

Daily Bible Study

“An Eternal & Serious Warning”

Mark 9:42 - 48

February 13 – February 19, 2011

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY – We pick up our study of Mark’s gospel this week at **Mark 9:42-48**. In this passage Jesus is giving *An Eternal & Serious Warning* concerning sin and its consequences. This passage is a continuation of the thoughts in the verses which preceded it but here Jesus puts the truth He taught the disciples in negative terms if you will. He is warning these men to be on their guard against sin such as this exclusivism and egotistical pride that was manifested in their “dialogue” concerning Who was the Greatest. He warns that they are to guard both themselves and others they influence. He then speaks to the drastic and severe action that must be taken against such sin; going so far as to speak in terms of “cutting off a hand or foot” in order to deal with sin which will if not checked, dealt with, and repented of, will lead a person to eternal hell. This particular teaching yet again, reminds us what true Christians look like as this is a mark of a true Christian; in reference to how they live and act especially toward sin in their lives. Read our text for the week: **Mark 9:42 - 48** *“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ ”*

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, Please teach me and feed me from Your Word this week. Help me to see, hear, understand, and obey what You are saying to me through Sacred Scripture.

TUESDAY – **Mark 9:42** *“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”* As mentioned earlier, this verse is the negative side of Jesus’ previous teaching; namely, **verse 37**. In **verse 37** as well as the previous **verse 41** we are given the teaching that there will be blessing for those who *receive* (accept, receive, take) these “*little ones*” and that is displayed by their caring and loving for them as demonstrated in the *giving of the cup of cold water* in **verse 41**. To *receive* the little ones, to help and care for them is to win eternal reward

while hurting them and causing them to stumble wins punishment Jesus says the punishment is worse than being drowned to death...very serious words. We need to back up and again define who the *little ones* are to which Jesus refers. In light of the context of this passage and Jesus' teaching both here and elsewhere (**Matthew 18:1-3**) we understand Him to be speaking about believers, children of God. He even says these are *little ones who believe in Me*. It is true that He is using a real live little boy as His illustration here and we can't overlook that Jesus is speaking to the humble, faith filled, genuine Christian as well as the seemingly insignificant *little ones*. Remember, this teaching is on the heels of the disciple's argument as to who is the greatest. The insignificant *little ones*, the true children of God who *believe in Jesus* are to be cared for and not caused to *stumble*. This word *stumble*, translated *offend* in the KJV, is the Greek word skandalizo which means "to entrap, entice to sin, make to offend". Jesus is warning against behavior and influence toward others that would cause them to sin, entrap them in sin, in light of the comparison to children might I say, "teach them to sin". In no way do I want to "soften" this warning as I indeed tremble in light of it; but I do want to say that Jesus, in context, is teaching about a behavior and influence that impresses the little, teachable one to sin against God. I do not believe Jesus is primarily referring to matters of Christian liberty here as much as He is referring to a proud, uncaring, belligerent attitude (**verses 34-35**) and behavior which influences the teachable *little one* to act in the same God dishonoring, sinful way. More on this tomorrow.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me to hear and understand the importance of being mindful of my influence to Your little ones. May I teach and exemplify God honoring behavior and attitudes.*

WEDNESDAY – **Mark 9:42** *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."* Continuing on what we were speaking about yesterday lets elaborate a bit more. Jesus is obviously referring to believers primarily as the *little ones* based on His definition that they *believe in Me*. We would be wise to point out that it is like God, who is gracious to the weak, to love those *little ones* that are weak and insignificant. The Greek word for *little ones* (*mikros*) means "small (in size, quantity, number, or figuratively, dignity), least, less, little". Truly Jesus holds dear those who are seen as weak, small, and less in dignity. He is not excluding babies here but is definitely and primarily referring to believers. He then has warned about causing even one of these to *stumble*. We spoke about the word *stumble* earlier but let me add that it comes from a word that literally describes a trap made with a bent stick. This is a trap made to ensnare and capture prey. Jesus is warning against laying a snare or trap in the path of a *little one*. There are many who have attempted to lead God's children astray in the past and continue to do so today for their own advantage and gain. Interesting Paul uses the same Greek word to speak of those who see the true message of the cross of Jesus as a (skandalon) *stumbling block* (**1 Corinthians 1:23**,

