



Christ Reformed Community Church

161 Hampton Point Dr. Suite 2 | St. Augustine, Florida | 32092 | christreformedcc.com

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Dr. Andrew Smith

“Seeing and Suffering” Mark 8:31–9:1

Well, I invite you to take your Bibles this morning and be turning with me to Mark chapter 8, Mark chapter 8. We’re going to look together at verses 31 of Mark chapter 8 through chapter 9 and verse 1. At least we’ll begin looking at these verses and, Lord-willing, next week, we will finish looking at them, but I want you to stand in honor of the reading of God’s Word, and I want to remind you that this is the authoritative Word of God, the inerrant Word of God, the inspired Word of God, the sufficient Word of God. This is the Word of our living God. Verse 31:

And he [that is, Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? 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.”

And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

Thus ends the reading of God’s Holy Word. Please be seated, and let’s ask Him for His help this morning.

Our Father, we read Your Word this morning, and now we pray that You would bless the preaching of Your Word. May it come with conviction and great power that only the Holy Spirit can cause in our hearts and in our church. So, bless us, we pray with Your strength and with Your wisdom from on high to understand this text and to apply it to our own lives. We pray these things in the blessed name of Christ. Amen.

Last week, saw really the climax of Mark’s Gospel in really the middle of Mark’s Gospel with that great confession of the apostle Peter when Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ. We saw that in Matthew’s parallel account, he has a fuller declaration of that confession, as Peter not only referred to Jesus as the Christ, but as *“The Christ, the Son of the living God,”* to affirm that He is not only Messiah, but He is also the Son of God. He is deity. He is God in human flesh. This really was, as we stated last week, the beginning of the disciples’ accurate understanding not only of the person of Jesus Christ but of the purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was really the intersection of this gospel where the apostles came to a theological crossroads, having rightly confessed Jesus as the Messiah at the beginning of His ministry when they first started following Him. This great confession of Peter said far more. It said that He was God come in human flesh. He was the Son of God.

So, at this point in the hearts and lives of the disciples, this is the greatest point of biblical orthodoxy up to this point, but still, they have room to grow. They have room to grow not only in their orthodoxy; that is, what they believe, but also in their orthopraxy; that is, how they implement their beliefs. And you need to understand this morning that both of those things are important for your life. Both orthodoxy, what you believe, and orthopraxy, how you implement the Christian life, is critical. Those two things are critical to the Christian life. You could say they are necessary parts of the equation in order to be a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the world and what that meant for Him; and then flowing from that, what that means for you is critical to your own salvation. Once you are aware of Jesus’ identity as the Christ, the Son of the living God, you’re like the disciples. You come to a crossroads. Will you believe the mission and purpose for which Jesus was sent, as defined in the Bible? And then flowing from that, will you understand the mission and purpose for which Christ is sending you as a disciple in the world? It is both belief and behavior. It is orthodoxy, what you believe, and orthopraxy, how you live out the Christian life that is emphasized in this passage. And I want to say at the beginning that this is only possible to live out the Christian life and to believe in Christ as the Savior by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. God is sovereign in salvation. He is sovereign in regeneration as well as sanctification.

Paul said in Philippians 2, *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”* We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Paul says, but then he says, *“for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”* So, what Jesus outlines in this passage for the disciples is not something they do in their flesh. It’s not something they do in the power and strength of their own might. It is something that they do because they’ve been chosen by God. They’ve been regenerated, and the Holy Spirit will sanctify them. Jesus, in this passage lays out therefore some very high standards for true discipleship, true discipleship. Following Christ in discipleship is described, for example, in verse 34 as self-denial: *“Calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”* Discipleship, following Christ is described in terms of self-denial. It’s also described as a willingness to lose

your life in order to gain it. Verse 35: *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”* To follow Christ in discipleship involves a lot. It involves self-denial. It involves a willingness to lose your life in order to gain your life. It involves a call not to be ashamed of Christ, verse 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.”*

What Jesus is telling us here in very simple terms is that in giving up one’s earthly life, one gains eternal life. In surrender, comes security. In losing, comes victory. In becoming spiritually poor, one becomes spiritually rich. In dying to self, one lives for the Savior. And following Christ is not accomplished either one one’s own terms or in one’s own power. You must renounce your sin, and you must renounce your own self-righteousness to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus was clear about that. The Pharisees were self-righteous, and they would not get into the kingdom of God. So, this is not works-based salvation. The root of salvation is faith. The fruit of salvation is works, and that’s what Jesus deals with here. And He deals with the reality that you must love God more than self if you want to enter the kingdom of God. You must love eternal life more than this life. Jesus said in Matthew 10, *“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”* That is to say, those sorts of people have no part of Me. John tells us in 1 John 2, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* Pretty clear. *“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”*

