

HWMR - Crystallization Study of the Gospel of Mark

Book Two, Week 10

Message Ten

Taking Up Our Cross and Praying with God as Our Faith

Scripture Reading: Mark 8:31-38; 9:28-29; 11:20-24

- Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be **killed** and after three days **rise**.
- Mark 8:32 And He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.
- Mark 8:33 But turning around and looking at His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, **Get behind Me, Satan!** For you are **not setting your mind on the things of God**, but on the things of men.
- Mark 8:34 And He called the crowd to Him with His disciples and said to them, If **anyone wants to follow after Me**, let him **deny himself** and **take up his cross** and **follow Me**.
- Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to **save his soul-life** shall lose it; but whoever will lose his soul-life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.
- Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to **gain the whole world** and forfeit his soul-life?
- Mark 8:37 For what could a man **give in exchange for his soul-life**?
- Mark 8:38 For whoever is **ashamed of Me** and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.
- Mark 9:28 And when He entered into the house, His disciples questioned Him privately, Why were we not able to cast it out?
- Mark 9:29 And He said to them, This kind cannot come out by any means except **prayer**.
- Mark 11:20 And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.
- Mark 11:21 And Peter remembered and said to Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.
- Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered and said to them, **Have faith in God**.
- Mark 11:23 Truly I say to you that whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and **does not doubt in his heart**, but **believes** that what he says happens, he will have it.
- Mark 11:24 For this reason I say to you, **All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them**, and you will have them.

Our **mind** is the **expression** of our self, and our **self** is the **embodiment** of our soul life. Our **soul life** is **embodied in** and **lived out** by our **self**, and our self is **expressed** through our **mind**, thought, concept, opinion. When we set our mind, not on the things of God, but on the things of man, our mind grasps the opportunity to act and express itself. This was what happened with Peter. Therefore, the Lord said that we must deny the self and not save our soul life. Instead of saving the soul life, we should lose it. **To lose the soul life is the reality of denying the self**. This is to take up the cross. (Life-Study of Mark, Chapter 25, Section 2)

DAY 1

I. In order to follow the Lord Jesus, we need to **deny the self, take up our cross, and lose our soul-life**—Mark 8:34-35:

- A. When we **set our mind not** on the things of God **but** on the things of men, **we become Satan**, a stumbling block to the Lord (Matt. 16:23) in the fulfillment of God's purpose (Mark 8:33); **setting the mind on the things of men** is a matter of the **evil reasonings** mentioned in 7:21.
- B. We need to **deny the self**—8:34:
 1. The self is the **embodiment** of Satan; the self is the soul plus the mind of Satan—Gen. 3:1-6; Mark 8:32-33:
 - a. The **origin of the self** was **Satan's injecting his thought into the human mind**; when the mind of Satan was injected into the human soul, the **soul was corrupted** and became the self—Gen. 3:1-6.
 - b. The self, which is one with Satan, is expressed through the mind, which is actually the opinionated thoughts—Mark 8:33.
 2. The **self is independent of God**; it does not care for God's will or for God's interest.
 3. **To deny the self is to reject the self with its desire, preference, and choice**.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SELF

What is the origin of the self? Since God did not create the self, where did the self come from? In order to answer the question concerning the origin of the self, it would be helpful to consider the difference between the body and the flesh.

God created for man a **body** that was good, pure, and sinless. The **flesh** is also the body, **but it is the corrupted, ruined body**. Satan injected sin into the human body created by God, and in this way **the body was corrupted and ruined, becoming the flesh**. The flesh, therefore, is the body corrupted by sin. We may also say that the **flesh** is the **body plus sin**.

The **sin** which is in man's body is the very **nature of Satan**. In Romans 6 and 7 sin is personified, for it is likened to a living person that dwells in us (7:17, 20), works in us (v. 8), deceives us (v. 11), kills us (v. 11), and reigns in us (6:12, 14). This sin which, like a living person, can force us to do things against our will, is the nature of Satan. We may even say that **sin is Satan**. Because **sin has been injected into our body** and is now in the members of our body, **our body has been corrupted and has become the flesh**.

