

# Reality Check

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 06 August 2025

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] Tonight we'll finish Mark chapter 8. This is going to be our last lesson in Mark for a while.

! We'll pick up Mark again in a few months after Willard teaches us about the life of Abraham. Remember what we looked at last week? Jesus shocked his disciples when he told them that he must suffer and be killed. He also told his disciples that he will rise again, but the disciples were so stunned by the news about Jesus' upcoming suffering and death that they seemed to have completely missed the part about Jesus' resurrection. Also remember that the disciples were stunned despite the many Old Testament passages that prophesied that Israel's Messiah would suffer, die, and be resurrected.

Jesus' suffering and death were necessary to pay the price for the sins of all people who put their faith and trust in him for their salvation. Part of the reason for the disciples' shock may have been that the disciples realized that anything that happened to their teacher likely could happen to them. So those disciples received the words of Jesus not only as a death sentence on him, but as a likely death sentence on themselves, and that was the last thing that they wanted to hear. If you thought last week's passage was a hard passage to study, here's a preview for tonight. Mark chapter 8 verses 34 through 38 is an even harder passage to study. The passage is hard to study because Jesus' message is so easy to understand. Missing the point of what Jesus says is virtually impossible, but our human nature will want to do the opposite of what Jesus tells us to do. This passage is a reality check about what following Jesus really entails. The message of this passage is crystal clear. Nobody can understand this passage correctly and believe the false teachers who promote the prosperity gospel or those false teachers who say that Jesus wants us to have our best life now. But we also see some good news as we go through the passage tonight. Despite the difficult message, any difficulties, suffering, and persecution that believers endure in this life will be worth it. So with that said, let's read Mark chapter 8 verses 34 through 38.

Speaking about Jesus, Mark chapter 8 verses 34 through 38 say, 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 gospels will save it, for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

[ 2 : 50 ] 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. Here's the main idea of the passage. Following Jesus means that believers must be willing to suffer and possibly give up everything, including their earthly lives, for Jesus' sake.

That main idea is blunt, but it's true. Once again, following Jesus means that believers must be willing to suffer and possibly give up everything, including their earthly lives, for Jesus' sake. J.C. Ryle said, The words of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage are particularly weighty and solemn. They were spoken to correct the mistaken view of his disciples as to the nature of his kingdom, but they contain truths of the deepest importance to Christians in every age of the church. The whole passage is one which should often form the subject of private meditation. Daniel Akin stated the main idea of this passage in a different way.

He said, Confident that God's will is perfect, even if it might not be safe, we embrace the call of Jesus to follow him and to die so that we and others might truly live.

[ 4 : 12 ] So are you convicted yet and convinced that this is a hard passage? Well, whether or not I've convinced you yet, we've barely scratched the surface, so let's go ahead and dig into the verses. And we'll split tonight's passage into just two sections, starting with verses 34 and 35.

And in Mark 8, verses 34 and 35, we see the surprising call. So the surprising call is your first set of blanks. Here is Mark chapter 8, verse 34 again.

It says, Jesus has been giving his disciples some private teaching.

However, we've seen throughout Mark's gospel that crowds follow Jesus wherever he goes. And this case shows us again that Jesus still is popular with the crowd at this point in his ministry.

So far, Jesus has been worth following. He regularly has healed people from diseases, and he's exercised actual demons. Jesus has created food for the people when they needed it.

[ 5 : 23 ] And Jesus regularly has taken on the pompous religious elite. From a human perspective, Jesus so far has put on quite a show. However, the point of Jesus' miracles never was to entertain.

The point of Jesus' miracles was to show that he is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. True believers never follow Jesus because of what he can do for us. True believers follow Jesus because he is worthy to be followed.

Jesus is about to start weeding out the people who are only following him for the entertainment value. And he also is starting to weed out those who are following him because they hope that he will rescue Israel from the Roman occupation.

Seeing that Peter and the other disciples, like the vast multitudes of people who were flocking to him, were still thinking of him as an entertainer or as a liberator, Jesus decided it was time to lay out for them what following him would entail.

