

In verse 29, Peter had a breakthrough and knew who Jesus was, so he must also learn what kind of Christ He came to earth in order to be.

We get to that issue right away in our first verse of our passage, verse 31, where Jesus, “...*began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things...*” What kind of Christ? A SUFFERING Christ!!

Yes. Jesus had spoken plainly. The disciples understood the implications.

This was not the kind of Christ that they were expecting when they had just a moment prior confessed Christ. Their breakthrough had not included this information!

The disciples had been groomed to think that the Christ would be a powerful and victorious political leader. The disciples believed that they would become His kingdom officials. A victorious Christ! But since Jesus was to be a suffering Christ instead, the disciples had misjudged their own place. The disciples must join in the suffering!

To use the miracle from verse 24 again, Peter had his eyes partially healed, but Peter still was experiencing some level of spiritual partial blindness. Peter was expecting that God’s kingdom would come in power, majesty, and glory.

Jesus was re-training Peter to see with increasing clarity that God’s kingdom would come in rejection, humility, and shame.

Once we understand that the normal Christian life involves dying to self in order to find life in Christ, we must make up our minds: in or out?

1. Can we accept that Jesus needed to suffer? (v.31-33)

Many around them understood Christ in an earthly and political sense, as a person who would save the Jewish people from mistreatment by the Roman government.

Jesus was teaching them that He was not going to be a military and political figure. It was necessary for Jesus, not to have a comfortable rise to power, but rather to suffer. It was necessary for Jesus, not to be accepted, but rather to be rejected. It was necessary for Jesus, not, to win, but to be killed.

In the past, Jesus spoke in a veiled manner about His suffering. Mark 2:20, “*The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.*” But now Jesus said that He must be killed, and in verse 32, Mark wrote that Jesus “*said this plainly.*”

Verse 33 was the rebuke from Peter to Jesus. We wonder whether Peter had ever read Isaiah 53, where we are given words and phrases about the Messiah, such as carried our sorrows, stricken, smitten, afflicted, pierced, crushed, chastisement, wounds, oppressed, afflicted, led to the slaughter, grave, crush, poured out his soul

to death, bore the sin of many? How could Peter so severely misunderstand the role of the Christ?

So, next we have a response from the Great Teacher Himself, a response that is prompt, decisive, and forceful. Notice that Jesus did not only speak privately to Peter, but the rebuke to Peter was done in the presence of all the disciples. Verse 33, “*But turning and seeing His disciples, [Jesus] rebuked Peter and said,...*”

Why did Jesus give such a stern response? Jesus will not be led astray from the pathway that God the Father had for Him. Peter wanted to turn Jesus away from the cross, and the necessity of a cross. Peter wanted to rebuke Jesus into seeing the role of Messiah as victory without suffering.

Did you ever have one of those moments when you will never forget what was said? It was not just Peter who had one of those moments. It was Mark our author. He is setting the scene in order to bring us these fierce and insistent words of Jesus, who could protect the role of the Christ anytime, anywhere.

All of the disciples were about to have a moment burned into their memories.

Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan!

Jesus is actually addressing Satan. The prince of evil is against the pathway of suffering that leads to the cross. Whatever perverseness got into Peter’s thinking was presented as a temptation to Jesus. Jesus answered that temptation with speed and finality.

Notice that Jesus identified two ways of viewing the situation. Man’s view and God’s view. Verse 33b, “*For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.*” The spiritual things of God included what Jesus said, and Peter missed. Did you miss it? Look back at verse 31, “*...and after three days rise again.*”

If you look at the cross from the perspective of earth and men, you see it as the defeat and end of Jesus. But if you look at the cross from the perspective of heaven and God, you see it as the victory and glorious beginning of Jesus’ everlasting reign.

Can you accept God’s perspective, that the cross is central to Christianity? Can you accept the fact of reality in God’s world, of what we read in Hebrews 9:22, “*...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*”?

Peter learned it. Mark learned it and wrote to us about it. All disciples of Jesus learn this. Have you? Consider the later apostle of Jesus, the one named Paul. Would he agree? Yes, listen to what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18, “*...the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*” And again in verse 23, “*we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both*

Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God.” 1 Cor. 1: 18, 23-24.

Suffering was essential for Jesus Christ. That brings us to the second point, where Jesus shows an enlarged audience that what was true for Jesus holds true also for everyone else. The way of suffering leads to glory.

