

"31 And He 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. 32 And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and *said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Mark 8:31-33, NAS95.

Jesus taught his disciples that he would suffer many things —rejection by the religious leaders (who, as we have seen, were his enemies), a violent death and a rising on the third day.

Peter rebuked Jesus (32). We are staggered at his impudence; but have there not been times when we too have questioned God's way of working and suggested to him another pattern, closer to our way of thinking? We cannot afford to criticize Peter. Jesus, usually so gentle and patient with his disciples, was very outspoken on this occasion. Words like Simon Peter's, trying to turn Jesus aside from the cross, show Satan's thoughts, not God's. This was the temptation that Jesus had faced and conquered in the wilderness and would conquer again at Gethsemane. He would not yield to it, and neither must his followers. This is the reason for the stern warning of v 34. 'No cross, no crown' is as true of Christians as it is of Christ.

In light of this event we have to try and come to some conclusions concerning Peter, and I would add the other disciples as well.

A question comes to my mind. Did any of the others object to Peter's statement?

None of the gospel authors reveals this. If any had, it would be significant to help us understand if there were some of them who really understood more than the others about what was occurring.

But it seems that the dullness of understanding was shared by all. They all got the Messiah-King-Warrior-Deliverer-Savior bit but they missed the element that makes all of these relevant and that is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

This is the reason for the harsh statement of Jesus. This is the very thing that Satan would want all Israelites and all Gentiles to miss, the fact that Messianic history is

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relevant to spiritual redemption first. All else follows it. It is not about a physical redemption or salvation before it its about spiritual salvation.

To miss the fact that Jesus had to die misses the whole underlying purpose for the incarnation.

God delivered Israel physically, numerous times without the Redeemer present in human form. There were types and shadows, types, models, pictures but until Christ there was no true Redeemer among men.

Of course true OT believers were genuinely saved by grace and looked to the day of the fulfillment based on whatever accumulative knowledge of the Savior-Redeemer any generation had, but no one had the Redeemer in the flesh until the Incarnation and to miss the reason for Jesus being there was a Satanic idea.

To deny the need of the cross for the salvation of men is a Satanic mindset. It is the antithesis of true salvation that comes from God by way of the reconciliation done at the cross, man-ward by Christ.

This is why Jesus would say, "get behind me Satan".

Peter was not temporarily possessed by Satan or a demon. His thought, his heart at that moment was opposed to the purpose of Christ. It was no different that Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness, where He identified with us in our temptations as we have studied previously.

The Satanic mindset is the spirit of the age. Anywhere anyone believes that they can make their way to God without Christ is evidence of a Satanic mindset. This is the greatest battle of the age. And that is why it is not a battle that can be won by mere human desire. It is not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man that any person comes to Christ. He must be born of the Spirit, born from above by a divine act of a gracious God.

The disciples of Christ faced a grave danger. They joined Peter in confessing, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This meant that they had begun to grasp

something of His nature as God the Son and His office as the promised Messiah. And this was great, especially since it came by divine revelation. Yet, it is not that they understood this fully, as is evident after the resurrection where Thomas makes the staggering confession, "My Lord and my God!" But the danger they faced lay in their failure to understand why Christ came. While visions of armies, kingly processions, and triumph over Rome danced in their heads, they missed the central focus of Jesus Christ in His redemptive work. The idea of the cross and Christ's death appeared unthinkable to them.

The disciples are not alone. Most people stumble over the cross and the redemptive work of Christ. Thinking that admiration of Christ's person and teachings suffice, they gladly stuff the divine reason for the cross. The death and resurrection of Christ might be acknowledged but are typically thought of only in sentimental terms.

This is glaringly apparent in the media. Have you noticed how various media outlets will speak admiringly of Jesus Christ's example and teachings, and even mention His crucifixion, but avoid like the plague the reason for the crucifixion? The reaction to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* demonstrates the offensiveness of the cross. Gibson focuses primarily on the physical suffering of Christ's passion rather than the reason for Christ's death. Debate rages with finger pointing and passionate argument on who is to blame for the death of this innocent Man. But all of that misses the whole point of the death of Christ. Gibson tried to grapple with this through his own hand holding the spike and driving it into his Christ-figure; portraying his own guilt for the death of Christ. Certainly, there is a sense that all of us bear responsibility for His death due to our sin. But that can become sentimentalized and miss the point of His death as well. Christ went to the cross because that was the Father's will. Only through such a death on behalf of His people could forgiveness be granted and relationship to God be established for sinners; because only through such a death could God's eternal justice be satisfied. Consider how Jesus expressed this clearly in John 10.