We need to notice something about this verse. Jesus is talking to the crowd here along with his disciples. So what he tells us here is not just for the disciples, it's for everyone who wants to follow Jesus.

[ 6 : 33 ] Look again at what Jesus says in verse 34. He says, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Jesus plainly says that being a true follower of him will require three things.

And the first of those three things is denying self. We tend to think of denying self as being the same thing as self-denial. Self-denial might be eating just one of those cookies tonight instead of two, or coming to church on Sunday instead of going fishing.

But denying self is much more involved than self-denial. Here's a rather long quote from John MacArthur that explains self-denial well. He says, The verb deny is a strong term, meaning to have no association with or to disown completely.

The Lord's point was that those who wish to follow him must be willing to disown themselves and give up everything for his sake. They must abandon both their self-righteousness and their sin, submitting all their ambitions and agendas to him.

Inherent in the reality of self-denial is the affirmation that the sinner cannot gain entrance into heaven through his own self-righteous or religious efforts. For those in the crowd still trapped in the legalism of the Pharisees and scribes, the call to self-denial was a command to abandon their apostate system of externalism, works-righteousness, and hypocrisy.

[ 8 : 00 ] That was the very message that Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount when he insisted that salvation is given to those who are poor in spirit, meaning those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy before a holy God.

Grace is not extended to those who think they are well, but to those who know they are sick. It was not the self-assured Pharisee whom Jesus declared to be righteous, but the undeserving and self-confessed unworthy sinner who cried out for mercy.

Unable to keep the law perfectly, the people fell woefully short of God's standard of holy perfection. They deserve divine condemnation and eternal death. Only by rejecting their self-righteous efforts and by clinging to God's gracious gift of righteousness through faith in Christ could they be saved.

The sinner denies himself when he abandons self-reliance and self-confidence depending on God's power and mercy alone for salvation. Here's what Daniel Akin had to say about denying self.

He said, This is a call to give up the right to self-determination. Live as Christ directs. Treasure and value Jesus more than yourself, your comforts, your aspirations.

[ 9 : 14 ] Put to death the idol of I, which is the idol of self. Say no to you and say yes to Jesus. James Brooks explained it this way.

He said, To deny oneself is not to do without something or even many things. It's not asceticism, not self-rejection or self-hatred, nor is it even the disowning of particular sins.

It's to renounce the self as the dominant element in life. It is to replace the will of self with God in Christ as the object of affections. It is to place the divine will before self-will.

So are you starting to see why this passage is a hard passage, even though it's pretty easy to understand? It gets harder. Jesus next says that the believer must be prepared to take up his cross. As was the case with denying self, our human nature often attempts to soften this command too. We sometimes hear people talk about a difficult neighbor, a bad boss, or even a physical ailment being a cross that they must bear.

[10:23] Jesus has something much more difficult in mind here though. Jesus is saying that his true followers must be willing to die if necessary for his sake. Christians have come to revere the symbol of the cross.

We see people wear a cross on jewelry. We see crosses in many places throughout any Christian church. But when Jesus said these things, any talk of crucifixion was avoided in polite company. F.F. Bruce said, The cross was by all ordinary standards of his day, the most ignoble of all objects, a matter of unrelieved shame, not of boasting.

It is difficult after many centuries, during which the cross has become a sacred symbol, to realize the unspeakable horror and loathing which the very mention or thought of the cross provoked in that day.

The word *crux*, which was Latin for cross, was unmentionable in polite Roman society. Even when someone was being condemned to death by crucifixion, the sentence used an archaic formula which served as a sort of euphemism.

[11:30] They would say, Hang him on the unlucky tree. Jason Meyer said, We need to recover the scandal and the shock of the cross. Cicero, the Roman philosopher who died 50 years before the birth of Christ, wrote, To bind a Roman citizen is a crime.

To flog him is an abomination. To slay him is like killing a relative. To crucify him is, what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed.

Meanwhile, the Jews regarded the cross as a curse. Remember, Deuteronomy 21, verses 22 and 23, taught that those who are hung on a tree are cursed.