2. Can we accept that we must we suffer? (v.34-37)

Verse 34, *“And calling the crowd to Him with His disciples, [Jesus] said to them, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let him deny Himself and take up His cross and follow Me.’”*

The message of Jesus is not just for Peter, and not just for His 12 disciples, but for everyone. The crowd was called in to hear this statement of Jesus regarding what is discipleship, what is Christianity, what is a follower of Jesus? Everyone must take their definition from Jesus. Everyone has the same definition. There are not two standards, one for real and serious leaders and very active church members, and the other standard for more passive and relaxed church members. No. All have the same standard. Jesus said, *“If anyone would come after Me...”*

There is a close connection between the sufferings of Christ, and the sufferings of His people. Peter, who learned an important lesson that day, would later write in 1 Peter 4:13, *“rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.”*

Suffering for Christ’s sake is not a booster package or an option. This is a matter of life or death. Each of the next four verses, verse 35, 36, 37, and 38, each begin with the little preposition “for,” and that is because these sentences present the basis for the urgent command to suffer for Jesus.

Jesus began to make His persuasion to us in verse 35, pleading with us not to refuse to suffer. Why? Here is logical point #1. *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”* What is differentiated here is everlasting life in contrast with everlasting death. All must hear this, not just the 12 disciples in the inner circle. This is not just material for church leader retreats, this is the most basic commitment of the newest church member. Visitors must hear that everyone must become a disciples, a real follower, a true believer. To come after Jesus is to align yourself with His viewpoint, His teachings, His ethic, and not just verbally assenting to some theological belief statement, but also living out the lifestyle fitting for Jesus and the people of Jesus. We lose our own lives, and we live for Jesus. We leave behind our own array of privileges and pleasures, and we live only for the cause of the gospel.

We deny ourselves. At the door, on the way in, we once and for all say goodbye to our old selves. The old priorities, the things we chased and enjoyed. We turn away from our old thoughts, our old habits. Relying on the things of the Pharisees, chief priests, and scribes cannot be harmonized with trusting in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:5, “*we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...*”

We repeat after Paul “...*whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*” Philippians 3:7

But that is not all. We also take up our cross. This is the image of a condemned man forced to pick up and carry his own cross to the place of his own execution. The convicted criminal does that under duress. But the eager disciples of Jesus do this willingly. We voluntarily and decisively accept whatever pain, shame, and persecution are going to be our particular place. Note, not someone else’s pain or place, but what is unique to our own seat. Because of our own personal loyalty to Christ and His cause, we will suffer something. That we accept, and we even accept it joyfully, as if it were our high privilege. Because it is.

We must do it. Not an option. And yet it is our privilege, and a precious opportunity.

True conversion for the smallest and newest person includes self-denial, carrying our own cross, and following Jesus in every aspect of our lifestyle. This is a permanent and ongoing aspect of every believer, leading to a thoroughgoing refining of our character, a lengthening list of duties, and a widening commitment.

Jesus offered logical point #2, in verse 36, giving us a solid reason not to follow the wrong pathway, “*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*” This is the person who refuses to suffer by thinking of others. He thinks only of himself. He does not share. He does not give. He does not sacrifice anything of his own. He piles up material possessions, and pleasure, prestige, fame, all in search of personal gain of peace and satisfaction. But something happens to such a person. When his goals get narrower and narrower, his very soul gets narrower and narrower. He loses whatever remaining slice of the noble thought that he had in the beginning.

Jesus offered logical point #3, which is begging us to consider what happens once that life is lost. The logic of Jesus for that future moment of loss is in verse 37, “*For what can a man give in return for his soul?*” Nothing will compensate for his loss. He lost himself. He lost his way. He lost his soul, his humanity, his ability to be above the animals and view any situation like a person. He becomes like an animal in seeking personal comfort, and avoiding all suffering. For what? For him, there is nothing worth suffering for. For him, there is nothing worth dying for. For him, there is nothing worth living for. What can he offer as payment to buy back himself? Nothing.

So, let no one reject the appeal of Christ Jesus to deny ourselves and follow Him!

Must you suffer? Yes.

Acts 14:22, “*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*”

2 Timothy 3:12, “*all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*”

Knowing all of that, would you sign up? There is one remaining question. It is our third point.

3. Is it worth it? (v.38-ch.9v.1)

Verse 38 has the fourth occurrence of the preposition “for,” which is Jesus’ logical point #4. Please do not refuse. Logic says to consider the distant future, and then work backwards to our present moment.

Here goes the reasoning of Jesus to the crowds and to all of us, v. 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.*” To be ashamed of Jesus means to want to have nothing to do with Jesus.

Jesus is asking for logic to prevail. Think! Who would we rather be loyal to today? The ones who currently have rule over the dominant religion of the times? Or, would they rather be loyal to the One who will soon have rule over all the future? The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father. If they would just think about the future for a few seconds, they would understand what is more logical for their loyalty today.

Yes, the Son of Man here on earth was suffering, and would suffer more on His way to being killed. But what then? The Son of Man came from above, and will return to the place above. The suffering of the Son of Man is temporary. The glory of the Son of Man is permanent. He will gain the acceptance and glory of His Father in heaven. He will return in the glory of His Father. He will gain the following of thousands upon thousands of holy angels. He will return in with the holy angels.

