

BAPTIST BIBLE SEMINARY

**HOMILETIC IMPLEMENTATION OF MARK 8:27-9:1**

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EXEGESIS OF MARK  
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## RATIONALE

Mark 8:27-9:1 revolves around the issue of authority. Who is in charge of life? Does people govern themselves? Should they? Particularly, the beginning of this pericope parallel the previous pericope in the sense that the disciples go from blindness to sight, spiritual in their case.<sup>1</sup> This is a pivotal moment in Mark, for the disciples went from ignorance to recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. Between Ch. 1:1 and 8:29 there is no recognition of this fact in spite of a many miracles and revealing statements from Jesus regarding Himself which demanded a decision from the disciples concerning Jesus' identity.<sup>2</sup>

8:22	Circumstances	8:27
8:23-24	Partial Sight-Partial Understanding	8:28
8:25	Sight-Understanding	8:29
8:26	Injunction to Silence	8:30

In verse 27, Jesus asks a question. In Mark's gospel the questions of Jesus often lead to a new teaching of Jesus. In this case, this question build to a more personal question (v.29) and a radical new teaching regarding the Son of Man (v.31ff).<sup>3</sup>

The answer of the disciple to the first question shows that the general populace still did not know who Jesus truly was. The people saw him as just another in a line of

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<sup>1</sup> Gaebelin, Frank E., ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 692.

<sup>2</sup> Lane, William L., *The Gospel of Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 288.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

prophets.<sup>4</sup> In other words, they saw Him in a preparatory role to the culmination of their eschatological future, not as the culmination of those events.<sup>5</sup>

Peter answered Jesus' second question as spokesman for the twelve, recognizing Jesus as the one anointed by God, the Messiah.<sup>6</sup> Peter's confession on one hand was an expression of faith, but in another way it was an expression of his misunderstanding. Jesus' teaching in verse 31 regarding the Son of Man ran contrary to the dreams of the disciples regarding the coming Messiah.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus then tells his disciples not to tell anyone of his identity as the Messiah. The next verse (v.31) tells us what specifically they were not to tell people. "The necessity of the passion in obedience to the will of God accounts for the so-called secrecy phenomena in the Gospel.... The repeated injunctions to silence throughout the Gospel of Mark are an expression of Jesus' fidelity to the divine plan of salvation."<sup>8</sup>

When Jesus gives His teaching He refers to himself as the "Son of Man." The phrase "Son of Man" is generally recognized as a literal translation of Aramaic. There is conclusive evidence that this idiom sometimes functioned as a circumlocution for "I." But earlier in Mark (8:38; 13:26; 14:62) Jesus' teaches regarding the Son of Man and says He will receive power and judge mankind. This earlier teaching links this statement with the mysterious figure of Dan 7:13f to whom God appointed glory and dominion over

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<sup>4</sup> Gundry, Robert A. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Lane, 290.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 290-291.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 291-292.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 296.

all the nations and an everlasting kingdom. But Jesus does not describe the Son of Man as Daniel did. Rather His description better fits the description of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12.<sup>9</sup>

Peter's reaction to the Lord is "understandable, but presumptuous."<sup>10</sup> Mark does not even write what Peter said to Jesus. He expresses it merely with words of authority. Peter "took" Jesus aside and "rebuked" Him. Mark's point is not that Peter disagreed with Jesus, but that he was usurping His rightful position.<sup>11</sup>

There are two possible understandings of Peter's rebuking Jesus. First, Peter might be thinking Jesus is using the idiom "Son of Man" to simply mean "I." In that case, Peter is reacting to the sharp contrast of that teaching with Old Testament teaching, and his personal dreams, of the coming Messiah.<sup>12</sup> If Peter understood Jesus to be referring to the "Son of Man" of Daniel 7:13f, he is having a similar reaction, considering that passage gives a significantly different account of his fate. The first of these two is more likely considering there is no particular reason why Peter would expect to receive a teaching regarding the "Son of Man" of Daniel 7:13f. Without any warning, it is understandable that he would understand Jesus to be meaning "I."<sup>13</sup>

It is hard to ascertain whether the disciples were present when Jesus rebuked Peter or not. Some claim that Peter was probably acting as spokesman for the twelve. The

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 299-300.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>11</sup> Mays, James L. "An Exposition of Mark 8:27-9:1." *Interpretation* 30 (1976): 174-178.