Being prepared to take up crosses is more than a one-time event. Luke's account of this same episode notes that Jesus told the crowd that believers must be prepared to take up their crosses daily.

Here is Luke chapter 9, verse 23. And Jesus said to all, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

[12:44] Once again, notice that also says, If anyone would come after me, take up his cross daily and follow me. And he said that to all people, not just his disciples.

Not every believer will die as a martyr, but every faithful follower of Jesus will love Christ so fully that even death is never too high a price for eternal joy.

All believers inevitably suffer to some degree because the world hates those who belong to Jesus. To take up the cross means being willing to pay any price for the glorious gift of life that Jesus gives.

True conversion causes a person to view the Lord Jesus and the hope of heaven as so precious that no personal sacrifice is too much. As the Apostle Paul explained to the believers in Corinth, For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. That comes from 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18.

[13:57] The third thing that Jesus says that people must do if they want to come after him is to follow him. In English, come after and follow sound like the same thing, but the word translated as follow in the Greek actually means to obey.

We sometimes use follow in that same sense today. Someone may say that he is following a specific diet or an exercise program.

Jesus taught throughout his ministry that obedience to his commands was proof of true discipleship. On the night before his death, Jesus spoke these words to the disciples.

This verse is John 14, verse 15. And in John 14, 15, Jesus said, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. The rest of the New Testament echoes that same reality.

Believers are never saved on the basis of their good works, but those who have been saved will inevitably demonstrate the fruit of a righteous life. Obedience becomes the litmus test for regeneration.

[15:05] Listen to what the Apostle John later wrote in 1 John 2, verses 3-6. Here are 1 John 2, verses 3-6. We can sum up Mark chapter 8, verse 34, like this.

Jesus' point was that those who desired to be his disciples, rather than seeking prosperity and ease, must be willing to endure persecution, rejection, hardship, and even martyrdom for his sake. To follow Christ was to embark on a path of adversity and maltreatment. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples the same thing using different words.

Listen to what Jesus said in John chapter 15, verses 18-21. Here are John 15, 18-21. Jesus said, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master.

[16:44] If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Those who live in obedience to Christ demonstrate that they are truly his disciples. Conversely, those who persist in unrepentant sin give evidence that they do not belong to him.

Those last two sentences touch on a very important point. Denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and obeying Jesus are evidence of salvation rather than requirements for salvation.

True followers of Christ will want to do those things regardless of the cost. True followers of Jesus, those whom he has granted eternal life through his sacrificial death for their sins, will want to do those things out of love for Jesus.

So if you're watching the clock, we're almost 20 minutes into the lesson, and we've just finished the first verse. If that worries you, don't be too concerned. I took a nap before I came this afternoon, so I've got plenty of energy to keep going.

[17:59] We'll just keep plugging right on through. I also have several weeks to rest before we get back to Mark again, so I'm ready to go as long as we need to. But let's move on to Mark 8, verse 35.

Check out Mark 8, verse 35 again. Jesus said, For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it.

So once again, for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it. In this verse, Jesus has challenged us to look at our lives, our souls, from an eternal perspective.

This verse also reminds us why we as true believers should be willing to suffer, if necessary, for Jesus' sake. Before we dive into the verse, we need to note something about the original language. The word translated as life in verse 35 is the same word that's translated as soul in verses 36 and 37. Some of the modern translations, including the ESV, the New American Standard, and the Legacy Standard, call that fact out in a footnote.

[19:14] But here's what verse 35 is telling us. Those unwilling to surrender their lives to Christ, choosing instead to cling to sin, selfish ambition, and acceptance by the world, will one day lose their souls to everlasting death.

But those willing to abandon everything for the sake of Christ will receive eternal life. Jesus, of course, was not suggesting that every form of self-sacrifice has spiritual or eternal value, but only that which is done for his sake and the Gospels.

Warren Wearsby said, Note the motivation for true discipleship. That motivation is for Jesus' sake and the Gospels. To lose yourself for these things is never an act of desperation.

