

Must

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Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 0 0] If you turn to Mark chapter 8, please. As you do that, we're aware that we have sort of put on hold our series on knowing Christianity, you know, the unique things of the Christian faith.

And now we come to approaching the cross. Yes, it's a time of Easter, or we're coming to a time of Easter. It's good to think again, even if we've heard it a dozen times before, to think again about Jesus approaching the cross, that it wasn't a surprise to him, but planned by the Father and taken up by the Son.

So we're going to read just two verses, Mark 8, verse 31 and 32. So now I hear God's word.

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and being rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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.

[1 : 4 3] Well, may God bless his word to us. I don't know how much time you spend reading God's word.

It's a challenge to sit and read. I'll give you an idea of how quick you could read certain parts of God's word and get you through it.

So, the book of Galatians. You could sit and read that in a shorter amount of time than it would take you to watch East Enders. Not that I've timed it, but the book of Galatians normally takes about 27 minutes to read, just under half an hour.

You know, are you going to be able to take it all in? Yeah, probably not. But it's worth just sitting and reading and getting the habit of being able to not read sections of God's word, but read entire books in one sitting or two sittings.

The Gospel of Mark can be read in, say, three sittings. You know, why don't you say, right, over the course of this week, I'm going to divide Mark up.

[3 : 0 3] There's 16 chapters. I'll do it in four sittings. I'll do it in four chapters a day. You know, four days and you're done. You've gone through the entire Gospel of Mark. You know, four chapters is not a lot, is it?

Especially with Mark, because they're short chapters. But you ought to take great enjoyment in just sitting and reading. And here's why. Because it's not like reading any other book.

You know, this is God's living word, a word in which the Spirit of God works within and through. And changes happen in you, in your mind, in your heart, in your will, in your affections, in your love for God.

Everything begins to change as you sit and think upon the word of God. So, you know, I'm not going to slant daily readings.

Yeah, they're good. The difficulty that I have with them is that often they get you to jump around the Bible a lot. You know, a few verses here, a few verses there, a little bit out of Matthew, a little bit out of Revelation.

[4 : 07] And then all of a sudden you're in Jeremiah or Leviticus. You know, there's nothing wrong with that. But why not get the grasp of the entire gospel by taking time to read Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?

Or even all of them. You know, just sit down and say, right, I'm going to make a conscious effort, four chapters a day over this next week. And you'll do it.

And you would have read the entire gospel. And you won't just feel better at the end of it. You all would have picked up on stuff that you perhaps didn't be for. Here's another reason for doing it.

Our love for God grows proportionately to how much we understand the gospel. Let me say that again. Our love for God grows proportionately to how much we understand the gospel.

I'll give you an explanation. Jesus forgives the woman of her sins. And you'll remember she comes into Simon's house where Jesus is staying. And her tears wet the feet of Jesus.

[5 : 13] And she dries them with her hair. And then Jesus tells this parable to Simon because he's just appalled at the whole thing. Appalled at the whole thing. You know, and the parable is basically, you know, two people who had debts.

One person's debt was larger than the other. And he just says to Simon, you know, both people have their debts paid off. But which one would love them more? Well, I suppose the one with the greater debt.

Yeah, you've got it right. You know, reading scripture, it does increase the size of your knowledge concerning your debt before God. But here's the joy of it.

As you learn of the enormity of your own debt before God, just like the parable says, your love for God will grow proportionately, just like it did in that woman's life, because she knew how much she had been forgiven of.

Yeah, that's the wonder of being able just to sit down and read God's word and to take it in. Now, Mark has a particular way of arranging his gospel.

[6 : 20] He doesn't do it like Matthew. And Matthew has a different way than Luke. And Luke has a different way than John. Mark is the shortest of all the gospels. And he arranges it in a particular way.

So, commonly, you know, when you're teaching this to students who want to know the structure of a book, you would say Mark is divided into two halves. The first half, chapters 1 through to 8, is answering the question, who is Jesus?

You know, so if you want to read the first half of Mark, have this question in your mind. Who is Jesus? And then what you'll find is that the first eight chapters will answer that question.

In the second half, chapters 9 through to 16, it explains why Jesus must die.

Now, that kind of makes the book of Mark quite easy to read. Right? You know, just as you go home and now pick it up, you know, the first eight chapters and the last eight chapters, I know what I'm going to read.

[7 : 25] The first is addressing who is Jesus, and the second half is addressing why Jesus must die. Yeah, that makes it simple, doesn't it, to be able to go away and understand Mark's main concern.

Here's the joy of reading the Bible a little bit closer. Mark has another way of structuring his gospel. Mark begins his gospel with these words, It sounds a little bit like Genesis, doesn't it?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. You know, that's an indicator. Mark's trying to tell you something without actually telling you it. He's highlighting it. The reason he arranges the beginning of his gospel very similar to Genesis is because he's got something to say.