So, you see, the Bible’s definition of true discipleship involves seeing who Christ is as a suffering Savior to atone for our sins fully and completely, but then willingly embracing in turn a similar life of suffering—not to atone for your sins because only Jesus did that, but to live as a living sacrifice for Christ and in the name of Christ because He did atone for your sins. That is true discipleship, and I want to say this morning that is diametrically opposed to contemporary Christian thought. Contemporary Christian thought emphasizes your happiness in life. Contemporary Christian thought emphasizes earthly success and material prosperity. It emphasizes self-esteem, not self-sacrifice. It tells you to place your self-interests over everybody else’s and most of all, above Christ’s. But to borrow Christ’s words in verse 36, *“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”* That is what Jesus poses to the disciples, and that’s what the Holy Spirit poses to us this morning.

In the year 1000, nearly 200 years after his death, the death of Charlemagne, who was the first true emperor really to rule western Europe since the fall of Rome, they opened up the king’s tomb, and what they found there was amazing. They discovered among the various treasures surrounding his remains, a scene that absolutely spoke volumes. The skeletal remains of this once-famous king was still seated upon his throne, and his crown was still upon his skull. And most significantly, he had a Bible in his lap opened up to the gospels, and his bony skeletal finger

was pointed to the Scripture text, “*What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?*” This passage teaches us the reality of our mortality. What do you live for? What are you trying to achieve in life? What is your greatest love? What are you willing to give up to get into the kingdom of God? And what are you willing to hold onto to be rejected from the kingdom of God? This passage teaches us what it means to truly believe in Christ, what it means to truly be a follower of Christ, and it is not for the faint of heart. Jesus pulls no punches. He speaks of the cost of true discipleship, and I want to tell you this morning, it will cost you something. Anything in life that is worth anything will cost you a lot, a lot of sacrifice.

Well, the disciples rightly recognized His person, who He was, and that is foundational. You have to recognize Him as the Messiah and the Son of God, but they, like us, also needed to recognize His purpose for coming into the world. What was His purpose for coming into the world? Well, His purpose for coming into the world was to suffer and to die for His people, and flowing from that purpose of the Messiah is the purpose of discipleship, being willing to suffer for the sake of Christ, being willing to sacrifice for the sake of Christ, being willing enough to give friends and money and time and possessions and agendas and ambitions for the sake of Christ because your very soul depends on what you’re willing to give up and what you’re not willing to give up. What you’re willing to give up reveals your value that you place upon Christ. So, in this passage, Jesus describes the purpose for which He was sent as well as the purpose for His people once He left the earth. He sat at the Father’s right hand after His resurrection. God’s purpose for His Son and God’s purpose for His people is placed for us in this text, and you can’t understand the one without understanding the other. They both go together. So, in this passage, we have four headings we want to look at. Number one, we want to consider the rejection. Number two, the rebuke. Number three, the requirements; that is, the requirements for discipleship; and number four, the reassurance. The rejection, the rebuke, the requirements, and the reassurance. Let’s see how far we can get this morning.

Let’s begin, number one, with the rejection, verses 31 and the beginning part of verse 32. Jesus begins by speaking about the purpose for which He was sent into the world, and He does so by teaching the disciples. The beginning of verse 31 says, “*And he began to teach them.*” That is a clue to us that from this point forward, Jesus is going to focus His attention upon the disciples to sharpen their vision of who He is and why He came into the world. What was the purpose of the Savior of the world? And at the heart of this teaching constitutes His suffering, his rejection. This is one of three predictions of His death and resurrection. Go with me to chapter 9, verse 31 for the second one, “*For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.’*” Verse 32 says, “*But they did not understand [this].*” So, He taught it again, chapter 10 and verse 33, “*We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise [again].*”

Now, Jesus is spelling out here His own rejection, and as hard as it is to believe, what Jesus is saying is simply this: “My reign will start with My own rejection,” and that was hard for the disciples to wrap their minds around. And as He teaches, notice the text; He refers to Himself there in verse 31, as the Son of Man. That is an Old Testament title borrowed from Daniel 7:13, which was a Messianic title. It also spoke about His humanity. It signaled the fact that He was God who had come in human flesh to verify the fact that what He was doing was a mission from God. He came from heaven to earth to suffer, to be rejected. That was His mission, and He teaches here in verse 31 that His rejection is going to involve several features. First of all, it’s going to involve tribulation. Notice, He says, “*The Son of Man must suffer many things,*” tribulation. He says, “The Son of Man *must* suffer many things.” This indicates divine necessity, and Jesus did suffer many things. He had nowhere to lay His head, the Bible says, even though the birds of the air did. He was harassed. He was doubted. He was despised. He was beaten. He was mocked. He was spit upon. He was arrested. He was tried unlawfully. He was crucified. They said He had demons. They said that He taught false teaching.

