

CHAPTER 8

In this chapter, we have,

- I.** Christ's miraculous feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes (v. 1-9).
- II.** His refusing to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven (v. 10-13).
- III.** His cautioning his disciples to take heed of the leaven of Pharisaiism and Herodianism (v. 14-21).
- IV.** His giving of sight to a blind man at Bethsaida (v. 22-26).
- V.** Peter's confession of him (v. 27-30).
- VI.** The notice he gave his disciples of his own approaching sufferings (v. 31-33), and the warning he gave them to prepare for sufferings likewise (v. 34-38).

~~4081~~ MARK 8:1-9

CHRIST FEEDS THE FOUR THOUSAND

We had the story of a miracle very like this before, in this gospel (~~4065~~ Mark 6:35), and of this same miracle (~~4052~~ Matthew 15:32), and here is little or no addition or alternation as to the circumstances. Yet observe,

- 1.** That our Lord Jesus was greatly followed; *The multitude was very great* (v. 1); notwithstanding the wicked arts of the scribes and Pharisees to blemish him, and to blast his interest, the common people, who had more honesty, and therefore more true wisdom, than their leaders, kept up their high thoughts of him. We may suppose that this multitude were generally of the meaner sort of people, with such Christ conversed, and was familiar; for thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and thus encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace.
- 2.** Those that followed him, underwent a great deal of difficulty in following him; *They were with him three days, and had nothing to eat*, that was hard service. Never let the Pharisee say, that *Christ's disciples*

fast not. There were those, probably, that brought some food with them from home; but by this time it was all spent, and they had a great way home; and yet they *continued* with Christ, and did not speak of leaving him till he spoke of dismissing them. Note, True zeal makes nothing of hardships in the way of duty. They that have a full feast for their souls may be content with slender provision for their bodies. It was an old saying among the Puritans, *Grown bread and the gospel are good fare.*

3. As Christ has a *compassion* for all that are in wants and straits, so he has a special *concern* for those that are reduced to straits by their zeal and diligence in attending on him. Christ said, *I have compassion on the multitude.* Whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, the humble Jesus looked upon with pity and tenderness; and thus must we *honour all men.* But that which he chiefly considers, is, *They have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.* Whatever losses we sustain, or hardships we go through, for Christ's sake, and in love to him, he will take care that they shall be made up to us one way or other. *They that seek the Lord, shall not long want any good thing,* ^(Psa 34:10) Psalm 34:10. Observe with what sympathy Christ saith (v. 3), *If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way,* for hunger. Christ knows and considers our frame; and he is *for the body,* if we glorify him, *verily we shall be fed.* He considered that *many of them came from afar,* and had a great way home. When we see *multitudes* attending upon the word preached, it is comfortable to think that Christ knows whence they all come, though we do not. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest,* ^(Rev 2:13) Revelation 2:13. Christ would by no means have them go home fasting, for it is not his manner to send those *empty* way from him, that in a right manner attend on him.

4. The doubts of Christians are sometimes made to work for the magnifying of the power of Christ. The disciples could not imagine whence so many men should be *satisfied with bread* here in the wilderness, v. 4. That therefore must needs be *wonderful,* and appear so much the more so, which the disciples looked upon as *impossible.*

5. Christ's time to act for the relief of his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity; when they were ready to *faint,* Christ provided for them. That he might not invite them to follow him for the *loaves,* he did not supply them but when they were utterly reduced, and then he *sent them away.*

6. The bounty of Christ is inexhaustible, and, to evidence that, Christ *repeated* this miracle, to show that he is still the same for the succour and supply of his people that attend upon him. His favours are renewed, as our wants and necessities are. In the former miracle, Christ used all the bread he had, which was *five loaves*, and fed all the guests he had, which were *five thousand*, and so he did now; though he might have said, “If five loaves would feed five thousand, four may feed four thousand;” he took all the seven loaves, and fed with them the four thousand; for he would teach us to take things as they are, and accommodate ourselves to them; to use what we have, and make the best of that which is. Here it was, as in the dispensing of manna, *He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.*

7. In our Father's house, in our Master's house, *there is bread enough, and to spare*; there is a fulness in Christ, which he communicates to all that passes through his hands; so that from it we receive, and *grace for grace*, ~~416~~ John 1:16. Those need not fear wanting, that have Christ to live upon.

