the devil.

You're not the good guy. I don't want to hear anything you have to say. You're a bad person.

You don't like me. You're trying to ruin me. I'm not going to listen to you.

But if he comes in through the voice of a trusted friend, your guard is down. It just it sounds more reasonable. It certainly comes as something that sounds like it's from someone who's concerned for you.

Oh, look out for yourself. Be easy on yourself. That's what Peter was saying.

That's what the devil wants to say. Don't be so hard on yourself. Don't be so fanatical.

Well, Jesus goes on to say. You're all going to be that fanatical. Verse 34, when he had called the people to him with his disciples also.

So this was this comment was made not only to the disciples, but to the people, whoever was around the side. Apparently, people had followed him up there to Cicero's. He said

to them, whoever desires to come after me.

That means to follow him, let him deny himself. And take up his cross and follow me, for whoever desires to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it.

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul, or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, let the. Of him, the son of man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with his holy angels. Now, Jesus really lays it on the line here and not just to his disciples.

So this is not just to, you know, the elite. This is not just to the green berets of the movement. This is to the disciples and the people.

Jesus made sure he gathered the people to him so he could say to everybody, you want to be one of mine? You want to come after me? You're close to me. You're going to have to do the hard thing, the thing that man doesn't want to do, but the things of God, not the things of man. You have to deny yourself, first of all.

Now, that denying yourself is not simply a matter of doing something as easy as self-denial. Sounds the same. Deny yourself, self-denial.

But self-denial often just means that you you fast once or you deny your body some food or some other pleasure. You go off TV for a while. You deny yourself, you know, certain luxuries and so forth.

That's in other words, it has to do with maybe what we think of as self-denial means that you kind of bite the bullet at times and don't do the thing you want to do. But denying yourself is something more fundamental, more central to who you are. You see, self, what is self? Self is just who you are.

You are yourself. You don't have a self. You are yourself.

And to deny yourself means to uproot your own self with your own agendas, with your own interests, with your own prerogatives, your own plans, your own rights, whatever, whatever you associate with who you are to just uproot that. And say, as Paul did in Galatians, not I, but Christ, it is no longer I, but Christ that lives in me. It's not about me.

It's about Christ, everything. It was about me. And maybe, you know, before you were a Christian, you might not have thought of yourself as a self-absorbed person.

And certainly there are people who are not Christians who are not entirely self-absorbed. There are there are philanthropists. There are people who are compassionate.

There are people who think about other people. There are mothers who will die for their

children who don't know the Lord. Not everyone is completely self-absorbed, but everyone is self-concerned.

Everybody still evaluates things in general about how will this affect me? How will this enhance my life or or not? And it's these things that become the foundation of all of our thinking, all of our decisions, all of our planning. And that is our default state as humans. We are the center of our world.

We may even before we're Christians, we may make great strides at being unselfish, but we're still the center of our thinking. And he says, you need to deny that. You need to say no to that.

And, of course, what that means is, of course, it's got to be Christ becomes the center. Now you take up a cross. It's interesting.

It's hard for us to at this late stage in Christian history to look at these words objectively as they would have been heard by the original hearers. Because remember, until a few moments earlier, when Jesus said that he was going to be crucified. And he did say that specifically, didn't he? Let's see here.

Killed. I guess he didn't even say crucified, he just said killed. So he hadn't even mentioned a cross.

He had mentioned he was going to die, but he had not mentioned the cross. The disciples had at this point no reason in the world to associate a Roman cross with this person that they were with. He had not clearly predicted that he was going to die on a cross.

There was no reason to associate him with a cross. After all, it was the Romans that put people on crosses. All of Jesus opposition was coming from Jews, not Romans.

Jews didn't crucify people. I mean, when Jews wanted to kill someone, they'd stone him to death. But the Romans were the ones who crucified people.

And Jesus didn't have any opposition from the Romans at all. The Romans didn't care about him. He was not a political threat to them.

Why would the disciples even think in terms of Jesus and a cross? They didn't at this point. But what did it mean to them then when he said, you need to take up your cross? Certainly, they knew what a cross was. A cross was an instrument of execution.

