

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

>>>>>> Lesson 21 <<<<<<<

1) Last time, we began looking at Mark 8:34-38.

2) We left with a couple of questions on the table:

Do we all need to become “Paul”? Why? Why not?

***Is becoming our own version of “Paul” the place we should be? Why?
Why not?***

3) I hope you found this challenging and not discouraging.

4) Lets take a quick review of the scripture that led us to them and then we will answer the questions.

Mark 8:34-38 (NIV)

1) This is one of those “hard sayings” passages.

2) If we really and truly look at Jesus’ words here, there is no way it can help but challenge us to our very core.

3) When Christ makes this statement – “deny oneself”, to understand it, we have to define for ourselves what the two words mean.

4) First, the words in context are not unique to anything associated with first century people.

5) To put it another way, the definition of self-denial we come up with is the same that they would have.

6) The word used here for deny is the same word used to describe Peter’s denial of Christ.

7) Of course, it means to deny, but other meanings include:

a) to disown, abstain, renounce, reject, refuse, or repudiate.

8) One commentator adds – “disown completely” or “to have no association with”.

9) No doubt, we have that picture of DENY – now, what about SELF what does it mean.

10) If we are looking for some wiggle room in this very contrite statement, might we find it here?

11) Self means (according to dictionaries):

a) One individual's personality, character, demeanor, or disposition.

b) The subject of one's own experience of phenomena: perception, emotions, thoughts.

c) An individual person as the object of the person's own reflective consciousness.

12) To deny oneself means to surrender immediate material gratification in order to discover and secure one’s true self and God’s interests.

If you found any wiggle room here – let me help bust your bubble!

13) One thing you probably had to consider in wrestling with the questions was this:

You don’t have to answer – but – what parts of “you” do you need to DENY?

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- If you find none then hooray for you – you have arrived!

14) The apostle Paul defines this idea when he describes his condition over in Phil 1:21 – “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”

15) John MacArthur says of this verse in Philippians;

Paul fully understood that wealth, power, influence, possessions, prestige, social standing, good health, business or professional success, and all other such things are transitory. Many acknowledge that truth, but not many live as if it is true. Few can say with Paul's utter sincerity to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

The apostle's very being was wrapped up in his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He trusted, loved, served, witnessed for, and in every way was devoted to and dependent on Him. His only hope, his only purpose, his only reason to live was Christ. He traveled for Christ, preached for Christ, and was persecuted and imprisoned for Christ. Ultimately, he would die for Christ. But even death, by God's marvelous grace, was ultimately for Paul's eternal gain.

16) That description says that Paul was the living definition of “denying oneself”.

17) Getting back to Jesus' words, as if this were not challenging enough, He finishes this sentence with a word picture that was vividly understood by those hearing Him and especially Mark's Roman readers.

18) Not only are we to deny ourselves we are to “take up our cross and follow Jesus”.

19) Death on a cross was a form of execution used by Rome for dangerous criminals.

20) A prisoner carried his own cross to the place of execution, signifying submission to Rome's power.

21) Following Jesus, therefore, meant identifying with Jesus and his followers, facing social and political oppression and ostracism, and no turning back.

22) We must note here that this is a voluntary taking up of the cross.

23) He isn't saying that if we are convicted of a crime we should be willing to bear our cross.

24) He is saying that regardless of the cost, we must be willing to bear it.

25) If He has not been clear up to this point, He surely does in His next statement:

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

26) I think the New Living Translation gives a better perspective on this than possibly do others:

If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

27) I don't think Jesus is talking about physical living and dying here (*though for some, it might mean that*) – instead, this statement dovetails and serves to reenforce the statement in the previous verse.

28) **It is giving up (loosing) the life we have now (denying ourselves) and accepting a new way of life (coming after Jesus).**

29) Jesus finishes this most difficult statement with what it all means in the long run:

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.

30) There is a point I feel must be made here. In both cases here Jesus bring to focus two conditions

- a) Being ashamed of Him / Giving up our lives for Him AND
- b) Being ashamed of His words / Giving our lives for the Gospel.

31) It is important to recognize that we must cherish and be willing to defend Jesus' words and the Gospel as much as we do Him.

32) Now, before we all get so discouraged we just throw up our hands, let's talk about our reality for a few moments.

33) When we answer the questions, we have to step back and try to grab this and use it as a mirror for our own lives,

Do we all need to become "Paul"? Why? Why not?

Is becoming our own version of "Paul" the place we should be? Why?
Why not?

- Give till it hurts – enough?
- Evaluation and goals for our Christian walk?
- Discipleship vs. membership discussion

If anyone would like to share, I have one more question – What is the thing that you found most challenging?

Further

Mark 9:1 (NIV)

- 1) We do not know if this statement came at the conclusion of the remarks we just discussed or at a later time.
- 2) The statement has, however, caused many to struggle because of the obvious fact that all those who were there have died and the Jesus' return and the final kingdom of God as revealed in his Revelation has not appeared.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- 3) With that in mind, there are several things that Jesus could have been referring to with this statement.
 - a) **First** – to His transfiguration that will take place a few days later;
 - b) **Second** – perhaps to all those who would witness the Resurrection and Ascension;
 - c) **Finally** – perhaps to the establishment of the church on Pentecost and the spread of that church thereafter.
- 4) As we said, because we know that all who were within hearing of this statement have died, the thing we know that He is NOT referring to is His triumphant return.
- 5) When we look back over the last verses of chapter 8 and as we go forward we see that from Mark’s perspective, Peter’s statement “You are the Christ” was pivotal.
- 6) Everything Mark presented up to that point was **leading** to it – everything that comes after Peter’s statement **flows** from it and verifies it.
- 7) What we are looking at next confirms that Peter’s good confession is true.
- 8) What he affirmed by faith and understanding of what he had witnessed will now be verified by the transfiguration of the Lord – visible absolute confirmation!