8. It is good for those that follow Christ, *to keep together*; these followers of Christ continued in a body, *four thousand* of them together, and Christ fed them all. Christ's sheep must abide by the flock, and go forth by their footsteps, and verily they shall be fed.

~~418~~ MARK 8:10-21

THE LEAVEN OF HEROD AND THE PHARISEES

Still Christ is upon motion; now he visits the parts of Dalmanutha, that no corner of the land of Israel might say that they had not had his presence with them. He came thither *by ship* (v. 10); but, meeting with occasions of dispute there, and not with opportunities of doing good, he *entered into the ship again* (v. 13), and came back. In these verses, we are told,

I. How he refused to gratify the Pharisees, who challenged him to give them a *sign from heaven*. They *came forth* on purpose to *question with him*; not to propose questions to him, that they might learn of him, but to cross question with him, that they might ensnare him.

1. They demanded of him a *sign from heaven*, as if the signs he gave them on earth, which were more familiar to them, and were more capable of being examined and enquired into, were not sufficient. There was a sign *from heaven* at his baptism, in the descent of the dove, and the voice (~~4186~~ Matthew 3:16, 17); it was public enough; and if they had attended John's baptism as they ought to have done, they might themselves have seen it. Afterward, when he was nailed to the cross, they prescribed a new sign; *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him*; thus obstinate infidelity will still have something to say, though ever so unreasonable. They demanded this sign, *tempting him*; not in hopes that he would give it them, that they might be satisfied, but in hopes that he would not, that they might imagine themselves to have a pretence for their infidelity.

2. He denied them their demand; He *sighed deeply in his spirit*, v. 12. He *groaned* (so some), being grieved for the *hardness of their hearts*, and the little influence that his preaching and miracles had had upon them. The infidelity of those that have long enjoyed the means of conviction, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus; it troubles him, that sinners should thus stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door.

(1.) He expostulates with them upon this demand; “*Why doth this generation seek after a sign*; this generation, that is so unworthy to have the gospel brought to it, and to have any sign accompanying it; *this generation*, that so greedily swallows the traditions of the elders, without the confirmation of any sign at all; *this generation*, into which, by the calculating of the times prefixed in the Old Testament, they might easily perceive that the coming of the Messiah must fall; *this generation*, that has had such plenty of sensible and merciful signs given them in the cure of their sick? What an absurdity is it for them to desire a sign!”

(2.) He refuses to answer their demand; *Verily, I say unto you, there shall no sign, no such sign, be given to this generation*. When God spoke to particular persons in a particular case, out of the road of his common dispensation, they were encouraged to ask a sign, as Gideon and Ahaz; but when he speaks in general to all, as in the law and the gospel, sending each with their own evidence, it is presumption to prescribe other signs than what he has given. *Shall any teach God knowledge?* He denied them, and then *left them*, as men not fit to be talked with; if they will not be convinced, they shall not; leave them to their strong delusions.

II. How he warned his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Observe here,

1. What the caution was (v. 15); “*Take heed, beware, lest ye partake of the leaven of the Pharisees, lest ye embrace the tradition of the elders, which they are so wedded to, lest ye be proud, and hypocritical, and ceremonious, like them.*” Matthew adds, *and of the Sadducees*; Mark adds, *and of Herod*: whence some gather, that Herod, and his courtiers were generally Sadducees, that is, deists, men of no religion. Others give this sense, The Pharisees demanded a *sign from heaven*; and Herod was long *desirous* to see some miracle wrought by Christ (²⁷⁸Luke 23:8); such as he should prescribe, so that the leaven of both was the same; they were unsatisfied with the signs they had, and would have others of their own devising; “*Take heed of this leaven*” (saith Christ), “*be convinced by the miracles ye have seen, and covet not to see more.*”

2. How they misunderstood this caution. It seems, at their putting to sea this time, they had *forgotten to take bread*, and *had not in their ship more than one loaf*, v. 14. When therefore Christ bid them *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, they understood it as an intimation to them, not to apply themselves to any of the Pharisees for relief, when they came to the other side, for they had lately been offended at them for eating with *unwashed hands*. They *reasoned among themselves*, what should be the meaning of this caution, and concluded, “*It is because we have no bread*; he saith this, to reproach us for being so careless as to go to sea, and go among strangers, with but one loaf of bread; he doth, in effect, tell us, we must be brought to *short allowance*, and must eat our bread by weight.” They *reasoned it* — *dielogizonto*, they *disputed* about it; one said, “*It was owing to you;*” and the other said, “*It was owing to you, that we are so ill provided for this voyage.*” Thus distrust of God makes Christ's disciples quarrel among themselves.

