

Mark 9:42-50 (NIV) [*begin at vs. 33 for full context*]

³³They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, **“What were you arguing about on the road?”**³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, **“Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”**

³⁶He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷**“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”**

³⁸“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

³⁹**“Do not stop him,”** Jesus said. **“For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰for whoever is not against us is for us.⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name**

because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

⁴²“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ^[44]⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ^[46] ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

In Ch. 9

- **Transfiguration**
- **Boy healed**
- **Teaching on how we treat others**

Jesus uses everyday events to teach important lessons

It must have been the dissension that prompted this teaching

- I. Warning**
- II. Cleansing**
- III. Salting / Seasoning**

I. Warning

1. In this passage, I picture Jesus taking the posture of a dad watching over His young children
 - a. Or perhaps a mom with her eyes fixed on her babies
2. **Believers are referred to as little children**
 - a. **Galatians 4:19** My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you
 - b. **John 21:5** Then Jesus said unto them, "Children, do you have any fish?"

- c. **1 John 2:1** My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One
3. The fact that we are God's children is very personal to Him
- a. Like new parents, their life is bound up with their children
 - b. God's life is bound up with His children
 - i. How His children are treated is personal

4. How personally does God take it?

- a. **In Genesis 12 God establishes this foundation:**
 - i. "Whoever blesses you will be blessed, and whoever curses you will be cursed"
- b. **Matthew 25:35** for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'... 39 Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'
- c. **Acts 9:4** Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
- d. **Zech 2:8** he that touches you, touches the apple of God's eye

5. Because God takes it so personally, what we say about His children & how we treat them is very important
 - a. Loving God = loving all of His children
 - i. We cannot claim to love God and speak evil of His children
 - b. A person cannot be my friend and speak bad about my family
 - c. Accepting me = accepting my entire family
6. God cares for and adores His children and moves heaven and earth on their behalf
7. After speaking about welcoming the little ones and giving a cup of cold water
 - a. Jesus gives a warning
8. Although Jesus uses harsh images
 - a. Ultimately, it's really about our protection
 - b. You only warn those you love about imminent danger
9. **Whoever** causes one of these little ones to sin (**scandalizo**) [leading someone into sin]

- a. The thought of throwing someone off course
- b. Perhaps the man rebuked by John & the 12 stumbled
 - i. There will be consequences

2. it would be **better for him** if a stone were around his neck and cast into the sea

- a) This is a large grinding stone
 - i. Jews were terrified of the ocean and never used it for capital punishment
 - ii. Romans, Egyptians, Turks used the ocean to drown certain offenders
- b) The idea is anyone who messes with a child of God has to give an account
 - i. By comparison, the worst death on earth doesn't compare with eternal judgment
 - ii. It's a stern warning and a **wakeup** call that our lives influence others

10. William Barkley tells a story about an old man who was on his deathbed, and he was distressed. He was troubled.

He was filled with anxiety; and so the people around him tried to find out why; and, before he died, he told them something that seemed so small but had obviously influenced him so powerfully. He said "When we were boys at play, one day at a crossroads, we reversed a signpost; and I've never ceased all my life to wonder how many people were sent the wrong direction by what we did." Our life is a signpost; and, if it isn't pointing the right way, then I wonder how many people are going the wrong direction.

11. Your life and choices impact those around you

- a. By how you live your life
- b. By how you teach or direct others

- c. It impacts others to a much larger scale than we'd like to believe

12. People can lead others into sin in a number of ways

- a. **By directly tempting others to sin -**
 - i. One spouse leading the other to cheat on taxes;
 - ii. A Christian giving you advise on how to save on insurance
 - iii. a Christian man seducing a Christian woman or vice-versa

b. **People can be led into sin indirectly –**

- i. When we treat others in insensitive; unloving and unkind ways we can cause them to sin through rebellion.
- ii. We can spark an angry reaction in people, or we can cause them to throw up their hands in frustration
 1. **Eph 6:4** And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord

c. **Our liberty can cause others to sin.**

- i. 1 Cor. 6:12 "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient..."
 1. As a redeemed believer I have great liberty in Jesus.
 2. I am not under the Law, but I am under grace.
- ii. If a weak believer sees me doing things that he believes are wrong and I encourage him to sin against his conscience, I am guilty of leading him astray. (**Carr**)

- d. **1 Cor 8:13** Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall

13. How we treat others is a big deal to God because we're all one family now. God's family

- a. As siblings, we're to help & not hurt others
 - i. Not create traps for one another
14. God takes that very seriously
- a. Harsh consequences are on the way for those who live recklessly and stumble others

