



Mark 8

Mark 8
Tape #8036
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to Mark's gospel chapter eight, as we continue our journey through the Bible and now in the New Testament, Mark chapter eight.

In those days the multitude being very great (8:1),

People are always interested in numbers. And it seems like we're always counting heads because we want to say we had so many attend and we had so many come forward and we baptized so many. There are churches even that have boards on the front in which they have number in church today, number last Sunday, number a year ago, and they post all of these statistics and we seem to be interested in statistics. But I love it in the Bible where it just says multitudes. "Multitude being very great,"

and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and he said unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me for three days, and have had nothing to eat (8:1,2):

There was such an intense interest in the teaching of Jesus, in the work of Jesus in their midst, that they have been in this deserted area and we read, He went across to a desert place, read that "deserted place" because around the sea of Galilee, there really isn't a desert place. It is beautiful, it is lush, it is very pretty. And so there are deserted areas even to the present time. And the area that Jesus went is quite deserted, except for a water park that they put in a few years ago, but that's not in keeping with the New Testament, you somehow don't associate the sea of Galilee with water slides and all, and about the area where He fed the five thousand and so forth, they do have a water park now but, at that time was quite deserted. And so they have been there, He said, with them for three days and had not eaten. They probably just slept there at night. And in the morning, Jesus with the morning light, would begin teaching again. He would begin working in their midst once more. And so intense was the interest that they were there for three days. Great multitude of people, we read there were four thousand men, beside the women and children. Mark doesn't tell us that, he just said four thousand, but Matthew adds "beside the women and children" (Matthew 15:38). And so Jesus said, "I have compassion." Why? "Because they've been with me for these three days and have had nothing to eat."

And if I send them away fasting to their own homes, they will faint in the way: because many of them have come from long distances (8:3).

Jesus' concern. They're going to go home now. But He's concerned for their welfare, He's concerned for their not fainting, knowing their weakness, He's moved with compassion to minister to them physical things. Now there is always that spiritual ministry of Jesus which is glorious and that have been going on for three days. But we are still in these bodies and we still are subject to the weaknesses and the frailties of the human body. And the Lord is aware of that, He is conscious of that. He knows we're made of dust and He is conscious of our human weaknesses. But to me it is comforting to know that as He is conscious of our human weaknesses, He has compassion on us because of our human weaknesses. He understands when you're tired. He understands when you're not up to a task. He understands when you're going through some real physical problems, physical afflictions. He understands, not only does He understand, He's compassionate. He has pity and compassion.

And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness (8:4)?

How in the world can we feed them? How can we satisfy them with bread in this deserted area? I guess they didn't remember much of their history, how that their fathers were for forty years in the wilderness and how God provided them bread from heaven. And we remember in Psalm 78 as the psalmist records these events in the wilderness, even after God had been providing the manna, the people finally said, We're tired of this manna, can God provide a table in the wilderness? Can He give us meat? And they lusted after meat.

And God showed that He could provide them meat in the wilderness. Here they were wondering, “How can we provide bread here in the wilderness?”

And he asked them, How many loaves do you have? And they said, Seven. And so he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and he gave thanks, and he broke them, and he gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fish: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat (8:5-8),

And again, this word “filled,” gluttoned. They ate,

and were stuffed: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets (8:8).

Seven loaves, they end up with seven baskets of broken fragments left over.

And they that had eaten were about four thousand men [and Matthew adds, plus the women and children]: and he sent them away. And immediately he entered into a ship with his disciples, and they came into the parts of Dalmanutha (8:9,10).

Dalmanutha is a section, it's sort of you might say, the county of Dalmanutha. And this is again back over on the other side on the west side of the sea of Galilee. He had been on the northeast side when He fed the five thousand and back almost in the same area where He fed the five thousand, He is now feeding the four thousand, which brings up an interesting point and that is that somehow this miracle just did not sink in with the disciples. When He fed the five thousand, somehow it didn't really impress them, somehow their eyes were blinded to the miraculous aspect of it.

