

Forty Days with Jesus
Simon Peter: It Feels Like Dad Strength
Mark 8:31-38

Apostle Peter could ever forget how powerful and strong Jesus truly was in those face to face encounters he had with the Messiah. Today's encounter is from Mark 8:31-38.

This scene follows on the heels of the disciples witnessing Jesus' many miracles. Before the minds of the disciples went too far off-track thinking that Jesus was a political Messiah, he tried to redirect their misconceptions and point them to the reality of what was on the horizon.

For the disciples, a Messiah would be triumphant, a conqueror, and not acquainted with suffering, rejection, and death.

Mark 8:31-32 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. He repeats this message two more times on Mark 9:30-32 and 10:32-34.

One of the reasons Jesus' disciples had such a hard time understanding what they were hearing is because of the dichotomy they were experiencing. On one hand, there was a forecast of suffering, rejection, death and resurrection of their Messiah. On the other hand, crowds were gathering and following Jesus not only for His messages of truth and hope, but also He was feeding hungry mouths and healing lives that only the Messiah could do. These two experiences with Jesus didn't work in their mental model of a Messiah!

Because Jesus understood the disciples (and their contemporary Jews) mental model of who a Messiah is to be, Jesus referred to himself not as the Messiah, but as "Son of Man." Jesus referred to himself as "Son of Man" rather than "Messiah", because the former was not 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 politically motivated mob scene, that would not have allowed him to prepare his disciples for what was to come with the same deliberate pace and precision.

The "Son of Man" title tied back to what the prophet Daniel writes about concerning judgment in Daniel 7:13-14. This is Dad-strength.

Because Jesus was not fitting their mental model, Peter, the spokesman for the group, rebuked Jesus.
Mark 8:32b

The word rebuke is *epitimao* 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. Mark 8:33

The reason Jesus flexed his power here is because Jesus recognized Satan was using Peter to attempt to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross by redirecting his thoughts from the things of God and onto the things of man. This is the exact tactic Satan attempted on Jesus His 40 days in the wilderness. Matthew 4:8-10

Peter felt the weight of Jesus' strength in His words and in his countenance that was filled with spiritual authority and intensity. It was strength from God the Father. This would not be the last time.

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 Jesus' spoken words; rather, Jesus would overpower Peter simply through the locking of their eyes upon each other.

After the Last Supper, Jesus told Peter he would deny him before the rooster crowed.

While Jesus was being brought before the high priest, 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. Luke 22:60-62

The dad strength of Jesus struck Peter again through eye contact and remembering what Jesus has said.

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

Jesus, however, saw what was formulating in Peter's mind as conflicting 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.

Surely Peter had heard of Isaiah 53 that foretells all 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. Mark 8:34-38

Jesus articulates the prerequisites to true discipleship: to deny oneself and to take 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.

These two prerequisites, coupled with the invitation by Jesus to "Follow me," leads to an opportunity to make it your 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 yourself to the cross *willingly* says something about how much belief and experience you have in the power of your Father's dad-strength, to raise you up again to new life. Bearing the cross is not about irritation or rhythm disruption in your 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 him or herself. Cross bearing is only done via dad strength.

Daily cross bearing leads to the death of your small, self-centered life that is lived in your own strength. It is an exchange for a new life that is lived and experienced in the power of your Heavenly Dad's strength. Such a life leads to and ends in glory.

In the end, your Messiah, the Son of Man, will return in power and with great strength that you will experience in great glory. This, too, will pin you in amazement of the dad strength that your glorious God will exhibit on that day. Until then, you should not be surprised when you as a follower of Jesus also encounter suffering, rejection and even death for your alignment with your 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.