

Looking toward Calvary

Mark 8: 31-33

At this point in Jesus' ministry His popularity has diminished greatly, particularly among the devout Jews. He is about to enter a season of intense difficulty, culminating with the cross. From this moment forward, Jesus will be intent on enabling the disciples to continue in His absence and preparing for the cross.

It is interesting that this passage immediately follows Peter great confession of faith in Christ. He was the most outspoken of the disciples, never at a loss for words. I am convinced many of us are much like Peter; we tend to speak before we take time to think. While this conversation was not limited to Jesus and Peter, they are the two primary characters. The last recorded word we have from Peter was wonderful and compelling. In our text today things are much different. Peter spoke from a heart in tune with Christ previously, and today we find him speaking from a heart motivated by the flesh.

As we consider the [aspects](#) of their conversation, I want to discuss the thought: [Looking toward Calvary](#). Hopefully the conversation between Jesus and Peter will enhance our faith and deepen our devotion to our Lord. Consider:

I. The Revelation of Jesus (31) – [And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.](#) As Jesus spoke with the disciples He offered a prophetic word about future events that must come to pass. No doubt this revealing word caught the disciples by surprise. Notice:

A. The Importance (31a) – [And he began to teach them.](#) It is interesting that Mark says that Jesus began to teach them. These men had been with Jesus for close to three years now. Clearly this does not imply that Jesus had waited until this moment to prepare His disciples. It is recorded for our benefit though, and reveals a significant truth. He began to share truth with His men that He had previously avoided discussing. There had no doubt been reference to the cross, but as we stated this marks a defining moment in Jesus' ministry. He is beginning in earnest to prepare the disciples for future events. It seems apparent that they were not ready to receive this truth until now. As Jesus perceived their maturity, He began to teach them of things yet to come. Obviously this was contrary to what they previously hoped and believed.

- Our walk with the Lord is a growing process. As we walk in fellowship with Christ, abiding in Him and the Word, we mature in the faith. As we grow and mature, the Spirit reveals deeper truth. Often this truth may be contrary to what we have been taught or previously believed, but it is true

nonetheless. I am thankful the Lord reveals truth and seeks to mature our faith through a deeper understanding of the Word.

B. The Implications (31) – *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.* As Jesus began to reveal previously unknown truth to the disciples, He offered great detail about events that must come to pass. Jesus spoke of:

1. His Rejection – *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes.* No doubt the disciples were familiar with the continued opposition Jesus faced by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, but here He spoke of increased suffering. These sought to hinder His ministry and minimize His influence, but this rejection and opposition would significantly increase as they neared the end of His ministry. While they had to admit Jesus was not an ordinary man, they stopped short of recognizing His deity or embracing Him as the Christ. The suffering would increase in intensity from here on out.

- Such rejection continues today. Jesus is the dividing line among the world. We know He is the sole means of salvation and reconciliation to God. The world refuses to embrace Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. They know if they are forced to submit to His authority and depend upon Him for salvation, they will then have to admit their own depravity, inability to secure their salvation, and trust Him by faith. This flies in the face of our fleshly nature, man's arrogance, and the humanistic view promoted by many.

2. His Crucifixion – *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed.* The disciples likely were handling the conversation pretty well up until this point. They had dealt with continued opposition, but now the conversation had taken a very serious tone. Jesus declared that He would not only suffer many things at the hands of evil men, but that He would also die at their hands. I can imagine the response of the disciples. No doubt they recoiled at such a statement. Likely they initially questioned whether they had heard Jesus correctly, thinking – did He just say that He would die? This flew in the face of their plans. They were not expecting His death; they were anticipating His triumphant reign as King of Jerusalem. As difficult as it was for them to receive, Jesus wanted to prepare them for His coming crucifixion upon the cross.

- This was Jesus' purpose for coming to the earth as a man. He came to die upon the cross as the atoning sacrifice for man's sin. This was not a new revelation that had recently been made known due to the increased opposition of the Jewish leadership. This was the plan for redemption,

made before the foundation of the world. Jesus knew He had come to die; and as that moment was approaching, He sensed the need to prepare His disciples.

