

**CALVARY BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(PANDAN)**

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DHW Bible Class

LESSON 18

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus took time away from the crowds of people coming to Him in order to be with His disciples. Time was short and there was much to teach His disciples. The disciples needed to know who their Master Jesus really was. Their concept of a politico-military Messiah was out of line because it was not in accordance with the

plan and purpose of God. Their focus and priority of life as disciples of Jesus needed to be corrected. All these things Jesus began to teach His disciples.

UNDERSTANDING

Warning Against the Leaven of the Pharisees

Matthew 16:5-12, Mark 8:13-21.

The conspiracy of the combined parties of the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians was intensifying against Jesus. The Pharisees hated Jesus and they would go to any length to destroy Him. To avoid their wicked scheme, Jesus departed to the other side of the lake by boat with His disciples. When they arrived on the other side, Jesus told them to beware of "**the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.**" The disciples must have talked among themselves that they had not taken more bread with them for they had only one loaf. They were evidently upset about it. Sensing their concern, Jesus rebuked them. Jesus posed six questions to them: "**Why are you preoccupying yourselves with the fact that you have no bread? Do you not see and understand? Has your heart been hardened? Have you not eyes to see? Do you not have ears to hear? Do you not remember?**" Jesus expected His disciples to know who He was and to understand it by now. Despite their close association with Jesus, and having seen the many sign-miracles which He performed, and heard His authoritative and

powerful teaching, they were still thinking on a physical level. They were slow in learning about Jesus. The disciples had not yet learned fully who Jesus was, and the power He possessed although they had been so close to Him and seen how He had lived among them. Obviously they had forgotten the two miracles in which Jesus multiplied the bread and fed the five thousand in the first instance, and the four thousand in the second.

So Jesus had to tell them plainly that His reference to “the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” was not about bread. He was warning them against the doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They needed to be alert and beware of their doctrines. Many had been influenced by the teachings and leadership of these religious leaders, and left Jesus. The use of the figure “leaven” is significant. A little leaven added to the dough will cause the size of the dough to rise and become bigger. Jesus was warning His disciples that the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees which were harmful would act like leaven and influence many people including the disciples themselves. They must guard themselves against such harmful influence.

Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida.

Mark 8:22-26.

They landed at Bethsaida near the place where Jesus had fed the five thousand. When Jesus arrived there, the people who besought Him brought a blind man to Him. They begged Jesus to touch the man, undoubtedly to ask Jesus to heal the man. Jesus did something unusual. He “took the

man by the hand,” and walking hand in hand, He led him out of the town, away from the crowd. The reason why Jesus led the man away was to have a private session with this man. He did not want to attract attention in the healing of this man. Many times, Jesus had told those whom He had healed not to publicize His healing. There were attempts to make Jesus their king and that would bring Jesus into direct confrontation with Herod and the Roman government. Just performing miracles and healing people was not Jesus’ mission. He had performed many miracles and healed many people to authenticate His claims, His Person and the authority of His teaching. However, Jesus would not turn away someone in need. So He took the blind man to a quiet and private place.

What a beautiful sight to see Jesus, the Son of God walking hand in hand with the blind man! Mark is the only writer who recorded this incident and the fine detail. Then Jesus did another unusual thing. He spat on the eyes of the blind man, and put His hands on him. Jesus then asked him if he could see. The man looked up and said that he could see men walking as trees. In other words, his vision was not clear. Then Jesus touched his eyes again, and made him to look up, and his eyesight was completely restored. He could see every man clearly. Jesus then told him to go home and not to go into the town or to tell the people in the town.

Why Jesus spat on the eyes of the blind man in order to effect healing, we will never know. But Jesus knew what was in the man and definitely the method He used

to heal the blind man was appropriate. It is possible that what Jesus did was to help the man's faith in Him. Another interesting observation is that this was the first time Jesus performed a miracle that resulted in a gradual cure. Surely this does not mean that Jesus did not have the power to heal instantly. Jesus had proven in all previous cases that He had absolute power over the elements of nature, sicknesses and diseases, and even evil spirits. Jesus must have a good reason for doing this healing in this manner. One good explanation is that Jesus wanted to show to His disciples that their faith was like this man's sight. They are partially blind still because of their continual influence by the teachings of the Pharisees. It would become clearer as they walked closely with Him. Jesus had just rebuked them for their lack of faith and understanding of Him. But Jesus was intent on taking them "by the hand" and walking with them so that they would eventually be able to see Him clearly as who He really was.

Peter's Second Confession of Christ.

Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-30, Luke 9:18-21.