3. The reproof Christ gave them for their uneasiness in this matter, as it argued a disbelief of his power to supply them, notwithstanding the abundant experience they had had of it. The reproof is given with some warmth, for he knew their hearts, and knew they needed to be thus soundly chidden; “*Perceive ye not yet, neither understand, that which you have had so many demonstrations of? Have ye your hearts yet hardened, so as that nothing will make any impression upon them, or bring them to compliance with your Master's designs? Having eyes, see ye not that*

which is plain before your eyes? *Having ears, hear ye not* that which you have been so often told? How strangely stupid and senseless are ye! *Do ye not remember* that which was done but the other day, *when I broke the five loaves among the five thousand*, and soon after, *the seven loaves among the four thousand*? Do ye not remember *how many baskets full ye took up of the fragments*?" Yes, they did remember, and could tell that they took up *twelve* baskets full one time, and *seven* another; "Why then," said he, "*how is it that ye do not understand*? As if he that multiplied *five* loaves, and *seven*, could not multiply one." They seemed to suspect that the one was not matter enough to work upon, if he should have a mind to entertain his hearers a third time: and if that was their thought, it was indeed a very senseless one, as if it were not all alike to the Lord, to save by many or few, and as easy to make one loaf to feed five thousand as five. It was therefore proper to remind them, not only of the sufficiency, but of the overplus, of the former meals; and justly were they chidden for not understanding what Christ therein designed, and what they from thence might have learned. Note,

- (1.) The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in the way of duty, greatly aggravate our distrust of him, which is *therefore* very provoking to the Lord Jesus.
- (2.) Our *not understanding* of the true intent and meaning of God's favours to us, is equivalent to our not remembering of them.
- (3.) We are *therefore* overwhelmed with present cares and distrusts, because we do not *understand*, and remember, what we have known and seen of the power and goodness of our Lord Jesus. It would be a great support to us, to *consider the days of old*, and we are wanting both to God and ourselves if we do not.
- (4.) When we thus *forgot the works of God*, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely for it, as Christ doth his disciples here; "Am I thus without understanding? How is it that my heart is thus hardened?"

◀82▶ MARK 8:22-26

A BLIND MAN RESTORED TO SIGHT

This cure is related only by this evangelist, and there is something singular in the circumstances.

I. Here is a *blind man* brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would *touch him*, v. 22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him — they doubted not but that one touch of Christ's hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to *touch them*.

II. Here is Christ *leading* this blind man, v. 23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which bespeaks his wonderful condescension) he himself *took him by the hand, and led him*, to teach us to be as Job was, *eyes to the blind*, ▶835 Job 29:15. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him *out of the town*. Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, into an inner chamber, and have cured him there; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida with the *mighty works* that had *in vain* been done *in her* (▶812 Matthew 11:21), and was telling her, in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man *out of the town*, that he might have a larger prospect in the *open fields*, to try his sight with, than he could have in the *close streets*.

III. Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world to *preach the recovering of sight to the blind* (▶818 Luke 4:18), and to *give* what he *preached*. In this cure we may observe,

1. That Christ used a *sign*; he *spat on his eyes* (spat *into* them, so some), and *put his hand upon him*. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his *unbelief*. And this spittle signified the *eye-salve* wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, ▶818 Revelation 3:18.

2. That the cure was wrought *gradually*, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He *asked him if he saw aught*, v. 23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him. And he *looked up*; so far he *recovered his sight*, that he could open his eyes, and he said, *I see men as trees walking*; he could not distinguish men from trees, otherwise than he could discern them to move. He had some glimmerings of sight, and betwixt him and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but *could not discern the form thereof*, ^{<R06>}Job 4:16. But,

3. It was soon completed; Christ never doeth *his work* by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, *It is finished*. He *put his hands again upon his eyes*, to disperse the remaining darkness, and then bade him look up again, and he *saw every man clearly*, v. 25. Now Christ took this way,

(1.) Because he would not *tie himself to a method*, but would show with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by *rote*, as I may say, and in a *road*, but *varied* as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an *implicit faith*.

