

Context:

- Peter just confessed, “You are the Messiah’ (v29)
- But Peter, and everyone else, still have misconceptions about what that means
 - They have in mind a *crown* and a *throne*.....Jesus knows what awaits- a *cross* and a *tomb*

Mark 8:31-32 Then he began to teach them that it was **necessary** for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Jesus didn’t see the cross as something to escape, but to embrace

‘it was necessary’ (must)- Jesus’ death is non-negotiable, not up for debate

Who is this necessary for?

For GOD- sin must be addressed. In Christ, on the cross, it would be

For HUMANITY- Jesus’ death is the only means for us to be saved

Jesus is drawing language from Daniel 7 and Isaiah 53- two contrasting passages-

Daniel 7:13-14 I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a **son of man** was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him.

¹⁴He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

Isaiah 53:3-5 He was despised and rejected by men, a **man of suffering** who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn’t value him. ⁴Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.

What is Jesus getting at? The Son of Man and the Man of Suffering are the same person- Him

But Peter is still struggling to see- the student takes the seat of teacher- he tries to correct Jesus

1 Corinthians 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

Peter stumbles over the offense of the suffering Son of Man

Jesus has to push back against the blind enmity of the Pharisees, and the blind enthusiasm of His disciples

Mark 8:33 But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God’s concerns but human concerns.”

Why call Peter satan? He offered Jesus the same thing satan offered (Matt 4) a crown without a cross

Notice that Jesus looks back at His other disciples- they too are weak and feeble and still struggling to understand, Peter may not be the only one who thinks like this, he is simply the one willing to speak out

Human concerns vs God's concerns- We too project our aspirations on God, seeking to shape Him to our worldview- The issue with that is that we, like the disciples, can't see the whole picture.

Rather than figuring out how God should fit into our plans,
we should examine how our circumstances fit into God's plans.

Many will acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, but the call is not just to acknowledge Him, but follow Him

Demons believe in God (James 2:19)

People who'll go to hell believe in the power of God (Matthew 7)

At this point, even though Jesus claimed He would be killed, no one knows or would even think it would be death by shameful crucifixion- that will be important because of the statements Jesus makes next

Mark 8:34 Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

Jesus Calls both the crowd and the disciples-

The gospel call is broad: *anyone can come*. (Even YOU)

But the path is narrow: *no one can come on their own terms, treading their own path*

Notice the three demands: Deny oneself- take up your cross- follow Him

Does this mean that approaching God is works-based? Does it depend on how well we can deny ourselves?

I'm convinced that salvation **and** sanctification are entirely works of the Spirit —

so why does Jesus give us a list of demands we know we'll fail at?

Here's the epiphany:

Jesus doesn't call us to prove our worthiness, but to expose our weakness so His grace can shape us

Deny Yourself – The Demand That Reveals Our Powerlessness

The natural self wants comfort, control, and credit — but discipleship begins with surrender.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us**. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us

And yet... we don't deny ourselves nearly enough do we?

- We resist turning from vices (Our phones, our night caps, our destructive addictions)
- We cling to comfort (TV over prayer and Bible)
- We react in pride, anger, or envy

The more we try to deny ourselves, the more we realize how deep self runs.

Self-denial shows us that self-improvement won't cut it. We need self-surrender.

Take Up Your Cross – The Demand That Points to Our Substitute

What does it mean to take up our cross?

To bear the cross means being willing to suffer in this life for Christ.

It means to be ready to be ridiculed or harassed for being a Christian.

It means facing your current problems and struggles while holding fast to Christ.

It is not less than any of those things, but it is far more than all of that!

When we finally see that our self-denial falls short, Jesus doesn't say, "*Try harder.*" He says, "*Take up your cross.*"

This would have been a striking statement! The cross= horror, shame, guilt (for the lowest & worst)

To take up our cross does not only mean to endure hardship, it means to identify with our guilt and shame and our own wretchedness, our defilement and utter defeat. It's to say, "That's me!"

The cross is where our failures are nailed.

It's not self-punishment — it's self-surrender

And what do we do now, because if this is it, we're in trouble-

We don't deny ourselves enough; we acknowledge we're guilty and deserving of shame.

Where do we go from here???

It is at this point that Jesus invites us- "Follow me"

Follow Me – The Demand That Displays His Power

By now we realize we can't follow perfectly. But here's the grace:

As we follow in His shadow- His cross eclipses over us, covering our shame and guilt and leaving us free to follow, imperfectly, but able to continue pressing on

His grace goes before us, His Spirit empowers us, and His mercy carries us when we stumble.

Following Jesus isn't about flawless performance — it's about faithful direction.

We walk in the wake of His finished work.

When Jesus says, "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me,"

He's not giving a checklist, He's giving us a pathway of grace.

The fault of many professing Christians and many churches is that in following Jesus, they've outpaced Him-

We've treaded our own paths- based on performance or our own plans.

'Living for Jesus' but not 'walking with Jesus'

Get back on the pathway of grace

Mark 8:35-37 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. ³⁶ For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?

³⁷ What can anyone give in exchange for his life?

What is Jesus talking about?Well, who is the audience?

Jewish people, who considered themselves righteous and in good standing with God by the keeping of the law and their national identity.

"My life is good; I'm good."

There is nothing we can gain by our merit that will secure our souls.

You don't earn goodness and eternal life. You aren't born into it.

Many will hold on to their life- their goodness, their accolades, their comfort-
deceived that their worth is in those things, or what they have or what they've done

To follow Jesus is too much of a loss for them

Following Jesus is not about what we lose, but what we gain.

And what we gain far outweighs any earthly thing we could accumulate

The cost of following Jesus may be great, but the cost of not following Him is greater

Philippians 3:4-19 although I have reasons for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; ⁶regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

⁷But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ**—the righteousness from God based on faith.

Many people will fail to grasp the free gift of eternal life because they refuse to loosen the grip on this life.

So Jesus issues a warning-

Mark 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

There is a coming judgment, each one of us will have to give an account to the Judge

Allegiance to Jesus cannot be private or partial

What's the opposite of being ashamed of someone? Being proud of them

Are you proud of what Jesus did for you, He is proud of you then.

Are you ashamed to be identified with Him? Then He will treat you the same!

So what is Jesus showing us through all this? This whole passage points us to one truth:
discipleship is not about what we can do for God, but what the cross has already done in us.

Key Takeaway- The cross is the means of our salvation, and the model for our formation.

We are saved and shaped by the cross

We are saved by identifying with Christ in His death, and we are transformed by dying with Him daily

"The cross that once condemned us now conforms us to Christ. Let's not just thank God for the cross—let's walk in its shadow, until the day we share in its glory."

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

Walking in the Way of the Cross

1. **Confess daily where you resist self-denial** — not to wallow in guilt, but to welcome grace.
2. **Identify with Christ's cross** — remind yourself: "That cross covered this too."
3. **Follow** — keep your eyes on Jesus, even when your steps falter.

Because His shadow is long enough to cover every stumble.

BULPEN-

Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Resurrection can only follow upon death. The good news is, it will

“If we were able to believe firmly that God will keep His promises and that the oath with which He has pledged His deity and has given His Son as a sign will be sure, then we would regard death, want, shame, and hell as if they were life riches, glory, and heaven, just as they differ in no wise before God.” – Luther

Job 19:25-27 But I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust.

²⁶ Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh.

²⁷ I will see him myself; my eyes will look at him, and not as a stranger. My heart longs within me.

Good intentions outside of God’s will are not good outcomes

Jesus undermines Peter’s new-found faith (last week) to lead him to a higher level of faith

The secret is not just that Jesus is the Messiah, but what He will do as Messiah