We read in verse fifty-two of chapter six, after the feeding of the five thousand, it said, “For they considered not the miracle of the loaves for their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:52). Now he's talking about the disciples. They were, of course, worried when they were out there in the sea thinking that they were never going to make it, and Jesus came walking to them on the water. And He came up into the ship, the wind ceased, they were amazed, wondered beyond measure and with wonderment because they didn't consider, they somehow still didn't fully realize that Jesus was master over the universe, over elements. Able to multiply the bread, able to multiply the fish, able to walk on the water, able to still the storms. Somehow it just didn't sink in because their hearts were hardened.

I pray that God will ever keep our hearts open, sensitive to the working of the Spirit, that we will always be amazed and look in wonderment at the creation of God and at His power, and that we won't take things for granted but just constantly being reminded and refreshed by the grace of God and by the love of God and by the work of God in our midst.

God has been blessing here for so many years. And what's happening here on any given Sunday would be just such an amazement to people from all over the world who have been sitting in dead churches for so long and have not seen the work of God or the hand of God. And the fact that it has been going on for so long, sometimes I'm afraid we're prone to just sort of take it for granted rather than being just in awe and in amazement of what God is doing. Just constantly thrilled, constantly blessed because of the goodness and the blessings of God that we see.

So they entered the ship, they came over to Dalmanutha which is back on the west side and it's slightly south of Capernaum. There is this little village of Magdala on the sea of Galilee, it doesn't exist anymore. There is just a little church that is mistakenly called the Church of the Loaves and the Fish. Whoever built that church had not read the scripture carefully and realized that the miracle took place on the other side of the lake. It was after the miracle they came across the lake to Dalmanutha, but in the older days, it was more difficult for the pilgrims who went to Israel to get around to the other, they didn't have roads around to the other side of the lake and so they just built the church over on a more convenient spot so they could take the pilgrims and say, this is the Church of the Loaves and Fishes, see the mosaic here on the floor? This is where Jesus fed the four thousand. And the poor pilgrims didn't read their Bibles enough to know that it was over on the other side of the lake, either. But such is the case for tourists, they have a lot of such sights in Israel that they have established as this is the spot where, and it's interesting.

Magdala, of course, is the little village from which Mary Magdalene and Magdalene means “of Magdala.” And so, Mary Magdalene had come from this place. And so they came across to the area of Dalmanutha. It is Matthew that tells us specifically they had come to Magdala. Now they're in the, they have

been over in the more deserted part and actually on the opposite side of the lake was where you had the Decapolis, the ten cities that developed the reputation of Galilee of the Gentiles. Now they're coming back over to more of the Jewish side of the lake--Magdala, Capernaum,

And here the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, and tempting him (8:11).

I wonder what Jesus must have felt. The dead had been brought back to life, lame people were walking, blind people were seeing, the multitudes have been fed with just five loaves and two fish, and then seven loaves and a few fish, and yet they're saying show us a sign. And Jesus just told them,

As he sighed deeply in his spirit (8:12),

It was probably, Come on, give me a break, can't you see what's been happening? "He sighed deeply in His spirit,"

and he said, Why does this generation seek after a sign (8:12)?

Sort of common though, as the people today are still looking for signs. Somehow they're blind to what God is doing and what God has done. Matthew tells us that Jesus, at this point, said to them, "In the evening, if the sky is red, you say tomorrow we're going to have a fair day. But if in the morning the sky is red, then you say, It's going to be bad weather today, we're going to have a wind come up." He said, "You hypocrites, you know how to read the signs of the heavens;" They're looking for a sign from heaven. He said, "You know how to read the signs from heaven but you don't know the sign of the coming" (Matthew 16:2,3). So He said,

There's no sign going to be given to you (8:12).

Matthew tells us He said, "Except the sign of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days" (Matthew 12:39,40). In other words, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead will be the great and final sign that He indeed was the Messiah, that He was the Son of God, that He came and was sent by God to bear our sins. His resurrection from the dead was to be the proof of all that He had declared. This was to seal the statements that He had made, to give the final proof that He indeed was the Son of God. That's why Satan seeks to fight the truth of the resurrection from the dead, throwing doubts and questions concerning His resurrection.