The situation is similar with the self. The body became the flesh because something of Satan—sin—was injected into it. How did the soul become the self? **The soul became the self when something of Satan was added to the soul**. The thing that was added to the soul was the **thought**, or the mind, of Satan. Therefore, the **self** is the **soul plus the satanic mind**, the mind of Satan. When the mind, the thought, of Satan was injected into the human soul, **the human soul was corrupted and became the self**.

The **body** has been **changed** into the **flesh**, and the **soul** has been **changed** into the **self**. Which of these changes took place first? The answer to this question is found in Genesis 3:1-6. Here we see that before Eve took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into her body, the thought, the mind, of Satan was injected into her soul. **Satan came to Eve with the intention of putting his thought into her mind**. Satan did this when he said to her, *“Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?”* (v. 1). This was an appeal to Eve's mind. Eve answered Satan (vv. 2-3), but as soon as she did so, she was *“hooked”* in her mind by the *“bait”* of Satan's thought.

Satan did not come to Eve to fight with her or to speak against her. Rather, he came in a nice way to “help” her. In response to Satan's question, she said, *“Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die”* (vv. 2-3). At this point Eve was already caught by Satan who, taking Eve's word as his basis, said to her, *“You shall not surely die! For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil”* (vv. 4-5). Satan seemed to be saying to the woman, “I am here as your good friend to tell you a secret. God is fooling you. If you eat of the fruit of this tree, you will become like God.”

Through this **satanic assault**, Eve's mind was attacked. Then her **mind** was **poisoned** by the satanic thought which had been injected into her. After this, her **emotion** was **aroused** when she “saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make oneself wise” (v. 6a). Next, her **will** was **exercised** to make a decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “She took of its fruit and ate” (v. 6b). By this time **every part of the soul**—the mind, the emotion, and the will—**had been poisoned**.

(The Heavenly Vision, Chapter 4, Section 1)

DAY 2

C. To **take up our cross** is to make the cross of Christ our cross—v. 34:

1. Taking up the cross is not a matter of suffering but of applying to our life what Christ has done on the cross **to terminate us**—Gal. 5:24.
2. The three aspects of the **work of the cross** are the accomplished **fact** of our crucifixion with Christ, the **realization** of the accomplished fact, and continually **bearing** the cross to deny the self—Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20.
3. To take up our cross is to **remain under the killing of the death of Christ** for the termination of our self, our natural life, and our old man; in so doing, we deny our self so that we may follow the Lord.
4. The **application of the cross** is in the Spirit and by the Spirit; the real bearing of the cross for the denial of the self must be in the power, strength, and energy of the Spirit—Rom. 8:13.

Applying the Cross

After we have seen and accepted the cross, we will apply the cross. When the Spirit leads us to see and accept the fact of our co-crucifixion, He will further lead us to apply the death of the cross to ourselves in our experience. On the one hand, this is the Spirit's applying the death of the cross on our life, on us; on the other hand, it is our applying the death of the cross on ourselves. Romans 8:13 refers to this experience, saying, “If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body.” Colossians 3:5 similarly says, “Put to death therefore your members which are on the earth.”

Although we do not have to and even cannot nail ourselves to the cross, we need to apply the death of the cross to ourselves by the Spirit, putting to death the practices of the body and of our sinning members on the earth. It is not possible to put to death the practices of our body without seeing the cross. Although we do not need to nail ourselves to the cross, we must apply the cross to ourselves. We can do this only by the Spirit and only after we see and accept the cross.

To apply the cross to ourselves is to crucify “the flesh with its passions and its lusts,” as spoken of in Galatians 5:24. It is easy to think that Galatians 5:24 and Romans 6:6 are speaking of the same thing, that is, the fact of the cross. Galatians 5:24, however, does not speak of the fact of the cross; it speaks of the application of the cross. Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Christ. This crucifixion is not something that we have done; it is something that Christ has done. Our old man was crucified when Christ was crucified. This is a fact accomplished by Christ. Galatians 5:24, however, says that we have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts. This is something that we do by the Spirit to crucify our flesh with its passions and its lusts. By the Spirit we need to apply the cross to our flesh and to our fleshly passions and lusts, putting them to death. This is the experience of applying the cross by the Spirit.