(2.) Because it should be to the patient *according to his faith*; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebuke upon those who came to him, doubting.

(3.) Thus Christ would show how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are *spiritually blind*; at first, their knowledge is confused, they see *men as trees walking*; but, like the light of the morning, it *shines more and more to the perfect day*, and then they *see all things clearly*, ^{<Q08>}Proverbs 4:18. Let us enquire then, if we *see aught* of those things which *faith* is the *substance* and *evidence* of; and if through grace we see *any thing* of them, we may hope that we shall see yet *more and more*, for Jesus Christ will *perfect* for ever those that are *sanctified*.

IV. The directions Christ gave the man he had cured, not to *tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida*, nor so much as to *go into the town*, where probably there were some expecting him to come back, who had seen Christ lead him out of the town, but, having been eyewitnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him: let not those be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, who would not show so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of the town, to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell

it to *any in the town*. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethsaida, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are *hid from her eyes*. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

Ⓞ MARK 8:27-38

PETER REBUKED

We have read a great deal of the doctrine Christ preached, and the miracles he wrought, which were many, and strange, and well-attested, of various kinds, and wrought in several places, to the astonishment of the multitudes that were eye-witnesses of them. It is now time for us to pause a little, and to consider what these things mean; the wondrous works which Christ then forbade the publishing of, being recorded in these sacred writings, are thereby published to all the world, to us, to all ages; now what shall we think of them? Is the record of those things designed only for an amusement, or to furnish us with matter for discourse? No, certainly *these things are written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God* (Ⓞ John 20:31); and this discourse which Christ had with his disciples, will assist us in making the necessary reflections upon the miracles of Christ, and a right use of them. Three things we are here taught to infer from the miracles Christ wrought.

I. They *prove* that he is *the true Messiah*, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world: this the works he did witnessed concerning him; and this his disciples, who were the eye-witnesses of those works, here profess their belief of; which cannot but be a satisfaction to us in making the same inference from them.

1. Christ enquired of them what the sentiments of the people were concerning him; *Who did men say that I am?* v. 27. Note, Though it is a small thing for us to be judged of men, yet it may sometimes do us good to know what people say of us, not that we may seek our own glory, but that we may hear our faults. Christ asked them, not that he might be informed, but that they might observe it themselves, and inform one another.

2. The account they gave him, was such as plainly intimated the *high opinion* the people had of him. Though they came short of the truth, yet they were convinced by his miracles that he was an extraordinary person, sent from the invisible world with a divine commission. It is probable that they would have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, if they had not been possessed by their teachers with a notion that the Messiah must be a temporal Prince, appearing in external pomp and power, which the figure Christ made, would not comport with; yet (whatever the Pharisees said, whose copyhold was touched by the strictness and spirituality of his doctrine) none of the people said that he was a Deceiver, but some said that *he was John Baptist*, others *Elias*, others *one of the prophets*, v. 28. All agreed that he was one *risen from the dead*.

3. The account they gave him of their own sentiments concerning him, intimated their abundant satisfaction in him, and in their having left all to follow him, which now, after some time of trial, they see no reason to repent; *But whom say ye that I am?* To this they have an answer ready, *Thou art the Christ*, the Messiah often promised, and long expected, v. 29. To be a Christian indeed, is, sincerely to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to act accordingly; and that he is so, plainly appears by his wondrous works. This they knew, and must shortly publish and maintain; but for the present they must keep it secret (v. 30), till the proof of it was completed, and they were completely qualified to maintain it, by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost; and then *let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ*, ~~406~~ Acts 2:36.

II. These miracles of Christ *take off the offence of the cross*, and assure us that Christ was, in it, not conquered, but a Conqueror. Now that the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they may bear to hear of his sufferings, which Christ now *begins* to give them notice of, v. 31.

1. Christ *taught* his disciples that he must *suffer many things*, Though they had got over the vulgar error of the Messiah's being a temporal Prince, so far as to believe their Master to be the Messiah, notwithstanding his present meanness, yet still they retained it, so far as to expect that he would *shortly* appear in outward pomp and grandeur, and *restore the kingdom to Israel*; and therefore, to rectify that mistake, Christ here gives them a prospect of the contrary, that he must be *rejected of the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes*, who, they expected, should be brought to

own and prefer him; that, instead of being crowned, *he must be killed*, he must be crucified, and *after three days he must rise again* to a heavenly life, and to be *no more in this world*. This he spoke *openly* (v. 32), *parresia*. He said it freely and plainly, and did not wrap it up in ambiguous expressions. The disciples might easily understand it, if they had not been very much under the power of prejudice: or, it intimates that he spoke it cheerfully and without any terror, and would have them to hear it so: he spoke that saying *boldly*, as one that not only knew he *must* suffer and die, but was resolved he *would*, and made it his own act and deed.

