

## The Gospel of Mark – Part 34

### It is Better – Mark 9:42-50

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#### Intro:

- We again are turning to Mark chapter nine as we hear teaching from Jesus that seem radical. Jesus is teaching His disciples as they are making their way to Jerusalem where Jesus was going to suffer and die. Along the way the disciples discuss among themselves who is the greatest among them and Jesus teaches them that the way to be great is to be servant of all and gives them an illustration of serving children. Next, they encounter someone who is not of there group driving out a demon in Jesus name. John tries to stop him, and Jesus tells him not to, because anyone who is not against us is for us and that those who help them in anyway will surely receive their reward.
- Jesus next teaches His disciples about what way is better and the serious consequences of sin. His first subject has to do with us causing people of small faith to sin.

***It is better to drown than to cause a believing child to sin.***

#### Mark 9:42 ESV

**“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.**

- This tells us that children are welcome and truly apart of the family of faith. This validates the faith of Children.
- Second, children are prone to believe what we tell them, and if we lead, teach and cause a child to sin, we are leading them down a path of hardship and destruction and we would be responsible for leading them in this direction.
- It would be better for the person who does this, that they would drown than to cause a child who is in the faith away from there faith into a life of sin. This is how serious God takes this. And we in turn need to take it this seriously as well. We are to do whatever we can to strengthen and support the faith of a child and lead them in a way that causes their faith to grow and to thrive. This includes both our words and especially our actions.

#### James 3:1-2 ESV

**Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**

- Those of us who are old indeed teach those who are children, by both word and deed. And those of us who teach, and this is in a theological faith context, and more responsible for what we teach because we are affecting peoples lives for both now and in eternity.
- So be very careful and very intentional about nurturing and forming the faith of a child. If you lead them down a wrong path you will have to give an account for that. And it would be better for you to be dead than to do this, God takes this very seriously. (now if you have, you need to repent and make work to make what you have done right).
- The second “it is better” is this:

***It is better to enter the kingdom of God with limitations than to enter hell with full freedom***

**Mark 9:43-48 ESV**

**And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’**

- This “it is better” has to do with the sin in our own life, not the sin we cause in children. Jesus said that it is better by far to put limits on what you do (hand), where you go (foot), and what you see (eye) and enter the kingdom of God than to live “free” without restrictions and be thrown into hell – where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.
- There are things that I limit my hands, that would be sin (stealing, hitting, touching other inappropriately, typing, signing). There are places that I would not go that would be sin (strip clubs, trespassing, sneaking into a section I was not allowed to be in, walking into bars if I have an alcohol issues, not going into places where I can purchase what I should not, or if I have a problem with stealing, going to places where I could do so, or if I am tempted with a person, guarding myself around them). There are things that I don’t take into my mind, because it causes me to sin (movies, people, websites, books).
- Well you say “I am free to do whatever I want, because it is my life – I am an American – I am free in Christ”. Because I am in Christ and I want to be like Christ and I want to enter into the kingdom of God, I choose to limit myself. Again it is better to limit yourself and enter into the kingdom, then to “freely” enter into hell. This is indeed better by far.
- And by the way, don’t take what Jesus is saying here “literally” – don’t physically cut off a part of your body” he is using this metaphor to communicate with us that no “freedom” we have is worth sliding into hell for and that we have to be “radical” when it comes to participate in sin.
- Next Jesus talks to us about what is better as we give and live our lives as spiritual worship.

***It is better to be salted by God than to be insulted by Him.***

**Mark 9:49-50a ESV**

**For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves,**

- “Salted with fire” points back to an Old Testament commandment that had to do with offerings.

**Lev 2:13 ESV**

**You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.**

- When the people of God offered a sacrifice in worship of God they were to add salt to signify that they were in covenant with God and to enhance the aroma of their worship. That the

presence of God's covenant in their lives would impede them from decay and enhance their lives in worship. So when they worship they were to include this substance.

- Now in the New Testament, we are called to live our lives as a “living sacrifice”

### **Rom. 12:1 ESV**

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

- As we present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, we do so because we are in a covenant relationship with Him and that His presence in our lives keeps us from decay and enhances the glory of our worship. This is why we are to have “salt in ourselves”. But if the “salt” loses its “saltiness” then it is good for nothing. That is if we walk away from our commitment to God and we no longer make a difference in the world by enhancing what is good and impeding what is bad, we are good for nothing, make no difference in the world and will be thrown out in the end. (Matt. 5:13)
- And the fire is trials and testing that will prove that we are genuine because we offer them up to God in our covenant with Him and that His Spirit in our lives enhances our sacrifice so that in our suffering we are “holy and acceptable” resulting in praise, glory and honor – when Jesus is reviled for all to see.

### **1 Peter 1:6-8 ESV**

**you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

- It is far better to be “salted” by God than to be “insulted” by Him. Live as people of the covenant, sacrifice and worship as people with the “salt” of God in your lives.
- And lastly, Jesus reminds us

***It is better to be at peace with each other than to be arguing***

### **Mark 9:50b ESV**

**and be at peace with one another.**

- Jesus ends this teaching by returning to the reason that He was teaching these things to them in the first place, that they were arguing with one another as to who is the greatest. He says that it is better for them to enhance what is good in each other and impede what is bad and choose to live at peace with one another and stop trying to be first, and be better and fight to be in the spotlight and be recognized. It is better to live at peace with each other, to serve each other instead of having other to serve you.
- So many of our fights at their heart, are all about who is right, who is better, who is more important, who is above the other. It is so much better to work to serve all people and in doing so you will be at peace with them. This is the much better way in life and in ministry.

### **Conclusion**

- Choose to remember what Jesus has taught you in this passage
  - *It is better to drown than to cause a believing child to sin.*
  - *It is better to enter the kingdom of God with limitations than to enter hell with full freedom*
  - *It is better to be salted by God than to be insulted by Him.*
  - *It is better to be at peace with each other than to be arguing*
- Closing prayer