And he left them (8:13),

He didn't spend much time there, headed back over to the other side of the sea again. So He's crossing quite a bit now, He was over there on the northeastern side feeding the multitudes, came over to the western side, challenged by the Pharisees and all, asking Him for a sign. So then,

He gets in the ship and heads back over (8:13)

to the area now of Bethsaida, which is slightly north of where He was. In fact, Bethsaida was on the northern shore of the sea of Galilee. At that point, the northern shore isn't that wide. The sea of Galilee runs from north to south and the long shores are along the north to south, but the northern shore itself and the southern shore are not that wide. And Bethsaida was right there on the northern shore. So He came over again to the other side.

Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and neither had they in the ship with them any more than just one loaf (8:14).

They had slipped up. They forgot to take bread with them, only one loaf there in the ship.

And so Jesus, in talking to them said, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod (8:15).

They didn't understand what He's, what does He mean by that? The leaven of, what's He talking about? One said, I know, we forgot to take bread. And He's rebuking us because we, and they thought they understood what He was saying. They didn't understand at all what He was saying. I think that this is oftentimes true, people think they understand the Bible. They understand what the Bible is saying but really they don't have the slightest idea of what the Bible says. You hear people talking authoritatively of the apple that Eve ate in the garden of Eden.

We had a debate here one time, we had couple of college professors from Cal-State Fullerton who were debating with Dr. Gish and Dr. Henry Morris, and this one professor from Fullerton, colorful man, who was

debating the evolutionary side, talked about how people just don't understand the Bible when they read it. And he said, For instance, most people believe that Eve ate an apple, he said, it wasn't an apple, it was a pomegranate. I don't know where he got pomegranate. But we didn't believe that she ate an apple either, but he was talking about ignorant people who were thinking it was an apple and then declaring it was a pomegranate when I don't know what Bible he was reading. That's unfortunately the way it is, so many times people speak so authoritatively concerning what the Bible says. And it's not what the Bible says at all. And so here they thought, we know what He means, we forgot to bring bread. And so as they were trying to figure this out among themselves,

And when Jesus knew it, he said unto them, Why do you reason, because you have no bread (8:17)?

Why is that your reason? You come up with the answer that you have, why do you reason that that is what it is?

Don't you perceive even yet, don't you understand? have you your hearts still hardened (8:17)?

Remember after the five thousand feeding, they didn't really grasp it, their hearts, are your hearts still hardened? Now you've seen twice my capacity to take little and make much. And so He reminds them. He said,

Having eyes, do you not see? having ears, do you not hear? Do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up? They said, Twelve (8:18,19).

Doesn't that say something to you? Don't you catch on how five loaves became twelve baskets.

And when the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take? They said, Seven. And he said, How is it that you don't understand (8:20,21)?

Later He said to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25). And I wonder how many times the Lord must get frustrated with us because of our misunderstanding, especially our misunderstanding of His grace. How that we so often are trying to earn or deserve His favor or earn His blessings rather than receiving His wonderful grace. Don't you understand, Paul said, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should so soon turn from the truth? Did you receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith, or by the works of the law" (Galatians 3:1,2)? Don't you know that it's just faith in God that honors God and that brings the responses from God? It isn't your worthiness, it isn't your working, it isn't God responding to you but the necessity of you responding to His grace and to His goodness.

He's dealing with blindness. The blindness of the Pharisees. Here He had been working so many miracles, doing so many things, and they say, Show us the sign. They're blind if they can't see the signs. The sign that He is the Messiah. When the disciples of John the Baptist came, sent by John who was in prison, saying, "Are you the one we are looking for? or shall we look for someone else" (Luke 7:20)? John was more or less saying, Let's get the show on the road. Because even John didn't understand that He had come to give His life as a ransom for all. Are you the one we are looking for, shall we look for someone else? "And Jesus just in that same hour healed many of the sick who had come to Him" (Luke 7:21), was doing miracles, was sharing God's love and God's truth with the people. "And He said, Go back and tell John what you had seen: the lame are walking, the blind are receiving their sight, and unto the poor the gospel is being preached" (Luke 7:22).