Romans 6 speaks of the fact that we obtained in Christ; Galatians 5 speaks of the experience that we apply by the Spirit. Romans 6 speaks of our old man having been crucified with Christ; Galatians 5 speaks of our crucifying the flesh with its passions and its lusts. The old man and the flesh are one, just as Christ and the Spirit are one. Christ is lived out and manifested by the Spirit; similarly, the old man, Adam, is lived out and manifested by the flesh. Everything in Christ is a fact, and everything in the Spirit is an experience. Similarly, everything in the old man, in Adam, is a fact, and everything in the flesh is an experience.

Romans 6:6 speaks of our old man having been crucified; this refers to the fact of crucifixion. Galatians 5:24 speaks of our crucifying the flesh; this refers to the experience of crucifixion. Our old man was crucified on the cross with Christ; this is the fact of crucifixion, which Christ accomplished for us. We crucify our flesh by the Spirit; this is the experience of crucifixion. The Bible does not say that our flesh has been crucified with Christ, nor does it speak of our crucifying the old man. Christ brought the old man in Adam to the cross, and it was crucified with Him. The flesh in our living, our walk, however, is crucified by the Spirit. The crucifying spoken of in Galatians 5:24 does not refer to our flesh being crucified with Christ on the cross as being a fact; it refers to our crucifying our flesh with its passions and its lusts by the Spirit's application of the cross. This relates not to a fact obtained in Christ but to an experience applied by the Spirit. Romans 6 says that our old man has been crucified. This is passive because it is something that Christ has done; hence, it is a fact. Galatians 5 says that we have crucified the flesh. This is active because it is something that we do by the Spirit; hence, it is an experience. Some believers have experience of this, and others do not. Nevertheless, according to God, all those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts.

We crucify the flesh by the Spirit. Although we cannot crucify our old man, we can crucify our flesh. When we apply Christ's crucifixion of our old man to our flesh by the Spirit, we put to death our flesh by the Spirit. This applies the fact that Christ accomplished regarding the crucifixion of our old man to our flesh so that we can experience the cross today. (Christ and the Cross, Chapter 21, Section 2)

DAY 3

- D. To **follow after the Lord** is to gain Him, to experience Him, to enjoy Him, to partake of Him, and to let Him become our very being—Mark 8:34:
1. If we want to follow after the Lord in this way, **we must put the self aside and forget the self.**
 2. Because Christ is the life-giving Spirit dwelling in our spirit, **we follow Him in an inward way, in our spirit**—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Tim. 4:22; Gal. 5:16, 25.
- E. To save the soul-life is to please the self by allowing the soul to have its enjoyment and not to suffer; to **lose the soul-life** is to lose the enjoyment of the soul and to suffer in the soul—Mark 8:35-38:
1. **Our soul-life is embodied in and lived out by the self**, and our self is expressed through our mind, our thought, our concept, and our opinion.
 2. Not loving our soul-life means that we are **willing to give up our soul-life** and that we do not care for our soul-life—Rev. 12:11.
 3. We should lose our soul-life for the sake of the Lord and also **for the sake of the gospel**; this is to **live Christ and to live the gospel**—Mark 8:35.

Living Christ and the Gospel

What, then, is the correct understanding of “for My sake and the gospel's”? Here for the Lord's sake actually means “no longer I, but the gospel.” We have been terminated in Christ. Now we need to apply this termination to ourselves and to every aspect of our living. Then in our living it will be “no longer I, but Christ, no longer I, but the gospel.” This means that we shall be living Christ and living the gospel. This is very different from trying to behave ourselves properly as Christians for the sake of the Lord's glory and for the sake of the effectiveness of the gospel.

If this brother working in the office has the correct understanding of the Lord's word, he will say to himself, “As a follower of the Lord Jesus, I am a partaker of Him. I have been crucified with Him. Now it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. At work I do not need to try to behave myself. I do not have to exert myself to be so careful. Instead, I should simply live Christ day by day. When I wake up in the morning, I need to call on the Lord Jesus and breathe Him in. As I call on Him, He becomes my breath, the intrinsic and essential element of my inner being, the essence of my living. Then at the office I simply live Him. I shall not deliberately try to preach the gospel to my colleagues, and I shall not worry because of the fact that I have told them that I am in the church. I only care for one thing—for living Christ. All day long, I want to breathe in Christ and then live Him.” This is the correct understanding of losing our soul life for the Lord's sake.