Now, if you go back to the creation story, what do you read? You'll read that in the very beginning, God created the world in six days. That means you have six evenings.

And then the seventh day. What did God do on the seventh day? Did he work? No. He rested. He rested. You know, wonderful.

[8 : 44] Now, here's the joy of Mark. In the gospel of Mark, Mark has six evenings. Six evenings take us through Mark.

Mark is dividing his book up into six symbolic days in which the Son of God will work. At the end of which, the Sabbath, you have the resurrection.

New life. Eternal life. And a new creation. Isn't that wonderful? Here's how he puts it. Here's how he puts it. Mark 15, verse 42.

This is after the five evenings. This is the sixth evening. And when evening had come, since it was the day of preparation, that evening is the day before the Sabbath.

The next day on the Sabbath, you have the resurrection of Jesus. You have the eternal Sabbath, the eternal rest. You have people entering into a new creation.

[9 : 45] You know, what do you think Mark's, what do you think Mark is trying to tell you? Well, this is what he's telling you. In fact, if you want to know all the evening passages, come and see me at another time.

I don't have time this evening to be able to give them all and to explain them all. But Mark divides his book up into six evenings and therefore seven days. And the reason Mark does this is because he's going to explain to you that the Son of God has come to do his work on six symbolic days.

They're not real days, they're symbolic days, symbolic periods of time. On which the seventh day, he rises from the dead. Entering into a new rest and taking us with him.

What do you think the Gospel of Mark is about? The Gospel of Mark is about God showing you that through the Son, he is going to make a new creation. And bring you into the rest of that new creation.

And right at the very center of this book, right at the very center of that work, we find these words. And Jesus 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.

[11 : 06] At the very center of the book, you have the very key to how Christ will accomplish this new creation. He has to be killed. He has to be rejected.

He has to suffer. He has to die on the cross. And he has to rise from the dead. The Son of Man. You know, the word must, which Jesus uses here, is a very important word for understanding the Gospel.

You know, words are important. You know, especially the word must. But I want you to notice who's saying it. You're going to say, well, it's Jesus. Yeah, I know it's Jesus.

But Jesus doesn't call himself Jesus here. Mark doesn't call Jesus Jesus here. The Son of Man must suffer. The Son of Man must suffer.

Who's the Son of Man? Well, throughout Mark, this is what you read about the Son of Man. It's not going to mean anything to you if you haven't read the Old Testament. You know, Mark's assuming you've read the Old Testament, a bit like John does.

[12 : 11] You know, I used to get a little bit frustrated with the Gideons that just used to hand out New Testaments. Because so much of the New Testament, in order to understand it, depends on having read the Old.

That doesn't mean that, you know, people aren't going to get saved just from reading the New Testament. It does mean, however, they're going to be a little bit confused, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. How are you supposed to understand that without an Old Testament?

You can. The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, Mark 2. Okay, but how are you meant to understand that without an Old Testament? You see, it's crucial.

Mark 2, the Son of Man is able to forgive sins. Has the authority to forgive sins. Yeah. Authority to forgive sins. Well, can't anybody forgive sins? No. You've got to have the authority to do it.

Mark 8, the Son of Man must suffer, be killed, be rejected, and die and rise again. Later on in Mark, we read that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

[13 : 15] Mark 10. Also, the Son of Man will sit at the right hand of God with power from on high. Mark 14. Fulfilling Psalm 110.

You know, this sounds like someone incredibly important. Who is the Son of Man? Well, Daniel says, the book of Daniel, not me, although I'm saying it as well.

He has this to say, that he is the ruler of all with all authority, and to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom that all peoples, nations, and all languages should serve him.

His dominion. His dominion is an everlasting dominion. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed. In other words, he is the total ruler.

You know, I began this service this evening by drawing attention to the fact that we are saved by a homeless man. We are saved by a homeless man.

[14 : 17] A poor man. But Mark here, the Son of Man must suffer, is drawing our attention to the fact that we are also saved by the ruler of all.

The one who has complete authority. You know, you don't mess with Jesus. You know, Jesus is meek and mild and gentle. Yeah, he is.

But he's also the ruler of all, whose kingdom cannot be destroyed. There's power from on high. Now, that's Jesus. You know, I find it strange that that type of person should suffer.

You know, when you think of other people in the world that have, say, similar types of powers, you know, they make other people suffer. You know, the Son of Man has enough power to make other people.

Why should he? But no. The Son of Man must suffer. You know, he doesn't make other people suffer. Rather, he must suffer many things, be rejected, killed, and then rise after three days.

[15 : 22] And then he uses the word must, and this is where I want our attention to be. You know, think about it for a moment. Why must? You know, I asked myself the question this afternoon as I was just reading through this passage again.

