

The challenge of the gospel

Part 1

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[00:00:01] ...to refer to two verses in Mark's Gospel, chapter 9. Mark's Gospel.

Sorry, it's chapter 8.

Mark, chapter 8.

Mark, chapter 8, verse 34.

And having called the crowd with his disciples, the Lord Jesus said to them, Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's shall save it.

It's just, dearly beloved, in the challenge of the Gospel.

[00:01:07] What does it mean?

And it's your notice in this expression here. You know, there's a brother among us who's made a very helpful study of the number of words that are unique to Mark's Gospel.

And here is one of them in that verse 35. Losing his life for my sake, and Mark puts in, and the Gospel. He's only one of the four Gospel writers who puts that bit in. So, from Mark's presentation of Christ as a servant, it's obviously extremely significant. I mean, they are very full words.

It's not just for Christ, for my sake, which is more than sufficient, isn't it? The Apostle Paul knew that as we were seeking a feeble way to suggest this afternoon. [00:02:01] All things to decide for Christ, nothing could be compared. And so, the Lord Jesus called the crowd with his disciples.

It was a challenge not only to discipleship, it was a challenge to the crowd. And whoever desires to come after me, oh yes, there might be many that felt as they saw him. And the deeds that he was doing, the people that were being cured and healed. Well, it might be a great thing to go along with this crowd. But if you're going to come after me, follow me. Let him deny himself.

What is of that in my heart and life that I want to lay hold onto? Yes, oh, I might give up this or that,

the next thing. But am I holding on to something which gratifies myself and the flesh? Some means whereby I will perhaps entree now and then to some comfortable situation. [00:03:06] Deny himself. What are we relying on?

Deny himself.

Deny himself.

And then it says, take up his cross.

And it's the cross of Christ that we take up, but it's made real for us. Made real for us.

There was a point that wasn't brought out actually.

Well, many points were probably not brought out in chapter 2 of Philippians. There, where it says, the Lord even unto death, and that the death of the cross. And the brother has suggested, you see, pointing out it doesn't say where the Lord Jesus Christ died for sins. And the implication of this, dear brother, I'm not entirely sure I agree with it, but his implication was it was there for us to go on to a death. [00:04:05] In connection with Christ. Certainly it could not be an atoning death, but that preparedness to go that length for him. To take up the cross.

And to bear that reproach.

In the times of the Bible there, when a man was leaving this world. He was finished with this world. He took his cross and he walked through the scene. He went out and departed. He was finished with the world. And usually the world was finished with him. Yes, oh we can all say, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me. Oh yes, we like that. We'll go so far. But what does it say? An eye unto the world. Yes, when the lip gets a bit curled at us and the sneers come in.

[00:05:02] Oh him, he's not quite right. You know, this sort of thing. That's the bit we don't like. We can take our position. When it's in our position, we'll stand apart from the world. But then when the world says, all right, you're apart from us. No, we're apart from you. That's it. That's the other side, isn't it? An eye unto the world.

Take up his cross.

The Apostle Paul, you know. We were just reading it recently, the other week, last week in fact. He says, I die daily.

I die daily.

I die daily.

There's the positional case, you know, in Colossians chapter 3. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ and God. That is the positional thing. Not one thing can alter that or change it. Then in Romans chapter 6, we come in to the thing which is positively true of us experimentally.

That we have died with Christ. That's the position that God sees now as a result of the work of Calvary's cross. [00:06:05] We have died with Christ. And then it's got to be worked out. It's got to be worked out in reality. In our hearts and lives. It's got to be worked out. Not just in our books, but in our boots. It's got to be worked out. And that's what we have in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, isn't it? I die daily.

I die daily.

Not just occasionally, not in the Lord's day or, you know, twice a year or something. Daily. It's a daily exercise. One of the daily exercises of scripture. I die daily.

In fact, Luke, of course, he takes it up. He says to take up his cross daily. Daily.

Mark, of course, he doesn't cover that aspect.

He assumes that you would be constantly in that situation. Taking up his cross and follow me.

What a blessed one to follow. But that's the reality of what it is to follow Christ. [00:07:01] And he says he who desires to save his life shall lose it. And this is not just our existence.

It's the things that are life consistent.

That's what it is, you see. Without being too erudite and technical, there are two words in the Greek for life. And one means the actual existence. From what we get, zoology. And then there's another subject that the children study and the students do. And I pass it most days, the department of biology.