Peter and the other apostles struggled with understanding why He would have to suffer. This was of divine necessity. He says, “I must suffer many things.” Why? Well, Peter got it later because he says in Acts chapter 2 that “*This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*” Jesus is helping them in their vision to connect the Old Testament concept of a Messiah, which was in their mind, with the truth reality of who the Messiah was, which involves suffering and rejection. I read it to you earlier. Isaiah 52 and 53 could not speak more clearly about the suffering and rejection of Christ. It even opens up speaking about the Son of Man being rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. So, Jesus, divine person as the Son of Man included a divine purpose as set forth by the Father from before the foundation of the world, a definite plan according to the foreknowledge of God that necessitates suffering in the form of tribulation. Rejection in the form of tribulation. He would suffer many things.

Secondly, Jesus says, that He would also suffer not only tribulation but also persecution. Notice He says, “*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed.*” We’ve spoken in times past about the religious ruling body of Israel, which was the Sanhedrin, which made up these various groups. They used the instrumentation of Rome to cause suffering and affliction, and ultimately, execution upon our Lord. He says He must be rejected by, first of all, the elders. The elders were seventy lay members of the ruling board of the nation of Israel made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees. But He would not only be rejected by them, He would also be rejected by the chief priests. This would have included the current high priest, which was at this time Caiaphas, but it also would have included—this is why it’s in the plural, chief priests—his successors, his sons, Jonathan and Theophilus, who were high priests in the making. And it wasn’t just the elders, and it wasn’t just the chief priests who would reject Him and persecute Him but also the scribes. The scribes we’ve noted throughout Mark’s Gospel, they were the experts in the law. They served as advisors to the Sanhedrin, this ruling counsel, and they often were sent in committee-like formations, delegated to try to trap Jesus with some theological question to cause Him to lose credibility with the

crowds, which never worked because Jesus was always smarter than them and threw it right back in their face. But nevertheless, they tried to persecute Jesus. It is this Sanhedrin made up of these groups that represented Israel that rejected Israel. This is why God’s judgment came on the whole nation. Their very leaders were corrupt, politically and religiously.

They hosted a mock trial. They delivered Him over to Roman authorities. They assisted in His execution. All of them desired nothing more than what the end of verse 31 says, that He would be killed, that He would be killed. As I said, this was of divine necessity. Isaiah 52 and 53, I won’t take the time to read it again this morning, but what did it prophesy? It prophesied that the servant of the Lord, *Ebed Yahweh* would bear the sins of His people. He would be rejected. He would be despised. He would be stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He would be pierced through for our transgressions. He would be crushed for our iniquities. He would be a Lamb led to the slaughter. Jesus is saying, “This is going to take place by the persecution of the religious leaders,” but His suffering and rejection not only involved tribulation and persecution, amazingly, it would also involve resurrection because notice the very tail end of verse 31, Jesus says, “*and after three days [I will] rise again.*” I’m going to go through tribulation. I’m going to go through persecution, but it’s all going to work out to the glory of the Father because I’m going to be raised again from the dead. If you turn briefly with me back to Isaiah 53 for a moment. If the religious leaders and the rest of Israel would have looked hard enough and read their Bibles slow enough, they would have seen that even the resurrection was predicted. Verse 10 of Isaiah 53:

*Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,*

Jesus is the atonement for our sins that we need. He was the offering of guilt. He was declared guilty though He was innocent so that though we are guilty, we would be declared innocent—our substitute. “*He shall see his offspring;* Well, if He died, how is He going to see His offspring? Because He was raised from the dead, and all of His offspring are those who were of father Abraham who have the faith of Abraham. And it says, “*He shall prolong his days.*” Of course, He will because He’s the Ancient of Days. He’s the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Son of the living God. “*The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand,*” because He has the scepter of the Lord. He sits at the right hand of the Father, ruling and reigning so that all that He does in this world will have to its end an honor and a glory that will go to Him alone. He is the King of Kings, and He is the Lord of Lords. In spite of His rejection, Jesus is saying, “I will rise again,” but the disciples aren’t good exegetes of the Word of God. Their theology is about as deep as a shallow kiddie pool, so they don’t see this. Jesus is clearly saying that He’s willingly going to go to the cross. He’s willingly going to suffer. He’s willingly going to suffer rejection and shame because this is according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. It’s of divine necessity.