Why must I be here tonight? And do you know what? There isn't a must. Interestingly. You know, why must I do anything?

On its own, there isn't a must. Just think about it for a moment. Why must you work? While on its own, there isn't a must.

Hopefully you're going to see what we're getting to. You know, why must salvation, why must forgiveness, why must eternal life only be accomplished through suffering and rejection and killing?

Why must it happen that way? Jesus is quite adamant that there's no other way. It must happen this way. So, you know, let's just think for a minute about this word must.

[16 : 39] You know, why does something become a must? I've thought about this for a long time, and there's only a couple of reasons that I could come up with. Number one, something becomes a must when something else is involved or someone else is involved.

Something's at stake or someone's will needs to be fulfilled. You know, if you want certain things to happen, then you must do certain other things.

You know, if I want to eat, then I must work to buy food or go somewhere with us.

The must comes when other things are at stake, when other things are in play. Put it this way, I must break eggs to make an omelette.

Can I remove the must? You see how the must becomes necessary because of the end result. You want something else, and so the must comes into play.

[17 : 46] I want to learn how to swim. Must I get in the water? Yes, if you want to learn how to swim. So the must only ever appears when something else is at play, when something else is at stake, when some other will needs to be fulfilled.

Think about it this way. You're walking along a harbor wall, and you notice in the water a child drowning. Must you jump in? No?

There's no must there, is there? The child can't make you jump in, just like we can't make God save us. Do I want the child to drown?

No. Then I must jump in. Do I want the child to live? Yes. Then I must jump in. But you see, until I have a will concerning that child in the water, there's no must.

There's no must at all. Until I have a love for that person's life, until I want that person to live rather than drown, there's no must. But the moment I don't want him to drown, and I want him to live, the must comes into play.

[19 : 13] But until that point, there is no must. You know, that's why we can get frustrated at some people, because, you know, they really must do things, but there's no heart or desire, and they just don't do it.

We think they must, but when they don't, it's easy to understand why, because there's no heart for it.

Know that something else has to be at play. Must I serve Jesus? Yeah, think about that one for a moment. Must I serve Jesus in the church?

You know, let your head get a little bit scrambled over that. Think that through. Why must I? Well, the must surely comes out of desire, surely comes out of love.

Let me give you another example. This is one from the Old Testament. When God rescued his people from Egypt in Exodus 13, this is one of my favorite verses. It says this, when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer.

[20 : 26] For God said, lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt. Why must God lead them another way?

When he could lead them through the land of the Philistines, he doesn't. Why must he lead them another way? Well, the answer is because they would see war, because they would change their mind and because they would return to Egypt.

God doesn't want that to happen. And the moment he doesn't want that to happen, then he must lead them another way. Do you see how your will concerning other people and what you want for them creates the must?

But until that point, the must doesn't exist. The moment you want something for somebody else, it creates the must. God didn't want them to see war. Why not?

Because if they did, they would change their minds and if they did, they'd return to Egypt. God didn't want that. So he must lead them another way. I think about the cross now.

[21 : 36] I think about God. I think about Jesus. Jesus says, the son of man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and then on the third day, rise.

one of my favorite stories in the New Testament is the woman at the well. The interesting thing about it is Jesus says that he must go through Samaria. Well, he didn't have to.

He could have went another way to get to where he was going to. Why must he? Well, because there was no other way of meeting the woman at the well other than going through Samaria.

You see, the reason why you must do things is because other things are at stake or because you have a will or because of the situation. That's what creates the must.

So here we have the son of God, the son of man saying, must suffer. Think about your own discipleship for a minute.

[22 : 36] Jesus said, you know, unless or you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me if you want to be a disciple. You know, what I think Jesus is saying, he's saying, look, there is no other way.

This must happen if you want to follow me. Here we see the will of God in the word must.

Jesus must suffer because God so loved the world. It's as simple as that. God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so Jesus must go to the cross.

God wants to make peace, he wants to reconcile, he wants to forgive, so Jesus must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and then rise. You know, so when Peter says here to Jesus, no Lord, he doesn't understand what's at stake.

He's basically saying, no, there's another way of doing it. You know, how many of you have had a conversation with perhaps a friend, and you're trying to explain to them, look, there is no other way of doing it, it must be done this way, and they go, no, it can happen another way, or you can forget about that bit, or no, this must happen.

[23 : 53] You understand that you've thought about all the other ways, and it's just not possible, it must happen this way, and your friend just can't see it. You know, that's Peter, you know, Peter's standing before Jesus here, as Jesus rightly points out with his mind, not on the things of God, but on the things of Satan, the things of man.

He's not thinking about this from God's point of view. You know, he's not thinking about this from the point of view that Jesus has to do this in order that he, Peter, is to be saved.

He's forgetting about that. There must be another way. No, there's no other way. Here are three reasons then as we sort of draw this to a close. The first must, or the first reason for must, is because salvation can come no other way.