I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep... For this reason

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the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again
[resurrection implied]. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own
initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This
commandment I received from My Father (John 10:14-15, 17-18, italics added).

Why did Jesus die on the cross? The Father commanded it of Him. The Father's will in redeeming sinners radiates from the cross. There divine mercy and divine justice met in eternal satisfaction. There the gospel becomes the gospel (good news) for sinners.

It is not difficult to get on the religious train of Christianity, and just roll down the tracks of sentimentalism, and even hold admiring thoughts of Christ, and yet never trust Him as Redeemer. On His part, Jesus Christ leaves no doubt of the necessity of the cross and resurrection in His divine purpose. That's what He desired all who would follow Him to understand. Do you see this as central to the message of Christianity and your own faith?

I. No cross - no gospel

A change occurs at this juncture in the content of Jesus Christ's instructions to His disciples. It is noted by the intensive phrase, "From that time." It indicates a new level of Christ's self-disclosure to His followers.

But the point of our text marks a striking difference. "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." The word "show" implies pointing out or explaining or making something known. He was proving the necessity of His death and resurrection before it happened so that the disciples might understand the truth of the gospel. He uses identical language in 17:22-23 after the Transfiguration. Afterwards, Christ adds even more details, referring specifically to His death by crucifixion. "Behold, we are going to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third

1. Divine necessity

"Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer... and be killed... and be raised up on the third day." "Must" controls the entire clause. It is a necessity for Christ - a non-negotiable. In this the divine will is manifested. Peter expresses something of this in his first epistle as he speaks of Christ as "a lamb unblemished and spotless" who redeemed us with His own blood (I Pet. 1:19-20), "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world," that is, marked out before the creation to redeem sinners through His blood. John adds in Revelation 13:8, "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast-all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world" [NIV]. As Jesus anticipated His own death and resurrection, He prayed to the Father, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). Leon Morris offers clear explanation concerning the "must" of Christ's death.

There is a compelling divine necessity about this 'must'. It is not simply advisable. It is not merely expedient. It is not the best way under the circumstances. The expression shows that there is no other possibility. The hand of God is in it, and this rules all else out. Even where the word 'must' does not occur statements about the inevitability of the cross can scarcely be understood otherwise (see Mt. 17:22f.; 20:18f.; Mk. 9:31; 10:33f)... From the earliest days the shadow of the cross lay over the Christ [The Cross in the New Testament, 27-28].

We must get firmly in our minds that the cross was not God's Plan B or an unfortunate option among different choices or something over which He had no control. The will of God was never more fully accomplished than by the Son of God at the cross. So why was His death and resurrection a divine necessity?

First, God's justice requires it. We are interested in forgiveness from God and relief from the weight of the guilt of sin. God's justice requires legal satisfaction for the grace of forgiveness to be given. All of the animal sacrifices according to the terms of the Old Covenant bear witness to the satisfaction of God's justice, each one foreshadowing the day that the Lamb of God would bear the weight of divine justice at the cross. Paul uses both accounting and legal language to express Christ removing through the cross the legal obligations against us due to divine justice.

"Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

This same apostle explained the reason for Christ's death as a divine satisfaction (the term is "propitiation") of His eternal justice, he wrote,

"This was to demonstrate His righteousness [i.e., in a legal sense], because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:25-26). God could not forgive anyone without His own justice first being satisfied; and that He did through Christ's death on the cross for all that would trust in His Son.

Second, God's mercy provides it. Though the disciples did not grasp what Christ was telling them, He insisted on the necessity of His suffering, death, and resurrection. The thought of it was horrible to them! But we are sinners, both in nature and in practice. Because of this we are helpless to fulfill the demands of God under the Old or New Covenant, and thus stand condemned before God for our sin (Rom. 3:19-20). God displayed His rich mercy for sinners at the cross.

Third, Christ secures it. Some have taught the idea that Jesus Christ simply came to give us an example of how to live, He was an innocent man full of great truth to live by that would make the world a better place, including His death as one innocent at the hands of cruel men. Some say that Christ's death inspires people to be sacrificial in giving of themselves to others. But that's not why He died! God sent His Son to secure for all that would believe, an eternal relationship to Himself.