Jesus then visited Caesarea Philippi, a town which was about 32 kilometres north-east from the Sea of Galilee. It is near the foot of Mount Hermon (height: about 3,000 metres), the highest mountain in Israel. The springs in this region are the sources of the River Jordan that flows to the Sea of Galilee, and winds its way south ending in the Dead Sea.

Away from the crowd, Jesus sometimes prayed with His disciples. Jesus then asked His disciples: "**Whom do men say that the Son of man am?**" They replied that some said that He was John the baptizer; some Elijah, some Jeremiah or some that He was one of the old prophets. It was not that Jesus was not aware what people thought about Him. The reason we can think why Jesus posed this question to His disciples is that He wanted His disciples to consider very carefully about other people's opinion of Him. The people whom Jesus was referring to were not those of His enemies, like the Pharisees and the scribes who had accused Jesus of being in league with Satan. But the people, whom Jesus was referring to, were those who were following Him and who had heard His preaching and teaching, and who had seen the miracles that He performed. Their answer was very great in their estimation at that time. To be compared with John the baptizer, Jeremiah and Elijah would have made any prophet proud. But when these names were compared with the LORD they were grossly inadequate. The reason was that they were still men and not God.

Jesus now asked them another question: "**Whom say ye (plural) that I am?**" By this direct question to them, Jesus made them think very carefully what they knew about Him. They had earlier shown a lack of faith and discernment concerning Jesus. His Twelve disciples knew that the answer they gave to Jesus about people's opinions about Jesus was grossly inadequate. Furthermore what others think of Christ is not

as important as what each and every disciple think of Him. And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The title "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah". In the Old Testament, the "Messiah" is God's promised Deliverer to the nation Israel, the supreme "Anointed One", who will come to be High Priest, King, Prophet and Saviour. Peter's answer firmly established in their minds and heart that Jesus was their promised Messiah and that He was also the Son of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein. Simon Peter spoke on behalf of the Twelve. Jesus revealed to them that Simon's testimony did not originate from his own knowledge and wisdom, but that it was revealed to him by God the Father in heaven. Nevertheless, Jesus remarked that Simon Peter was blessed. Indeed, all those who acknowledge and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God will be eternally blessed. To confess that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God is to accept all His teachings and do His will.

Then Jesus said to Simon Peter, **"That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."** This passage has been used by the Roman Catholic Church to teach that the church was built (1) on Peter, and that he was made (2) the first Pope and Bishop of Rome, and that (3) the

Roman Catholic papacy has since continued beginning from Peter. The theologians of the Roman Catholic Church are not only presumptuous but utterly unbiblical.

The name "Peter" in Greek is *petros* (singular, masculine), and the word "rock" which comes after it is *petra* (singular, feminine). One widely accepted interpretation of this passage is to understand "Peter" (*petros*) as the small stone, and Jesus Christ as "this rock" (*petra*) on which Christ builds His church. The "rock" cannot be applied to Peter for he himself admitted that Jesus is the chief Cornerstone upon which the church is built (1 Peter 2:6-8).¹ The church is not built upon him. He does not replace Jesus Christ on earth, nor is he the vicar of Christ on earth. It would be disastrous if the church was built on Peter. Peter was impulsive and when his faith was tested, he denied Jesus not once but three times. Peter still sinned even after the Pentecostal experience. He had to be rebuked by the apostle Paul (cf. Gal. 2:11-15). The interpretation that Jesus was the great rock, upon which His church is built is faithful to Scriptures. The church was not built upon Peter or any man.

¹ 1 Peter 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Furthermore, in view of Ephesians 2:19, 20, in which Paul wrote that “the household of God” is “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,*” sheds more light in the understanding of the point that Jesus was making to Peter in this passage. Peter was the leading apostle who always spoke on behalf of the rest of the Twelve. The point to note here is not on the persons of the apostles but their teachings. They were the chosen ones whom God gave the privilege and honour of writing the New Testament, the Word of God. **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*” In the light of this understanding, the church is built upon the apostles (NT) and prophets (OT) of whom Peter represented, and upon Christ who is the chief Cornerstone—the great foundational Rock! Jesus was building His church through the apostles who preached His Word.

Today Jesus is still building His church through the preaching of His Word by His servants. Every believer who accepts His Word is made a member of the church which Jesus declared that He would build. Believers do not build the church. Believers make up the building blocks in which the church is built. **1 Peter 2:5**, “*Ye also, as*

lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is the One who builds the church, and He builds the church through the members of His Body.