II. Cleansing

1. **Vs. 43.** If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off
 - a. **Not literally**
2. The problem with taking Jesus' words literally here is that bodily mutilation does not go far enough in controlling sin. Sin is more a matter of the heart than of any particular limb or organ, and if I cut off my right hand, my left is still ready to sin. If I completely dismember my body, I can still sin in my mind and in my heart. (**Guzik**)
 - a. The "**hand**" refers to "***the things we do.***"
 - i. Our actions
 - b. The "**foot**" refers to "***the places we go.***"
 - i. Our manner of life & habits
 - c. The "**eye**" refers to "***the things we see or desire to have.***"

i. ***Lusting after possessions or pleasures***

d. If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off

e. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out

f. Jesus is saying once you've identified a problem, nip it in the bud

g. Place any known obstacle in your life on the chopping block and be prepared to be a living sacrifice holy and well pleasing to the Lord.

i. Most of us know our weak areas

ii. If you're not sure

1. **Psalm 139:23** Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting

i. If I know that I am easily tempted by...

ii. **Then I'm to do what I know the Lord wants me to do to get that issue dealt with**

- iii. If I need to cancel my cable subscription, then let it be
- iv. If I need to empty out my liquor cabinet, let it be
- v. If I need to put a filter on my PC, let it be

- vi. If there are ungodly relationships
 - 1. At work
 - 2. Old friends
 - a. I need to cut those ties

- vii. If there is anything getting in the way between me and God, deal with it.
- viii. Whatever is in the way needs to go.

3. It's better we enter into heaven without any attachments to this world

4. The alternative is to end up in hell

a. Valley of Hinnom

- i. A place outside Jerusalem's walls desecrated by Molech worship and human sacrifice
- ii. It's where trash burned continuously

iii. Hell is also referred to as

- 1. Lake of fire
- 2. Eternal darkness

b. Jesus is speaking with His disciples, why is the issue of hell even brought up?

i. Not all followers of Jesus are true believers

1. The thought of someone who thinks they're a believer going to hell is way too important

2. Jesus has to bring up this issue

a. Hell is too hot

b. Eternity is unending

5. Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched

a. In hell, memories of all the evils and opportunities to repent will be there

i. There is no end

1. It is eternal

6. If someone continues down a road of destruction, how are they a real believer?

i. Based on what?

a. If I continue stumbling others, I'm probably not a believer

b. One of the marks of a Christian is their care for others

ii. The Holy Spirit convicts you immediately

7. Paul cared for people to the point that he wanted to be cut off from Christ that the Jews might be saved

- a. Stumbling others has its serious consequences
- 8. if I recognize a point in me that may stumble others
 - a. I'm to take drastic measures to cut those things off
 - i. It's the only option
 - 1. Otherwise, my faith is in question

9. How can I really tell if I'm a believer?

III. Salting / Seasoning

- 1. Everyone will be season with fire...
- 2. Fire is a purifier, a cleansing agent
 - a. We will all go through times where the fire of life will test us
 - b. Our genuine faith will be tested
 - i. This is for our own good
 - ii. To know if we have the real deal or not
 - c. Fire cleanses what is genuine and burns the rest
- 3. Every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt
 - a. O.T sacrifices had to be seasoned with salt
 - i. Salt symbolized several things
 - 1. Preservative

2. Cleansing agent
3. Antiseptic
4. Currency
5. Flavor

- b. Salting the sacrifice spoke of seasoning for flavor
 - i. It speaks of a willing fellowship with God

1. True fellowship with God meant genuine fellowship with people
2. It reveals your willingness
 - a. Where your heart really is

4. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?

- a. The idea is, it is not possible
- b. Once its flavor is gone, its worthless

5. Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

- a. Be a willing sacrifice
- b. Be who you really are
 - i. Children of God who have the Spirit of God
 1. By not causing others to sin
 2. Avoiding sin at all costs
 3. Be willing to offer yourself as a sacrifice like salt is placed on the offering

4. Being salt we are to be a preserving agent in the world.
 - a. When we come around, our very presence should raise the moral atmosphere, promote honesty, elevate conversation, stir the conscience and make people want to live a little cleaner (Carr)

5. Salt is used to flavor meals
 - a. Meals speak of fellowship with others
 - i. Have genuine fellowship and live in peace

6. **Rom 12:18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men