

DECISION TIME

Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-37; Luke 9:22-25
Yeshua §86

I struggled with moodiness in high school and college. Sometimes a friend would want to know what was going on and they'd be sympathetic that I was having a bad day. They were trying to help, but actually they were feeding my my self-centered, self-indulgence.

Sarah Woolery was the one person who gave me what I really needed – and that was a kick in the pants. When I copped a mood on Sarah, she got in my face, called it what it was – sin, and told me in no uncertain terms that I would never do that to her again. God used Sarah's words to set me free from moodiness!

I think something like this happened between Peter and Jesus. Peter thought Jesus needed one thing when in fact, Jesus needed just the opposite.

The story takes place in Caesarea Philippi, gentile territory north of the Sea of Galilee. It was here that Jesus quizzed the disciples asking them who the people thought He was. In the midst of this, Peter declared his conviction that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God.

This was a milestone. From this time forward, Jesus talked about the establishment of His Church and He revealed the suffering required of Him to accomplish God's plan of salvation.

PETER REACTS NEGATIVELY TO THE NECESSITY OF JESUS' SUFFERING

MATTHEW 16:21-23 (ESV)

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Part 1.	The Coming of the King
Part 2.	The Authentication of the King
Part 3.	The Controversy over the King
Part 4.	The Training of the Twelve by the King
→ Decision Time	
Part 5.	The Opposition to the King:
Part 6.	The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
Part 7.	The Official Presentation of the King
Part 8.	The Preparation for the Death of the King
Part 9.	The Trial of the King:
Part 10.	The Death of the King
Part 11.	The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King
Part 12.	The Sequels

Now that Peter (and presumably the disciples) were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), Jesus began to reveal to them His death and resurrection. Over the course of the next many months, Jesus will tell them several times that He will be rejected by the spiritual leaders of Israel, He will be killed and He will rise from the dead. Mark records that Jesus *said this plainly*, meaning Jesus did not say this in a parable (Mark 8:32). Even so, the disciples did not understand; the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus still took them by surprise.

Jesus clearly revealed four things. First, He must go to Jerusalem. Second, once in Jerusalem, He must suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes. Third, He would be killed. And fourth, He will rise again on the third day.

Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus saying He *must* go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. This is very important to observe: Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection were not chance occurrences but the predetermined plan of God. From childhood Jesus studied the Hebrew Scriptures under the guidance of His Heavenly Father (Isa. 50:4). He understood from Psalms 16, Psalms 22 and Isaiah 53 that Messiah would be killed and then resurrected. Messiah's suffering was the means by which God would deliver His people from judgment.

Peter reacted negatively. Matthew tells us: *And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him*. The Greek word for *rebuke* means "to reprove" or "to censure". It describes a person trying to prevent an action from taking place and using physical force to do so. The picture here is of Peter physically pulling Jesus aside and saying, *Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you*. Perhaps Peter's reaction was a mix of sympathy that Jesus not suffer these things and a mix of Messianic expectation that anticipated the restoration of the kingdom not the rejection of the Messiah.

Jesus' response was equally strong. In that moment, Peter was like Satan, the Adversary. Satan's purpose was to derail Jesus from fulfilling God's plan of salvation in God's way. God's plan involved the suffering and death of the Messiah. In the wilderness, three times, Satan appealed to Jesus' self-preservation and the natural, human aversion to physical suffering to try and subvert Jesus' obedience to God's plan.

As a loving friend not wanting Jesus to suffer, Peter, inadvertently, was doing the same. Jesus needed *en-couragement*. He needed Peter to affirm His mission and bolster His resolve, not undermine it.

This confrontation with Peter lead naturally into the following challenge to the disciples.

IF THE DISCIPLES WANTED TO CONTINUE TO FOLLOW JESUS, THEY NEEDED TO BE WILLING TO DIE WITH HIM

MATTHEW 16:24–28 (ESV)

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

The future for Jesus is rejection, suffering, death and resurrection. The challenge was very straight forward: if the disciples wanted to continue to follow Jesus as His disciples, they needed to be willing to be rejected, to suffer and to possibly die with Him. The cross they needed to take up was the cross of crucifixion. They needed to settle in themselves that if it came to it, they will accept being crucified rather than abandoning Jesus.

And Jesus argued that following Him even to the point of death was the best way to go for three reasons. First, following Jesus is to experience the abundant life. Second, if they continue to follow Jesus, they will receive reward when He comes again (and now we know that that takes place after the Rapture at the Judgment Seat of Christ). And third, if they continue to follow Jesus, some will see Him in His kingdom in the near future (Transfiguration) and they all will be with Jesus in His kingdom when it comes in all its fullness.

It was decision time. Follow Jesus and suffer, but gain life, reward and a place in the kingdom. Or bale and lose it all.

Maybe it was at this point that Judas began to seriously think about leaving Jesus?

This is one of those passages that preachers can get a lot of mileage out of. But we need to keep it in its historical context. Peter declared his conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Based on Peter's confession, Jesus began to talk and reveal more about the establishment of His Church and about

His rejection, death and resurrection by which He will accomplish God's salvation plan.

Peter reacted negatively to the news that Jesus must suffer and be killed. Jesus rebuked Peter for prioritizing personal safety and comfort over accomplishing God's will. He then turned to all the disciples and issued the challenge that if they wanted to continue to follow Him, they needed to be willing to suffer and die with Him. He assured them that if they chose to continue to follow Him, they would gain true life, reward and a place in His kingdom.

For most of us in the West, we have not been called upon to suffer for being followers of Jesus. But that is changing. As the Apostasy deepens (2 Tim. 3:1-5), hatred of the Church and of Christians will intensify. Our faith will be challenged. For some of us, we will face the same challenge as the disciples: to follow Jesus will require us to be willing to suffer and even die for Him.

Without diluting the historical reality of this passage, there is a very real sense in which we need to be living on this continuum of self-denial now. We should be living for Jesus now, investing our time, energy and money in serving Him; looking for and loving His appearing. We should not be putting our time, energy and money primarily in securing ourselves and entertaining ourselves – living for the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*. If we are, we are forfeiting the life of the Spirit now and forfeiting rewards and authority in the Messianic Kingdom (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

There is another principle in this passage regarding suffering. Those who are suffering for doing God's will do not need our pity; they need our encouragement. Jesus did not need or want Peter's pity; He needed Peter's encouragement to strengthen His resolve to persevere through the suffering. This is what we need to give our suffering brothers and sisters to whom we are ministering through VOM. Encouragement is what we will need to give one another when God gives us the privilege to suffer for the name of Christ.