Jesus further declared that “**the gates of hell**” will not prevail against the church. The phrase “the gates of hell” has been popularly explained as the evil forces of the devil attacking the church of Christ. This is not a correct interpretation. Firstly, “gates” are not weapons of warfare. Gates are built to keep people out or to keep people in. Secondly, the word “hell” is the Greek word *hades*. *Hades* is the Old Testament Hebrew equivalent of *sheol*. *Sheol* is the place of departed spirits. It is not the final abode of all unbelievers as we understand it from Revelation 20:15.² What Jesus meant by this declaration is that the “gates of Hades” have no power to keep the church (the believers who have died in Christ) in Hades. This is the interpretation because Jesus Christ has conquered sin and death on our behalf; for Christ will “*descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).” And Peter also declared this

² Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

wonderful truth in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost. He preached that God raised Jesus, whom God freed from death because it was impossible for Jesus to be held in its power (Acts 2:22-24). Likewise, since Jesus lives, we too shall live also (John 14:19).

Then Jesus continued and said to Peter: “ **And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind (to forbid) on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose (to permit) on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**” This is an astounding declaration to Peter and the rest of the Twelve, and also to the church. Jesus was saying that He gave authority to Peter and the Twelve, and the church (the body of true believers) that they had the right to tell someone who is unrepentant and who rejects the gospel of the kingdom of God that he has no part or fellowship with God’s people. **THIS IS THE WRITING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.** Christians cannot make this same judgement at all. Christians do not have such authority.

The authority that Peter and the other apostles have is based upon the promised of God. The source of authority is Jesus Christ. Christians just declare the Word of God on matters that are acceptable and pleasing to God, and on matters that are forbidden and abominable to God. Jesus Christ said that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Whatever things are right or wrong, and

whatever things are true or false have already been determined in Him and by Him. On this basis, we as His disciples can make a right judgement based on His judgement as revealed in Holy Scriptures.

Jesus then firmly charged His disciples to tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. The time was not right yet for them to declare to the world that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Christ’s First Prediction of His Passion and Resurrection.

Mark 8:31-9:1, Matthew 16:21-28, Luke 9:22-27.

Having established to the Twelve who He is and the authority they would be given, Jesus began to reveal to them His impending suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. He spoke to them “openly”, meaning that He did not hold back anything from them. When He would make His final trip to Jerusalem, the Jewish religious leaders would arrest and torture Him, kill Him and on the third day He would rise again from the dead. On hearing these words of Jesus, Peter took Him to task, saying: “**Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.**” Once again Peter spoke in behalf of the Twelve. Peter was thinking that he and the other disciples would not let what Jesus had predicted about his death to happen to Him. Jesus would be prevented from such treatment at all costs. Peter had just declared that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Perhaps his thoughts were that of a politico-military Messiah

who would overthrow the Roman government and set up the kingdom of God. Or it could also be that Peter could not bear the thought of Jesus leaving them and they were left without a leader. It could also be both.

The idea of a suffering and dying Messiah was far from their expectation. Jesus rebuked Peter and said, **“Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”** This must be a great shock to Peter who meant well when he said those words to Jesus. Satan actually used Peter to tempt Jesus not to go to Jerusalem and fulfil the plan and purpose of God. Jesus is teaching us that the only and effective way of dealing with Satan whenever he tempts us is to give him a simple and straightforward “Go away” or “Get lost”. Entertain no dialogue, no discussion, and no hesitation! Peter was one of the three that the LORD loved very much. His heart felt words and emotions must mean a lot Jesus. To be used by Satan in this manner to tempt the LORD when he should have been there to encourage the LORD is frightening. Peter was very sincere but sincerely wrong.

The temptation to avoid the cross was real to Jesus. In this instance, Peter took the side of Satan, and he became “an adversary” or a stumbling block to Jesus. Peter was thinking that Jesus’ plan was not good, and he had a better and selfish plan.

After Jesus rebuked Peter, He called the people to Him together with His disciples and began to teach them. Jesus made one of His several paradoxical sayings: **“Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.”** Peter had rejected the thought of the cross. Now Jesus was counteracting any effects of Peter’s words. Anyone who wants to be a follower of Jesus must take up his own cross. The verb-form “deny” and “take up” is significant. It expresses a once-for-all action or decision. In other words, each of His disciples must make a once-for-all and continuous daily decision to take up his cross. The verb “follow” is in the present tense, and so it means to a repeated and continuous or habitual walking with Jesus—walking beside Him. The cross meant crucifixion. Jesus must go the way of the cross. Similarly His disciples must be willing to do the same. The cross means a willingness to make a total and complete commitment of one’s life to Jesus without mental or physical reservations. This would include a life of hardship.