Galatians 5:11). Jesus is saying that sin planned against and done to lead even *one* of His *little ones* astray is so serious to Him that death by drowning would be preferable (*it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.*) To stay tied real close to the context here, we must see Jesus warning against damaging the faith of those of little worldly importance by promoting self through an inconsiderate and egotistical use of power (**verse 35**). These disciples were being taught and us as well that it is humble servant hood, putting others needs in front of our own that God is pleased with. The King of the Kingdom, Jesus Himself came not to be served but to serve and those in authority under Him must follow His lead. Not doing so and causing little ones to stumble calls for sever punishment.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, thank You for caring for me as Your little child. Help me to obey the commands of Jesus, and follow His perfect example of caring for and serving others.*

THURSDAY – Mark 9:43-48 “*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ ”* This warning against sin and its consequences gets even more personal as Jesus continues in the text. He is without doubt referring to Heaven and Hell in this passage as HE contrasts entering “*life*” or entering “*hell*”. He is saying, don’t pamper your sin and think all is well. If you are not making war on and against your sin, you are in a dangerous place. Our hands, feet, and eyes are treasured and valuable beyond words to us as human beings and Jesus says if any of these organs lures a person to living in sin, they should be done away with, disposed of, *cut off* or *plucked out*. That is a radical statement and of course it is to be understood figuratively and not literally. Jesus is not teaching that self mutilation will send you to heaven or save your soul. He is saying however, that sin is such a serious force that it must be dealt with severely. We are called to put sin to death (**Colossians 3:5**). This is not a pretty picture but rather a gruesome and disgusting one as sin does not like to die and go away quick and easy. Jesus is speaking to things that would tempt us or cause us to sin in this text. The hand, foot and eye are just instruments that allow temptation to be experienced by the person. Immediately and decisively deal with the temptation to sin beloved. The words *cut off* and *pluck out* in this text are in the Greek language, aorist imperative actives. This denotes a command that must be begun at that very moment. Jesus is saying, when tempted, pull out a knife (*The Sword of The Spirit*, The Word of God -**Ephesians 6:17**) and cut off the temptation. Halfway, sort of, procrastination type efforts are deadly. We are not called to “*beat the air*” but rather to *beat our bodies and bring them into subjection* (**1 Corinthians 9:27**). We understand from the Apostles teaching which elaborates

on Jesus' instruction here in this text that this is only possible through the power of The Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:16-26**).

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Holy Spirit of God, help me use Your Word and power to put my sin to death. I see the severe consequence of being deceived & destroyed by sin, so help me walk in You.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – Mark 9:43-48 “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ ” Jesus paints the horrific picture of sins final resting place as 3x’s He speaks of *hell* (geenna). This place, “The Valley of Hinnom” was known for fire; it was the place where in the past, children were offered as burnt sacrifices (**2 Kings 16:3, 21:6, 2 Chronicles 28:3, 33:6**). It also became the place where the cities garbage was burned and therefore Jesus depicts *hell* by this illustration of geenna where, the ever smoldering, burning flame as well as the constant worm was seen eating the rotting refuse. But thank God amidst this bleak and horrifying picture Jesus speaks of the Gospel, the good news. He says *It is better for you to enter life, better for you to enter the kingdom of God* fighting and hating your sin while loving, trusting, & obeying Jesus as opposed to entering *into hell fire* for being passive to sin and therefore showing you were not really a born again, Spirit empowered believer at all. Jesus’ warning was not just serious as we read that both life & punishment are “*eternal*” & “*everlasting*” (**Matthew 25:46**).

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Thank You Jesus for your life & death in my place. Help me fight my sin.