

## **“The Double Cross”**

### **Mark 10: 35-45**

([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+10:35-45](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+10:35-45))

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### **Christ changes a negative into a positive every time!**

Have you ever had someone step in front of you while you waited patiently in a line? The agreed upon method to get properly served is to wait in line. Yet, someone thinks they are more important, their time is more valuable than yours. So they step in front. I can get pretty irate over some such foolishness.

Therefore, I can easily understand the 10 disciples, especially Peter, being upset with James and John. These two “Sons of Thunder” overstepped their bounds. They are double crossing their friends. Their egos surpassed their wisdom. Their audacity overcame their intelligence. After all, just before they ask the question of being placed in authority and importance over the rest of the disciples, Jesus told them that he would be dying. They totally missed the point! Their ears were so clogged with potential applause that they didn’t hear Jesus. Their mind was so filled with their own glory, that they blocked Jesus’ message of death and resurrection. The “Sons of Thunder” created a storm of difficulty among the disciples.

Perhaps they misunderstood. Sometimes words have different meanings. I am reminded of the woman who answered a knock at her door and found a destitute man. He wanted to earn money by doing odd jobs, so she asked him, “Can you paint?” “Yes.” He said, “I’m a pretty good painter.” “Well, here’s a gallon of paint and a brush. Go behind the house and you’ll see a porch that needs repainting. Be very careful. When you’re done, I’ll look it over and pay you what it’s worth.” It wasn’t more than an hour before he knocked again. “All finished!” he reported with a smile. “Did you do a good job?” she asked. “Yes, but lady, there’s one thing I’d like to point out to you. That’s not a Porsche back there. That’s a Mercedes.”

Perhaps the disciples misunderstood? Perhaps James and John misunderstood? What we know is that Jesus once again carefully and clearly explains to them all the nature of His mission.

*“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* (vs. 42-45) ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+10:42-45](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+10:42-45))

Jesus is turning the “double cross” of James and John, into an eternal understanding of the double cross upon which he would die. Humanly speaking, being “double crossed” is a wholly negative experience. In fact, traditionally, our culture has tended to reserve a bad connotation for anything bearing the “double” label. To work twice as hard is to pull “double duty”; in espionage, a spy who betrays both sides is a “double agent”; a word or phrase that drips with innuendo is said to be a “double-entendre”; judgments that have ominous consequences are “double-edged”; to be tried for the same crime twice is to experience “double jeopardy.”

Jesus always seems to push the limit on the “either/or” mentality. He wants us to appreciate the complex nuances of living in a “both/and” world. With Jesus we are challenged to take the negative and turn it into a positive. The “double cross” becomes a profound symbol of our redemption, our salvation, our entrance into the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ personal challenge to his disciples—both those in the first century and those in the almost twenty-first century is in the form of a double cross.

Jesus’ double cross discipleship is a call to experience God’s power in the vertical cross beam combined with God’s compassionate mission to the world in the horizontal cross beam. It was this “double cross” that informed Jesus’ sense of mission and enabled Him to carry out his sacrificial gift of love for all. Jesus understood and experienced in his ultimate sacrifice, that the more powerfully vertical one’s relationship to God, the more profoundly horizontal one’s relationship to others. It was as Jesus reached out and claimed his unique relationship as the Divine Son that he was able to stretch out his arms on the cross as the Suffering Servant, taking on all humanity’s sins.

Are you a “double cross” disciple? Is the power of your vertical relationship with God sustaining you for the presence and compassion of the horizontal? Will you claim the power that is yours? Will you commit yourself to living compassionately in the world for Christ? Let us explore both parts of the “double cross”.

### **The Vertical beam of the cross.**

I invite you to open up to the mind blowing, heart warming, life changing power of God. A power that will disturb, delight, deliver, and lift you up. It will make you young when you are old, and live when you die. And whether you are black or white, rich or poor, upper class, middle class, or no class; whether you have a Ph.D or no D's; whether you are young or old, male or female, Democrat, Republican, or Independent, politically correct or red-necked, you have available to you a power from God to dynamically live your life.

With God's power in your life:  
discouraged folks, cheer up;  
dishonest folks, 'fess up;  
sour folks, sweeten up;  
depressed folks, look up;  
closed folks, open up;  
gossips, shut up;  
conflicted folks, make up;  
sleeping folks, wake up;  
lukewarm folks, fire up;  
dry bones, shake up;  
and pew potatoes, stand up.

But most of all, Christ the Lord, the Savior of the world is lifted up when you open up and let God's power flow into you.

God's power is available to you each and every day. God's joyous, life giving creative power is yours, if you choose to plug into the power socket. All the power in the world cannot light a small light bulb in your house if you do not plug the lamp into the power socket. God's power is available to you. You must choose to plug into the socket God provides for you within your heart.

You can plug into the power as you open your eyes in the morning and breathe a thanksgiving for life prayer before you arise from bed. You can stop during the day and breathe a prayer that reconnects you to God's power. You can end your day by breathing a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving for life lived in God's power. The socket to connect to God's power is within you. You must choose to pay attention to it and plug in!

Even though James and John had been with Jesus for almost three years, they still had not plugged in to the power socket. Their own agendas were running in their heads. Their egos were large and growing. Their ambition was strong and getting stronger. Their eyes were focused on earthly glory and not God's glory. They were depending on their own power and influence, rather than listening to Jesus. They used Jesus' name, but they did not yet know the Savior. Jesus suggests to them the way to real power, Divine power is baptism and a cup.