It was an instrument of humiliating execution. A person who was condemned to die on the cross generally was required to carry at least a part of the cross, the the the horizontal beam on their shoulder to the place of execution. Even Jesus apparently began carrying his, but he couldn't finish it out.

And he was in worse shape than many criminals because his back had been totally lacerated with clippings. And so it was clear that he couldn't. He lost too much blood.

His back was too lacerated. So they basically had to find someone else to carry his cross for him. But criminals carrying crosses was not an unfamiliar sight in the Roman world.

The Roman world did not require all of the rigmarole we have in our modern society before executing a criminal. People were not on death row for long periods of time. They didn't have many courts of appeals they could go through.

If the Romans decided this person was an insurgent, take him up to the hill and crucify him. And they crucified thousands of people. The Romans did.

So to see a man carrying a cross was a familiar sight. It just wasn't at all familiar to them to associate with Jesus. We do.

We hardly associate with anything else because we're so late in Christian history. The cross has become the symbol of the Christian religion. We can hardly think of a cross without picturing Jesus hanging on a cross.

We almost forget that other people sometimes died on crosses, too. But at the point when Jesus said that there is no such association, the disciples, he said, OK, we got to take up a cross. What in the world is that talking about? But they knew that they'd seen people take up and carry a cross before.

That was a person who, well, that person was going to soon die. The reason he's carrying his cross is going to the place where he's going to die. And by the way, if a man was really carrying his own cross, there's a sense in which he had resigned himself to the fact that he's going to die.

He had given up his sense of entitlement. He'd given up his sense of right. He was making no protest.

To defend himself any longer, he had accepted the sentence, he might not like it, but he accepted it. As seen in the fact that he was carrying the cross. After all, no one could make him carry a cross.

This is a voluntary act. I mean, what could they could beat him if he wouldn't carry it? They could punish him. But hey, a man could easily be stubborn enough to say, well, you're worse.

What do you think? I care. You're going to kill me in a few minutes. You know, I don't want to carry it.

I'm not going to cooperate with you guys. I'm still innocent. I don't deserve this.

I'm not going to carry your stinking cross. If you're going to crucify, you're going to drag me up there and drag the cross, too, because I'm not going to do it. Not going to help you.

A man could do that. I don't know if they ever did. Probably some did.

I bet there are a lot of obstinate Jews who said, you can try it if you want, but I'm not going to carry it. And yet there were people who carried their crosses. There were people who, after they were condemned, they'd given up all hope.

Perhaps they realized they were guilty of the crime and they'd been caught and there was no appeal to be made. And so they were resigned to their fate and they were not thinking about their rights. They weren't thinking about their future and their plans.

They had none of that. They were soon to die. And that was their mentality.

And Jesus said, you have to take up your cross like that. You need to adopt the attitude of somebody who isn't really trying to save his own life, who isn't trying to hold on to his own privileges, who isn't protesting that his rights are being violated. Who is, in fact, expecting to die, maybe soon.

That's the attitude you have to take up. Now, you might say, that seems like a really gloomy attitude to have as a Christian. Should Christians be so gloomy? I don't think it's supposed to be gloomy.

You see, the apostles in the book of Acts, they were arrested by the Sanhedrin. Their lives were threatened. They were beaten.

And when it was all over, what did they do? It says they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. These guys favored the things of God, not the things of man. Sure, it's gloomy if you're if you're still savoring the things of man, if you're still thinking that saving your life is what it's all about.

If you're thinking, no, that God be glorified by my faithfulness and that God be pleased that I'm faithful in death. That's a privilege to me. I rejoice to have such a privilege.

And so that the sacrifices that are made for being for Christ are sacrifices that are made. You feel like it's a privilege to make them. And, you know, we sometimes forget this, but if you haven't been in love.

Before or for a long time, you might not be aware of this, if you are in love or have recently been in love, then you probably will relate to what I'm saying when you're in love, you want to serve the person you want to sacrifice the person if you had the opportunity to die for them, you do it. Not because of some gloomy obligation, but

because love, the love of Christ constrains this process. It's the love for God makes you want to sacrifice everything.

