



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



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Part 20
Mark 8:34-9:1

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(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

We have just seen Jesus take his disciples on a remote trip to Caesarea Philippi.

There, Jesus has asked his disciples to answer the key question: Who am I?

Peter has given a partly right/partly wrong answer – “You are the Messiah!”

But immediately after, Peter rebukes Jesus because Peter misunderstands the KIND of Messiah Jesus is.

Jesus has told his disciples he will both die and be raised from the dead.

Now, Jesus will extend to the disciples, and to the crowd, an invitation to “take up your cross and follow me”.

Through SURRENDER, we learn, we are enabled to live life to its fullest.

Mark 8:34 (NIV)

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

“called the crowd to him”

This is likely a mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles.

The call is addressed to ALL people – “if ANYONE would come”

“deny himself”

That is, surrender his OWN way of thinking, and his own desires.

“and take up his cross”

For a first-century inhabitant of Rome, this would call to mind a condemned person carrying his cross to the place of execution – walking into death itself.

Rabbis would commonly speak of “taking up the yoke of Torah” – but never a cross.

“and follow me”

The words imply Jesus knew full well what KIND of death lay ahead for him.

Mark 8:35 (NIV)

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

“for me and for the gospel”

These are the key words in Jesus’ statement about saving and losing life.

Salvation is utterly bound up with the gospel and with Jesus.

One either embraces the gospel and lives by its demands, even if it costs one’s life,

OR, one avoids its apparent dangers, thinking one will save their life by living apart from it, and end up perishing.

Mark 8:36 (NIV)

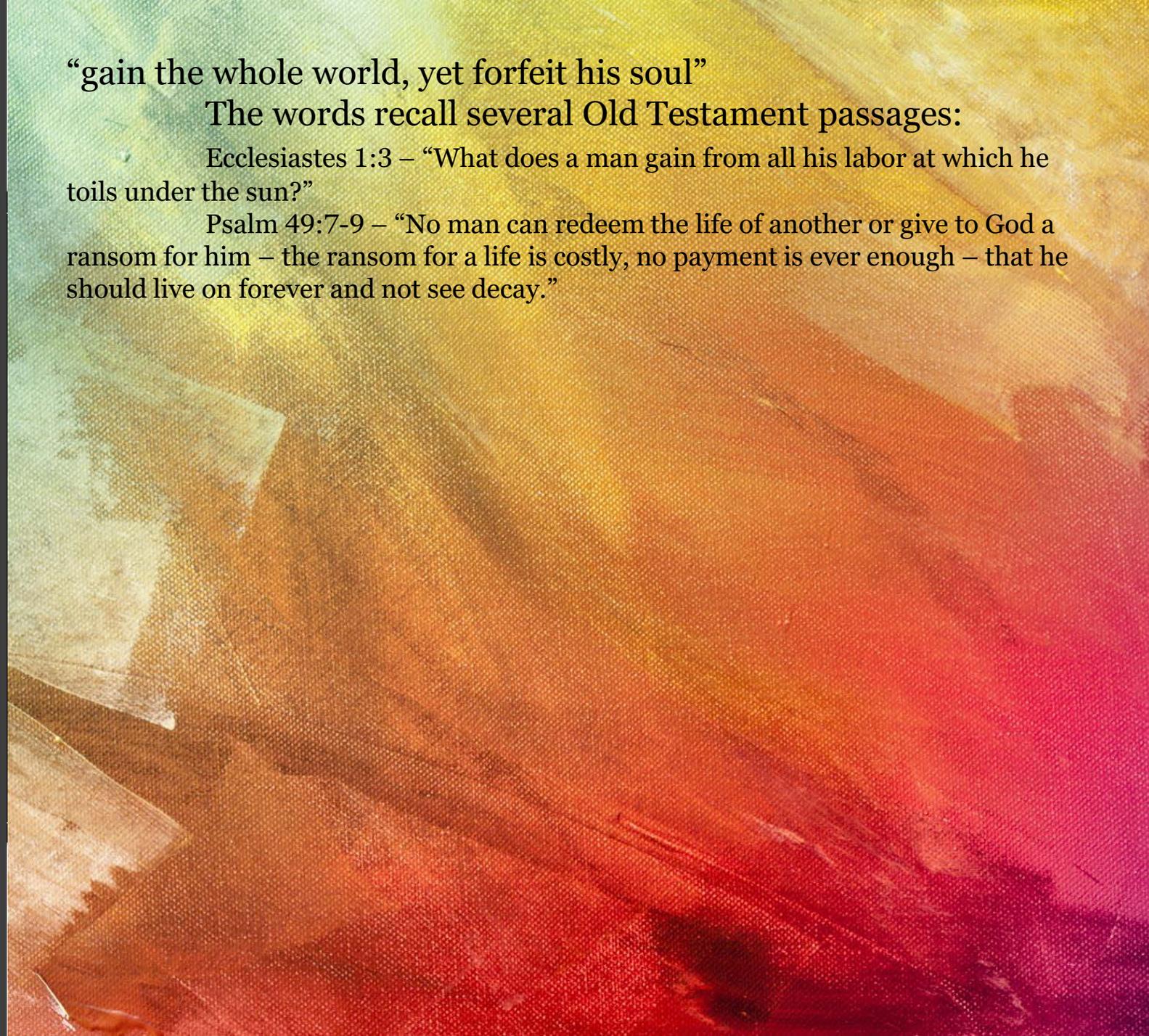
“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

“gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul”

The words recall several Old Testament passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:3 – “What does a man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?”