<sup>12</sup> Carson, D.A., Douglas J Moo, & Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 164.

<sup>13</sup> Lane, 297-98.

others probably had similar feelings.<sup>14</sup> But Robert Gundry claims the summoning of the crowd with the disciples in v.34 indicates that Peter and Jesus were having a private conversation after the teaching and then later were joined by the others.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the disciples were there or not, the question remains as to why Jesus so dramatically and sharply rebuked Peter. William Lane wrote regarding Jesus' reason, "An inability to accept a suffering Savior involves the refusal of the will of God, who sovereign disposition of the problem of sin and human rebellion fails to conform to the niceties of human expectations."<sup>16</sup> When rebuking Peter, Jesus called him "Satan." This does not necessarily mean that Satan was somehow possessing Peter. For one thing, Satan does not think human things. Jesus is using nicknames. By comparing Simon's two nicknames given in this text, Peter "The Rock" and Satan "The Adversary", it is clear that Jesus is contrasting the inner motivations of Peter and not seeing the physical presence of Satan with Peter. Admittedly this is more clearly seen in the parallel account in Matthew.<sup>17</sup> This verse is pivotal in understanding that Mark is making a statement regarding Jesus' authority. Notice that Jesus does not justify the will of God to Peter and/or the twelve, but simply affirms it. This is because the issue is not what God's will is, but rather that they should submit to it.<sup>18</sup>

Vital to understanding verse 34 is noticing that Jesus called the crowd. He was not limiting this teaching to the twelve. He was teaching all people what it means to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>15</sup> Gundry, 434.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, 304.

<sup>17</sup> Gundry, 433.

<sup>18</sup> Lane, 304.

follow Him.<sup>19</sup> The command Jesus gives in this verse has been hotly debated. The main area of debate revolves around the issue of “take up your cross.” Scholars have a multitude of differing views of the meaning of this phrase. For example both William Lane and Frank Gaebelein hold that bearing the cross is not a Jewish metaphor, but was a phrase that surely was repugnant to the crowd. Jesus was calling his followers to willingness to die for His sake.<sup>20</sup> Robert Gundry sees a chiasmic structure and equates “cross-taking” with denying oneself, or “hating one’s own life.”<sup>21</sup> While others disagree with a wide variety of explanations. The scope of this paper is too limited to cover the breadth of all these views.<sup>22</sup> The best explanation is to see this phrase as a figure of speech derived from the Roman custom requiring a man convicted of rebellion against Rome’ sovereign rule to carry the cross-beam to his place of execution. With that in mind, this phrase would mean that believers are to actively submit to the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to His will.<sup>23</sup> In summary Jesus’ command, says to stop rebelling against God’s will, Start obeying His will, and follow Jesus.

In verses 35-37 Jesus shows a contrast between earthly life and the eschatological future of life. Jesus is calling people to focus on the latter.<sup>24</sup> Christ does not teach that

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 306-307.

<sup>20</sup> Gaebelein, 697; Lane, 307-308.

<sup>21</sup> Gundry, 435.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of this issue see: Green, Michael P. “The Meaning of Cross-Bearing.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140, #558 (Jan-Mar 1983): 117-127

<sup>23</sup> Mays, 120-127.

