

Mark 8:34-38 - Real Christianity

Calvin, Handfuls, TSK, GreekLexicon, Gill, Robertson, Geneva, Spurgeon, Trapp, FourFoldGospel, Vincent, Barnes, Clarke, JFB, Henry, Poole, Eclectic

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus: Was Christianity like Peter thought, that Christ came on earth to set up an **earthly kingdom** and give his disciples **prominent, powerful, positions**? No. True Christianity was centered on a **spiritual kingdom** and marked by **self-denial, submission and service!** Because the disciples were struggling to get this point in their hearts and heads, Jesus took the time to explain this point. This is what you will hear about today from God's Word.

Our headings are:

Instruction on what is real Christianity.

Encouragement to pursue real Christianity.

Warning to those who reject real Christianity.

Our goals are: **That you will live a life that shows real Christianity.**

Instruction on what is real Christianity.

34 When He had **called the people to Himself**, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and **follow Me**."

1. In order to properly instruct his disciples on what real Christianity is, Jesus called them together.

2. Jesus began with: "Whoever desires to come after me and be my disciple..."

"Whoever" reminds us that anyone could follow the Lord: rich, poor, young, old, man, woman, educated, or uneducated, black or white. The kingdom was opened to everyone. Christ's kingdom was not for a few high ranking officials – like Peter and the disciples. Jesus did not focus on the poor as socialists like to say. Jesus did not focus on the rich. He focused on everyone.

3. Jesus instructed his disciples that real Christianity – the one who truly follows Jesus - is marked by self-denial.

To deny oneself is to quell the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. To deny oneself is to **deny self-righteousness** and to look outside oneself for help. To deny oneself is to **deny self-aggrandizement** – hoping for an earthly kingdom with

personal influence and power.

4. Jesus instructed his disciples that real Christianity is marked by them taking up their cross.

This means you must patiently fulfill your duty as a Christian, submitting to God's will, and be willing to patiently bear afflictions, shame, and pain that the Lord might bring across your path. The easy life was not in Peter or the disciples' future! And wasn't that very true? Peter is reported to have been crucified upside down. (Roman Catholic monks used to make wooden crosses and carry them on their backs as a sick interpretation of this text.)

5. Jesus instructed his disciples that real Christianity is marked by them following him – follow his example.

To follow Jesus is a spiritual act. You don't have to literally walk where Jesus walked. You don't have to go to Israel, walk by the Sea of Galilee, or swim in the Jordan River.

To follow Jesus is showing grace, humility, patience, and self-denial.

To follow Jesus is to fulfill your moral responsibility of spreading the Gospel, starting in your home.

To follow Jesus is to show mercy to the poor and needy.

35 "For whoever **desires to save his life** will lose it, **but whoever loses his life for My sake** and the gospel's will save it.

6. Jesus instructed them that real Christianity is marked by them being willing to lose their lives for him and the Gospel.

In this verse Jesus is speaking of two different "lives," here.

The first "life" refers to man's eternal soul. This "life" (soul man can lose to hell). How? Those who desire to save their lives at all cost, which shows a love of themselves rather than a willingness to die for Jesus, will end up losing their lives in hell for eternity. Those who fight to live their lives for themselves will indeed face the 2nd death without Jesus as their advocate.

The second "life" refers to man's body (whoever loses his life for My sake). Jesus was playing on words. The Christian must be willing to physically die for the Lord. His disciples could expect to see difficult times ahead. But, Jesus was pointing out, the Christian who willingly loses his life (his body), will be rewarded. (So much

for Peter wanting a prominent position in a great earthly kingdom!)

7. Lessons:

a. Learn to say “no” to the lusts of this world, regardless of how strong those lusts are, so that you serve Christ’s wishes.

b. Be prepared for suffering in this life. That is part of God’s refining fire. There is a so-called preacher on TV, Kenneth Copeland, whom I recently heard saying that God does not permit trouble to come to his people. That’s false teaching. That type of false doctrine puts unnecessary, unbearable guilt on people who suffer, making them think that their trouble is always because of a lack of faith. But Jesus said that if they persecuted him, they would persecute you. Peter said that God ordained hardships for your own good. Did you see Dr. Nabeel Qureshi as he is suffering in a hospital bed dying from stomach cancer? Some people thought that he was being punished by God for what he wrote about Muslims. But suffering comes to most at one time or the other in their lives and often not because of personal sins!

c. Be ready to lose your life for Jesus, for you will find a perfect life most gloriously in the resurrection – free of all afflictions and filled with all pleasures. Bishop Hooper, a martyr, wrote the night before he was murdered: "Life is sweet, and death is bitter, but eternal death is more bitter, and eternal life is more sweet." In other words, the happiness of heaven is far greater than even the loss of life in this world.

d. The Devil does not tell you the true cost of following him. He lures with his lies and leads to destruction, promising paradise. Remember the famous words from Eden, “You shall not surely die, you shall be like God.” Jesus tells you the truth.