As Isaiah 53 says, it pleased the Father to crush Him. He would render a guilt offering to take away the sins of the world. This is the glory of the cross, the glory of our salvation. Paul put it

this way in Romans 8, *“What then shall we say to these things? If [Christ] is for us, who can be against us?”* If He can be rejected and suffer tribulation and persecution and rise again to rule, atoning for sins, who can stand against us? *“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* You too can be raised from the dead if you believe in Christ, if you embrace His suffering. The punishment for sin is death, right? Romans 6:23, *“The wages of sin is death.”* Therefore, in order to pay for the sins of His people, it was of divine necessity that Jesus suffer, and unfortunately, the rabbi’s interpretation of Scripture didn’t recognize the suffering Messiah. They viewed the suffering servant of Isaiah 52 and 53 simply as a reference to the nation of Israel as a whole who, from time to time, would pass through suffering and affliction but ultimately be delivered. They completely misinterpreted the Old Testament, and they were considered experts in the Law of God and the prophets? The Bible clearly says in John 1 that Jesus came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. They rejected him. Isaiah 50:6:

*I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting*

Jesus is saying, “Disciples, I will not hide my face from disgrace. I will be rejected. This is the plan and the purpose of God.” And although you’re familiar with it, turn with me to Psalm chapter 22 for a moment because in Psalm 22, we see the suffering of our Lord prophetically. The Psalmist describes the suffering of our Lord that He would experience on the cross. Verse 1:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.*

Verse 7:

*All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
“He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”*

The scoffs. Verse 16:

*For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—
I can count all my bones—*

*they stare and gloat over me;
they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.*

Clearly a prediction of what would occur with Christ, and by the way, what occurred with any criminal that was executed by Rome. Their garments would be cast and divided, cast as lots. Their bones would protrude. They would be pierced, and yet the rabbis failed to interpret Psalm 22 as applying to Christ and His rejection. Throughout the Old Testament, we get glimpses of the suffering of our Lord in just the few passages I read to you. Now, that the disciples had followed the leaven of the Pharisees, false teaching, is clear. Remember back in Mark chapter 8, they're in the boat. They only brought one loaf, verse 14, “*And he cautioned them,*” verse 15, “*saying, Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.*” He had spoken about His death and resurrection before, but they didn't understand because they were so influenced by the leaven of the Pharisees, the false teaching of the Pharisees, the misunderstanding of who the Messiah was going to be by the Pharisees. Jesus had tried to use helpful illustrations to enable them to connect the dots. For instance, He spoke about His resurrection by pointing back to Jonah. He said, “*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*” As if to say that incident in the Old Testament pointed forward to My death and My resurrection. They didn't understand that.

So, Jesus offered another illustration in John chapter 2. You're familiar with this. Jesus said, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” He's referring to the temple of His body. The disciples didn't understand these illustrations. They were sort of veiled references to His death and resurrection because at the time that Jesus offered them, they didn't understand enough about His person and His purpose to embrace it, but now they are to the point where they must because Jesus is very, very, very close to the cross. And how is the church going to be built if they don't embrace a suffering Messiah, if they don't understand the nature of atonement, Jesus paying for the sins of His people? So, notice back in Mark 8, Mark goes out of his way at the beginning of verse 32 to say, “*And he said this plainly.*” Said what? The prediction in verse 31 that He's going to suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the scribes and be killed and after three days, rise again. In other words, no illustrations. Jesus just says it, “*This is what's going to happen.*” How could it be any clearer? How could it be any more plain? Literally, *parrēsia* is the Greek word for *plainly*. Translated, it literally could mean “boldly” or “confidently.” In other words, He didn't mince words. He spoke clearly and convictionally and authoritatively as He brought together the theology of the Old Testament and the true concept of who the Messiah was to identify His mission and purpose, which included rejection.