<sup>24</sup> Lane, 308-309.

people should be perfectly happy with who they are and feel secure, but rather that in breaking one's will or allowing themselves to suffer loss, that they will gain in the end.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus ends by telling the crowd and the disciples that those who deny Him as the Messiah will result in Jesus one day judging them for their denial. Denying Christ as the Son of Man and Messiah is equivalent to denying Him as the coming Judge. It is for this reason the criteria for a man's acceptance or rejection at the judgment seat is his loyalty or disloyalty to Him in this life.<sup>26</sup> One confusing aspect of this last statement is that some think Jesus is referring to the rapture, which would mean He is in error. Jesus did not make a mistake claiming some would not "taste death" before he returns.<sup>27</sup> The phrase "taste death" is a reference to violent death. Jesus is not teaching that the Rapture would come in the lifetime of the disciples.<sup>28</sup>

So why did Jesus ask these questions and teach what he taught? His disciples and the people needed to understand that following Him is more than simply acquiescence or passive submission before God. It means following Jesus to the very end. To accept the fact of a suffering Messiah is one thing; to share in His sufferings is quite another. It is no accident that immediately after rebuking Peter, Jesus adds some instructions on total commitment and possible martyrdom.<sup>29</sup> (Barker, 104).

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<sup>25</sup> Mays, 178.

<sup>26</sup> Lane, 310-11.

<sup>27</sup> Erickson, Millard, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983-85), 710.

<sup>28</sup> Gaebelien, 698.

<sup>29</sup> Barker, Glenn W., William Lane, and J. Ramsey Michaels. *The New Testament Speaks*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1969

Before transitioning to the homiletic implementation, the issue of structure needs discussed. This passage is large and could easily be broken into three consecutive sermons. These divisions are based on the logical flow of the pericope.

The first sermon could focus on the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus' subsequent teaching on the Son of Man. The focus of that sermon would be on the importance of profession of faith, and what that faith is based on. The second sermon could introduce Peter's shocking reply to the teaching and Jesus' rebuke. The focus of that message could be on the need for understanding and following God's expectations, not one's own. And lastly, Jesus' teaching on what it means to follow Him. The focus of this message would obviously be on what it means to follow Christ. Being very clear about the phrase "take up your cross" and the confusing last verse would be of special concern.

But for this message, the focus is on the pericope as a whole. This pericope starts by the disciples recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, as the anointed one of God. Then following Jesus' teaching about himself, the pericope flows into a discussion about discipleship. Grammatically, the most intriguing part of this passage is the flow from verse 28-31. In this discourse Mark uses the Greek word *upage* twice in a way that contrasts what it means to not follow Christ and what it means to follow Christ. In the following message, the theme is authority.

## **HOMILETICAL IMPLEMENTATION**

For the last few weeks our nation has been in turmoil. All because of two teens who decimated a community by walking into their high school and killed dozens of people. Our nation is asking, “How could this happen?”, “What’s wrong with this world?”, and “What can we do to stop this from happening again?” The Mayor of Littleton, Colorado recently banned Marilyn Manson from performing in his the town. Why now, and not before the shootings? Has his music performance gotten worse. At concerts, he sings songs about death, drugs, and the absolute futility of living. Signs flash “DRUGS” as his band plays. People are outraged at Howard Stern for his flippant comments about the shootings. Since when did the shock jock not make disgusting sexual comments? What has really changed? The truth is that people are realizing they are not in control. People are realizing that there is evil in this world and all is not well. They are desperate for answers. They are desperate for change. They are desperate for direction. But sadly, most people are happy to settle for a cosmetic change. It’s almost like they see the clothes they are wearing are dirty, and are grabbing clothes from the laundry basket to replace them. Simply by removing Marilyn Manson and Howard Stern from the community, things will not get better. It is an admirable move to clean up the media, but it does not cure the problem. It is almost as if people believe these two men pulled the trigger. But the disgusting and awful truth is that in the hearts of two young boys - boys who are just like you and me - sin grew in their hearts, in their minds, and then they acted on it. And they killed. What they did was not the result of bad genetics, or bad parenting. Those killings happened because of one thing, sin.

We can't change what happened in Littleton. But we can affect today and tomorrow. It doesn't start with reforming the media. It doesn't start by teaching parenting skills. These are noble endeavors, but they don't strike at the core of the problem. We must start with the heart. We must start with our own lives, our own sin.