2. Peter opposed it; *He took him, and began to rebuke him*. Here Peter showed more love than discretion, a zeal for Christ and his safety, but not according to knowledge. He *took him* — *proslabomenos*. He took hold of him, as it were to stop and hinder him, took him in his arms, and embraced him (so some understand it); he fell on his neck, as impatient to hear that his dear Master should suffer such hard things; or he took him aside privately, and *began to rebuke* him. This was not the language of the least authority, but of the greatest affection, of that *jealousy* for the welfare of those we love, which is *strong as death*. Our Lord Jesus allowed his disciples to be free with him, but Peter here took too great a liberty.

3. Christ checked him for his opposition (v. 33); He *turned about*, as one offended, and *looked on his disciples*, to see if the rest of them were of the same mind, and concurred with Peter in this, that, if they did, they might take the reproof to themselves, which he was now about to give to Peter; and he said, *Get thee behind me, Satan*. Peter little thought to have had such a sharp rebuke for such a kind dissuasive, but perhaps expected as much commendation now for his love as he had lately for his faith. Note, Christ sees that amiss in what we say and do, which we ourselves are not aware of, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we ourselves do not.

(1.) Peter spoke as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the purposes and counsels of God. When he saw such proofs as he every day saw of the *power* of Christ, he might conclude that he could not be *compelled to suffer*; the most potent enemies could not overpower him whom diseases and deaths, whom winds and waves and devils themselves, were forced to obey and yield to: and when he saw so much of the *wisdom* of Christ every day, he might conclude that he would not *choose to suffer* but for some very great and glorious purposes; and

therefore he ought not thus to have contradicted him, but to have acquiesced. He looked upon his death only as a *martyrdom*, like that of the prophets, which he thought might be prevented, if either he would take a little care not to provoke the chief priests, or to keep out of the way; but he knew not that the thing was necessary for the glory of God, the destruction of Satan, and the salvation of man, that the Captain of our salvation must be *made perfect through sufferings*, and so must *bring many sons to glory*. Note, The wisdom of man is perfect folly, when it pretends to give measures to the divine counsels. The cross of Christ, the great instance of God's power and wisdom, was to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness.

(2.) Peter spoke as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the nature of Christ's kingdom; he took it to be *temporal* and *human*, whereas it is *spiritual* and *divine*. *Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men; ou phroneis* — *thou mindest not*; so the word is rendered, ^{<48B>}Romans 8:5. Peter seemed to mind more the things that relate to the lower world, and the life that now is, than those which relate to the upper world, and the life to come. Minding the *things of men* more than the *things of God*, our own credit, ease, and safety, more than the *things of God*, and his glory and kingdom, is a very great sin, and the root of much sin, and very common among Christ's disciples; and it will appear in suffering times, those times of temptation, when those in whom the *things of men* have the ascendant, are in danger of falling off. *Non sapis* — *Thou art not wise* (so it may be read) *in the things of God*, but in the *things of men*. It is important to consider what *generation* we appear *wise in*, ^{<48B>}Luke 16:8. It seems policy to shun trouble, but if with that we shun duty, it is fleshly wisdom (^{<48C>}2 Corinthians 1:12), and it will be folly in the end.

III. These miracles of Christ should engage us all to *follow him*, whatever it cost us, not only as they were *confirmations* of his *mission*, but as they were *explications* of his *design*, and the tendency of that grace which he came to bring; plainly intimating that by his Spirit he would do that for our blind, deaf, lame, leprous, diseased, possessed *souls*, which he did for the *bodies* of those many who in those distresses applied themselves to him. Frequent notice had been taken of the great flocking that there was to him for help in various cases: now this is written, that we may believe that he is the great Physician of souls, and may become his patients, and submit to his *regimen*; and here he tells us upon what terms we may be admitted;

and he *called all the people to him*, to hear this, who modestly stood at some distance when he was in private conversation with his disciples. This is that which all are concerned to know, and consider, if they expect Christ should heal *their souls*.