The principle is the same in the matter of living for the sake of the gospel. When we live Christ, we shall certainly live the gospel. As we live Christ, others will see the gospel in our living and not only hear it. Our living will be Christ, and this Christ will become the gospel to others in an actual and practical way. By this we see that living for the sake of Christ and the gospel is not a matter of our behavior; it is a matter of living Christ in a practical way. Regarding this, I would say once again that we need the Epistles of Paul in order to have an adequate understanding of the Lord's word in verse 35.

In 8:27-38 we have an unveiling not only of the Lord's wonderful Person, but also of His death and resurrection. This unveiling also includes our application of the Lord's death and our living in His resurrection. Through the application of Christ's death to ourselves we may live in Christ in resurrection. (Life-Study of Mark, Chapter 25, Section 2)

DAY 4

F. **Prayer** is the real denial of the self—9:28-29:

1. The Lord's word in verse 29 indicates that the disciples failed to pray; that was the reason they could not cast out the demon.
2. **To pray is to deny ourselves**, realizing that we are nothing and that we can do nothing—v. 29; 8:34.
3. The word prayer in 9:29 means in practice that "*it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20); therefore, to pray is actually to declare, "*Not I, but Christ.*"
4. One who prays in a genuine way has been terminated and has become ashes; his natural life has been completely terminated by the cross—Lev. 6:9-10.

DAY 5

II. We need to pray with God as our faith—Mark 11:20-24:

- A. **Prayer** is **man cooperating and co-working with God**, allowing God to express Himself through man and thus accomplish His purpose—Rom. 8:26-27.
- B. In Mark 11:20-24 the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to **pray by faith for executing God's will according to God's economy**:
 1. Our prayer should **carry out God's will** to have the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem—Eph. 1:9, 22-23; Rev. 21:2.
 2. When the praying one is mingled with God and is one with God, **God becomes his faith**; this is what it means to have faith in God—Mark 11:22.
 3. Only prayers that are out of faith will touch God; without faith prayer is ineffectual—v. 23.
 4. **Faith** is **believing that we have received** what we have asked for—v. 24:
 - a. According to the Lord's word, we should believe that we have received, not that we will receive.
 - b. **To hope** means to expect **something in the future**; **to believe** means to consider **something as having been done**.
 - c. **Faith is not only believing that God can or will do a certain thing but also believing that God has done that thing already**.

Having Faith in God without Doubting

Thus, the praying one could have **faith in God** without doubting, but **believing** that he had received what he asked for, and he would have it (Mark 11:24). The praying one is now **one with God**, in **union with God**. He is **mingled with God**, so **God becomes his faith**. This is what it means to have faith in God, according to the Lord's word in Mark 11:22. The praying one is absolutely one with God, and God becomes his faith.

If we ask the Lord for things that satisfy our desire, we will not receive anything. This is because our prayer is not according to God's will for the fulfillment of God's economy, and we are not the right persons. First, **we must be the right persons**, absolutely one with God. One night, during my imprisonment by the Japanese for thirty days, I looked up and said, "Lord, You know why I am here." At the time it seemed as if the Lord Jesus was right before me. I had the full assurance to say to the Lord, "Lord, I am imprisoned for Your sake." **We must first be the right persons before God, persons who are one with God**. Then **we can have God as our faith and pray according to our knowledge of God's will for the fulfillment of His economy**. **If we pray for something according to our desire, not according to God's will, to fulfill our purpose, not to fulfill God's economy, we can never have the faith in God to believe that we have received what we asked for.** (The God-man Living, Chapter 16, Section 3)

DAY 6

- C. The prayer in Mark 11:20-24 is a **prayer with authority**; this kind of prayer is directed not toward God but toward "*this mountain*"—v. 23:
 1. A prayer with authority **does not ask God to do something**; instead, it **exercises God's authority and applies this authority** to deal with problems and things that ought to be removed—Zech. 4:7; Matt. 21:21.
 2. God has **commissioned** us to command what He has commanded and give orders to what He has given orders to—17:20.
 3. The church can have such a prayer with authority by **having full faith**, being **without doubt**, and **being clear** that what we do is fully **according to God's will**—6:10; 18:19-20.
 4. Prayer with authority has much to do with the **overcomers**; every overcomer must learn to speak to "*this mountain*"—Mark 11:23.

