



Simon Peter: It Feels Like Dad Strength

Mark 8:31-38

There is little doubt that the Apostle Peter could ever forget how powerful and strong Jesus truly was in those face to face encounters he had with the Messiah. The episode being described in the video was a reference to Mark 8:31-38. (cf. Matthew 16:21-28, Luke 9:22-27)

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 again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing 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 man."

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:31-38

That is a scene filled with power and strength. It follows on the heels of moments that Jesus allowed his disciples to witness which included miracles from feeding multitudes to the healing of individuals. Before the minds of the disciples went too far off track thinking that Jesus was the Messiah who was ready to throw his strength around, conquer their oppressors and control the masses by force, he tried to redirect their misconceptions and point them to the reality of what was on the horizon.

What Jesus would share with his disciples would not be what they had been concocting in their minds. Surely a Messiah would be triumphant. Surely a Messiah would be a conqueror. Surely a Messiah would not be acquainted with suffering, rejection and death. Jesus was about to redirect his disciples expectations and help them see clearly what was about to unfold before their very eyes. His words and his life would soon make a powerful impression.

“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 again. ³² And he said this plainly.” Mark 8:31-32

Jesus did not want there to be any misunderstandings about what was to take place. There were no riddles. This was not one of those moments where Jesus shared a parable and left the guys scratching their heads in wonder. Verse 32 says Jesus taught this lesson about what was coming plainly and said that suffering, rejection, death and resurrection were all a part of what lay ahead for him in Jerusalem. Jesus wanted this message to be comprehended by his followers so clearly that he retells them the same message in Mark 9:30-32 and Mark 10:32-34. Three times he shares the same lesson with his disciples and it was not until after these events come to pass that his disciples remember the words Jesus spoke to them.

The reason Jesus’ disciples had such a hard time understanding what they were hearing is because a forecast of suffering, rejection, death and resurrection of their Messiah was the very opposite of what they had been experiencing with Jesus thus far on their journey. They had seen the crowds gathering and following because Jesus not only was speaking messages of truth and hope, but also was feeding hungry mouths and healing lives that needed something only the Messiah could do.

However, it is interesting that Jesus referred to himself in this passage and others not as the Messiah, but as “Son of Man.” This expression is by far Jesus’ favorite description of himself if we base it on the number of times he used it about himself. It occurs 81 times in the Gospels and neither his friends nor his enemies ever refer to him in this way.

One of the reasons Jesus may have referred to himself as “Son of Man” rather than “Messiah” is because the former was not nearly as politically volatile as the latter. Jesus’ actions and teachings were attracting large crowds and gaining him much popularity. For him to champion himself as the Messiah too early would have created a mob scene that would not have allowed him to prepare his disciples for what was to come with the same deliberate pace and precision.

He was working his way to the cross but needed more time to prepare his disciples to carry on the message and mission afterwards. This is why he kept telling his disciples not to tell anybody about what they were talking about and experiencing with Jesus yet. The time had not yet come for such things to be announced.

The “Son of Man” title tied back to what the prophet Daniel writes about concerning judgment in Daniel 7:13-18. Jesus alludes to such themes of the final judgment in Mark 8:38 when he talks

about the Son of Man coming “in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” He is talking about judgment. He is talking about the power of God. He is talking about Dad-strength!

Even though Jesus told his disciples exactly what was going to happen and by whom the suffering would be extended, they just sat there shaking their heads in disbelief because it all seemed so foreign to their mental image of the Messiah. As a result, Peter pipes up, as he so often was prone to do. The back half of verse 32 says,

“And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.” Mark 8:32b

This is equivalent to the kid wrestling with his dad thinking he is winning. The dad could crush the kid in one swift stroke but up to this point is allowing close contact without exuding much of his muscle. Then the kid crosses the line and the dad strength gets flexed. This is what happens when the text says Peter “rebuked” Jesus. The word rebuke is *epitimaō* and is the same one used for silencing of the demons in Mark 1:25 and 3:12. This rebuke caused Jesus’ dad strength to be flexed in a powerful and memorable manner.

“But turning and seeing 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 man.” Mark 8:33

Jesus made sure all the disciples were within earshot of this dad strength flex fest and show of power upon Peter. The reason this was such a moment of power by Jesus was because Jesus recognized Peter was being used by Satan to try and do the very thing that Satan did after Jesus was baptized and led into the wilderness for 40 days. Satan was using Peter to try and dissuade Jesus from going to the cross by redirecting his thoughts from the things of God and onto the things of man. This was the same temptation Jesus experienced from Satan at the outset of his ministry.

Although last week’s message from Mark 1:9-15 recounts this endeavor, the Gospel of Matthew has similar language in 4:8-10 that we just heard Jesus say to Peter in the Mark 8 passage.

“Again, the devil took him [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he [the devil] said to him [Jesus], ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan!’ For it is written, “ ‘ You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”” Matthew 4:8-10

In both accounts Satan was trying to tempt Jesus to abandon the mission that leads to the cross. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry Satan tempted Jesus three times in the wilderness. It ended with Jesus demanding Satan leave. And now toward the end of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus is tempted again by the influence of Satan through Peter. Jesus calls him out in the form of a rebuke and again demands Satan get in the rear view mirror of their path ultimately leading towards Calvary and the cross.