Scripture has spoken to us clearly concerning the person and purpose of Christ. If you cannot embrace a suffering, rejected, despised Savior, you have no entrance into the kingdom of God. Spiritual blindness sees blurry, doesn't it? Thinking that God's kingdom comes into the world with immediate power and glory, but like the disciples we need our vision adjusted. We need the glasses of Scripture, as it were, to be tailor fit to our faces so that we can embrace a suffering

Messiah because apart from a suffering Messiah, there is no salvation. Key verse in Mark, *“For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve,”* Mark 10:45, *“and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Jesus came to pay the price for our sins. Christ’s suffering was not suffering for the sake of suffering. It relates specifically to the nature of the atonement, and you can’t understand the atonement apart from understanding divine justice. All sin, one way or another, will be punished. Have you considered that before? This is not some violence that Jesus offered to Jesus based upon primitive understandings of what other tribal people did in offering sacrifices. This was related to His divine justice. This was related to His law. Hebrews tells us *“If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy.”*

This is an issue of failing to obey God’s law. This is an issue of failing to obey God’s law. Adam had one law. He disobeyed it. We inherited his sinful nature. We disobey God. We transgress the law of God. So, Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 2 that *“It was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”* Sin had to be paid for. Sin had to be atoned. *“For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brother.”* *“Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers,”* Hebrews says, Hebrews 2:17, *“in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people,”* to satisfy the demands of the law and the demands of God’s justice. It’s not that you have a higher view of God if you deny that He crushed His Son. It’s that you have a low view of God and a low view of His holiness and His law and His divine justice. This is about retributive justice. Romans 2, *“[God] will render to every man according to his deeds...indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”* The cross teaches us how much God loves His glory, how much He loves justice that He’s willing to punish His Son in our place. God cannot simply forgive sin. He can’t forgive it without payment being made, a ransom being made because His law has been violated, and as Genesis 18 says, *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* The gospel is not about reformation. It’s about retribution. The gospel is not about reforming your life. The gospel is not about cleaning you up. The gospel is about paying for your sins that violated God’s holy law so you don’t have to pay for it. This is about divine retribution. That’s why salvation is not based upon what you do and how you come to God. You are to come just as you are. You are to confess your sin and admit your guilt and expose your sin before God, coming humbly before Him, or you can have no part in the kingdom of God. The gospel is not about reformation. It’s about retribution.

Now, sanctification is about reformation, but that only comes after retribution has occurred. Once your sins are paid for, once you have believed in Christ, you are declared righteous, and now God through the power of the Holy Spirit helps you live righteously. But the point of the gospel is not reformation; it’s retribution. Someone must pay for your sins and for my sins; otherwise, God is not holy. Otherwise, God is despising his law. Otherwise, God is despising His own character. He’s not upholding His justice. He’s not upholding His holiness. You know why? Because God promised Adam, *“In the day you eat of [that tree], you will surely die.”* How can

God remain faithful to His promises if He doesn't send people to hell? How can God remain faithful to His promises if He doesn't punish His Son in the place of His people to save them and to redeem them? This is why Jesus in instituting the Lord's Supper said, "This is the blood of the new covenant." This all has to do with the covenants that God has made. He made a covenant with Adam, and Adam failed. Death came in. Now, through the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, another covenant has been made, and this second Adam must do what this first Adam failed to do, never sinning in thought, word, or deed; His active obedience and then His passive obedience, dying in the place of sinners. There is no other way to heaven but through a suffering, rejected, mocked and despised Savior.

That is the essence of the gospel, and if you are here this morning and you are trying to add anything to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, what we call His penal substitution, you are damned by God. You cannot add anything, not any work, not baptism, not church membership, not a righteous life, not trying to earn God's favor and God's credit. You must rest solely in the finished work of Christ because He paid it all upon the cross of Calvary as our federal head representing us. Atonement is simply the doctrine teaching that Christ satisfied divine justice. Through His penal substitution, God was faithful to His promises that although we sinned, He would send someone who would pay for our sin to redeem us. Now, Peter's rebuke of our Lord that we see next can only be understood when we see that Peter was smart enough at this point to take into account what Christ's rejection meant for him and the other apostles. The rejection of Christ will always mean the rejection of His people. The purpose for which He came into the world was to be rejected, to suffer, to die, to rise again, to give new life, but the new life He gives to His people is not necessarily a life of happiness, constant joy, no trials, no sorrow, earthly success, material prosperity. Oh no, it involves a rejection by the world. Jesus would later press this home. He said, *"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."*