Those were signs of the Messiah. It says, "The lame will leap for joy, the blind will see and the mute will be praising God. And to the humble the gospel will be preached" (ref). And so here they are, the signs of the Messiah. And John recognized, one of the disciples of John came back and, We saw people who were blind and they were able to see, we saw people who were lame, able to walk, and He was teaching the people of God's wonderful love. And that was the sign, John recognized, Yes, those are the signs of the Messiah.

But the Pharisees are blind to these things. Show us the sign, give us a sign. And now even the disciples are blind. They're blind to what He is doing. He has fed the five thousand, beside the women and children, with the five loaves and two fish, they took up twelve baskets. Now what then did He mean, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees? In another place, He said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is

hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). Leaven was the rising agent in the dough. Leaven causes a rotting actually and as the dough rots, the little bubbles, oxygen form and it causes the dough to rise. But all you need is just a little starter, the sour dough starter, you just put a little bit in and it will permeate through the whole hand of dough. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9), Paul told the Corinthians and also the Galatians.

He told the Corinthians in the context of how they were tolerating an evil man in their fellowship. And he said, Don’t you realize that this toleration of evil, a little leaven will leaven the whole lump? In the feast of the passover, it was very important that the bread that they made had no leaven in it, it was definitely prescribed by the Lord that there shouldn’t be any leaven. And thus, during the feast of the passover, there is the search through the house to get rid of all of the leaven that they might observe the passover without any leavening. And thus leaven has become in the scriptures a type of sin. How that you tolerate or allow a little sin and how it begins to permeate your whole life. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

Hypocrisy, the leaven of the Pharisees. It was the outward religion. Everything was done for outward show. They were interested in impressing men of their spirituality and of their righteousness and it was all outward. But inward, they didn’t have it. Inward there was malice, there was strife, there was jealousy, there was all of these evil things within. As Jesus said, You’re like whitewashed sepulchers. On the outside you’ve been whitewashed and you’re painted and you look attractive but inside, you’re full of dead man’s bones. You clean the outside of the platter but within, there’s all kinds of filth. And so be careful of that kind of religion that is just outwardly manifested and displayed, but isn’t something that is going on in your heart.

It’s interesting how that religion seems to always seek to work from the outside in, where Christianity works from the inside out. God begins the work in your heart and it becomes manifested outwardly. But the religions are all outward prescriptions of “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.” And it becomes a thing where you put on and living under the law, they have put on this appearance of righteousness but it was hypocrisy. It was just an act, “hypocrites,” that’s the Greek word for “actor.” And they were just acting but it wasn’t a reality in their hearts. Be careful of that, Jesus said.

So they came to Bethsaida (8:22);

back to the north side, the northernmost side really of the sea of Galilee,

and they brought a blind man unto him, and they begged him to just touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town (8:22,23);

Interesting. Here He is in Bethsaida and they brought this blind man and Jesus takes him and leads him. Can you see the picture of Jesus leading this blind man? Again, the tenderness, the compassion, the willingness to just minister to one person when the crowds, the multitudes are seeking Him, and yet taking time for this one blind man. “And taking him by the hand, he led him out of the town,”

and when he had spit on his eyes (8:23),

interesting because a few chapters earlier, we find Him spitting on the tongue of a mute and loosing the tongue so he could speak. Now He is spitting in the eyes of this blind man. And we have one other case, in Jerusalem, where a blind man came to Jesus and He spit in the dirt and made a little bit of mud with the spittle and put the mud in the guy’s eye and then said, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, and when he washed he was able to see.

Again, interesting how that Jesus did not pattern the healings, He worked in different ways, not always the same so that we would not seek to limit Him to one particular method or one particular way. We are so anxious to create formulas. And we’re so anxious to get things in line so if you do this, this, and this, A plus B equals C, the Lord would not be confined to formulas. But that’s all that we need to create a new denomination. The denomination of “He spit in my eye” and the denomination of “He made mud in my eye,” because this is the way He did it to me and if He didn’t do it to you the way He did it to me, then He really didn’t work in your life. But He works in diverse ways. So “He took the blind man,” I see tenderness here, “led him out of town, when He spit in his eyes,”

He put his hands upon him, and he asked him, Can you see anything? And he looked up, and he said, I see men walking as trees (8:23,24).