And when people are in love, they make those sacrifices. They don't think they're making a sacrifice, never crossed their mind that they're making a sacrifice. It's a delight.

To spend and be spent. To lavish everything you have, even if you had the privilege to even die, to be the hero of that person you love and to die knowing that you're saving their life or you're dying because you are being loyal and faithful to them. There's a maybe you think, well, I've been in love and I didn't have those feelings.

I don't think you have been in love. And if you're in love with Jesus, which is, of course, what he's calling for. Then it's not a gloomy thing to take up your car.

So if this glorifies God, if this pleases God, if this makes him happy, then it makes me happy. I rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. And that's what Paul said in Philippians.

Remember. In Philippians, chapter three, talking about his own attitude, which I think all of us know this passage and probably have heard it quoted, may quote it ourselves. But how much do we relate with it? Paul said as he was talking about all the advantages he had before he was a Christian in terms of status in the Jewish community where he lived.

He had the right pedigree, he had the right education, he was part of the right party. He was an up and coming, promising leader in the party of the Pharisees, very possibly an understudy of Gamaliel so as to become eventually part of the Sanhedrin. This man, in terms of Jewish society, was on the trail of success, the path of success.

But he says in verse eight of Philippians three, but indeed, I also count all things. I could go to verse seven, but what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed, I also count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.

I don't feel like I'm sacrificing unless taking out the trash is making a sacrifice. I count them to be the things I got rid of. They're rubbish.

You think I made a sacrifice for Christ? All I gave up was I just took out the trash. I never thought of that as a big sacrifice. The things I gave up were the ball and chain that I wore before, the stuff that I'd give anything to be rid of because my values have changed, because I esteem the things of God.

He says, I count those things that were gained to me, I count them like rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from

the law, but which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering being conformed to his death. This is what Paul considers to be a privilege to know Christ through the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering and being myself conformed to the likeness of his own death. If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead, now, Paul sounds like a man obsessed with Jesus so much so that his values are all turned around from what they used to be.

What I once valued, I count it as rubbish. What I once feared is what is most precious to me now, and that is the supernatural change that Christianity brings. You see, sometimes people think of becoming a Christian is joining a religious movement.

You can join the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons or maybe the Muslims. You could become a Muslim or a Jew or a Hindu. Maybe you can join the Masons or you can join the Baptist Church.

And many people think of it all kind of like a potpourri of religious options. And you pick the one you think is best and you do your best to fit in. You learn the rhetoric, you learn the songs, you learn how to behave as they wish, and you fit right in.

Now you're part of that religion. That's how Christianity is. Christianity isn't a religion that you fit into.

It's something that you don't fit into. You have to almost you have to die to yourself because you don't fit. Because the things of man are opposite of the things of God.

You have to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him. He says, for whoever desires to save his life will lose it. You want to save your life, you'll lose that.

I remember I thought it was Richard Wurmbrandt, but it could have been another one of the suffering Christians from the communist world that told a story. About a. Actually, you know, it might it might have even been from the old man, it might have been Fox's book of martyrs, come to think of it. Sometimes I remember where I read the stories I read because I've read lots of books of a similar sort.

But I read a story of a Christian who was being tortured. I guess it was in the Middle Ages. He was on the rack.

And it was excruciating, of course, torture. His joints were being pulled out and he was remaining faithful to Christ. And they would let him off if he denied his faith.

And finally, under torture, he did deny his faith. And they let him off the rack. He got off the rack and he collapsed on the floor dead.

I thought, man, is that the classic case of a man seeking to save his life? And losing it, I

don't think it's always that dramatic. I don't think the thing happens quite so like instant karma is John Lennon used to call it. But Jesus is saying you're not going to be able to save your life.

You're not getting out of here alive. You're going to lose your life. So why waste energy trying to save it? And by saving your life, he means, of course, by compromise.

