

## Turning Points

*All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28). Think of a very painful occasion in your life, which, ultimately—turned out to be an important, landmark feature of your life.

In Mark's Gospel, the following passage beginning at Mark 8:31 functions as a **turning point** in the gospel account, a **turning point** in the ministry of Jesus', and a **turning point** for our understanding of the human life in general. It follows immediately on from Peter's flash of heavenly insight, concerning the identity of Jesus: 'You are the Christ'.

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man **must suffer many things** and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he **must be killed and after three days rise again**. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

- A turning point in literature attracts our attention, to see what comes next.
- A turning point in Jesus' ministry should draw the attention of the whole world.
- A turning point for humanity's understanding of life, in general, is crucial.

One of the keys to understanding the life of Jesus, is that out of the great love with which he loved us, he willingly endured deep suffering, for our benefit. In his body on the cross, the right judgment upon **all human sin** took place. By taking our place as the condemned, and the damned, his substitutionary gift to us, is to justify us freely, and to save us eternally.

Jesus laid down his life for us. This is true humanity revealed. Jesus embraced suffering, purposefully, teaching us in some respects the truth of doing so. We learn from his life, what it is to suffer purposefully. Some simple examples of embracing suffering include:

The painful slice of the surgeon's scalpel is necessary for removing a deadly cancer. Many years of rigorous study are necessary to become an *animal-saving* veterinary surgeon. Scripture says: '*Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning*' (Psalm 30:5b). Scripture teaches us to learn from deep sadness: '*The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth*' (Ecclesiastes 7:4)

The self-giving, deep suffering love of God—the Father, Son and Spirit—is necessary for the salvation of one person, and for the redemption of the world.

*Dear Self-giving, suffering God, loving Lord Jesus, eternal Spirit, within your eternal purposes strengthen, lead us and equip us, to embrace our difficulties, with courage, faith, hope and love for you. Amen.*

**Trevor**