

Set Your Mind on Things Divine

Mark 8: 31 – 38

Peter takes Jesus aside and begins to rebuke him. Mark tells us he said that Christ was wrong that he would not be taken and killed! “This will never happen to you!”

Jesus rebukes Peter in front of all the disciples.

How do you deny yourself? Going on a diet, tell people hey I’m not who you think I am; It wasn’t me! We sometimes are pretty good at denying ourselves. But that sort of denial isn’t what Christ had in mind when he said this. What does this scripture say to us today? Those of us who wish to follow Jesus are to take up our cross and follow him. If we seek to save our own life we will lose it, but if we lose our life for Christ’s sake and for the Gospel’s we will save it.

How do you set your mind on things divine? Prayer, meditation, fasting, constant control of thought; what would Jesus do?

Take up your cross, is a way of saying allow yourself to die...physical death? Not at all rather a realignment of your priorities.

How many times have you rushed home from school because you couldn’t wait to get out your Bible and study the story of Gideon? When was the last time you planned to stay home just to spend some time in prayer? What physical pleasure has such a hold on you that you wouldn’t give it up in exchange for your immortal soul? Our lives today are filled with distraction more so than any of the disciples could ever imagine. In many ways people who are successful Christians today are overcoming many more temptations from every corner of their lives than did Paul. The entertainment industry is vast and it

overwhelms our senses with image after image of sex, violence, indecent situations, it paints people who anywhere else would be considered bullies into the good guys and somehow makes it seem like the bad guys are getting what they deserve. Even movies that are enjoyable for the most part have somewhere in it something that Christ would not want us watching, but what are we supposed to do bury our heads in the sand? I believe that Christ knew then and knows now what Satan is capable of and He is waiting and watching to see if we will choose to follow Him, even if the way to the cross isn’t as attractive as Hollywood, HBO, and Cinemax.

Why does Christ tell his people he’s going to die? That’s not the kind of news most people want to hear about their teacher, leader, and friend. Of course, if he doesn’t die, he can’t be resurrected and can’t pay the price for our sins.

What does he mean to be “ashamed of me and of my words”? How can we be ashamed to be Christians? We can be ashamed when it is more important that our friends think we are cool, or hip or able to stand up for ourselves, than it is to admit that we are Christians and sometimes it’s okay to let the other person have their way, or it’s okay not inject four letter words between every other word of our normal conversation, or sometimes it’s okay to not drink until we pass out, or it’s not okay to make fun of another person so we’ll feel better about ourselves, or be embarrassed if we are seen going to church.

How do we set our minds on things divine? It takes character. First of all we have to learn what sin is by studying the scriptures. That gives us knowledge. Knowledge coupled with right actions gives us wisdom. Wisdom, in other words making the right decisions builds character. Character is doing the right thing even when no one is looking. Character is

hearing your conscience and listening to it. Character is what keeps your mind on the divine. As Paul says in Romans 5: 1 – 5.

^{NIV} **Romans 5:1** Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.
³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.
⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Rom 5:1-5 NIV)