Of course, there's nothing wrong when you're hungry with eating food, knowing that that'll sustain your life. Or if you're sick and the doctor can give you a medicine that will help you. That I mean, you're a diabetic and you take insulin.

You're seeking to save your life by taking that's not that's not what he's talking about. He's not saying you should neglect your health and neglect your life. He's saying that.

If following Christ is life threatening. And the only way that you can save your life is by compromise, then don't compromise.

Don't try to seek your life to save your life by by somehow compromising your loyalty to Christ because you're going to lose your life anyway. What's the point of trying to save it? You get a few more years. Who cares? What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul, Jesus said in this context.

But he said whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Now, here he seems to be talking about martyrdom. You lose your life for Jesus' sake.

Martyrdom was a very real situation that many of the disciples faced. All of the apostles did face it. And all of them, except John, died as martyrs and many thousands of other Christians who were not apostles, sealed their testimony with their blood, too.

And they did not seek to save their life. They lost their life, but they found it in another sense. But not every Christian really has the opportunity to die as a martyr.

You know, it's not really offered to all of us. You live in certain countries like America. You could be a faithful Christian.

No one will give you the privilege of being a martyr. They'll just ignore you. They might mock you.

They might pass over you for a promotion at the job. They might exclude you from their company, but they're not going to make a martyr of you. But you can still lose your life in the sense that you give up your life.

You give up your privileges and your prerogatives for Christ's sake. And you, like Paul, say it's no longer I, but Christ who lives in me. That's that's what matters.

That's the attitude Jesus is saying his disciples have to have. This is not what men value.

This is what God values.

And he says, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, loses his soul? Now, there's one line in here that I should comment on. I passed over it without comment, but I thought about it at the time. And I think I'll come back because in verse thirty four, when Jesus said, whoever desires to come at me, he said, let him deny himself and take up his cross.

Of course, I talked about that. But what's that last part? And follow me. Now, what does it mean to follow Jesus? It would seemingly mean, at least with that crowd, that I'm going over here and you go there, too, behind me.

That's what following someone means. When Jesus called the fishermen to follow me, he meant, here I go. You're going to be behind me or not.

Are you going where I'm going? They had to leave what they're doing and go somewhere else to be where he was. And as he moved, they had to keep moving with him, like the children of Israel following the cloud through the wilderness. Jesus was in motion.

He was there, but he was only one place at a time. So they'd have to be in motion to be with him. But now Jesus isn't in just one place at a time.

He isn't just kind of walking around the earth where you can say, OK, if I want to be with Jesus, I have to go to that spot and be there and move in this direction because I see that's where he's going. In other words, following Jesus when he's a visible, tangible person on earth, it was easy to know what that means. I walk behind him.

But now he's not here in that form anymore. He's not visibly going from one place to another. What does it mean to a modern day Christian to follow Jesus? And the answer is complex one in a way, because there's a lot of aspects to it.

It certainly means that you identify yourself as one of his followers in the same way that any disciple of any rabbi saw himself as one of the rabbi's followers or as the Pharisees saw themselves as followers or disciples of Moses. Remember when the blind man had who had been healed, told his interrogators how Jesus had done it and they wanted to hear it again. They said, tell us again how he did that.

He said, I've already told you. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to be his disciples, too? And they said, you're his disciple. We are Moses disciples.

Well, Moses was long dead, but it was not impossible to be a disciple of Moses anyway, because Moses had left, in this case, in the law, a thorough representation of what he wanted people to do, what he what he taught that people should do. And so as they were following Moses laws, they thought they were following Moses. So also to follow Jesus often means simply to follow his teaching.

That's what a disciple does. He said, if you continue in my word, then you're my disciples. Indeed, in John 8, 31.

So following his teaching, following his words, continuing his words, is following him, just as one might be said to be a follower of Freud. Or a follower of Jung or a follower of Maslow or a follower of some other in those cases, of course, are philosophical theorists, but you could be a follower of Richard Dawkins and you could continue to be a follower of after he's dead. It's basically that he's like your guru, everything he writes, you believe in you and you propagate.