Peter’s earlier words to Jesus suggest that Jesus should avoid the cross and save His own life. If Peter had his way, Jesus would have disobeyed His Father and failed to complete the purpose for which He came to the world. He

would have failed to save men from sin and Hell.

Whoever would save his life would lose it but whoever would lose his life for the gospel's sake would save it. This is a universal principle that applies to every Christian. The word "life" is the Greek word *psuche* which means "soul", the inner person, the "real you". Jesus is saying that whoever is NOT willing to give up his earthly, physical life, the ease and comfort of this temporal life, will lose the opportunity for eternal life. But whoever is willing to give up his earthly and worldly life, even to the extent of suffering and dying for the sake of Jesus Christ, will find eternal life. Jim Elliot, a missionary to the Aucas in South America, once said, "He is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep to gain what he can keep for all eternity."

Jesus strengthened this paradoxical principle by adding: **"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** The answer is: he shall gain nothing. This is a very pointed hyperbole for everyone who lives in the free world where money can be made by sheer hard work. Be ware and be warned. A person may in his lifetime make billions of dollars or amass great wealth and property. The important question is: What shall he gain? In the end, he has to lose all his earthly wealth and riches when he dies. He cannot take a penny with him. Just as he is born and enters this world

naked, he has to leave this world naked. And in the final analysis, if he has chosen earthly riches instead of Jesus Christ, he loses everything and his own soul, and spends eternity in torment and sorrow in the lake of fire. On the other hand, if he commits himself totally to Christ, he will receive eternal life. What price tag have you placed on your own soul? What tag have you placed on the soul of your children that we would neglect their salvation?

Jesus ended His teaching with these sobering words: **"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father with the holy angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works."** To be ashamed of Jesus and of His words is to avoid and reject Jesus. When Jesus returns in glory and in His kingly splendour, He too will be "ashamed" or reject him who has rejected Him. The only way to salvation is to trust Jesus Christ from your heart and obey the Word of God.

PRACTICAL VALUE

There are many practical lessons to be learned for our spiritual growth. We should not be slow to discern the power and compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should trust Him. It is true that our spiritual maturity takes time to grow, but each stage

towards maturity must be tempered with implicit faith in Him. In the initial stage, we may not see so clearly, like the blind man. But if we continue to let Jesus touch us, if we continue to walk with Him, our spiritual vision will improve and we will see things clearly.

It is imperative that Christians know who Jesus Christ is. He is not only their Saviour, but He is also their Lord, and their God. Unless we firmly believe this and live our lives in the light of this truth, there can be no power in our lives and no significant spiritual growth. If Jesus is our wonderful Lord and Saviour and God, we should willingly and gladly commit ourselves to Him to do His will.

There is no other way in this journey of salvation. Either surrender our all to Christ or else surrender nothing at all. If we rely on the strength and power of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, we will be able to give all that we cannot keep in exchange for the things that we can keep forever. Jesus has promised to return in all His kingly glory and majesty with all His angels. Let us look to His return with an earnest and joyful disposition. AMEN.

DHW Bible Class

LESSON 18

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Matthew 16:5-12, Mark 8:13-21.

TUESDAY: Mark 8:22-26, Philippians 1:6, Ephesians 1:17-19.

WEDNESDAY: Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-30.

THURSDAY: Luke 9:18-21, 1 Peter 2:4-6, 1 Corinthians 3:11.

FRIDAY: Mark 8:31-9:1, Matthew 16:21-28, Luke 9:22-27.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Jesus compared the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees to leaven (yeast). Why do you think He did so?**

- 2. What was Jesus expecting His disciples and us to learn from the two miracles of feeding the multitude and**

His discourse on the bread of life?

Jesus and that of Peter's confession?

3. Examine this incident with the one in Mark 7:31-37. What are the similarities and differences? What does it tell us about the way God works?

6. What three things did Jesus say specifically to Peter?

4. Do you see a parallel between this healing in stages of the blind man and the slowness of the disciples in knowing who Jesus was? What would they have to do in each stage to gain spiritual insight?

7. How did Peter understand the words of Jesus to him: "upon this rock I will build my church"?

5. What is the vast difference between what others thought of

8. What is meant by "the gates of hell"? What is the power that Jesus was referring to that "the gates of hell" could not prevail against it?

9. What did Jesus say about Himself in these verses?

10. What did Jesus say about the life of a disciple?

11. What is the value of the soul of a person? Are you a Christian?

12. What have you learned that has increased your faith and love for Jesus?