Baptism in Jesus' language is not sprinkling or dunking with water. Baptism is a symbol for death. James and John must die to their old self important way of thinking. Die to their old self centered way of living. There is new life for a person who is connected to God and growing in God's creative power.

- New life with all the old skeletons in the closet cleaned out!
- New life with the power of God's mercy flowing within you!
- New life with God's strength enabling you to overcome any obstacle.
- New life with an unshakable foundation in God's love that will not allow the quakes of fear, guilt, and shame to tear it down.

Baptism is a symbol of a new life with God. Jesus invites them into a new relationship.

Christ's bread and cup of the new covenant are symbols of a new life in God. You have available Christ's healing bread and Christ's cup of forgiveness of all our sin. In relationship with Christ Jesus:

- You are not bound by sin.
- You are not slaves to anything: not a physical, chemical, or emotional substance.
- You are free to be the person God created you to be!

With Christ's bread and cup, you are free to live empowered to overcome any temptation, any addiction, any sin. You are mercifully healed! You are forgiven! Not because you deserve to be forgiven, but just because God loves you. God wants you to be a part of God's family.

There is power available as God's child. In Christ Jesus you have:

- The power to live in the real world.
- The power to actually make healthy choices for your life.
- The power to grow strong, free, vital, and vigorous.
- The power to make a difference in the world, not just live in an illusion.

God's power naturally brings us to the horizontal beam of the double cross.

### **The horizontal beam!**

The powerful vertical beam that connects us into God's presence is not an end in itself. We are not just praising the Lord so that we can feel good. There are some churches that think praising God is enough. Jesus brings us power in the vertical beam so that we can stretch out our arms in compassion for the world that is hurting.

I was fortunate enough to hear E. Glenn Hinson speak of his early life experience. He told of an "in as much" man who made a significant difference in the life of his family. The "in as much" title comes from Jesus' parable in **Matthew 25:31-46** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+25:31-46](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+25:31-46)). *"In as much as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me."* The Great Judge of the universe tells those people, who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and in prison, related with love to the marginalized people of the world.

The "in as much" person who made such a difference in Dr. Hinson's life was a grocery store owner. When Hinson's family could not pay the \$6.00 a month rent on their farm. They moved to a farm, rent free, owned by the "in as much" man. When Hinson would buy a small bag of groceries with the only money he had. The "in as much" man would give him a box of groceries to take home. He gave without expectation of return. He gave without an expectation of thanks. He gave, as the "in as much" people in the parable gave, out of the love and power of Christ Jesus.

God is calling us to be the "in as much" people of our world. The power is provided for us through our relationship with Christ. The strength to reach out in mission is given to us. The choice is ours. Do we choose to live connected to the power of God doing God's work in the world. Do we choose to be and to grow to be that person whom God created us to be? Or, do we choose to do our own thing in a powerless illusion.

"Why are people so blind and stupid?" Sigmund Freud was asked by a student. "Because they demand illusions," answered Freud. "They constantly give what is unreal precedence over what is real. And we know why. The real world is simply too terrible to admit; it tells man that he is a small, trembling animal who will decay and die. Illusion changes all this, makes man seem important, vital, immortal in some way...The masses look to the leaders to give them just the untruth that they need." (Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*)

Jesus comes into this world to give you and me the power to live a real life. No illusions! No denials! No power games! Just the power to live in touch with the real world so that we can with Christ's help transform this shadowed planet into God's Kingdom! We celebrate Jesus today! Jesus who provides for us the power to live life now and for all eternity!

## **Christ's double cross brings life!**

In Christ Jesus, we have a power to break the illusions, live in reality because death is defeated and eternal life is given through the power of the vertical beam of the cross. In Christ Jesus, we have the challenge to grow in love through the sharing of God's power in mission to the world. Choose today to plug into God's power so that you can make a significant difference in your world. Choose today to let Christ Jesus be the Lord of your life. You can trust Christ because:

Christ is the Lord of life here and life eternal!  
Christ is the first and the last, the Beginning and the End!  
Christ is the keeper of Creation and the Creator of all;  
The Architect of the universe, and the manager of all time.  
Christ always was, always is and always will be---  
Unmoved, unchanged, undefeated, and never undone!  
Christ was bruised and brought healing!  
Christ was pierced and eased pain!  
Christ was persecuted and brought freedom!  
Christ is risen and brings power!  
Christ reigns and brings peace!  
The world can't understand Him,  
The armies cannot defeat Him,  
The schools cannot explain Him, and  
Leaders cannot ignore Him.  
Herod couldn't kill Him!  
The Pharisees couldn't confuse Him, and  
The people couldn't hold Him down!  
Nero couldn't crush Him,  
Hitler couldn't silence Him,  
The Consumer Age cannot replace Him,  
Madonna can't ridicule Him,  
And John Stewart can't explain Him away!  
Jesus is Light, Love, Longevity, and Lord.  
Jesus is goodness, kindness, gentleness, and God.  
Jesus is holy, righteous, mighty, powerful, and pure.  
Christ is always right.  
Christ's word is eternal.  
Christ's will is unchanging, and  
Christ mind is on us!  
Jesus is our Redeemer.  
Jesus is our Savior!  
Jesus is our Guide.  
Jesus is our Peace.  
Jesus is our Joy!  
Jesus is our Comfort and our Security.  
Jesus overcomes all evil with good! And,  
Jesus is pure light and there is no darkness within Him.  
Jesus is our Victorious, Living, Risen and Coming Again Lord!