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into

the world to save sinners," wrote the apostle Paul (I Tim. 1:15). Our Lord declared, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It is secure, so that Peter testified, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" - and that's secure! (I Pet. 1:3-4)

So, if there is no cross there is no gospel. But what are we to do with the death and resurrection of Christ? That really is the point of what Jesus made to His disciples. "He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." Jesus was not just giving the disciples some strange, unwanted information. He laid before them His reason for coming into the world, and with that, what they must believe concerning Him. They were still several months away from the crucifixion. Would His death be merely a great tragedy to them? Or would they finally recognize the plan and purpose of God in His death, and the fact that their eternal salvation depended solely upon it?

It is notable that Peter had already confessed Jesus to be the Messiah.

Jesus gloried in this confession, not because Peter demonstrated keen insight but because the Father had chosen to reveal this to Him. So with the rest of the disciples, Peter recognized the person of Christ, understanding something of His uniqueness as the One promised from Genesis to Malachi in the Old Testament scripture. As the Christ, they recognized something of Christ ruling over His own kingdom, though they still were thinking in physical and not spiritual, eternal terms. But they had not come to terms with the costliness of Christ's kingdom or the price necessary for sinners to be called the children of God. They missed over David's graphic description of crucifixion in Psalm 22 and Isaiah's depiction of the suffering servant upon whom God would lay our iniquities and crush Him with divine justice (Isa. 53). So Christ takes them back to the reason He came to earth in the first place - to die in our place and to suffer our judgement.

Their faith, and ours, must not simply acknowledge Christ as the Son of the living God,

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but must trust in the sufficiency of Christ in His death for us at the cross. A faith that cannot embrace Christ crucified and raised from the dead is no faith at all.

Christ's announcement of His impending suffering and death did not go over very well with the disciples! The promise of His resurrection three days after His death seemed to not be heard let alone understood. So what we, no matter how well intentioned is the man trying to talk Christ out of the divine will which is exactly what Stan attempted in the wilderness. The approach may have been different but the goal was the - don't go to the cross.

1. Believing the wrong thing

Peter is positive proof that it is possible to know much about Jesus Christ and even be able to state significant theological truth about Him, and still fail to understand the work that He came to do and thus miss the gospel.

"Peter took Him aside – some translations say, and began to rebuke Him."

Why aside, if this was the case one can only speculate.

The verbs seem to express something of forcefulness on Peter's part. The rebuke went beyond just the words recorded, as the present infinitive of "rebuke" suggests. Peter evidently laid out his argument as a rebuttal to Christ's prophetic words. Yet in reality, all this tells us is that Peter was satisfied to believe the wrong things about Christ.

Peter was willing to leave out the suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He gave no thought to his own need for redemption or payment to be made for his sin or divine justice being satisfied. What was he thinking?

He anticipated a physical and material kingdom.

Evidently, Peter had forgotten what he felt when he saw something of Christ's majesty, and cried out, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8) When we forget our sinfulness, and the judgment of God against us as sinners, it is very easy for us to think little of the cross and resurrection. We can satisfy our religious need

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with lots of sentimental thoughts about Jesus. Christianity becomes a nice, warm, fuzzy religion that makes us feel good because we've identified with something wholesome and good. "There is a way that seems right to a man," Proverbs 14:12 tells us, "but its end is the way of death."

Yet, having said that, we cannot but help admiring Peter's zeal! He loved Christ, and wanted no ill fortune to befall Him. But it was a misdirected zeal. He told Jesus, "God forbid it, Lord!" The Greek is actually the word "mercy." Literally, it is "Mercy to you, Lord!" The term developed into a strong prohibition that expressed the person's desire that God might show mercy to spare that person of some harm or misfortune. "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." Again, he uses strong language, a double negative, to express that not at any point would this suffering and death happen to Christ.

Zealous indeed, but He understood nothing of what God had purposed and planned before the foundation of the world. Later, as he preached on the Day of Pentecost, Peter would declare the divine will concerning Christ.

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power (Acts 2:22-24).

Even though Peter failed to see this as he rebuked Christ, he saw it later, realizing that the good news of the gospel began in the heart of God before the foundation of the world! God's predetermined plan was to put "an end to the agony of death" through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And so we are brought face to face with the same question that Peter faced. Do we embrace God's way or man's way concerning the death and resurrection of Christ?
your life and faith?