In other words, he had blurred vision. He couldn’t see men distinctly. It looked like maybe a tree was

moving or something. And this is interesting to me, the fact that the healing was gradual. And again I think it is something important to realize that oftentimes the healing is gradual. It doesn't always come all at once. But many times the healing is gradual. And so,

He put his hands again upon his eyes, and he said, now look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to anyone in the town (8:25,26).

Don't go back into Bethsaida and tell, just go home. So then,

Jesus went with his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi (8:27):

From Bethsaida to Caesarea Philippi is a distance of probably fifty, fifty-five miles. So they are journeying now in the area that is called the Upper Galilee region, going up to Caesarea Philippi which is right at the base of Mount Herman. Caesarea Philippi is where you have two of the major sources of the Jordan river. Right at Caesarea Philippi is the great spring of Banias, and nearby in the city of Dan was the spring of Dan and thus, the two of the three major sources of the Jordan river, coming right out of the rock at the base of Mount Herman there at Banias, Caesarea Philippi. So He's all the way up now in the northern border of Israel. And He is coming into the towns of Caesarea Philippi.

and on the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am (8:27)?

What are people saying about me? Who do they think I am?

And they answered, John the Baptist (8:28):

That was Herod's evaluation. He said John is come back to life.

and some of them say, Elijah (8:28);

it was prophesied that Elijah would come before the Lord to prepare the hearts of the people and all.

Others said, One of the prophets (8:28).

That is, that's what Mohammed said that he is one of the prophets.

And he saith unto them, But whom do you say that I am? And Peter answered and said unto him, You are the Messiah. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them (8:29,31),

Now that you recognize that I am the Messiah, there's something that you need to know. He's going to deal with another area of blindness. Interesting, the blindness of the Pharisees, the blindness of the disciples, their hearts were hardened, they didn't recognize the miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fish, the blind man of Bethsaida—that was a physical blindness. Now He's dealing with spiritual blindness again. You're the Messiah, right, but you're blind to the purpose of the Messiah. You think that I am going to establish God's kingdom now. You think that you're going to have these great positions now in the kingdom, that we're going to overthrow Rome and we're going to establish now the kingdom of God but you're wrong, you're blind.

There were many prophecies of the Old Testament that had to be fulfilled. He had to be "despised and rejected by men, the man of sorrows acquainted with grief, He had to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:3,5). According to Daniel, "He had to be cut off" (Daniel 9:26). According to Isaiah, "Cut off from the land of the living" (Isaiah 53:8). According to the Psalms, He had to be placed on a cross. So He's now beginning to try and open their eyes to what would actually be taking place to the Messiah. And so He began to teach them,

that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests (8:31),

the stone which was rejected by the builders, He's got to be rejected by the builders, the chief priests, the elders,

and he must be killed (8:31),

"As a lamb led to the slaughter, so he openeth not his mouth. Taken from the land of the living: and who shall declare his generation" (Isaiah 53:7,8)? "He must be killed,"

and after three days rise again (8:31).

Somehow they were so shocked by this change of their opinion of the Messiah and the reigning of the Messiah that when He talks about, I'm going to be killed, their minds at that point just shut off and they don't hear the rest. They don't hear, After three days He's going to rise again. It's possible that you can say

things that are so shocking that while people are absorbing or letting it sink in, what has shocked and they don't hear the rest of what you say.

