

## Mark 10:32-34 Commentary

### Verse 32

Mark 10:32-34 contains an account of Jesus' third prediction of His crucifixion and resurrection. Verse 32 says, "They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished, but those who followed him were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them the things that would happen to him" (Mark 10:32). Notice in our current text that Jesus and His disciples were "on the road." In Mark's gospel, the phrase "on the road" is one that is intended to evoke thoughts of discipleship (6:8; 8:3; 8:27; 9:33-34; 10:17; 10:32; and 10:52). The word translated "the road" is one that carried an idea similar to "the way" in the first century.

It is interesting to note that in the book of Acts, the early Christians were called followers of "the way" (Acts 22:4 and 24:14). This moniker was applied to the early believers due to the significance roads played in Jesus' ministry. As we see in our current passage, the word translated "way" metaphorically spoke of "the way of God or of the Lord"; thus, it spoke of the "way, walk, or life which God approves and requires."<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason the terminology was used of the early Church.

Mark's reference to the road, or the way, in our verse seems strategic. It is a reminder that the doctrines of the crucifixion and resurrection are integral to Christian discipleship. One cannot fully follow Jesus without a strong faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul showed this to be true. In speaking of his growth in his Christian experience, he said, "My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10). Elsewhere, the apostle would teach that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead currently lives within the souls of Christ's children. In Romans he said:

Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you. So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh (Romans 8:10-12).

If Christians want to live in victory over the desires of the flesh, they must learn to gain strength from the Spirit of God. The power that accomplished the resurrection is available to all Christians. They simply must learn to appropriate that power through faith. One will never follow Jesus "on the road" as a disciple until he or she learns to live by resurrection power.

It is important to also note that Jesus and His disciples were specifically "on the road to, going up to Jerusalem." They were likely in the region of Perea, near the Jordan River.<sup>2</sup> Our next chapter in Mark's gospel will have Jesus making His triumphal entry into the city (Mark 11:1). For now, Mark makes His first mention of the place. Up to this point in His ministry, our Lord has primarily ministered in the rural regions surrounding Galilee (Mark 1:14 and 38). Now He sets His sight on the Holy City. As the group traveled, they literally went "up." The approximate 20-mile trek from Jericho to Jerusalem involved a climb of more than 3,000 vertical feet.<sup>3</sup>

Along with Jesus' literal ascent into the Holy City, there is a sense in which He figuratively went "up" as well. Mark's mention of Jerusalem in our text seems to place emphasis on the fact

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<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, 1027.

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, 247.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, 166.

that Jesus was fixed on His purpose. Our Lord knew He had “come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Consequently, He set his face “like flint” to do God’s will (Isaiah 50:7). Luke tells us that our Lord “He determined to journey to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). There was no chance or stroke of bad luck in Jesus’ crucifixion. He did not suffer an untimely death. He came according to God’s foreordained plan to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins (Genesis 3:15; Philippians 2:5-8; and Revelation 13:8). Jesus purposefully laid down His life for us so that we can have forgiveness, acceptance, freedom, and life before the Father.

On their way to Jerusalem, Jesus is depicted as “walking ahead of” His disciples. The original language of the text speaks of a person going ahead of, preceding, or leading another person.<sup>4</sup> It was common custom for first-century rabbis to walk in front of their pupils.<sup>5</sup> However, it seems that there is something more in Jesus’ stance. His posture is one of leadership. He gladly and gallantly directs His followers to the cross. Unfortunately, they were timid in following His lead. Mark says, “the disciples were astonished, but those who followed him were afraid.” The word translated “astonished” means “to be amazed or startled.”<sup>6</sup> Appearing in the passive voice in our text, it seems the verb is intended to portray the disciples as being startled at Jesus’ chosen destination.

While Jesus’ inner-circle was startled, the rest of His disciples were scared. The word translated “fear” is the common Greek word from which we get our word “phobia.” Both the emotions of astonishment and fear are depicted with the imperfect tense, describing continued emotional states.<sup>7</sup> As Jesus walked in solitude in front of them, there was a nagging and ongoing sense of disturbance amongst His followers.

The surprise amongst the first group, as well as the fear amongst the second group, likely had something to do with the resistance Jesus had previously faced from both religious and governmental leaders. If you remember from Mark 3:6, the Pharisees and the Herodians have been plotting against Jesus, scheming concerning how they might kill him. Both Mark 3:22 and 7:1 tell of how scribes had been sent from Jerusalem to spy on Jesus. The episode revolving around Herod in 6:14-29 has an ominous tone. It gives a hint that Herod likely had a vendetta against Jesus. Knowing all of these realities, Jesus’ disciples and closest followers were undoubtedly nervous. It is no wonder they “were afraid.”