A **prayer with authority** has the position of being in the heavenlies as its **basis**. Since the church is in the heavenlies with Christ, it can pray with authority.

What is praying with authority? Simply put, it is praying the prayer of Mark 11. In order to be clear about this truth, we should consider verses 23-24 carefully. Verse 24 begins with the words *“for this reason.”* *“For this reason”* means that this sentence is a continuation of what has gone before. This means that verse 24 is joined to verse 23. Verse 24 mentions prayer. This proves that verse 23 must also concern prayer. The strange thing is that verse 23 does not sound like an ordinary prayer. The Lord did not tell us to pray, “God, please move the mountain and cast it into the sea.” What does it say? It says, *“Whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea.”* According to our concept, what should a prayer be like? We think that when we pray to God, we have to say, “God, please move this mountain and cast it into the sea.” But the Lord said something else. **He did not tell us to speak to God; He told us to turn to the mountain and to speak to the mountain.** The speaking is not toward God but directly toward the mountain, telling it to be cast into the sea. Since the Lord was afraid that we would not consider this to be a prayer, He pointed out in the following verse that it is a prayer. **This prayer is not directed toward God, but it is a prayer.** It is a speaking **directed toward the mountain** that says, *“Be taken up and cast into the sea.”* Yet this is also a prayer. **This is a prayer with authority.** **A prayer with authority does not ask God to do something.** Rather, **it exercises God’s authority and applies this authority to deal with problems and things that ought to be removed.** Every overcomer has to learn to pray this kind of prayer. Every overcomer has to learn to speak to the mountain.

We have many weaknesses, such as temper, evil thoughts, or physical illnesses. If we plead with God concerning these problems, it seems that there is not much result. However, if we apply God’s authority to the situation and speak to the mountain, these problems will go away. What is the meaning of the word *“mountain”* in this verse? **A mountain is a problem that stands in front of us.** A mountain is something that blocks the way and stops us from going on. If we see a mountain, what do we do? When many people encounter a mountain in their life or in their work, they pray to God to remove the mountain. But God tells us to speak to the mountain ourselves. All we have to do is issue a word of command to the mountain: *“Be taken up and cast into the sea.”* There is a great difference between **asking God to remove the mountain** and **commanding the mountain to be removed.** It is one thing to go to God and ask Him to do something. It is another thing to directly command the mountain to be cast away. We often overlook this kind of commanding prayer. Seldom do we pray by applying God’s authority to the problem or by saying, “I command you in the name of my Lord to go away” or “I cannot tolerate this thing to remain with me anymore.” **A prayer with authority is one in which we tell the things that are frustrating us to go away.** We can say to our temper, “Go away.” We can say to sickness, “Go away. I will rise up by the resurrection life of the Lord.” This word is not spoken to God but directly to the mountain. *“Be taken up and cast into the sea.”* This is a prayer with authority.

How can the church have such a prayer with authority? It is by the church having **full faith**, being **without doubt** and **being clear** that what we do is **fully according to God’s will.** Whenever we are not clear about God’s will, we do not have faith. Therefore, **before we do anything, we have to be clear whether what we are about to do is according to God’s will.** If it is not God’s will, we cannot have faith toward it. If we are not sure that something is God’s will, we will not be sure that it can be accomplished. **In order to not have any doubt about its accomplishment, we must first have no doubt concerning it being God’s will.** When we speak carelessly to the mountain, there are no results, because we do not know God’s will. But if we have no doubts and are clear about God’s will, we can speak boldly to the mountain, *“Be taken up and cast into the sea,”* and the thing will be done. **God has commissioned us to be those who issue the command.** We command what God has commanded, and we give orders to what God has given orders to. This is a prayer with authority. **A prayer with authority is not asking God directly.** Rather, **it is dealing with problems by directly applying God’s authority.** All of us have mountains. Of course, these mountains are not the same in size. Our mountain may be this or it may be that. **But whatever is blocking us from going on in the spiritual pathway, we can command to go away. This is to pray with authority.**
(The Prayer Ministry of the Church, Chapter 4, Section 3)