Encouragement to pursue real Christianity

36 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and **loses his own soul**? 37 "Or what will a man give in **exchange for his soul**?"

1. Jesus’ disciples were eager and expecting an earthly kingdom with prominent positions as their ultimate prize, so Jesus set graciously, taught them.

But they needed encouragement to live “real Christianity,” instead of lusting for power. So...

2. Jesus encouraged his disciples to pursue real Christianity by telling them that their souls were more valuable than the whole world of profit.

This made them focus more on their souls.

Men who live for themselves always want to gain the whole world (possessions) and to gain social and political advantage (prominence). But earthly possession and prominence disappear quickly. EG: Alexander controlled the whole known civilized world but he died at a young age. Solomon had the great pleasures of the whole world brought to him but his son lost almost everything immediately after his death.

3. Jesus encouraged his disciples to pursue real Christianity by telling them to pursue things that benefit the soul; they were not to obsess over things in this world that can be stolen, rot, or be eaten away.

4. Lessons:

a. You have to work to provide for your family. You have to exercise to be healthy. You have to rest to rejuvenate your body. But you must focus on the success and security of your soul!

Guard against the folly of the day where churches are now more focused on a clean colon than on a clean heart, and guard against the folly of the day where people are now more focused on high yielding savings account than on a holy soul! **The soul has no market price.** It is most valuable. Real Christianity does not ignore the body, but it focuses on the soul!

b. One commentator wrote: “They are the most foolish of all men who purchase the pleasures of this life with the loss of everlasting bliss.” They buy for the body and starve the soul. Question: When was the last time you spent your money on a good theology book... any book that explains the Bible?

Warning to those who reject real Christianity.

38 "For **whoever is ashamed of Me** and **My words** in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of

Man also will be ashamed **when He comes in the glory of His Father** with the holy angels."

1. Jesus warned his disciples to identify with him to show they were real Christians.

They were not to be ashamed of him.

2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; **nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed** and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

They were not to be ashamed of **Jesus' suffering abuse, death on the cross, and humiliating burial.** But because Jesus surely did not come looking like a king, many were ashamed of him.

2. Jesus warned his disciples to clearly identify with the Gospel – his words - to show they were real Christians; they were not to be ashamed of the Gospel.

Some believers in Ephesus thought that salvation had to be earned; they thought free things were shameful. So in their minds, the Gospel was useless.

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore **do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord**, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,

But Apostle Paul warned them against this...for the free Gospel was real Christianity.

3. Jesus warned them that if they were ashamed of him and his Gospel, he would be ashamed of them when Israel would be judged.

This meant that **he would say that he did not know (love) them.** They would lose their advocate before the Father. (While everyone has to appear before the Father on Judgment Day, this "coming in the glory of his Father" was **likely referring to the judgment that would come in AD70 on Israel for rejecting God.** The kingdom would be taken away from them and given to the nations. You can know that this was referring to the judgment on Israel and not the final judgment because of the verse that comes next.

Mark 9:1 And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are **some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.**"

They would be alive when "the world-wide kingdom" appeared.

4. Lessons:

a. Never be ashamed of the Gospel and of knowing and believing in Jesus.

b. How you respond to Christ and the Gospel now will determine how he will respond to you in the future.

c. One day the true Shekinah – the glory of the Lord - will appear in fullness and you will be there to enjoy it. At that time the world will shake its head in regret...but you will hold your hand up and rejoice!

Conclusion:

Real Christianity is when Jesus is the center of your salvation and the center of your life. In order for you to keep Jesus as the center of your life he gives you:

Instruction: **Stop living for yourself** – your pleasure and your profit - and live for Christ's glory.

Encouragement: **Keep Jesus at the center of your life because no one in this world can buy his way out of eternal condemnation.**

Warning: **Remember that if you don't acknowledge Christ as the center of your life he will deny knowing you before his Father.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Resist the urge to live for yourself through reminders of the work of Jesus for you – work based on love.

2. Receive the Lord's encouragement for the blessings you will receive for staying close to him.

3. Remind yourself of the threat the Lord puts on those who ignore his person and his preaching.

4. Retell this story of Christ and his Gospel to your children. Repeat it to the world.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, that is sad. All you have then are the passing pleasures of this world – which the Lord can remove at any time. So be wise. Ask God to impress on your heart God's love for sinners. Embrace that truth. Die to yourself. And live for Jesus. If you don't do this you will surely lose your soul in hell forever.