You are his follower. And we're followers of Christ in that sense, but there's more to that in following Christ, just as there was for the disciples. It wasn't just that they were to obey what he said.

But remember when he washed their feet, he said, I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Following his example, not just following his orders, but imitating Christ, doing what he did, not just what he said. See, so many times people say, well, do as I say, not as I do, but Jesus didn't have to make a distinction.

He lived by the standards he taught and he modeled them so that we would. Imitate him as well as obey him. That we'd have the verbal instructions, we'd also have the visual aid of how he lived in First Peter, chapter two.

In verse twenty three. It says Christ, when he was reviled, did not revile in return when he suffered, he did not threaten, but he committed himself to him who judges righteously. Actually, I should have read a couple of verses earlier, though it's on the same vein.

But verse twenty one is what I was actually thinking about. He says, for to this you are called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps. Now here Peter is talking to people after Jesus was dead, risen and gone to heaven.

Following Jesus steps at that particular time in history did not mean walking around behind the visible Jesus. What did it mean? He says, well, Jesus has given us an example so that you should follow his steps as follow his example. Imitate him.

Following Jesus means that we follow his teaching and we follow his example. We imitate Christ. And I believe since Christ is the living Christ today and has given us his spirit.

And the Bible says as many as are led by the spirit of God, they're the sons of God, then we follow his spirit. We follow him that way, too. We don't only follow his written instruction, we follow his leading insofar as we can discern it.

And by the way, following what the Bible says is following the spirit because the spirit is

part of the Bible. There's not some dichotomy here between obeying the Bible and obeying the voice of the spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, but the Holy Spirit also will give us guidance as it is needed additional.

And when he when he convicts us and says, you need to do such and such following Jesus means we need to do what he says, his spirit in it guides us as well in various ways, lots of different ways can be dreams or visions could be prophetic utterances given to us. It can be simply a still small voice or the voice of conscience or the reminder of our mind of something that the scripture said relevant to a decision we're making all kinds of ways. God can speak to us.

Maybe even just through circumstances, maybe through just opening remarkable doors that correspond with something we've already kind of felt a conviction about doing, there's all kinds of ways that the spirit can lead us. But following Jesus involves still following him literally. We follow his teachings, we follow his example, but he's still alive and we have a relationship with him.

And so Jesus said, you need to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me and following him means. It really does mean a lot the same as what it meant for the disciples at that time. But he instructs them to do.

He says, let's go across the lake. Well, they got in the boat with him, went across the lake. If Jesus tells you to go someplace, you go there.

And so this is what it means to follow Jesus. He said, if anyone will come after me, let him do these things. You see, Jesus was going to the cross.

He had already said, we're going to Jerusalem, we're going to be killed. And if you want to go with me, you're going to have to go on the same terms I'm going. I'm going to bear a cross, you'll have to bear a cross.

I'm denying myself because in the grace of his father, not my will, but yours be done. That's self, that's denying himself. You're going to have to deny yourself.

You're going to have to follow me. You're going to do what I do, go where I go, follow my steps, be like me. That's what it means to be a Christian.

As Jesus defined it, and then do we get the end? It just says, oh, this is important. First, 38, for whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation. Him, the son of man, will also be ashamed of when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels.

Now, being ashamed of Christ, and it's interesting, he's saying whoever's ashamed to be in this sinful. And adulterous generation, you think shame when you feel shame or embarrassment, it's because you're concerned about what somebody else is thinking

about you. If you do something embarrassing and no one knows it, you don't feel very embarrassed.

You might be, you might laugh at yourself, but you don't walk around ashamed and embarrassed because no one knows about it. But if you do something embarrassing in front of people and you care about what they think and you're afraid that they'll have a negative thought of you, then you feel shame, you feel embarrassed. Because if you're embarrassed of me.

In front of this generation and they are adulterous and sinful, what do you care about their opinion for? Well, I'm going to be ashamed of you if their opinion matters that much to you, you're not really one of mine. And there was a I got a caller on the radio yesterday, I'm trying to remember the call because I don't remember after it shows over what the specific calls were until someone reminds me usually. But there was a caller.