Jesus must suffer and die, or else no one gets saved. It's a must. It's a necessity. You know, we often read the Bible, I think, quite selfishly.

We read the Bible, as I said, I made a joke about it a couple of weeks ago, but I think some of you took it more seriously than I initially thought, of reading your Bible like a horoscope.

[25 : 25] Yeah, that verse didn't do it for me, let's find another one. Or your daily readings, you know, you read your daily reading, but you don't like it very much, so you do the next days. You know, and you treat the Bible selfishly.

What has it got from me? You know, Peter, is Peter thinking about Jesus or is he thinking about himself? Well, it's clear that when you read the gospel in its entirety, they don't want Jesus to go.

It looks like he's thinking about Jesus, but primarily he's thinking about himself. You know, we're all tempted to fall into that kind of selfish reading of scripture, aren't we? salvation, yes, it's for you.

Jesus must suffer and die to save you and me, to save us. The next thing, the next must, is that reconciliation, you know, this is slightly different than salvation, but it's included, you know, the peace between God and us.

God makes peace through the cross. The only way that we can be at peace with God is if Jesus must suffer and die.

[26 : 37] That reconciliation, you know, we're set apart from God, we have no connection with God and God brings us close to him. Why? Because Jesus must suffer and die. And then thirdly, it's found in the name Son of Man.

Why must Jesus suffer and die? Well, because he is the Son of Man. You know, God establishes his rule on earth at the cross.

It's sort of a power transfer. You know, the prince of the air, the prince of demons, you know, he has his way. Remember the parable that Jesus tells in Matthew 13? In fact, go away and read Matthew 13.

The strong man must be bound. Why? Because you can't plunder his goods while he's not bound. What does that mean? It means that God in Christ defeats Satan, bounds him, and then men and women, boys and girls, living in his house can be redeemed and saved.

First, the man of the house must be bound and then his goods can be plundered. That's happening at the cross. Jesus is binding the strong man and he is plundering the strong man's goods, you.

[27 : 59] You're redeemed by Christ. That's what the son of man does, the rule. God establishes his rule, his rightful rule and power and authority over this world.

So yes, there's reconciliation, yes, there's salvation, but more importantly, there is rule. I don't know what you're thinking. You look out at your friends tonight or perhaps even, you know, someone at home that you're going to go home to, you think, well, they're not living under the rule of God.

No, you've got that wrong. Everyone's under the rule of God. The distinction is not that some are and some aren't. The distinction is that some are living obediently under it and some are taking no notice of it at all.

That's a frightening thought, isn't it? That we're all under now, this very moment, under the rule of God. You know, we've all seen it in children. Some children take notice of their parents and some don't.

You know, we've all seen it in classrooms. Perhaps even we've been the child, the teacher walks in and they deserve their respect. You know, but they don't always get it. Now, are we under the teacher's rule and authority?

[29 : 09] Yeah. But do some abide by it and do some mess around? Yeah, of course. It's no different with God. Everybody is currently living under the rule of God.

Not all are obeying and following Jesus, but all are living under his rule. Well, let's have the exhortation then as we bring this to a close. What does this mean for all of us?

Well, number one, don't be tempted to be indifferent to the rule of God. You know, don't be tempted to treat it lightly, to think, yeah, well, the Son of Man is there in the right hand of God, you know, while his enemies are being made his foot still, it's no big deal.

No, do you know, it's a massive deal. Big, big deal. You know, so take that on, take that on board. You know, go away thinking about that a lot.

Also, Jesus is the messianic ruler. You know, don't join in the world in taking no notice of just how important Jesus is. You know, I understand that your mind and heart can be occupied by a whole host of things in the course of a week.

[30 : 21] You know, don't forget that everything you touch and every person you see is under the rule of God. Don't join in the world thinking, I can get away with it for a day, or it doesn't matter for a day.

No, live and show others what it looks like to live under the rule of God. Also, Jesus must, do you know, if God didn't love you, then there was no must for Jesus.

If God didn't want to forgive you, then there's no must suffer. It's because there's no need. The moment God decided to love you, then Jesus must suffer and die.

die. Let's finish with the same way that we started. Remember how Mark puts his gospel together. You have these six symbolic days in which the Son of God, the Son of Man does this work of making you a new creation.

He must suffer, be rejected, be killed, die, and rise, the seventh day, the resurrection day, the eternal rest.

[31 : 41] You know, salvation is much, much more than just you being saved. It's about God creating a world all over again, brand new, which we get to live in, and which those who don't follow Jesus Christ get to leave by the heavy hand of God.

Take it on board. Think about what it means to live under the Son of Man. He forgives you, he loves you, but he's also your ruler.

He's also the one who has all authority over us. It's a joy, something to rejoice in. Amen.