3. His Resurrection (31) – *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.* Likely these words were lost in the shock of His impending death, but Jesus promised the disciples that death would not be final for Him. While He would die upon the cross, He would not remain dead. After three days He would rise again in triumphant life.

- To their credit, the disciples likely failed to hear the significance of Jesus' promise to rise again. Their hopes and dreams lay shattered before them as they contemplated the death of Jesus. They could not possibly at that moment have comprehended the enormity of Jesus' resurrection and the hope it would provide for all who come to Him by faith. However, we know this is the attribute of Christ that separates Him from all others. He died upon the cross, paying the debt for sin that we owed. He fully satisfied the righteous demands of the Father. In Him there is salvation. However, we must never be guilty of leaving Christ on the cross or in the tomb. He rose again triumphant, securing our justification and promising eternal life for all who believe!

II. The Rebuke of Peter (32) – *And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.* Here Mark records the stinging rebuke of Peter toward Christ the Lord. Notice:

A. The Setting (32a) – *And he spake that saying openly.* Jesus had not spoken these words hidden away in privacy. He had spoken them openly in public. This was clearly a planned, public statement from the Lord.

- This served as a convicting challenge for me. Jesus openly spoke of the suffering He would endure at the hands of sinful men. He spoke of the horrific death He would die upon the cross and His glorious resurrection. Jesus in essence publicly proclaimed the Gospel unto the disciples. The world would have us believe the Gospel is to be reserved for private and personal settings. They view it too personal and controversial to discuss publicly. Jesus proclaimed it publicly, willing to provide for my salvation. The least we can do is proclaim His glorious Gospel publicly to those who desperately need to hear and be saved.

B. The Sentiment (32b) – *And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.* Again Peter reacted before taking the time to think through his actions. He pulled Jesus to the side, hoping in his mind to correct this before it got out of hand. This did not go along with Peter's plans and ambitions. He

thought surely the Lord had misspoken. He wanted to take care of this and prevent any further talk of the death of Jesus.

- At this moment Peter did not want to embrace the cross. Many continue to do so today. They seek any means of salvation other than the cross. A theology that denies and rejects the cross of Christ is worthless. Had there been no death on the cross there would be no salvation for the sin of humanity. If we were to be redeemed, Christ had to die!

III. The Resolve of Jesus (33) – *But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.* Although Peter was upset, Jesus remained committed to the will of the Father. His face was set toward Calvary, and He had resolved to follow through as the sacrifice for sin. Consider:

A. The Rebuke (33a) – *But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan.* Peter had rebuked Jesus, but the Lord had the last word. Jesus was not literally calling Peter Satan, but referring to his attitude and actions. Peter's rebuke was not motivated by the Spirit, but by Satan. Peter allowed himself to be used of Satan in a moment of anxiety. Peter was acting in the flesh, not according to the Spirit.

- Those who deny the cross of Christ and His atoning sacrifice are being used of Satan to discredit the sole means of salvation. Satan did not want Jesus to offer Himself as the sacrifice for sin, providing redemption for humanity. Even today he wants to hinder the message of the cross and the hope of the Gospel.

B. The Reality (33b) – *for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.* Peter had spoken in a moment of passion, motivated by the flesh. His words did not honor God or submit to Christ. This was a word spoken in the flesh and it was contrary to the plan of God. At that moment Peter was more concerned with his personal desires than the will of God.

- It is easy to cast a condemning word toward Peter for his actions, but much too often we respond in similar ways. The Word of God and leading of the Spirit is contrary to our flesh. How often do we side with the flesh and deny the leading of the Spirit or prompting of the Word? We must ensure that our attitudes and actions are consistent with the will of God instead of being motivated by the flesh.

Conclusion: Jesus spoke of the Gospel in the text we read today. He is the embodiment of the Gospel, Savior and Redeemer of the world. Have you received Him as your personal Savior? If not, I urge you to do so today. There is no other way of salvation and eternal life. If you are a believer, I pray you have been challenged to share the Gospel with others and rejoice in the finished work of Christ!