Who was saying that his unbelieving friends. Were not sympathetic towards something or another that God had done in the Bible. I don't remember what it was, it could be any number of things, because there's always things that people find objectionable to God, his opinions, his actions, his judgments in the Bible.

By the way, it says in Proverbs, the wicked do not understand judgment, but the righteous understand all things. And the wicked, when they read the Bible, they're reading about the judgment, God's judgment calls about things and they don't understand it and they're offended by it. And this caller was a Christian who was trying to trying to ask me if there's some way to answer these non-Christians because they were I felt like the Christian was kind of felt kind of embarrassed for God.

And I don't remember the question, I don't remember what my answer was exact, I remember that I gave him some kind of answer that I thought made sense and then but then I thought, you know, but. I don't think they're going to accept this answer because this answer presupposes loyalty to God. If you're on God's side, then you can accept an answer like this, if you're not on God's side, you're not going to be impressed with an answer like this, because my whenever people say, why did God do such and such? Every answer I'm going to give is going to assume that God was in the right.

I'm going to assume that God's in the right and there's a good reason for what he did, but the unbeliever is already assuming the opposite. That's why they're raising the objection. God doesn't seem to be in the right.

He didn't have a good reason, and they challenge you to answer for God, and you almost feel like, well, if I can't do it, it's embarrassing. And it's embarrassing to stand up for God when he said those. Politically incorrect things, I remember saying something about how that you know that it's only our modern culture that has the particular sensitivity about this issue, the person brought up, I don't remember what exactly I wish I could

remember what it was, but it's some issue where society had always thought one way, but modern society has rejected it.

It could have been feminism or something like that. The society that forever thought a certain way about this, it's only our ultra modern society that has taken offense to this. And I said, you know, frankly, I'm not particularly impressed with the moral discretion, the moral discernment of our present generation, and therefore I don't see any reason to be ashamed of God simply because he's out of step with the moral sensitivities of our adulterous and sinful generation.

You know, I mean, what is to be ashamed of our generation should be ashamed. They're the ones who have departed from what God said and what even most civilized people for centuries have agreed with on the particular issue. But so many Christians are afraid to stand against the culture to say the thing that's viewed as politically incorrect.

And Jesus, if you're ashamed of me in front of these adulterous and sinful people, why should you care what they think? Why would their opinion carry any weight at all that you should be ashamed of me before them? He says, you're ashamed of me before then. Then you're going to be I'll be ashamed of you. And boy, that's not really what I would like to see happen.

I would hate to stand before God and hear Jesus, you know, I'm ashamed of you. I mean, I don't even care if that didn't keep me out of heaven. And if he said, I'm ashamed of you, you're going to heaven, but I'm ashamed of you.

I feel like how about if you just send me to hell? I don't think I want to be in heaven knowing you're ashamed of me. Just to have him say, well done, good and faithful servant, I really doesn't have any more heaven than that. Even if we're all going to be annihilated, you know, it's like we're going to go to the judgment.

He's going to tell us what he thought of us and we're all annihilated. We're not going to have any more consciousness ever again. If that were the case.

And he said, well done, good and faithful servant. I think that that's all I wanted to hear. Now, let me depart in peace, you know, but to have Jesus say, I'm ashamed of you.

It's something that I could I don't think I could I could bear. And Jesus assumed his disciples had the same sentiments because that's the threat he held out over. You're ashamed of me.

You know what I'm going to do? I'm ashamed of you. That's supposed to be a strong motivator to not be ashamed of him. And if you can picture that scene, not the scene here, but the scene on the judgment day.

And what does it feel like to be staying there? And it's your turn and he's looking at you

and you want pretty badly for him to say. I'm proud of you know, well done, good and faithful servant. And he says the opposite.

That would be about as bad as it gets. I don't I can't think of a hell worse than that. There might be one, but I can't think of.

Anyway, we got to the end of chapter eight. I actually had imagined we'd even get into chapter nine, but obviously we didn't. It's too late to try it now.

And obviously also it's a stopping point here. So we'll we'll quit here.