Peter felt the weight of Jesus’ strength. He felt it in Jesus words and in his countenance that was filled with spiritual authority and intensity. It was strength from God the Father. It was dad strength personified. And it slammed Peter on the inside. It would not be the last time Peter felt such Dad strength when Jesus “turned” as verse 33 noted.

The Gospel of Luke notes another time when Jesus would turn and Peter would experience the dad strength of Jesus. It would not be through the spoken words of Jesus in this moment; rather, the dad strength would overpower Peter simply through the locking of their eyes upon each other.

It happened after the Last Supper. Jesus told Peter he would deny him before the rooster crowed that very night. Peter said it would not happen no matter what. In a sense, Peter told Jesus, “No, Lord.” Those two words are not compatible together. Eventually, Peter would come to understand that reality.

While Jesus was being brought before the high priest in his house, Peter was following at a distance and warming himself by the fire in the courtyard. He was trying to hear and see what was going to happen to Jesus. Those around the fire recognized Peter as one of Jesus’ followers. Peter repeatedly denies this accusation of being one of Jesus’ followers.

“But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.” Luke 22:60-62

The dad strength of Jesus struck Peter again through eye contact and remembering what Jesus has said. Sometimes the strength of a look in the eye is every bit as powerful as a word that is spoken. Looks and words often times are more powerful even than physical strength.

My mother told me that growing up, her father never laid a hand on the kids. He just had to LOOK at them and they knew they were in trouble and cried in repentance asking forgiveness.

In the Mark 8 scene, the rebuke to Peter by Jesus impacted him and the other disciples who listened to what Jesus had to say with such authority.

“Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” Mark 8:33

Just as Satan tried to get Jesus to focus on the things of man while he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Peter was talking about similar things in this part of the story. Peter could see power and honor on the horizon with Jesus, not suffering, rejection and death. But Jesus saw such things that was formulating in Peter’s mind as being in conflict with the mission of God and the redemption, rescue, and salvation of humanity from sin, death, Satan and hell. Jesus had a focused mission he intended to accomplish; nothing was going to thwart his mission that was in line with the things of God.

Yes, the things of God at this point in time included suffering, rejection, and death. Surely Peter had heard of Isaiah 53 that foretells all of these things in this passage concerning the Suffering Servant of God. However, it is not difficult to move the focus of one’s mind from the things of God and onto the things of man whether a first or twenty first century follower of Jesus. Thus, Jesus would make clear what those on the side of God needed to do.

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s

will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Mark 8:34-38

In these final verses of our text, Jesus articulates the prerequisites to true discipleship. The first is to deny oneself. The second is taking up one’s cross. These requirements go far beyond just “not sinning;” they move on to laying down one’s life in a willing manner as a way of submitting to the power and strength of one’s heavenly Father. The Dad-Strength of God is more powerful than the lure of sinful choices or even a selfish life that comes up short when compared to the things of God.

These two prerequisites, coupled with the invitation by Jesus to “Follow me,” leads to an opportunity to make it our habit to follow in the same form of Jesus. In other words, “Follow me” interprets the first two prerequisites of what it means to live on the side of God and keep our minds fixed on such things rather than on the things of man.

Submitting oneself to the cross willingly says something about how much belief and experience one has in the power of our Father’s dad-strength to raise us up again to new life. Bearing the cross is not about irritation or rhythm disruption in our life. It is about death. The only reason a sane person would carry his cross daily is because of the supernatural strength that comes from beyond himself. Cross bearing is only done via dad strength.

Daily cross bearing leads to the death of a small life on our own that is lived in our own strength. It is an exchange for a new life that is lived and experienced in the power of our Heavenly Dad’s strength. Such a life leads to and ends in glory. In the end, our Messiah, the Son of Man, will return in power and with great strength that we all will experience in great glory. This, too, will pin us in amazement of the dad strength that our glorious God will exhibit on that day. Until then, we should not be surprised when we as followers of Jesus also encounter suffering, rejection and even death for our alignment with our Savior. Ultimately, those who have put their faith, hope and trust in Jesus also will experience resurrection on the final day. Resurrection is a result of dad strength that comes as a gift from our Father in Heaven who knows a thing or two about conquering the grave. This is a strength and power we as followers of Jesus will remember and rejoice in throughout eternity.

After Jesus’ resurrection, He questioned Peter on the shore...

He said to Peter, Do you love me (with all you have and all you are) – AGAPE

Peter said, “Lord, I love you like a brother.” PHILOS

Jesus returned, “Peter do you know what I’m asking? Do you love Me (unconditionally) - agape.

Peter answered, “Lord, you are like a brother to me, of course I love you.” – philos

Jesus then said, “Peter, Do you love me like your very brother.” – philos

Jesus saw that Peter wasn’t ready to get to the next level, so He came down to Peter’s. He does the same for us. He comes down to our level to get us on board with Him and His plan for our lives. He will meet you where you are and use you for His glory starting right now.