

Theme: The Dangers of Temptation

Mark 9:42–50

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. ⁴³ 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— ⁴⁴ where “*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*” ⁴⁵ 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— ⁴⁶ where “*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*” ⁴⁷ 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— ⁴⁸ where “*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*” ⁴⁹ “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

Introduction

As we come to Mark 9, Jesus is serving in His earthly ministry, teaching his followers (often in parables) and performing miracles. Look back at this chapter and note some of the important events and conversations that have happened up to this point and list them below.

Consider

9:42. How does one cause another to stumble?⁴

Who are the “little ones” Jesus is referring to? (Also see 9:37) Do you think Jesus is referring exclusively to children? Why or why not?

Note: A millstone was a very large stone that was so heavy it could only be turned by beasts of burden.

Why do you think Jesus’s statement is so extreme?

9:44, 46, 48. Each of these verses are the same verse and quote Isaiah 66:24. Why do you think this verse is quoted 3 times?

9:43–46. What does Jesus say we should do with a hand or foot that “causes you to sin”? How might your hand cause you to sin? Do you think Jesus intends for His instructions to be carried out literally?

- What do these commands tell us about the value of eternal life?
- What do these commands tell us about the steps we should take to avoid sinning?

Jesus says it is better to enter into “life” (9:43, 45) and “the kingdom of God” (9:47) with only one eye or one foot than to enter into hell with all your body parts intact. How does this challenge our normal way of thinking?

9:47. Would removing your physical eye actually take care of the real problem? According to Mark 7:14–23, what is the real problem?

9:49. What do you think Jesus means when He says that “everyone will be seasoned with fire”?

9:50. In Bible times, salt was very useful not only for adding flavor but also for preserving meats. What does Jesus mean when he asks what we should do if salt “loses its flavor”? What would it look like for believers to follow Jesus’ command to “have salt in yourselves”? How will this help us live at peace with one another?

Ask Yourself

How seriously do I take my own sin? How easy is it for me to justify sin or blame it on other people? Do I downplay my own sin instead of confessing it like I should?

⁴ The word “stumble” comes from the Greek word *skandalizō* and means to “cause someone to sin.” This word is the basis for our English word “to scandalize.”

What things could I remove from my life that might be leading me toward temptation or sin? What does this say about my priorities if I am not willing to remove something that could keep me from having clear fellowship with God?

What practical steps can I take to eradicate sin from my own life?

What trials have I experienced in my own life? How has God used this “testing by fire” (see 1 Peter 1:6–7)?

How is my testimony before others at work and in the community? Am I, like Jesus said, “salt” and “light” (see Matthew 5:13–16)?

What do my choices say about how important Jesus is in my life?

Cross References

Isaiah 66:24

“And they shall go forth and look
Upon the corpses of the men
Who have transgressed against Me.
For their worm does not die,
And their fire is not quenched.
They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

Mark 7:14–23

¹⁴ When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: ¹⁵ There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. ¹⁶ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”

¹⁷ When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. ¹⁸ So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?” ²⁰ And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

Leviticus 2:13

And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

Matthew 5:13–16

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:27–30

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

1 Peter 1:6–7

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.