

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not review by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 08: 30-38

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you; this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Gospel of Mark, chapter 8, verses 30-38.

Jesus, with His disciples, embarked on the third travelling missionary trip. This marks the third stage of discipleship training and is a crucial moment when Jesus imparts the richest and most important revelations to them. The Gospel of Mark records this stage of discipleship training uniquely. It begins with the account of the fragments from 12 baskets and 7 large baskets. The background of these fragments is interwoven with the great revelation the disciples received in Caesarea Philippi. When Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Peter, having received revelation from the Father, declared that Jesus is the Christ. This is a significant revelation, but just as Jesus had to lay His hands twice on the blindman, so he could see clearly. Peter's declaration represents only the first half of the revelation, equivalent to recognizing Jesus as the Bread of Life. This revelation leads to the next step, which is that the bread must be broken to become fragments in order to be the sustenance for everyone. Therefore, in Mark's account, the emphasis is not solely on the first revelation of who Jesus is, but on the second revelation that Jesus, the Bread of Life, must be broken.

Verse 30: "Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him."

The revelation of Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is Messiah; He only allows the disciples to know this. He warns them not to tell others. Revelation is God unveiling the curtain, allowing you to see a new light and gain a new understanding. However, revelation alone is not enough; it needs to become your vision, controlling your life, for it to bring about a transformation. The prerequisite for revelation to become vision is that you must be willing to follow. In other words, you must become a

disciple of Christ. For someone unwilling to follow, even the highest revelation is merely information for conversation and not helpful to them. Therefore, Jesus warns the disciples not to tell anyone.

Verse 31: "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

When the disciples acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah who would bring salvation, Jesus felt that they were ready for further revelation. He directly told them that the Son of Man must endure much suffering. Although the disciples recognized Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus emphasized that He would undergo suffering in His role as the Son of Man. What kind of suffering? He would be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes—all elites among the Jews and members of the Jewish council. Jesus not only would be rejected by them but also killed, reaching the ultimate suffering, death. Yet, after three days, He would rise again. This reveals that both suffering and death are for the purpose of resurrection. If there is resurrection, then suffering and death are filled with hope. Suffering and death are meant to eliminate all negative aspects, leading to a positive outcome—resurrection.

Verse 32: "He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him."

Like most of us, Peter's reaction was impulsive upon hearing only the first part of Jesus' words about suffering and death. In parallel scripture, Matthew 16:22 records Peter's rebuke, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" We see that Peter genuinely loved Jesus and did not want to see Him suffer and die. However, this love was based on natural affection.

Verse 33: "But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"

Jesus turned around, looked at the disciples, and publicly rebuked Peter severely. He called Peter "Satan" and told him to get behind Him. Just moments ago, Peter received the highest revelation from the Father, proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. How did Peter suddenly become an embodiment of Satan? Jesus even called him Satan, telling him to go away! Why did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan? Because Peter was not mindful of the things of God but only concerned with the things of men. To be mindful means to think, love, and follow God's thoughts, love, and ways, rather than those of men. A believer, though born again, still has the flesh present, and Satan may dwell in the flesh. When one is mindful of the flesh, they align with Satan, becoming his follower or even embodying Satan himself. Peter, who received a high revelation a few minutes earlier, was now called Satan by Jesus.

Here we see that a believer is indeed complex. So, when you see a Christian sinning, don't be surprised, for at that moment, they are mindful of the flesh. As long as they repent, confess, and turn back to being mindful of God's thoughts, they remain disciples of God. Therefore, a Christian, when mindful of God's thoughts, may appear angelic, but when mindful of men's thoughts, they may resemble the devil. On one hand, Christians are complex, and on the other hand, the key for a Christian is to turn. When you realize you are mindful of men's thoughts, quickly turn your gaze back to Christ, transforming and becoming mindful of God's thoughts. A matured saint is not one who never sins but one who, after sinning, turns quickly.

The reason Peter clearly documented what happened to him is to remind us that this can easily happen to us. Satan is always seeking opportunities to tempt us with various things. As soon as the flesh is activated, we become followers of Satan. Therefore, we must set aside specific time daily for reading the Scriptures, prayer, spiritual exercises, and fellowship with the Lord. With such practices, we won't give the flesh a chance to indulge continuously. On the other hand, we must recognize that the flesh will accompany us throughout our lives, so we must remain vigilant.

Verse 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.'"

Seizing this teachable moment, Jesus called the people and His disciples together, with Peter serving as a negative example. We must appreciate Peter for deliberately not highlighting his moments of glory but focusing on his failures. This shows us that even the chief apostle, Peter, could be weak and fail. It is not to rationalize our weaknesses and failures but to learn to stay alert. When you are not mindful of God's thoughts and not standing with God, failure is not far away.

Jesus used Peter's example to teach the disciples, saying, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself." The phrase "deny himself" is translated from the Greek word "ἀπαρνέομαι" (aparneomai), which means to deny or disown oneself. To follow the Lord, one must deny oneself. This is in stark contrast to the teachings of the world, which emphasize self-appreciation, self-development, and even self-inflation. Under such teachings, everyone becomes selfish. Look at the politicians on the stage today; who among them isn't selfish? In the business world, the elites are likewise selfish because that is the teaching the world imparts. However, Jesus' teaching is the opposite: people are to deny themselves, set aside their natural concepts and preferences, no longer centered on themselves, but centered on God. In all things, instead of asking, "What do I want?" one should ask, "What does God want?"