In Chapter 9:1, Jesus predicted that some of the people near Him would see amazing things during their lifetimes. They would see Jesus arrested. They would see Jesus beaten and crucified until the sky turned dark, and He was dead. They would see His burial. They would see His resurrection appearances. They would see Him ascending on the clouds to return to heaven! They would see the Holy Spirit given. They would know of God’s power, as Jesus also said later, recorded in Acts 1:8, “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*”

But on this day, Peter was still making up his mind, while Peter was still thinking through whether it would be worth it to follow Jesus! Over in Matthew 19:27, Peter said to Jesus, “*See, we have left everything to follow you. What then will we have?*” This is the question of worth. Value. Cost. Conducting a cost vs. benefit analysis. Will it be worth it? The answer of Jesus to Peter is that yes, it will

be worth it, because you stand to gain something. Peter will gain. Peter will gain Christ. In gaining Christ, Peter will gain his own soul. Peter will gain life. Peter will gain the future.

There is suffering in following a suffering Christ.

There is resurrection in following a suffering Christ.

There is victory in following a suffering Christ.

There is gain and glory in following the glorious Christ.

The suffering Christ becomes the conquering Christ, and He will share the blessings of His conquest with Peter, and with all of us.

Concluding Application:

1. Make up your mind. Mark's Gospel has been a succession of challenges to make up our minds, ever since the ministry of John the Baptist in chapter 1 of Mark. John preached for people to repent. Will you repent or not? Will you receive the baptism of repentance or not? A Gospel account is not meant to be an interest in academics, an interest in history, or curiosity about life in the ancient world. The purpose of a Gospel account is to help people to be clear about the kind of discipleship to which Jesus is calling us, and to equip us with the information needed in order to respond positively to that call. So far in the Gospel of Mark, very few people have made up their minds to follow Christ. When Peter in Mark 8:29, at Caesarea Philippi declared that Jesus is the Christ, it was a turning point. It pushes us as readers to make up our minds. Who is Christ? At chapter 9, the Gospel account is not complete. However, the central figure is the person of Jesus, and by now we should have enough information to respond to the challenge of Jesus to commit. Are we in or out? We must make up our minds.

2. We must ask ourselves, does our Christianity cost us anything?

If not, then we have not really begun to follow.

Our crosses are not a bad boss or an unfair school teacher, or a bossy mother-in-law in your family. Illness or disability are not crosses.

Our crosses are not any difficulties that come along.

Our crosses are only those difficulties for Christ's sake.

Consider again verse 35, where Jesus said, "*whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel's [sake]...*"

We have to ask ourselves if we have any difficulties from following close to Christ. A cross comes specifically from walking in the steps of Jesus, and embracing His life, and shining His light. A cross is receiving disdain precisely because we are embracing the narrow way of Christ. Our cross is when we live out the ethics of Christ Jesus, in a culture that is increasingly hostile to God.

There are thousands of brave people who would run into a burning building or brave a storm, or face an active shooter if duty called them to do so, but they would

be ashamed to stand before this church tonight and be thought of as very religious. They would never say in public that their top desire is to please Christ.

We are never to be ashamed of Him who died for us. In spite of mockery and hard words, let us boldly reveal that we serve Christ. As heavy as the crosses that we bear may seem to us, Jesus gives grace to carry us while we carry our crosses.

Do not be delayed from picking up a service opportunity for Christ, out of fear of the weight of the Christian life. Philippians 4:13, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Look how many Christians have come before our generation, and have carried their yoke, their cross, their burden, and have found that they were not alone. Look how many Christians have found that Christ comes alongside of us in all of our struggles, and that in the end, the words of Jesus prove true, that the yoke of Christ is easy, and the burden of Christ is light. (Matthew 11:30)

Nothing in this world comes without effort and setbacks.

Entering the kingdom of God and serving the kingdom takes effort, and always includes setbacks.

God strengthens us daily with the reminder that the cross is for a little while, but the glory at the end is forevermore.

3. Use the pricetags of heaven. Suffering for Christ. What value does the world put on that? What value does heaven put on that?

Military or political or governmental power, and having a place in the leadership of those in power. What pricetag does the world put on that? What pricetag does heaven put on that?

Or, what is a soul worth? Priceless. We need to place the value that heaven places on souls. Your own soul and the souls of others. Our culture throws around religious words in order to advertise things of this world like credit cards. Meanwhile, our culture throws around religious words as if they were nothing, such as "he sold his soul to the devil." That is not a phrase to be saying flippantly, if we have the value system of God.

Having all the money in the world. Having fame, fortune, influence, pleasure, access, and privileges? What pricetag does the world put on that?

Or, the last one, what is the importance of the second coming of Christ?

What priority should that have in our thinking, if we are heavenminded?

I end with this verse regarding suffering, where Paul crystalized and summarized the viewpoint of right-thinking Christians through the centuries.... 2 Corinthians 4:17, "*this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.*"