

**Jesus Warns about Hell**  
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**Original: 6-2-24**

**Text:** Mark 9:42-50 (see also Matt. 18:6-9; Luke 17:1-3)

**Gospel of Mark:** [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

**UBS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Paragraph Topic:** Temptations to Sin

**Central Idea of Message:** Christians must preserve their spiritual fervor, holiness, and allegiance to Jesus and the gospel by aggressively removing sinful thoughts and actions which corrupt their lives, causing dysfunction and hostility with others. Such *saltiness* transmits righteous living to the world and helps suppress moral and spiritual decay.

**Introduction:** Episode 48. Temptation to sin has been mankind's problem since the time of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve failed their test miserably and thereby took the entire human race down with them. But we would not have done any better than either of them. We have proven this with our own sinful choices.

**Jesus is serious about dealing with temptation. In this paragraph, he uses hyperbole [intentional exaggeration] to emphasize the need for aggressive, even radical, personal action to remove the root cause of our stumble into sinful behavior, and he introduces the reality of hell as a consequential destiny for those who fail to take the eradication of sin seriously.**

- I. **Jesus Warns about Causing a Child to Stumble (v. 42)**
  - A. Jesus here references an external cause coming from someone else which prompts sinful behavior by a child or anyone with an immature faith
  - B. **Σκανδαλίζω** [skandalizo] means to place a snare or trap in someone's way which causes one to stumble
  - C. Little ones who believe in Jesus must not be caused to stumble
    1. Was Jesus referring to the disciples' rebuke of the exorcist in the previous passage (cf. Lane 345; Wessel 707)?
    2. Undeveloped faith in someone is not to be criticized but encouraged through discipleship efforts we may call "teaching moments"

- D. **We can cause a less mature believer in Christ to stumble into sin when we carelessly speak or act in inappropriate ways, because our words and actions are telling them "it's okay"**
  - E. Anyone who does this would have been better off to have had a heavy donkey-stone tied around their neck and drowned in the sea
  - F. For those thinking they have not sinned badly enough for God to keep them out of heaven, consider seriously these words of Jesus and evaluate yourselves on whether or not you have impeded anyone from following Jesus
- II. **Jesus Warns about One's Hand Causing Her/Him to Stumble (vv. 43-44)**
- A. **Jesus begins to address internally-caused sin, meaning that which originates within one's self, such that there is nobody else to blame but ourself**
  - B. If a hand really is responsible for causing us to stumble into habitual sin, then we should cut it off
    - 1. Hyperbole: intentional exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis
    - 2. We must deal radically with the root cause of sin
    - 3. Even to the point of eliminating things in our life which might seem the most dear, useful, or necessary
      - a) But not actually eyes, hands, or feet!
      - b) Remember, this is hyperbole!
    - 4. **"Precious things may be thankfully retained, if they have no evil effects" (Plummer 228)**
  - C. It is better to go through life with only one hand than to continue to let that hand have its sinful way
  - D. It is better to enter heaven with a hand missing than enter hell with two hands!
    - 1. Greek word is Gehenna
    - 2. "Valley of wailing, once defiled by sacrifice of children to Moloch, it became the rubbish dump of the city" (Zerwick 139)
    - 3. **Moloch/Molech was the Canaanite god of fire to which child sacrifices were offered, even under the reign of two wicked Judean kings, Ahaz and Manasseh (cf. 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31)**
    - 4. King Josiah, in his reforms, abolished these practices and desecrated this location southwest of Jerusalem by making it a garbage dump (2 Kings 23:10-14)

5. **Gehenna [hell] is the word used to describe the filthy trash dump outside of Jerusalem which "had been desecrated by the sacrifice of children to Moloch so that as an accursed place it was used for city garbage where worms gnawed and fires burned" (Robertson 1:346)**
6. **Gehenna here becomes a symbol of hell and is synonymous with the term "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15)**
7. "Jesus used the word *geenna* in 11 of its 12 New Testament occurrences (the one exception is James 3:6" (Grassmick 2:147)
- E. Hell is described by Jesus as being an unquenchable fire where their worm does not die (vv. 43-44): v. 44, *although identical to v. 48, is not found in the best manuscripts*

### III. **Jesus Warns about One's Foot Causing Her/Him to Stumble (vv. 45-46)**

- A. If a foot really is responsible for causing us to stumble into habitual sin, then we should cut it off
  1. Hyperbole: intentional exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis
  2. We must deal radically with the root cause of our sin
- B. It is better to enter heaven with a foot missing than enter hell with two feet!
- C. Hell is again described by Jesus as being an unquenchable fire where their worm does not die (vv. 45-46): v. 46, *although identical to v. 48, is not found in the best manuscripts*

### IV. **Jesus Warns about One's Eye Causing Her/Him to Stumble (vv. 47-48)**

- A. If an eye really is responsible for causing us to stumble into habitual sin, then we should cast it out
  1. Hyperbole: intentional exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis
  2. Hands, feet, and eyes are all highly valued
  3. We must deal radically with the root cause of our sin even if it means excising something dear to us
    - a) A sinful or evil habit
    - b) A sinful or evil custom
    - c) A sinful or evil pleasure
    - d) A sinful or evil relationship