Peter understands that, and that's why we move from the rejection, number two, to the rebuke; the second half of verse 32 and verse 33, and first, we see Peter rebukes Jesus, but then we see Jesus rebuking Peter. First, Peter rebukes Jesus at the end of verse 32, *"And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."* And I just want to say this wasn't just one sentence. This was a harassment of Jesus, a constant rebuking of Jesus. He's trying to persuade Him not to suffer because Peter loves our Lord. He doesn't want to make a scene in front of the other disciples, so verse 32 says, *"He took him aside."* But Christ is going to cause a scene because He's going to rebuke Peter because, although it appears to be good intentions, Satan is behind it. Ignorant of Old Testament prophecy, a love for Christ that was somewhat blurry. *"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."* Now, what the others were thinking they weren't willing to do. Let me be clear about that. They were more than happy to have Peter singlehandedly try to stop Jesus from embracing suffering. Why is that? Because Peter and the Twelve had a vision of the Messiah that was largely that of a warrior and political spirit, focused on Him defending ethnic Israel, defeating all her enemies during Jesus' earthly life; and they wanted a crown apart from crucifixion. They wanted salvation apart from suffering. Their concept of the Messiah was still being influenced by the leaven of the Pharisees. Jesus is going to help them see a little clearer,

but it’s going to require some harsh words by our Lord; in fact, the harshest words that He ever spoke to any one of His elect.

We see Peter rebuking his Teacher. Now, I don’t think in our world we can understand this, but a pupil of a rabbi did not rebuke the rabbi. I’ve had a lot of schooling, too much schooling; and I’ve seen from time to time, students challenge professors, and I can’t wait when they do it because I know they’re going to be embarrassed. Not the professor, but the student because the student always thinks he knows more than the professor, and that’s an indication that he clearly doesn’t. But I have never in my life seen a student openly rebuke a professor. That is whole other level, and that’s exactly what Peter does here. In fact, that Greek word for rebuke *epitiman*, is the same word used to describe Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples back in verse 30 when it says, “*He strictly charged them to tell no one about him,*” strictly charged. Same word for *rebuke*. And Matthew reports that the rebuke was rooted in Peter not wanting Christ to suffer shame and death. Matthew 16:22 says, “*God forbid it, Lord!*” Peter’s words to Jesus, “*This shall never happen to You!*” What shall never happen to You? What You just predicted, Your suffering and Your rejection. “*God forbid it, Lord!*” I mean, that is interesting language. That’s like saying, “*God forbid it, Lord!*” It’s like praying, “*Forbid it, God.*” It’s so bold to tell God to forbid doing something that only God can forbid. He’s attempting to tell God what His agenda should be. Same word of rebuke. It’s the word used when Jesus silenced demons and condemned them to hell. Make that connection in your minds. This is such a strong rebuke by Peter to Jesus that it comes from hell itself. It’s the type of rebuke that Jesus would use to suppress hellish forces, but this rebuke comes from Satan himself.

The problem is that he’s opposing Jesus’ purpose and mission again, isn’t he? Oh, Peter. He’s saying that what Jesus just said must happen must not happen. This is open rebellion and defiance at the highest of levels, and Jesus addresses it head on. “*You don’t want a scene, Peter, but I’m going to cause a scene.*” We move from Peter’s rebuke of Jesus to Jesus’ rebuke of Peter, verse 33, “*But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’*” Now, I think this is funny because Peter probably thought Jesus was being influenced by Satan. That was the charge by the religious leaders that Jesus was influenced by demons. Maybe Peter thought that Jesus was being influenced by Satan. How can my Savior suffer? But Jesus knows that Peter is the one being influenced by Satan. The same word for *rebuke* is used to describe Jesus’ casting down of Peter’s truly satanic suggestion. It’s the same word that Jesus would use to rebuke demons. When He cast them out, He would rebuke them, tell them to hush, be quiet, say no more. That’s exactly what Jesus is doing with Peter. Strongest words ever said to a truly elect disciple. Peter, you’re speaking the devil’s words. “*Get behind me, Satan!*”

Notice, Mark is sure to tell us that after receiving Peter’s rebuke, it says there that He turned, “*and seeing his disciples, he [then] rebuked Peter.*” When Jesus turned to look at the disciples, He could see their faces, and He could tell they were in every bit agreement with Peter; Jesus shouldn’t suffer. This is not just a rebuke to Peter. This is a rebuke to the Twelve. He turned to their face and face-to-face looked them in the eyes and said, “*Get behind me, Satan! Get behind me, Satan!*” Why? Because this was no different than the demon doctrine that Satan proposed to Jesus in the wilderness at the very beginning of His public ministry. Turn back with me to Matthew chapter 4, a very interesting parallel here. We’ll just look at part of this, verse 8.