Psalm 49:7-9 – “No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him – the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough – that he should live on forever and not see decay.”



Mark 8:37 (NIV)

“Or what can a man give
in exchange for his
soul?”

“what can a man give”

This is a rhetorical question – no one would exchange life for any amount of wealth.

The call or demand in these verses can easily be taken completely negatively, as a call to death.

But, in fact, the words are highly life-affirming!

The logic appeals to the infinite value of every single human being.

Every single human being must be saved, because every single person is infinitely valuable!

No accumulation of worldly goods can outweigh the value of a single human soul.

For ANYONE to be lost would be an unspeakable loss.

Jesus calls every person to follow Him, to take up a cross, because Jesus wants every single person to be saved/rescued/restored/to thrive/to live!

The condition for entering into this is to embrace the cross – both Jesus’ and our own.

We are called into this kind of surrender because God is FOR us, not AGAINST us (Romans 8:31-33)

Mark 8:38 (NIV)

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

“If anyone is ashamed of me”

This implies it IS possible to be ashamed of Jesus!

But notice that it is, more fully, “ashamed of me AND MY WORDS”.

Jesus cannot be detached from his words!

Who he IS is directly related to all he has SAID.

“Son of Man will be ashamed of him”

See Mark 4:24 – this is an example of this in action:

Mark 4:24 – “Consider carefully what you hear,’ he continued. ‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more.’”

The motif is justice in equal measure.

It is simple – if you are ashamed of him/his words, he will be ashamed of you.

And, “ashamed of him/his words” means the TOTALITY of who Jesus is.

Many people pick and choose what they like about Jesus.

And advocate of love, mercy, justice, and compassion, for example.

While ignoring or downplaying harsher words.

Like we have just heard – “take up your cross”

Jesus makes this statement about being ashamed of him and his words NOW, right after the demand to take up your cross, exactly BECAUSE these are some of his most difficult words!

Mark 8:38 (NIV)

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

“Son of Man will be ashamed of him” (continued)

For Jesus, “love” is far more demanding than just getting along, or “tolerating” others.

He calls us to bless, pray for, and even love our enemies.

He calls us to willingly suffer on behalf of others. And, he warns more about hell, judgment, and lostness than any other speaker in the New Testament!

JUST in the Sermon on the Mount, from Matthew’s Gospel, in:

Matthew 5:19-20

Matthew 5:22

Matthew 5:30

Matthew 6:15

Matthew 6:24

Matthew 7:13-14

Matthew 7:21-23

Matthew 7:27

Mark 8:38 (NIV)

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

“when he comes in his Father’s glory”

What “coming” exactly is this referring to?

Most of us read this from the perspective of “coming to us” – from the human perspective – that is, the Second Coming.

But “Son of Man” sayings usually reference Daniel 7:13-14, and the “coming” of the Son of Man HERE is to the throne of God.

Daniel 7:13-14: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

In which case, the “coming” Jesus refers to could be Jesus’ enthronement at the right hand of God after his death, resurrection, and ascension.

Which would imply, from OUR perspective, that Jesus is ashamed NOW, in the Father’s presence, of those who are ashamed of him NOW – a present perspective, not a future judgment (although it is still in the future as Jesus speaks the words).

Mark 9:1 (NIV)

And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

“taste death before they seen the kingdom of God”

This is a promise of the imminence of the Kingdom of God.

The powerful deeds of Jesus’ ministry **HAVE BEEN** evidence of the reality of the Kingdom.

PERHAPS this reflects an early church expectation that what Jesus promises **WILL** happen before Jesus’ generation dies off completely.

But this saying is very closely linked to what is about to happen, that we will look at over the next several sessions: the Transfiguration.

See Mark 9:2 (the next verse):

Mark 9:2 – “After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them.”

Mark 9:1 (NIV)

And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

“taste death before they seen the kingdom of God” (continued)

For Mark, the Transfiguration IS the most dramatic proof that the Kingdom of God HAS come, with power, in the preaching and ministry of Jesus!

Remember Mark 1:15, from the beginning:

Mark 1:15 – “The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.’”

And in Daniel, the coming of the Son of Man is connected to the saints of God taking possession of the Kingdom:

Daniel 7:22 – “until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.”



Bibliography

The following materials have been used as sources for this Bible study:

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