It is an act of devotion. But we do not stop there. Personal devotion should lead to practical duty, the sharing of the Gospel with the lost world. For my sake could lead to selfish religious isolationism, so it must be balanced with and the Gospels, because we live for Jesus and we live for others when we share the Gospel with them.

The Apostle Paul understood the concept of being willing to abandon everything for the sake of Christ. Listen to what Paul wrote in Philippians chapter 3, verses 7 through 11.

[20:37] Paul said in Philippians 3, verses 7 through 11, 1. But whatever gain I had, I counted loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of

knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

These are hard sayings, but they cannot be evaded. The words of our Lord are plain and unmistakable. If we will not carry the cross, we shall never wear the crown.

Those sentences after the Philippians passage were a quote from J.C. Ryle, and Ryle went on to say, Let us often ask ourselves whether our Christianity cost us anything.

Has it the true stamp of heaven? Does it carry with it any cross? If not, we may well tremble and be afraid. We have everything to learn.

[ 22 : 00 ] A religion which costs nothing is worth nothing. It will do us no good in the life that now is. It will lead to no salvation in the life to come. R.C. Sproul summarized this section even more bluntly.

Sproul said, The Christian life is a throwaway life. Every moment that we live without rejection, affliction, and death is grace. But our destiny as the people of God is to be thrown into the garbage by the powers of this world and of this age, And there is no way to glamorize that.

So Jesus said, Count the cost. If you want to follow me, it will cost you your life. Then Sproul asked two questions. He said, Do you know anyone who does not know that you are a Christian?

Do your friends and your co-workers all know that you are a Christian? If not, take these words of Jesus to heart. If we would be followers of Jesus, we must embrace his suffering, his rejection, his death, and his cross, Because that is what it cost to stand with him.

Here's another quote from John Phillips. He said, People think it strange that Christians suffer the same horrors and hardships as other people do, and that they are so often bitterly persecuted, even to death.

[ 23 : 40 ] But it's really not so strange. This is a God-hating, Christ-rejecting world. It would be stranger by far if the Lord's people were not hated by the world. Daniel Akin ends his summary of Mark 8, verse 35, by reminding true believers of our certain hope.

Akin said, If you save or treasure your life above all else, you will lose it. The one who plays it safe and considers his existence more important than Jesus will lose both Jesus and eternal life.

In contrast, the one who gives his life for Jesus and the gospel will actually save it. Following Jesus involves risking it all, safety, security, and satisfaction in this world.

But he promises us that it leads to a reward. So do you see the hope in the middle of such a hard passage here?

Here are those last two sentences again. Following Jesus involves risking it all, safety, security, and satisfaction in this world. But he promises us that it leads to a reward that this world can never, ever offer.

[ 24 : 51 ] Now that we've looked at the surprising call, we're ready to move on to the next section. And in the last three verses of this passage, Jesus warns us about what will happen if we fail to heed that surprising call.

In Mark chapter 8, verses 36 through 38, Jesus tells us about the serious consequences. So the serious consequences is your next set of blanks.

We'll start with just verse 36. Jesus said, For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

What's the obvious answer to the question about what it profits a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul? Right, the obvious answer is nothing. To obtain all the riches, respect, and religious accolades that this life could offer and yet die apart from Christ is to be eternally destitute.

The world and all it contains is passing away, soon to be consumed with fire. But each person's soul will live forever. For those who joyfully embrace that reality, it's incredible to think that anyone would forfeit eternity in heaven for a few fleeting decades of self-indulgence in this life.

[ 26 : 05 ] But that is what most people do, such as the power of human sinfulness. J.C. Ryle said, We all have souls that will live forevermore.

Whether we know it or not, we all carry with us something that will live on when our bodies are rotting in the grave. We all have souls for which we will give an account to God. It is an awful

thought when we consider how little attention most people give to anything except this world. But it is true. In Luke chapter 12, Jesus told a parable that expands on the teaching of Mark chapter 8 verse 36. Listen to Luke 12 verses 16 through 21.

Luke 12, 16 through 21 say, And Jesus told them a parable saying, The land of a rich man produced plentifully. And he thought to himself, What shall I do?