“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain,” Matthew 4:8, “and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him,” notice this language, “Be gone, Satan!” Get behind me, Satan! “For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”

Jesus is using the same words that He used to rebuke the devil to rebuke Peter. “Be gone, Satan! Get behind me, Satan!” And, of course, in that wilderness temptation, if Jesus would just bow to Satan, He was promised all the kingdoms of the world. This is akin to Satan telling Jesus, “Look, take the high road. Avoid the conflict. Avoid all the rejection and shame. Avoid the cross. Establish Your kingdom now. Take the throne apart from pain and suffering.” And that’s exactly what Peter is offering here: “You don’t have to suffer. You must not suffer.” Jesus would make no deal with the devil. He would not concede to Peter’s terms or the devil’s terms because they were one in the same. They were coming from the same source. Interestingly, Luke’s account of the wilderness temptation in Luke 4 says that “[Satan] departed from him until an opportune time.” Guess what? That day is here. This is that opportune time. It shouldn’t surprise us. Peter just made the great confession, right? This great confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, but pride comes before a fall. And now Satan is trying to use Peter to get Jesus away from His mission and His purpose.

Listen, Peter’s problem is the same problem we all struggle with. We want immediate power and glory apart from suffering, don’t we? We tend to think that Jesus saved us, and we’re trusting in Him, and therefore, we should be free from suffering and pain. We watch the news, and in despair, wonder why God doesn’t just stop all the evil in the world. We go through a trial, and we question God’s goodness. We think to ourselves, “This is not what I signed up for. My life is to be blessed.” Peter felt that way, and I think behind this rebuke—though Peter clearly loved Jesus—in rebuking Him, Peter understood that he would be suffering in a way that he couldn’t imagine. He put two and two together. If Christ is the Messiah, and He’s going to suffer and He’s going to be rejected by the religious establishment, then what will happen to us? Christ would lead the way in suffering, but before He does that, notice what He says at the end of verse 33. He gets to the heart of Peter’s issue. “Get behind me, Satan!” Here’s your issue, “For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” You are not understanding God’s purpose for the world.

Peter it’s not about you. God has set the agenda. God has determined the courses. He is in control. He didn’t have to send His Son to die for sinners, but He did. He would have been just in allowing all the world to go to hell. Peter, you’re focused on yourself. You’re setting your mind not on the things of God but on the things of man. You have your own agenda for your own life, and you have your own agenda for God, what God should do. Hebrews 9 is clear, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins,” right? The cross was offensive to Peter, and it’s offensive to many today. Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews. To gentiles it’s foolishness, but Paul says that the cross is the power of God unto salvation. It is the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of man. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways.

Peter was focused on the world, the things of man, not the things of God. What he was grappling with—listen to this—was personal ambition and power. He didn’t want to suffer. Sure, he loved the Lord. He did not want the Lord to suffer and die, but he also loved himself. He didn’t want to suffer. He wanted an easy path to power and prominence, a place of importance without pain, without cost, without humility, without sacrifice. And Jesus is saying, “Your mind is on the things of man.” That’s what man does—not the things of God. What do the gentiles do? Jesus said, “They lord it over those that they’re in charge of.” That was Peter, carnal and worldly thinking. And if it marked Peter, be sure it marks us from time to time.

How can we be sure that we set our minds on the things of God and not the things of man? Or to pose that question another way, what are some clues that perhaps we are not setting our mind on the things of God, and we are setting our mind on the things of man? I’ll give you four little things as we close. Number one, what are some clues that perhaps we’re not setting our mind on the things of God but rather on the things of man? Number one, a complaining spirit, a complaining spirit. This describes one who is always groaning about God’s providences in the world, always complaining about their trials and their struggles, how they have it tougher than anyone else. Let me give you a simple remedy if you struggle with that. Stop having such a mindset on yourself and your pain and your struggles and begin focusing on the pain and struggles of others. Have a little sympathy and a little bit of empathy, and guess what? Your problems won’t appear that big. There’s always someone in the world, someone in your connection of people that are suffering far beyond anything you can imagine. Don’t think about your own suffering. Think about the suffering of others. Set your mind on the things of God, not the things of man. How do you know that you’re setting your mind on the things of man, not the things of God? You’ll have a complaining spirit.

Secondly, maybe you’ll have an ambitious spirit. Now, ambition is not bad in and of itself, but there is a sinful ambition. This describes a person who always wants to have power and control over others. They want a position of authority. They know nothing about service and sacrifice. This is like Diotrefes, right, from 3 John 1, always seeking a place of prominence in the church. Such a person bulldozes everyone in front of them to have their own way, to pursue their own happiness, their own pleasures, their own agenda. They set their mind on the things of man, not of God. If this is your tendency, you must repent of this. Jesus calls for servant leadership, not domineering leadership. Peter struggled with that. I think all leaders struggle with that. It must be repented of. Fathers must repent of this. Mothers must repent of this. If you’re in the workplace and you’re a boss, you must repent of sinful ambition, setting your mind on the things of man instead of the things of God.