I decided one Easter Sunday many years ago to open my Easter Sunday message with a shocking statement, just to get people's attention and I said, Jesus Christ really did not rise from the dead. There is no resurrection. And then I said, How does that make you feel? Now there are many people who are saying that today. And, but if there is none, and then I went on to preach if Christ be not risen, then our hope is vain, all this kind of stuff. But there was a couple that met me at the door and were yelling at me after church. That's the most horrible thing we've ever heard! To tell people He didn't rise from the dead! Didn't you hear my whole sermon? That was just the opening statement and I said, How does that make you feel? But that's what some people are saying today. And then I went on to preach, But now is Christ risen from the dead, they didn't hear the rest of the sermon though. That just so shocked them, their minds turned off at that. And this is what happened to the disciples when Jesus said, And I'm going to be killed. And they didn't hear, But after three days I'm going to rise again. That just went right over them.

And so Peter took upon himself, and he began to rebuke him (8:32).

Imagine rebuking the Lord. Peter, he,

But when he had turned about [that is, Jesus turned about] and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and he said, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men (8:33).

In other words, you don't really have spiritual discernment. When Peter said, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father which is in heaven. God's given you a revelation. Now when Jesus said--and the Son of man, one of the titles we've told you for the Messiah--is going to be killed, then Peter begins to rebuke Him and say, Lord, be that far from thee. Perish the thought. And Jesus said, Get thee behind me, Satan. Now, he couldn't tell what was a revelation from the Spirit of God and what was a revelation from Satan. He lacked spiritual discernment. On one hand, you can have a revelation of God; another time, you're speaking Satan's jargon. That all changed when Peter was filled with the Spirit. And in the book of Acts, we find Peter with very keen spiritual discernment. Case of Ananias and Sapphira, the case of Simon the sorcerer from Samaria. But at this stage, lacking spiritual discernment, could not tell what was from God, what was from man.

And so when he had called the people unto him with his disciples, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me (8:34).

You have to deny the self life. The Bible teaches against the self life, the self-centered life, the selfish life. To follow Jesus you've got to give up the self life even as He gave up the self life. "Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus: Who, though he was in the form of God, and thought it not something to be grasped to be equal with God: Yet he emptied himself, and he came in the form and likeness of man: as a servant obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

So the self life, that's got to go if you're going to follow Jesus. It's not in keeping with Jesus who emptied Himself. And so we must empty ourselves from whatever we thought we were and be willing to take the position of a servant, to serve others, to help others, to minister to others. Not thinking of ourselves, but concerned and thinking of others. Deny himself, denying the self life and anything that would separate me from completely following Jesus.

Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). There are some things that can hinder my progress in my walk with the Lord. They're not wrong, they're not, you can't label them sin, but they just are hindrances. In Hebrews it speaks about "laying aside every weight, and sin which doth so easily beset us" (Hebrews 12:1). They become impediments, hindering our process of following Jesus. And so the denying of those things that would hinder me, stand in the way.

Secondly, take up his cross. When Jesus was facing the cross and was praying that if it were possible the cup would pass, He added, "Nevertheless not what my will, but thy will, be done" (Luke 22:42). When He says take up the cross, He's talking about a full surrender of your will, to the will of God. The laying down of your will that you might do the will of the Father, whatever that may be, whatever that may entail. Laying down your ambitions to do His will.

And then the third is to follow Me. And that is, He set the example. Having set the example for us, as Peter says, in suffering that we should follow in His steps. And so, following Him, the example of self-sacrifice, the example of compassion, the example of love, the example of caring for others, that's the way Jesus would have you to live. Giving, and more interested in giving than receiving. Loving, forgiving, tender, these are the characteristics that the Lord would have you to have. They are the characteristics that mark the life of Jesus.

And we need to remember this, it's so easy for us to get set in our own little rigid, stubborn kind of ways. This is the way I want to see it done, they don't do it the way I like that one done, and that is so un-Christlike. But yet we feel so super-spiritual because we can judge them the way they're, and it's so unlike Jesus. We get disgusted with people, what's wrong with them, and Jesus looks and has compassion on them. We get so uptight and I'll never forgive him but look what he did to me, and look what they did to Jesus but He prayed, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. We've got such a long way to go.

It's sort of discouraging in a way, I'm been so many years seeking to follow the Lord and yet when I look at my life and next to the life of Jesus, I realize that so far to go. God ever keep me conscious of my need to be more Christlike in every action and in every reaction to others, following Him.