Denying oneself is only the first step. The second step is to "take up his cross and follow Me." Throughout His life, Jesus carried the cross, ultimately completing redemption on the cross. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are also to carry our own crosses and follow Him. While Jesus carried the cross for redemption, we carry our crosses to experience being crucified with Christ. Everyone's cross is different because everyone's old self is different. The purpose of each Christian carrying their cross, passively, is found in Romans 6:6, "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." The passive aspect of the cross experience is to recognize that our old self has been crucified with Christ, our old man is dead, and

we no longer need to be slaves to sin. On the positive side, Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." The old self has been crucified; it is dead. Now, the one living is the new self, and Christ lives within.

After Jesus finished speaking, when the disciples were told to deny themselves and take up their cross to follow the Lord, from verses 35 to 37, these three verses are not easily understood, and the main reason is due to translation. The text speaks of six instances of "life", where saving one's life results in losing it, and losing it for Jesus and the gospel results in saving it. This concept differs from our natural understanding. We should be thankful that the New Testament was written in Greek, a language with precise terminology. To understand what life truly is, we must delve into the Greek language.

When it comes to life, there are three primary Greek words. The first is "bios," referring to our physical life. The second is "psyche," the origin of the English word psychology, which speaks of the life of the soul, including our minds, emotions, and will. The third word is "zoe," which refers to the life of the spirit. Our physical life, bios, will one day pass away, but our spiritual life, zoe, and the life of the soul, psyche, will not cease with the end of physical life.

In these three verses, the Greek word used for life is always "psyche," indicating the life of the soul. What is the life of the soul? The minds, emotions, and will constitute the three main parts of our soul. Earlier, when it spoke of denying oneself, it meant denying your minds, denying your emotions, denying your will – not letting your minds, emotions, and will take the lead.

Verse 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."

This verse speaks about those who seek to save their soul life, not willing to let their minds, emotions, and will be harmed. In the end, they will lose their soul. What does it mean to save one's soul? It is not willing to let one's minds, emotions, and will be hurt, not willing to deny oneself. As a result, one lets their minds, emotions,

and will develop according to the desires of their old self, leading to the loss of their soul.

On the contrary, for the sake of Jesus and the gospel, if one is willing to lose their soul, meaning to deny themselves and not follow their own desires, then they will save their soul. What does it mean for Jesus' sake and the gospel's sake? Essentially, the gospel is Jesus Himself. When you are willing to lose your soul for Jesus' sake, you are willing to deny yourself, not follow your own desires, and instead, focus your minds, emotions, and will on things related to the gospel, or more directly, on Christ. On the surface, it might seem like your soul is being hurt, but because it is for the sake of Christ, in Christ, you have eternal life. This eternal life is the life of the spirit, or "zoe," and it can fill your soul, preserving it.

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

To gain the whole world, one must put all their minds, emotions, and will into the world. Of course, most people can only gain a small part of the world. However, when one invests their minds, emotions, and will in the world, the result is that their soul becomes filled with the world. While this may bring temporary enjoyment during their time on earth, in the process of gaining the world, they end up being possessed by the world. The world and its desires will pass away, and only those who follow God's will shall remain forever (1 John 2:17).

Satan is the ruler of this world, enticing people to gain the world. Consequently, their soul becomes dominated by the world, offering no eternal value. When their body passes away, they end up losing their soul. What can a person give in exchange for their soul? In Ephesians 5:16, Paul encourages us to "redeem the time, because the days are evil." Time is precious, and we should pursue eternal things while we are still alive, so that we can redeem the time. Let our souls be occupied by things that are eternal. Otherwise, in this evil generation, if you spend your life pursuing worldly things, on the day you die, you may forfeit your soul.

Verse 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."

Here Jesus emphasizes the nature of this world as a corrupt and sinful one. Those who are ashamed of Him and His teachings, refusing to carry their cross and walk the path of the cross, are in a dangerous position. This warning is significant because Jesus promises His return at the end of this age when the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. If one today regards Christ and His teachings as shameful, there will come a day when Christ will consider them as shameful. This serves as a clear instruction to disciples, and to us, that during our time on earth, we must learn to carry our own cross and follow the Lord. If we are willing to suffer with Him today, we will share in His glory one day. If we are unwilling to walk the path of the cross today, we will experience shame when that day comes. This is a clear teaching from Jesus, and it's a danger when some churches avoid talking about the cross, only teaching success and enjoying life on earth. Such teachings are perilous because if you consider the path of the cross as shameful today, one day Christ will consider you as shameful. Let us ask for God's help.

Let's pray: Lord, You have revealed Yourself not only as the Bread of Life but also as the One who was broken for us, supplying the needs of our lives. Thank You for walking the path of the cross to complete redemption for us, allowing us to enjoy Your provision in grace every day. However, You also tell us to carry our own cross and follow You. Grant us listening ears and obedient hearts, willing to carry our cross and follow You. Help us learn to crucify our old self with Christ every day and live a new life. Also, prepare spiritual companions in the church who are willing to experience the loss of the soul for the sake of the gospel, so that when You come again, they may receive Your approval. Bless the church I am a part of, in Jesus Christ's holy name, I pray. Amen.