Here’s a third thing. How do you know that you’re setting your mind on the things of man, not the things of God? You’ll have a complaining spirit. You’ll have an ambitious spirit. You’ll have a prideful spirit. Number three, a prideful spirit. This is an attitude that never admits wrongdoing even though the person is often wrong. They seem to think they possess all wisdom, all knowledge, all skill, all goodness. They think they even know better than God. That was Peter. They are the standard, and everyone else must conform to them. That is pride. That is a prideful

spirit that must be repented of. That is having an earthly focus on the things of man, not the things of God. So, what are these things? A complaining spirit, an ambitious spirit, a prideful spirit. These are all things that tell us, if they’re true about us, that our focus is on the things of man, not the things of God. We’re worldly-minded. There’s a fourth one; an opportunistic spirit. That’s an attitude that goes along to get along. They look at the church, they look at life as a series of opportunities to capitalize upon in order to make themselves look better, look holier, look more important. They use the church. They use others to achieve their own agenda, as if it’s a ladder to climb to the top. They’re all in it for themselves. This is not of God. It is setting one’s sights on the things of man, not the things of God. Why do I mention all of this? Because we are in the kingdom of God. We are disciples of Christ, and it’s not about us. It’s about His glory. We must be willing to suffer. We must be willing to sacrifice, and what all these things have in common is a life that’s notice focused on Christ. It’s a life that doesn’t live like Christ. And if one remains unrepentant in such a lifestyle, they will reveal they aren’t true disciples.

So, Jesus is addressing what it means to be a true disciple. He says this is going to involve, as we’ll see, self-denial. It’s going to involve a willingness to lose your life in order to gain it. It’s going to involve a willingness to be bold and not be ashamed of Christ. As I said earlier, in giving up one’s earthly life, one gains eternal life. In surrender, comes security. In losing, comes victory. In becoming spiritually poor, one becomes spiritually rich. In dying to self, one begins living for the Savior. Following Christ is not accomplished either on one’s own terms or in one’s own power. Peter, to him, this would have been bad news that Jesus would suffer because he wasn’t seeing straight, but later he would write this, 1 Peter 3: *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous,”* Why? Peter says, now I know why. Now I know why: *“that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”* Peter got it. He understood. Christ must suffer. Christ must die to pay the penalty for sin. There’s no other way into the kingdom, and he also understood—listen to this—that he would suffer the same and he would do it willingly, crucified upside down because he said, “I’m not worthy to be crucified the way my Savior was.” He embraced the cross. He embraced suffering. What does Jesus say? Pick up your cross and bear it. Pick up your cross and bear it. That’s what it means to be a true disciple. Serve Christ by serving others.

So, Jesus teaches the disciples here to have a little clearer vision of His purpose in the world so that they can gain a clearer vision of their own purpose in the world, and such applies to us today. The rejection, the rebuke. Lord-willing next week, we will see the requirements of discipleship, verses 34 and 38, followed by the reassurance, chapter 9, verse 1. You see, there is comfort. There is reassurance even in the midst of all the requirements, all the pain and all the suffering that enables us to get through this life with all the difficulties it brings us. May we look to Christ this morning. May we trust Him in our deepest anxiety, in the heartaches of our own soul, knowing that He suffered for us to save us. So now, we must be willing to suffer for Him in order to glorify Him. Let us pray.

Father, thank You for this text of Scripture, which reminds us of suffering and rejection of our Lord, pointing really back to the Old Testament, Isaiah 52 and 53 that speak about You bearing

the shame and the sin of Your people, including the sorrow and the rejection and all that came with that. Father, we recognize that in celebrating the Lord’s Table, we are acknowledging Your suffering in our place. We are acknowledging that there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ. We cannot earn our salvation. We can’t even keep our salvation. We are at Your mercy and Your grace through the gospel; and Lord, we thank You for that. We thank You that through these emblems, we’re reminded of that. We don’t have to look to ourselves. We don’t have to set our mind on the things of man. We set our mind on the things of God and the Scriptures tell us that You have sent Your only begotten Son into the world to forgive us, to free us, to deliver us. Help us to look to Him. Help our faith to be strengthened. Maybe there’s those present who don’t know Christ. Give them faith to believe. Help them to turn from their sins, to renounce their life to gain eternal life. Seal these truths to our hearts as we now move to take the Lord’s Supper. We pray and ask all of this in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.