

## Lesson 8      18 September, 2011

### Jesus Teaches About the Cross

**Lesson Scope:** *Mark 8:27-9:50*

#### Lesson Focus

After healing the blind man at Bethsaida, Jesus traveled north from the Sea of Galilee to Caesarea Philippi, nestled at the foot of Mount Hermon. On the way, Jesus taught the disciples about His death, resurrection, and coming glory. He apparently saw a need to prepare them for what awaited Him.

The rising antagonism of the Jewish leaders brought the prospect of the cross into sharp view. Jesus openly informed His followers that He would die on the cross. On that cruel instrument of death, He would surrender to the will of His heavenly Father.

Just the same, His disciples today must deliberately choose the way of the cross, surrendering their desire for popularity, worldliness, and pleasure. To those who perish, cross bearing seems foolish, but to the child of God, it points to the glory of the world beyond. The way of the cross mortifies the old man, but it leads to eternal life.

The teaching in this lesson centers on Jesus' imminent cross experience. He explains it first to His disciples and then to the multitude. Moreover, He invites everyone, including us today, to take up the cross of self-denial. If we do not, He will be ashamed of us in His coming kingdom.

The second part of the lesson scope tells the story of Jesus' transfiguration. We really do not understand exactly how Jesus appeared or how it happened. Instead of dwelling too much on the details of the event, consider His transfiguration as an illustration of His resurrected, glorified body. Be sure to see emphasis that we, like our Lord before us, must take the way of the cross to experience eternal glory.

Jesus taught that the way to life is by death. This paradox is the essence of the cross.

**Lesson Aim:** To see that the establishment and triumph of the kingdom of God is by the way of the cross.

**Theme Verse:** *Mark 8:34*. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

## **Lesson Text**

### **The Means of Death**

*Mark 8:27*. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? <sup>28</sup>. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. <sup>29</sup>. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. <sup>30</sup>. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. <sup>31</sup>. 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. <sup>32</sup>. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>. 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.

### **The Way of Life**

*Mark 8:34*. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup>. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. <sup>36</sup>. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? <sup>37</sup>. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup>. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

### **The Path to Glory**

*Mark 9:1*. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. <sup>2</sup>. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup>. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. <sup>4</sup>. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>. And Peter answered and said to

Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. <sup>6</sup> For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. <sup>7</sup> And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. <sup>8</sup> And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. <sup>9</sup> And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

## **Questions for Study**

### **The Means of Death**

1. What prompted Peter to make his declaration in Mark 8:29?
2. Why did Peter rebuke Jesus?
3. Why did Peter's objection merit such severe rebuke?

### **The Way of Life**

4. How does the way of the cross lead to life?
5. In what way is one's soul worth more than the whole world?
6. Why might we be ashamed of Jesus?

### **The Path to Glory**

7. How did Christ's transfiguration foreshadow His resurrection?
8. In what ways does the child of God demonstrate resurrection power?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

Why did Jesus quiz His disciple about His identity (Mark 8:27)? Likely Jesus used the question to help the disciples understand that, as Messiah, He must suffer the rejection of His brethren and die on the cross. Jesus' command not to tell anyone (Mark 8:30) would likely have limited the size of the sign-seeking crowd.

Jesus began (Mark 8:31) to teach His disciples more directly the purpose for His coming—to die on the cross and to rise again. With the increasingly open rejection of the Jewish leaders in view, Jesus turned their eyes from an earthly kingdom to a heavenly kingdom that He would gain by the way of the cross. Peter, speaking as a natural man, opposed the pain of the cross. Jesus' rebuke to Peter reveals that God planned the pain of the cross to provide the gain of eternal life (Mark 8:32-33).

Jesus then openly taught the people and His disciples what the cross would mean for His followers (Mark 8:34-38). Anyone following Him must take

the way of the cross--death to the carnal man—which leads to eternal glory worth more than the whole world.

The events of our lesson scope occurred at Caesarea Philippi on Palestine's northeastern border. This town stood near Mount Hermon and the main spring that gives rise to the Jordan River. It was likely on the slopes of Mount Hermon that the disciples observed the transfigured Christ. Moses and Elijah represented the Law and the Prophets that Christ was about to fulfill completely. Soon a heavenly declaration affirmed Jesus' identity and the truth of His words.

The transfiguration of Christ connects directly to His teaching on the way of the cross. Jesus' transformed body demonstrated the glory that He had with the Father before Creation (John 17:5) and that He would again have after the resurrection (Hebrews 12:2). Can you see the truth clearly displayed in this for us? The way of the cross (death to the carnal man) ushers in the transformation to a new creature filled with resurrection power and capable of experiencing eternal glory.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **The Means of Death**

1. We must personally identify with Christ to experience the triumph of His kingdom (Mark 8:29). Either we will identify with Him to our greatest blessing or we will reject Him to our own damnation. Like Peter, we must confess that He is our Lord. Then we must take up His cross to receive the glory that awaits the faithful.
2. Suffering and rejection accompany the way of the cross (Mark 8:31). The world despises even the idea of a way of hardship. They seek earthly rewards—pleasure, pomp, and power. But the way of the cross takes us in another direction, the strait and narrow way. Although neighbors, friends, and even family members may reject us, we choose the way of life. "If no one joins me, still I will follow."
3. Death on the cross opens the way to eternal life (Mark 8:31). Jesus could not rise without first dying. The great paradox of salvation is that we too must die to live. Unless we mortify the expressions of our fallen nature, we will miss the triumph of Christ's eternal kingdom.
4. Carnal man cannot comprehend the way of the cross (Mark 8:32-33). "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). We cannot understand the value of self-denial until we experience the new birth.