As the caravan moves forward Jesus takes “the Twelve aside again.” The word rendered “aside” is the word *paralabōn*. It seems that Jesus paused for a moment, had His disciples step off the side of the road, and engaged in a brief teaching moment. He begins “to tell them the things that would happen to him.” The word “again” alludes to the fact that this isn’t the first time Jesus has talked about this subject. On two other occasions in Mark’s gospel, Jesus has predicted His death (Mark 8:31-33 and 9:30-32). The three-fold reminder concerning the event was necessary, when one considers the disciples’ response to the announcements. On the first occasion, Peter flatly rebuked Jesus (Mark 8:32). On the second, Jesus’ words seemed to fall on deaf ears. Mark records: “But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask him” (Mark 9:32). After hearing Jesus’ second prediction, the disciples launched into a debate concerning who was the greatest of the twelve (Mark 10:34). It was necessary for Jesus to foretell His death and resurrection a third time because His closest followers were slow to receive His teaching.

Are we not often like the disciples? It seems that we can sometimes be forgetful

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<sup>4</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 90.

<sup>5</sup> Brooks, 166.

<sup>6</sup> Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, 194.

<sup>7</sup> Robertson, 353.

concerning these core doctrines. There is an ever-present temptation to have a form of religion that isn't grounded in redemption; to go through the motions of service to Christ while forgetting the message of Christ. Remember the words of the apostle Paul: "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

### **Verse 33**

In His pronouncement, Jesus is careful to list out the groups that will consent to His death. He says, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles" (Mark 10:33). The reference to being "handed over" alludes to Judas' upcoming betrayal (Mark 14:43-52). Occurring in the passive voice, the verb also hints at providence. Though Judas was the human means of betrayal, the Heavenly Father had ordained the sacrifice of His Son aeons in the past.

Notice that Jesus names "the chief priests and the scribes." He called out these same individuals in 8:31, along with the "elders." In 9:31, He simply said "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of *men*." We will see our Lord stand before the "chief priests, elders, and the scribes" in Mark 14:53. Jesus now says that these people will "condemn him to death." The Greek word translated "condemn" was one used of a legal decision.<sup>8</sup> In Mark 14:64, our Lord will be "condemned" on the charge of blasphemy. This decision will lead Him to be handed over to Pilate for sentencing (Mark 15:1). Once in Pilate's court, the words of our current text will be fulfilled — "they will hand him over to the Gentiles." Reference to the Gentiles isn't made in the other two crucifixion predictions.<sup>9</sup> The Jews were strategic in passing Jesus on to the Roman Pontus. Imperial officials were the only ones bestowed with the right to carry out capital punishment.<sup>10</sup>

### **Verse 34**

Jesus concludes His third prediction of His death by saying, "and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days." Notice that Jesus lists four acts that will be performed on Him — mocking, spitting, flogging, and killing. The details surrounding the first are found in Mark 15:16-18. Spitting is seen in Mark 15:19. Flogging occurs in Mark 15:15. It involved beating with a whip.<sup>11</sup> The killing of Jesus takes place in 15:20-37.

Jesus' words in our verse seem to allude to Old Testament proclamations.<sup>12</sup> One can sense a hint of Psalm 22:6-8 — "But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by people. Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads." One can also hear the words of Isaiah 53 — "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn't value him" (Isaiah 53:3). Interestingly, all four of the actions listed in verse 34 — mocking, spitting, flogging, and killing — are mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:3, 5, 8, 9, and 12).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 90.

<sup>9</sup> Brooks, 166.

<sup>10</sup> Schnabel, 248.

<sup>11</sup> Schnabel, 248.

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, 166.

<sup>13</sup> Schnabel, 248.

Although they may have been performed by the hands of men, all of these events were generated by the eternal plan of the Heavenly Father. The suffering servant of Isaiah proclaimed: "I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who tore out my beard" (Isaiah 50:6). Ryle has commented: "Let us mark this well. There was nothing involuntary and unforeseen in our Lord's death. It was the result of his own free, determinate, and deliberate choice. From the beginning of his earthly ministry he saw the cross before him, and went to it a willing sufferer."<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, Jesus' third pronouncement once again fell on deaf ears. Luke's account of this same event tells us that "they understood none of these things" (Luke 18:34). The disciples' oblivion to Jesus' purpose will be seen as one attempts to engage in battle with Jesus' captors (Mark 14:47). It will also be seen in our next passage in Mark's gospel. Immediately after hearing Jesus' third prediction of His death, James and John asked Him to give them places of prominence in His kingdom (Mark 10:35-37). At their request, our Lord had to remind them, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for man" (Mark 10:45).

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<sup>14</sup> Ryle, 169-170.