- B. It is better to enter the kingdom of God with an eye missing than enter hell with two eyes!
  - C. **Please note how *kingdom of God* here is equated with [parallels] the word *life* used twice above, making both terms references to heaven**
  - D. Hell is described by Jesus as being an unquenchable fire where their worm [maggot] does not die (vv. 47-48; see also Isa. 66:24)
    - 1. Isaiah graphically portrayed the destiny of Israel's wicked enemies and Jesus employed this description as the eternal fate of the unsaved
    - 2. A fire that never burns itself out
    - 3. A fire that torments but never consumes flesh
- V. **Jesus Warns That Everyone Will Be Tormented with Fire (vv. 49-50)**
- A. "Everyone will be salted with fire" (v. 49)
    - 1. Reference to believers experiencing "fiery trials," especially the Twelve, in order to be purified, refined, and ready for eternity (Brown 2:81; Dummelow 729; Lane 349; Godwin 81; Turlington 345; cf. 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12)?
    - 2. Reference to *everyone in hell* being tormented with flames forever, since salt *preserves*?
    - 3. Reference to everyone being judged?
      - a) The unrepentant [unsaved] being thrown into eternal fire
      - b) The repentant believers in Jesus Christ are acquitted because of having Jesus as their mediator/attorney (cf. Grassmick 2:148)
      - c) I know many people don't like lawyers, but everyone needs a lawyer for judgment day ... and it better be Jesus or you're going to lose!
    - 4. Reference to every true believer in Jesus being a sacrifice to God (cf. Lane 349)?
      - a) Grain offerings were to be seasoned with salt [a symbol of the covenant], otherwise they would not be acceptable to God (cf. Exod. 30:35; Lev. 2:13; Ezek. 43:24)
      - b) Also highly compatible with Rom. 12:1-2
  - B. Salt is good (v. 50)
    - 1. But if the salt becomes unsalty, it's original saltiness can't be restored
    - 2. Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another

- a) Salt
- (1) **"Salt" suggests self-discipline for spiritual fervor and holiness as well as allegiance [loyalty] to Christ**
  - (2) Salt stings in a wound
  - (3) Salt purifies: the fire of hell is for punishment, whereas the fire of salt is for purification and refinement
  - (4) Salt preserves
  - (5) Salt seasons
  - (6) **It is far better to be routinely purified by "salt" than permanently tormented by fire!**
  - (7) **Jesus called Christians "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13), indicating that we should be "salted like this with the values of the kingdom" (Cole 966)**
  - (8) **A little irritation that stands in our way toward sin is a good deterrent and far better than spending eternity in flames!**
- b) Be at peace with one another
- (1) The disciples had recently been debating among each other which of them is greatest
  - (2) Remember that peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)
  - (3) No room for proud egos if there is to be peace in the group

**Conclusion: Principles.**

(1) If being thrown into the ocean with a heavy stone tied around one's neck is a picture of being better off, how awful and impacting must causing the stumbling into sin of a less mature Christian be (v. 42)?

(2) One primary objective of every Christian must be to behave in such a way that nobody would be lost to Christ [remain unsaved] because of our example (v. 42).

(3) "To sin is terrible but to teach another to sin is infinitely worse" (v. 42; Barclay 267).

(4) God will deal severely with those who mislead people, for, no matter how things might look right now, nobody is getting by with causing others to stumble, especially spiritually and morally (v. 42).

(5) We should be quick to find out what Satan is tempting us with and cut it out of our lives, seeing that Jesus both sternly and graphically warns against letting our body lead our spirit astray (vv. 43, 45, 47).

(6) No sacrifice is too great in comparison to being allowed entry into the kingdom of God or being sent to hell; thus, people are being urged to do whatever needs to be done to avoid going to hell (v. 47).

(7) Jesus speaks of hell [Gehenna] as an absolute reality which is a non-consuming fire of eternal torment and punishment and is positioned in this passage opposite the kingdom of God. Be sure to note that there is no third option (v. 48).

(8) Whoever is in hell [Gehenna] is there forever and is essentially "bullet proof," in that they cannot even die to escape the torment (v. 48).

(9) Christians must preserve their spiritual fervor, holiness, and allegiance to Jesus and the gospel by aggressively removing sinful thoughts and actions which corrupt our lives, causing dysfunction and hostility with others. Such *saltiness* transmits righteous living to the world and helps suppress moral and spiritual decay (vv. 43-50).

(10) It is the task of every Christian "to bring an antiseptic to the poison of life" (Barclay 274) and go "season the world" with the genuine Christian qualities which "salt" represents (v. 50; Godwin 81).

(11) Maintaining a *saltiness* [self-discipline for spiritual fervor and holiness as well as allegiance to Christ and the gospel] also helps to uphold peace with others (v. 50).

(12) A Christian not living at peace with other Christians is as useless as a chunk of salt that has lost its saltiness, making that person "not worth his/her salt" (v. 50).