

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

As Jesus and his disciples traveled up north, many miles beyond Jesus' hometown of Nazareth of Galilee, to Caesarea Philippi. Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, "Who do people say that I am?" (Mk 8:27).

[Oops]

Now, I don't know what Jesus was thinking or what he was expecting to receive as an answer. But I doubt he was very surprised to hear that the world didn't have the right expectation of him.

The disciples answered, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets" (Mk 8:28). All of these are flattering to hear, at least for any other man, but for Jesus, our Lord and Master they don't quite hit the mark. The world's expectation is a swing and a miss.

So, Jesus asks the follow-up question. "But who do you say that I am?" (Mk 8:29).

These disciples have been with Jesus for almost his entire ministry. Jesus, rightfully so, has high expectations for their answer. Thankfully, Peter comes through with a powerful swing of the bat. He hits the ball and sends the answer flying back to Jesus, "You are the Christ."

At this answer, Jesus tells the disciples to keep quiet about it. To keep quiet, so Jesus can continue his ministry by teaching the disciples "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" (Mk 8:31).

After hearing Jesus talk so plainly about his impending death, Peter realizes that his confession about Jesus' Christology isn't matching his expectations. If Jesus is the Christ, then how is it that he will suffer and die? That is just ridiculous to think about. How can the Christ, the King suffer and die?

So, Peter takes Jesus aside to correct His expectations. However, Jesus, instead rebukes Peter by saying, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mk 8:33).

As Jesus’ words hit Peter, it was like the ball, from Peter’s powerful grand slam confession of a swing, suddenly comes crashing down as it hits the wall and falls into the glove of the outfielder. Peter’s expectations of Jesus the King, Jesus the Christ comes falling down.

“Get behind me, Satan!” has God ever said these words to you?

Have you ever had a time in your life when your expectations seemed good and right, but then, all of a sudden you are thrown back by God’s Words.

Have you ever had a time in your life when you’ve swung for the fences, and the ball goes screaming towards the winning run, but then falls short?

[*Ugh!*]

How did it feel? Peter certainly wasn’t expecting it. He was on an emotional and spiritual high. In his confession, that Jesus was the Christ, everything he thought about Jesus was confirmed. So how could his expectations have been so wrong?

You see, Jesus was the Christ, but he was not the earthly King that Peter expected. Peter’s confession was that Jesus was the anointed son of David. The future king and ruler who would lead Israel and save them from their enemies. That’s what Peter’s expectation of the Christ was. Peter had in his mind the things of man. In his sin, Peter was looking to his own will and his own self-interest. Peter’s expectation was that his will **not** “Thy will” was to be done.

In your own life have you ever put your will and your expectations as the centerpiece? Have you ever been on an emotional and spiritual high thinking that it’s all going according to plan? Only later to figure out that those plans are sinfully centered on your own best interests, as they come crashing down.

[*Aha!*]

What’s missing? How can our expectations be so far off? Jesus said to Peter, “you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mk 8:33).

“The things of God...” that’s the clue.

Jesus was not focused on his own will, but on the will of his Father. In contrast, Peter was focused on the things of man. On his own will, the will of man, instead of the will of his Heavenly Father. So, what is the will of God the Father?

Jesus tells us that, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mk 8:34–35).

The will of God is that we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus.

In fact, we aren’t to just do this once, but we are to do this continually and repeatedly. We are to daily repent and deny the things of man.

To deny the things that we expect on this earth.

To deny what we consider to be best for ourselves and instead take on the burden of being a Christian. To take on the burden of being like Christ.

Christ who put the will of his Father first. We are to take on that same burden and put God’s will above our own. To repent of our own expectations of this world. To repent of our own sinful expectations. To turn to Christ and the cross where God’s will and God’s expectations bring us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

[*Whee!*]

God the Father’s will and God the Father’s expectations are not for Christ to be an earthly king, but to be the King in the Kingdom of God. God’s will and our expectations don’t often don’t match up. However, despite our sin, God still loves us and by God’s will and God’s expectations, Jesus went to the cross to show His love for us.

Jesus willingly chose to “suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed” (Mk 8:31).

Jesus’ expectations of what it meant to be the Christ included all of that because God’s will is the only will that can save us.

That’s why we daily repent and daily die to ourselves and our own expectations. Because by faith and trust in Jesus’ words, God’s Will and my expectations can finally match up. By Christ work, through faith alone, my expectation of God is that he Loves us.

My expectation is NOT based upon what I deserve.
My expectation is NOT based upon what I have done.
Instead, my expectation IS based on the cross.
My expectation is based upon what Christ has done.
My expectation is based upon God's grace and God's mercy.

My expectation and my trust is that the good and gracious will of God gives you the forgiveness of sins, life everlasting, and salvation. By Christ alone through faith our lives of sin have been put to death and our expectations can be focused on the Kingdom of God here on earth.

[*Yeah!*]

As God's will and our expectations finally come together in the Kingdom of God we can rejoice, because the Kingdom of God is here on earth. The Kingdom of God is where our sinful expectations about the things of the world are put to death. Where we confess that you and I are poor miserable sinners. And where, in the midst of our sins, God's good and gracious will grants us forgiveness. Not because of anything we have done, but because of God's grace and mercy and Christ's atoning sacrifice.

When the world asks for our confession about Jesus we can boldly say that Jesus is the Christ. The King of the Kingdom of God. The Savior of the world. For we are not ashamed of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. Instead, we rejoice and sing praises to God, because he sent His son to be our Savior. Amen.

“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)