For I have nowhere to store my crops. And he said, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

[ 27 : 13 ] And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?

So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Here's J.C. Ryle again.

He said, The whole world cannot make up for the loss of the soul.

The possession of all the treasures that the world contains would not compensate for eternal ruin.

They would not satisfy us and make us happy while we had them. They could only be enjoyed for a few years at best and must then be left forevermore.

Of all unprofitable and foolish bargains, the worst is that of giving up the soul's salvation for the sake of this present world. Let's look at Mark chapter 8 verse 37 now.

Jesus said in Mark chapter 8 verse 37, For what can a man give in return for his soul? At first glance, verse 37 seems like it's restating verse 36 in a slightly different way.

[ 28 : 27 ] But there's a difference. In verse 36, Jesus asked what it profited someone to gain the world but lose his soul. In verse 37, Jesus is asking what someone can do to redeem his soul after that soul has been lost.

Jesus asked two different questions, but the answer to both questions is the same. Gaining the whole world but losing your soul profits nothing. And after someone loses his soul, that person can do nothing to buy that soul back.

If the soul is lost, a man's case will be utterly hopeless. He cannot buy back the life that has been forfeited because of sin and selfishness. J.C. Ryle said, Anyone may lose his own soul.

He cannot save it. Christ alone can do that. But he can lose it, and in many different ways. He may murder it by loving sin and clinging to the world. He may poison it by choosing a religion of lies and believing human superstitions.

He may starve it by neglecting all means of grace and refusing to believe and receive into his heart the gospel. There are many ways that lead to the pit.

[ 29 : 39 ] Whatever way a man takes, he and he alone is accountable for it. Weak, corrupt, falling, impotent as human nature is, man has a mighty power of destroying, ruining, and losing his own soul.

Once we have spent our lives, we cannot buy them back. Losing your soul is the equivalent of wasting your life, missing the great opportunities that God gives you to make your life count.

You may gain the whole world and be a success in the eyes of men, and yet have nothing to show for your life when you stand before God. If that happens, though you did own the whole world, it would not be a sufficient price to give to God to buy another chance at life.

We have one more verse to cover in our passage tonight, and that is Mark chapter 8, verse 38. For believers, Mark chapter 8, verse 38 is good news.

For unbelievers, Mark chapter 8, verse 38 should be terrifying. Jesus said there, For whoever is ashamed of me and 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.

[ 30 : 58 ] Using Old Testament imagery that was readily familiar to his listeners, Jesus declared the terrifying end that awaits all who reject him. In Daniel chapter 7, verses 9 through 14, Daniel recounted a powerful vision of that future judgment.

Listen to Daniel chapter 7, verse 14. Speaking of the Son of Man, Daniel said, And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, in his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed. By using the title, the Son of Man, Jesus directly connected himself to Daniel's vision.

One day, in fulfillment of that prophecy, the Lord Jesus will return as king and judge, and he will return to earth in glory to establish his reign over the whole world. The rugged cross will be replaced

by a royal throne.

When that day of reckoning comes, the Lord will destroy his enemies, and they will be cast into eternal hell. For believers, the return of Christ is their blessed hope, a comforting promise that they eagerly wait to be fulfilled.

[ 32 : 18 ] In the meantime, they are not ashamed of Christ or his word. Having abandoned their sin and self-effort and wholly embraced the Lord Jesus in faith, they rest confident in the knowledge that they are forgiven and redeemed.

The wondrous reality is that their Savior is not ashamed of them either. As the book of Hebrews reveals, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. That comes from Hebrews 2, verse 11.

And Hebrews also tells us in Hebrews 11, 16, God is not ashamed to be called their God. For unbelievers, the certainty of final judgment should be a terrifying reality.

As the scriptures declare, it is appointed for men once to die, and after that comes judgment. That also is from Hebrews in Hebrews 9, 27. On that day, those who refuse to abandon their sin or who trusted in their self-righteous efforts will be irrevocably and eternally condemned to hell.

But those who obeyed the invitation of the gospel, embracing the Lord Jesus Christ in humble repentant faith, will not be put to shame. Having abandoned this world for the sake of Christ, they will live with him forever in the world to come.