Biology.

Zoology.

And that's the environment in which we live our life. It's the environment in which we live our life. And are we wanting to make sure we're living a full life, wonderful life, in the things of this world? Things of this world.

Yes. Saving his life, are we preserving it? Are we living a full life in the eyes of this world? [00:08:04] And it's that way. Or are we losing it?

Giving it up for Christ in the eyes of this world. An empty life. What does he do? What is it?

What does that dear one do? And losing his life.

All that environment of your life. What things are you going in for? Is there nothing there? Have you lost it?

Are you wholly and solely here for Christ?

Nothing but Christ is on we tread.

And he says, for my sake, oh indeed, there is no one else, no one greater, to think that the very Lord of glory, Lord of glory, Father's Son, the one who was in the bosom of the Father, laying in those heights of highest glory, that council chamber of eternity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where a man would be created, and he would fall.

[00:09:01] And the only way he could be brought back was by the one going there, one in the Godhead. Who shall go from him?

Whom will I send? Behold me, send me. Came from Godhead's fullest glory, down to Calvary's depth of woe. Blessed one, my sake, oh, is there anything?

Can we have any single excuse for not laying all on the altar for him? I challenge my own heart for a challenge of yours.

Have I done that?

Is everything gone on the altar for him? Given up?

As we mentioned this afternoon, Christianity is a sacrificial system. Sacrificial system.

There's nothing that we can have for ourselves. It's all laid up for him. For my sake, what a blessed one. And he's no man's debtor. Oh, yes, no man's debtor. You know, in Peter it says suffering, it says the spirit of God and the spirit of glory, [00:10:03] the spirit of glory rests upon you. And it says, happy are you, happy are you, blessed. And it's the word that means happy. That's where happiness is found. That's where it's found. And everything up for Christ, being here for him. And for the gospel.

For the gospel. That's the neat thing that comes into this world. Thank God that we heard the gospel. First time I heard the gospel was on a racetrack. Preacher there on the gospel. And that's why I like to get out with open air into these places. To tell the fame and name of Jesus in all sorts of places. That's where I first heard it. On a racetrack.

Thankfully, I heard it again. In the streets not long, not far from my house. These dear fishermen.

They maybe didn't have the light that we had. Or we now have.

Oh, no.

But their hearts were on fire for the Lord Jesus, isn't it? [00:11:02] Remember, dear old, we're the saint.

And there was one of these higher brethren.

At those days, they were allowed to be lodgers. Nowadays, they can't be lodgers. But they could dine to lodge with people who are not in the meetings. And, of course, all her friends were coming around. Who is this?

What's he like? She says, he's a bit like the Salvation Army.

But the trouble is, they're all heat and no light.

And he's all light and no heat.

So, dear friends, you know, I don't want to be too facetious. But I think you can see the reality behind it. Are we on fire for the Lord? Is he everything to us?

He is far more to me.

The poet says, you know, I couldn't say he is far more to us. I believe much each and every one say this. [00:12:01] He is far more to me than in my golden daydreams I fancied he could be. Yes. Tis the look that melted Peter.

Tis the face that Stephen saw.

Tis the heart that wept with Mary.

Can a loan from idols draw?

Draw and win completely till the cup o'erflows the brim. What have I to do with idols who are accompanying with him? Yes. What have I to do with idols? I'm asking myself.

Pray maybe perhaps you can ask yourself that, dear Saint of God. There are things, you know, that we can't take in for a company. We must get into them ourselves and live it out.

For my sake and the Gospel's. So, you know, as we consider the greatness of that glorious person, to do it for his sake. But he's saying also here, you know, Mark, the perfect servant, setting the Lord Jesus, the perfect servant. [00:13:01] He's saying it's for the Gospels. And we'll say we'll preserve that, that existence. Not the existence, preserve that manner of life. Well done, good and faithful servant. As we've said already, not successful servant.

Good, it's his assessment. So, dear Saints of God, I had no intention of being here on the platform tonight. But I felt, you know, really, I didn't want to put any anything more. But your dear brethren have given us a faithful message. But it just came to me, this challenge, you see, of what it is to lose your life for the sake of Christ and the Gospels.

And then we'll save it.

May we know something in some measure of that. While we wait to see his blessed face. Because he's coming very soon. Perhaps tonight.