Mark 9:2-8 (NIV)

- 1) When we look at the miracles of Jesus in relation to the disciples, we find an interesting three level continuum.
 - a) **First** – there were those miracles that were witnessed by all the disciples and the crowds – healings and demon removals etc.
 - b) **Second** – there were those that were witnessed by all the disciples alone.
 - i) Calming of the sea.
 - ii) Walking on water.
 - iii) One might even argue that the disciples alone witnessed the feedings of the 5000 and 4000 because the people were probably not aware of where the food was coming from.
 - c) **Finally**, there were those miracles witnessed only by the three of the inner circle – Peter, James, and John.
 - i) Several healings.
 - ii) Raising of Jairus’ daughter. JI RUS
 - iii) They will be with Jesus in the Garden as He prays
 - iv) And now, this amazing scene is shown to these three alone.
- 2) The transfiguration was a unique glimpse of the divine Christ.
- 3) Mark says:

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

4) Matthew adds: 17:2

His face shone like the sun

Where do we see descriptions like this elsewhere in Scripture?

- Revelation
- 5) Bottom line is, this is a glimpse (perhaps not complete) but a look none the less at Christ in his heavenly glory.
 - 6) Then, there appeared Moses and Elijah.
 - 7) Obviously, Peter, James, nor John had ever seen them since they were dead and gone long before this.
 - 8) Doubt if they had name tags so, we are left with the obvious – they were absolutely recognized by the disciples thru divine revelation.
 - 9) Luke tells us the men were sleepy but became fully awake and saw the glory of the two men.
 - 10) What a fantastic and awe inspiring scene.
 - 11) Peter is so awe struck by it he doesn't know what to say but, being Peter, he has to say something so he makes his suggestion of building the shelters.
 - 12) He did call Jesus Rabbi (Master, Teacher) which indicates that he missed the revealed glory.
 - 13) However, giving him the benefit of the doubt, he was awe struck and half asleep!
 - 14) There are a couple of theories regarding what Peter had in mind.
 - a) He wanted to build true shelters so that they would stay there for a long time.
 - b) He could have had in mind Feast of Tabernacles or shelters.
 - i) That would have meant that the shelters were to be a commemoration of the event just as the shelters of the Feast commemorated the Exodus as an event.
 - c) Possibly three shrines honoring each of them Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.
 - 15) His words “it is good for us to be here” revealed a further lack of understanding.
 - 16) He desired to prolong the experience, to keep Moses and Elijah there with them.
 - 17) But that was NEITHER the point of the experience NOR the lesson to be learned by it.
 - 18) The parenthetical expression here says it best “(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened)”.
 - 19) The purpose of the actual transfiguration is an affirmation by God Himself of Jesus' divinity and His pleasure with Him.
 - 20) There is an underlying lesson (truly secondary) but important none the less to be learned here that is– **WAIT for UNDERSTANDING.**

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

21) I think the LABC says it best:

Poor Peter takes a lot of heat for blurting out words which, in retrospect, show how far out in left field he still was. It began with his startled fear. He may have reacted with his instinct to do something or his desire to help, or perhaps with his hope that a great messianic era would begin that night, the kind Israel had always dreamed of.

The better part of wisdom, for Peter and for us, is to wait for understanding before getting all worked up about offering one's impressive plans and ambitions. Christ has more to teach us.

Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah, our Savior. In the face of his glory, our first response should be to listen and learn. In churches and in families, that's a good idea, too. In our urge to help, we speak too quickly. In our tendency to direct the show, we nominate ourselves as program director before we've understood the program. Jesus wants our worship now; the time for action will come later.

Agree / Disagree?

22) As I studied the conclusion of the incident, I thought about Peter and how he must have felt at this moment.

23) He makes a somewhat off the cuff statement (by his own admission) and regrets it immediately.

24) Then, suddenly the three men are enveloped in a cloud.

- a) It is assumed by most that this is no ordinary cloud.
- b) It was in fact, the glory of God Himself.
- c) Similar to if not the same cloud that guided the Israelites in the desert or perhaps the same cloud that filled the temple with the glory of the Lord.

25) If I were Peter, the first thought that might cross my mind is "WOW, what have I done?"

26) He, James, and John must have been absolutely terrified.

27) Then if all that wasn't enough, the voice of God Himself fills the air speaking directly to the three disciples – "**This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!**"

28) Then, equally as quickly, the cloud disappears and no one is left but Jesus.

29) According to Matthew's account, the three men fell face down and were terrified.

30) Matthew also says that Jesus came to them and touched them and said "Get up, and do not be afraid."

31) They must have been dumbfounded as they stood there, probably with their mouths hanging open in shock at what had just happened.

32) God's affirmation of Jesus as His Son was (or should have been) the end of doubt regarding who Jesus was.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- 33) But, God punctuates that statement with a command – “Listen to Him”.
- 34) This was a command that these men were to listen to Jesus – not their own ideas and desires about what lay ahead.
- 35) Peter’s rebuke of the Lord for His announcement regarding His death was a true example of what God is saying NOT to do!
- 36) The Greek word used here (ακουετε) translated listen carries with it a further meaning of not only hearing but acknowledging and obeying. (it is an imperative – command)

Do we ever have need to here God’s voice saying “Listen to Him”?

Do we ever think we know better than what God’s word says?

How about when He speaks to our hearts about something we should or should not do?

Further