[ 33 : 34 ] As the Lord himself promised, speaking of the glories of the new earth, the one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.

That comes from Revelation 21, verse 7. When God says that the one who conquers will be his son, that applies to all believers, both male and female.

Months ago, when we covered the book of Galatians, we looked at Galatians chapter 4, verses 4 and 5. Those verses say, In Bible times, women had little to no rights.

Sons received the inheritance. However, when God adopts someone into his family, God gives that person, whether male or female, the same rights that a son would have.

That was a revolutionary concept that reinforced the earlier teaching of Galatians chapter 3, verses 28 and 29. Here are Galatians chapter 3, verses 28 and 29.

[ 34 : 48 ] There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. That is all great news for believers, but maybe you are a believer and something about Mark chapter 8, verse 38 is bothering you.

Perhaps you see the words about Jesus being ashamed of people who are ashamed of him, and you can remember times when you've been ashamed of Jesus, or maybe when you failed to share the gospel or acknowledged your faith to someone.

In his commentary, Daniel Akin quoted John Piper's summary of Mark chapter 8, verse 38, and it's a good summary. Piper says, What's the opposite of being ashamed of somebody?

Being proud of them, admiring them, not being embarrassed to be seen with them, loving to be identified with them. So Jesus is saying, If you're embarrassed by me and the price I paid for you, and he's not referring to lapses of courage when you don't share your faith, but a settled state of your heart toward him.

[ 36 : 02 ] If you're not proud of me and you don't cherish me and what I did for you, if you want to put yourself with the goats that value their reputation in the goat herd more than they value me, then that is the way I will view you when I come.

I will be ashamed of you, and you will perish with the people who consider me an embarrassment. But what I want you to see as believers is to take comfort in the part where John Piper reminds us that Jesus is referring to a settled state of your heart toward him rather than occasional lapses of courage.

If you're worried that you have embarrassed or dishonored Christ, that is a good sign. Unbelievers never worry about such things. So remember the main idea.

Following Jesus means that believers must be willing to suffer and possibly give up everything, including their earthly lives, for Jesus' sake. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, The cross is laid on every Christian.

The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ.

[ 37 : 15 ] As we embark upon discipleship, we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death. We give over our lives to death. Thus it begins. The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ.

When Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die. But it is the same death every time. Death in Christ Jesus, the death of the old man at his call.

In fact, every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lust. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life.

The call to discipleship, the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, means both death and life. In the introduction, we heard a quote from J.C. Ryle that ended with the sentence, The whole passage is one which should often form the subject of private meditation.

Ryle went on to say, There are thousands of people who would face a lion or storm a beach, if duty called them, and fear nothing, and yet would be ashamed of being thought religious, and would not dare to avow that they desired to please Christ rather than people.

[ 38 : 36 ] The bondage in which people live to the opinion of the world is astonishing. Then he says, Let us all pray daily for faith and courage to acknowledge Christ before the world.

Of sin, worldliness, or unbelief, we may well be ashamed. We ought never to be ashamed of the Lord who died for us on the cross. In spite of laughter, mockery, and hard words, let us boldly avow that we serve Christ.

Let us often look forward to the day of second coming and remember what he says in this passage. Better a thousand times to acknowledge Christ now and to be despised by people than to be disowned by Christ before his Father on the day of judgment.

We also should pray that God will give us the attitude of C.T. Studd. You may know that C.T. Studd was a missionary to China, India, and Sudan. And he said, We will dare to trust our God and will do it with his joy unspeakable singing aloud in our hearts.

We will a thousand times sooner die trusting only in our God than live trusting in man. The only way to do that is to remain focused on Christ.

[ 39 : 52 ] John says in 1 John 2, verse 28, And now little children abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

Let's pray. Father, this is a difficult passage to study. It's easy to understand, but actually doing what this passage calls us to do is the difficult part.

Please enable us through your spirit to have courage to acknowledge you before men and to willingly share you with others. No matter what comes in this life, let us remember that what awaits believers in eternity is far better than anything we can imagine.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.