Today, let us consider what Jesus taught regarding how we should live our daily lives. Please turn with me to Mark 8 starting at verse 27. I will be reading from the NIV.  
[read]

This story revolves around the issue of authority. Who is in charge of life? What motivates your decisions? What does it really mean to have Jesus Christ as your personal Lord? In the previous narrative, Christ healed a blind man's sight. What happens to the disciples in this narrative is not much different. They did not understand who Jesus was, but He opened their eyes to the truth that He is the Messiah, the Lord and Savior that they have long waited for! The way Jesus teaches them is always interesting.

He starts in verse 27 by asking a simple question, "Who do people say that I am?" The disciples' answer shows that the people still did not know who Jesus truly was. The people saw him as just another in a line of prophets. In other words, they saw Him just as many see Him today. Muslims are a good example. They honor Christ because He was God, but do not acknowledge Him as the Messiah, as Lord in their lives.

Jesus then gets personal. He asks, "Who do YOU say that I am?" Before we look at Peter's reply, let's stop. Ask yourself that question. Who do you believe Jesus to be? You must answer that question in your minds and your hearts. Who do YOU say Jesus is? [pause] Peter answered for the disciples, "You are the Christ!" This is amazing! Peter realizes by God's grace that this man, this real man in the flesh, in front of him is

the Savior of His people and the King of a future kingdom. On one hand, Peter's confession was an awesome expression of faith, but in another way it was an expression of his misunderstanding of who Jesus is.

Jesus goes on to teach about his future. [read v.31] When He finished teaching, Peter rebuked Jesus. Imagine this for a moment. Imagine meeting Jesus in the flesh. Imagine getting to hug your Savior and spend time with Him as a friend. Imagine listening to Him teach you. Can you imagine what would make a man presume to tell Jesus to *shut up*. That's what Peter did! Why would he do this? When Peter thought of the coming Messiah, his mind would have been filled with dreams of this glorious kingdom that would be set up. But Jesus painted a totally different picture. Jesus painted a picture that glorified God, not men. And Peter was thinking the things of men.

Peter's reaction to the Lord might be understandable, but it was wrong. Notice that Mark does not even write what Peter said to Jesus. He expresses Peter's rebuke with words of authority. Peter "took" Jesus aside and "rebuked" Him. The point is that whatever Peter's disagreement with Jesus was about is irrelevant. He was making up his own mind and following a path of his own making,

So Jesus rebuked him. He wanted Peter to see his mistake. And Jesus does this with some strong words. He called Peter "Satan." This does not mean that Satan was somehow possessing Peter. Jesus is using nicknames to make a point. Remember Peter is actually a nickname given to Simon by Jesus. It means "The Rock". Jesus called him that because of Peter's faith in Him. By comparing Simon's two nicknames, Peter or "The Rock" and Satan or "The Adversary", it is clear that Jesus is contrasting Peter's inner motivations.

After this heated discussion with Peter, Jesus called the crowd to teach them about the very thing he just taught Peter. He was teaching all people what it means to follow Him. [read v.34] The phrase “take up your cross” is a figure of speech. It comes from the Roman custom requiring a man convicted of rebellion against Rome to carry his own cross to his place of execution. That doesn’t mean that all Christian are to die! What it means is that believers are to actively submit to the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to His will. In summary, Jesus’ command says to stop rebelling against God’s will, Start obeying His will, and follow Jesus.

Jesus goes on to show a contrast between earthly life and our life after death. He wants us to focus our attention, our motivations on life after death. Christ does not teach that you should be perfectly happy with who you are and feel secure, but rather that in submitting your will or allowing yourself to suffer loss – emotionally, financially, in any way - that you will gain in the end. You will gain life forever with Him in heaven.

You can wake up tomorrow and forget this message. You can continue to make all your decision based on your desires. I can’t stop you. God won’t stop you. But there is a better way. Life doesn’t have to be pointless and meaningless. When two kids decide to kill dozens of people, you can understand and cope with the grief. You can have the peace that Christ is offering. But there is sacrifice. There is a price. Paul knew this very well when he wrote Philippians 3:7-14.

[read][pray]

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