5. God planned the way of the cross for man's eternal blessing (Mark 8:33). Peter did not understand the way of the cross from God's viewpoint. God has planned that we must go by the way of the cross to enter eternal glory. When we lay self aside, we can look beyond the pain of self-denial to the promised glory. The life of cross bearing best prepares us for heaven.

### **The Way of Life**

6. Denying self and surrendering to God's will is the essence of the cross (Mark 8:34). Jesus taught His disciples clearly that every believer must take up the cross and follow Him. We do that by surrendering to the lordship of Jesus and placing all on the altar of sacrifice. We put our fleshly, carnal nature to death. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.... Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth ... seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man" (Colossians 3:5, 8-10).

7. To be part of God's kingdom, we dare never be ashamed of Christ and His teachings (Mark 8:35-38). Natural man is averse to the thought of death, but God calls for a complete sacrifice of our will to Him, even to the point of giving up physical life. The world may reject us, mock us, or despitefully use us for our commitment to Christ. We dare never allow the pressure of persecution to cause us to be ashamed of Jesus or to compromise our loyalty to Him.

### **The Path to Glory**

8. The power of the kingdom of God comes by way of the cross (Mark 9:1). When we served our sinful desires, Satan had us bound. But when we choose the way of the cross, Christ's power frees us from sin to serve the Lord. This new power energizes us for service in Christ's kingdom (Romans 12:1-2).

9. The way of the cross is the path to eternal glory (Mark 9:3-7). Even while Jesus endured the pain of the cross, He looked ahead to the glory that awaited Him (Hebrews 12:2). Truly, the way of the cross leads home, and we must go that way to gain the glory of eternal life. Yes, the way seems very restricted and narrow, but it opens up into the broad fields of that heavenly country. One glimpse of Christ's dear face will amply repay every hardship and act of self-denial.

10. The work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection power provide for the transformation of sinful man (Mark 9:7-9). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). When we bow at the foot of the cross in heartfelt repentance, we can rise in newness of life. The work of the

Spirit in our heart transforms us into the image of our resurrected Lord and prepares us to live eternally with Him. We look forward to the day when He will redeem even our vile bodies and make them like His glorious body (Philippians 3:21).

### **Important Teachings**

1. We must personally identify with Christ to experience the triumph of His kingdom (Mark 8:29).
2. Suffering and rejection accompany the way of the cross (Mark 8:31).
3. Death on the cross opens the way to eternal life (Mark 8:31).
4. Carnal man cannot comprehend the way of the cross (Mark 8:32, 33).
5. God planned the way of the cross for man's eternal blessing (Mark 8:33).
6. Denying self and surrendering to God's will is the essence of the cross (Mark 8:34).
7. To be part of God's kingdom, we dare never be ashamed of Christ and His teachings (Mark 8:35-38).
8. The power of the kingdom of God comes by way of the cross (Mark 9:1).
9. The way of the cross is the path to eternal glory (Mark 9:3-7).
10. The work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection power provide for the transformation of sinful man (Mark 9:7-9).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What prompted Peter to make his declaration in Mark 8:29?

What Peter had seen and heard while following Jesus convinced him that Jesus was indeed the Christ. He did not yet, however, comprehend the nature of Jesus' kingdom. Peter clearly wanted to be part of an earthly kingdom.

2. Why did Peter rebuke Jesus?

Peter rebuked Jesus because he envisioned an earthly kingdom of pomp and power. Such a kingdom would not be possible if Jesus were slain. Peter viewed life from the perspective of the natural man, who lacks an understanding of how death leads to life and who shuns the pain of self-denial.

3. Why did Peter's objection merit such severe rebuke?

Peter was suggesting an earthly kingdom without the cross, as Satan had offered Jesus in the wilderness temptations. This was contrary to God's plan; salvation could not be possible for fallen man apart from the cross.

4. How does the way of the cross lead to life?

The carnal man practices sin and reaps death. When Christ redeems us through His work on the cross, however, we rise in newness of life. The way of the cross leads to eternal life when we daily sacrifice our will to the lordship of Jesus.

5. In what way is one's soul worth more than the whole world? Gaining the whole world, even for a lifetime, could not compensate for the loss of one's soul for eternity.

6. Why might we be ashamed of Jesus?

We might be ashamed because the natural man despises the pain of the way of the cross. We may be reluctant to identify clearly with the kingdom of God lest we suffer persecution. We could be ashamed because no earthly glory accompanies the way of the cross; in the sight of the ungodly we appear foolish.

7. How did Christ's transfiguration, foreshadow His resurrection? Christ's transfigured body illustrated the glorious nature of His resurrected eternal body.

8. In what ways does the child of God demonstrate resurrection power?

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:4-14).

## Summarizing the Lesson

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,  
There's no other way but this;  
I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light,  
If the way of the cross I miss.

### *Refrain*

The way of the cross leads home,  
The way of the cross leads home;  
It is sweet to know, as I onward go,  
The way of the cross leads home

I must needs go on in the blood-sprinkled way,  
The path that the Saviour trod,  
If I ever climb to the heights sublime,  
Where the soul is at home with God.

### *Refrain*

Then I bid farewell to the way of the world,  
To walk in it nevermore;  
For my Lord says, "Come," and I seek my home  
Where He waits at the open door.

### *Refrain.*

—Jesse Brown Pounds

## Research Guide

1. Read and study the companion Scriptures to the teaching on the cross and the Transfiguration.
2. Make a study of Scriptures teaching self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh (Colossians 3; Romans 6, 8; Galatians 5:13-25).