And then He gives what I call the divine rationale and I can't argue with it. It is so logical and so reasonable that there is no argument.

For whosoever will save his life will lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same will save it (8:35).

You live for yourself, you try to hang on for yourself, you live a selfish life and you're going to lose the real meaning for life. But you just lose your life in Christ and you'll really discover life. This is life. This is it. That life that is just surrendered and committed to Jesus. There's just, you know this is it. This is the life!

And what should it profit a man, if he would gain the whole world, but in so doing lose his own soul (8:36)?

We were sharing with the kids up at camp that one of our problems is that we lose sight of the eternal. We are here on this earth but such a short time. In fact, I was thinking the other day, just how short has been the time that man has been on the earth. You're looking at 6,000 years of human history from the time of Adam till now. That's not very long. In fact, if you live to be a hundred, you'll actually live 1/60th of the time of human history. Interesting. But eternity, and even if I would live to be 1/60th of the whole human history, that's such a short, short time when you compare it with eternity. And what if in that short span of time I gained the wealth of the world? I was reading today in the paper about this one fellow in Mexico that in the last few years has amassed 6.6 billion dollars. He's three times richer than Ross Perot because of the way corruption works in Mexico. What will that profit him if in the gaining of that through corrupt practices, he loses his soul? And then secondly,

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul (8:37)?

What would you trade your soul for? How much does Satan have to offer you that you would sell your soul? Esau hated his birthright, or despised, didn't care about it, he sold it for a mess of pottage, some lentil soup. And there are people today who are selling their soul for a mess of pottage, junk, for the bubbles that Satan has. We read with shame and disgrace how that those early Europeans who came to America defrauded the Indians with the sparkling glass beads and traded them beads for gold. And we are embarrassed and ashamed at that part of the history, how men would take advantage of other men, trading precious gold for shiny beads. And yet I think of how many people today are trading their souls for the shiny bubbles that Satan offers. What a tragedy, what a tragedy. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And then Jesus declared,

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation (8:38);

Sounds like He's talking about today, adulterous and sinful generation. Whoever will be ashamed of me and my words,

of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels (8:38).

Heavy. There's a lot of pressure against Christianity today. More and more, the popular game of the liberals is Christian bashing. It's very politically incorrect to bash the homosexual and the homosexual lifestyle. You can get in real trouble for that. But they're taking real sport now in bashing Christians. Sort of remind you of the scripture of, "Woe unto them who call evil good and who call good evil. And woe unto a nation who is ruled by people who call evil good and who call good evil." We're living in days when it's going to cost us something to stand up for Jesus Christ and the word of Jesus Christ. To stand up for righteousness, to stand up for truth, to stand up for purity and morality. What does it take to get you in jail today? You thought about that? Taking a knife and removing an important part of your husband's anatomy? Will that get you in jail? No. Killing someone? Not if you have sharp enough attorneys. Going into a church screaming, yelling obscenities, breaking up a service? Nope. What does it take to get you in jail? Praying in front of an abortion clinic, that'll get you in jail. What crazy days we're living in. The pressures.

Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me and my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, then I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with my holy angels." Chances are you're going have to stand up for Christ. Chances are persecution is going to increase against the church. Chances are the ridicule is going to increase. Do you have enough of God's grace and Spirit within you to stand up against it when the real testing comes? It's so easy for us to be here tonight, we're in a specialized group and we have similar interests and concerns in the Lord and the things of the Word, but when the real pressure comes, will you be able to stand? Do you have enough of Christ, deep enough convictions to follow Him to the cross? May God help us.

Father, we thank You tonight again for Your Word, for the strength and the help that it gives to us. Lord, our hearts are deeply concerned with the things that are happening in the world around us, with the direction that we see things going. O Lord, come quickly we pray. Jesus, we long to see You and more to see Your kingdom come and Your will be done here on this earth, even as it is being done in heaven. Lord, once again, we cry by reason of the taskmasters, because of the heavy bondage that is being placed upon those who are seeking to live for you. Come Lord, free us. In Jesus' name, Amen.