1. They must not be *indulgent* of the *ease of the body*; for (v. 34), “*Whosoever will come after me* for spiritual cures, as these people do for bodily cures, *let him deny himself*, and live a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; let him not pretend to be his own physician, but renounce all confidence in himself and his own righteousness and strength, and let him *take up his cross*, conforming himself to the pattern of a crucified Jesus, and accommodating himself to the will of God in all the afflictions he lies under; and thus let him continue to *follow me*;” as many of those did, whom Christ healed. Those that will be Christ's patients must attend on him, converse with him, receive instruction and reproof from him, as those did that *followed* him, and must resolve they will never forsake him.

2. They must not be *solicitous*, no, not for *the life of the body*, when they cannot keep it without quitting Christ, v. 35. Are we invited by the words and works of Christ to follow him? Let us sit down, and count the cost, whether we can prefer our advantages by Christ before life itself, whether we can bear to think of losing our life *for Christ's sake and the gospel's*. When the devil is drawing away disciples and servants after him, he conceals the worst of it, tells them only of the pleasure, but nothing of the peril, of his service; *Ye shall not surely die*; but what there is of trouble and danger in the service of Christ, he tells us of it before, tells us we shall *suffer*, perhaps we shall *die*, in the cause; and represents the discouragements not *less*, but *greater*, than commonly they prove, that it may appear he *deals fairly* with us, and is not afraid that we should know the worst; because the *advantages* of his service abundantly suffice to *balance* the *discouragements*, if we will but impartially set the one over against the other. In short,

(1.) We must *not dread the loss of our lives*, provided it be *in the cause of Christ* (v. 35); *Whosoever will save his life*, by declining Christ, and refusing to come to him, or by disowning and denying him after he has in profession come to Christ, he shall *lose it*, shall lose the comfort of his natural life, the root and fountain of his spiritual life, and all his hopes of eternal life; such a bad bargain will he make for himself. But *whosoever*

shall lose his life, shall be truly willing to lose it, shall venture it, shall lay it down when he cannot keep it without denying Christ, he shall *save it*, he shall be an unspeakable gainer; for the loss of his life shall be made up to him in a better life. It is looked upon to be some kind of recompence to those who lose their lives in the service of their prince and country, to have their memories honoured and their families provided for; but what is that to the recompence which Christ makes in eternal life to all that die for him?

(2.) We must *dread the loss of our souls*, yea, though we should *gain the whole world* by it (v. 36, 37); *For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world*, and all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in it, by denying Christ, and *lose his own soul*? “True it is,” said Bishop Hooper, the night before he suffered martyrdom, “that *life is sweet*, and *death is bitter*, but *eternal death is more bitter*, and *eternal life is more sweet*.” As the happiness of heaven with Christ, is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world *in sin*, is not sufficient to countervail the ruin of the soul *by sin*.

What that is that men do, to *save their lives*, and *gain the world*, he tells us (v. 38), and of what fatal consequence it will be to them; *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed*. Something like this we had,  Matthew 10:33. But it is here expressed more fully. Note,

[1.] The disadvantage that the cause of Christ labours under this world, is, that it is to be owned and professed in an *adulterous and sinful generation*; such the generation of mankind is, gone a whoring from God, in the impure embraces of the world and the flesh, lying in wickedness; some ages, some places, are more especially adulterous and sinful, as that was in which Christ lived; in such a *generation* the cause of Christ is opposed and run down, and those that own it, are exposed to reproach and contempt, and every where ridiculed and *spoken against*.

[2.] There are many, who, though they cannot but own that the cause of Christ is a righteous cause, are *ashamed* of it, because of the reproach that attends the professing of it; they are *ashamed* of their relation to Christ, and *ashamed* of the credit they cannot but give to *his words*; they cannot bear to be frowned upon and despised, and therefore throw off their profession, and go down the stream of a prevailing apostasy.

[3.] There is a day coming, when the cause of Christ will appear as bright and illustrious as now it appears mean and contemptible; when the Son of man comes *in the glory of his Father with his holy angels*, as the true Shechinah, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the Lord of angels.

[4.] Those that are ashamed of Christ in this world where he is despised, he will be ashamed of in that world where he is eternally adored. *They* shall not share with him in his glory then, that were not willing to share with him in his disgrace now.