

High Standard of Discipleship

Mark 9:42-50

August 11, 2013

Introduction

When Jesus calls us to be disciples, He calls us to His standard, which is perfect. He calls us to give our lives entirely into His service with love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit completely gives us what we need to enter in His kingdom. But to be His disciple is hard and fraught with suffering.

Jesus gives us another look into discipleship when He addresses the disciples' ugly competition of who is the greatest. He addresses their unloving attitude.

Mark 9:42-50 *And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. 43 If your hand causes you to sin, 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. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. 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 than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48 where "their worm does 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 in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.*

Note: Wait a minute, verses **44** and **46** are missing! What happened? **44** and **46** are the same as verse **48**. These two verses are not in the older, reliable manuscripts. These verses were added later. One guess why the scribes added it was that it was used as an emphasis (possibly from a sermon that the scribe has heard). Mark does not repeat himself in the gospels, so this repetition is not normal.

I. High Standard of Love (42)

Note: Loving believers so deeply that we do not want to cause any to sin.

- If you lead another believer to sin, you are better off dying a horrible death
 - Why is Jesus using such strong language?
 - Jesus loves His own
 - He gave His life for His sheep
 - We cannot separate Jesus Christ from His own people
- Stumble ("to sin")
 - Entrapped—trapped in sin
 - Luring believers to sin—this is a serious crime in Jesus' eye
- Millstone
 - Literally—mule stone
 - Grain grinder—large round rock rolling around on top of flat rock
 - Rock so heavy that it requires a mule or donkey to pull the stone
- Drowning at sea
 - Jews not sea-going people
 - Frightened of the sea and scared of drowning
- What is Jesus talking about?

Note: The disciples were putting each other down—back stabbing each other as to who is the best. They were very ugly about it. Jesus is in effect telling them, when you do this, the competition between one another, leading each other to sin, it is better that you die a horrible death than to do this again.

- Love your brothers and sisters

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

- Love spurs each other to righteousness
- Love seeks someone's best, elevates, purifies, and bless others

II. High Standard of Purity (43-48)

Note: Strong language—killing sin.

Note 2: This is found in the other gospels at different times. Jesus probably uses this picture more than once, emphasizing truths.

- Hands, feet, and eyes
 - Behaviors of life
 - Hands—what you do
 - Feet—where you go
 - Eyes—what you see
- Call to amputation
 - Getting rid of anything that is a barrier to holiness
- Symbolic
 - Jesus is not telling us to mutilate our bodies
 - By physically cutting up our bodies, we are not cutting off sin
 - Issue is inside

Mark 7:20-23 *He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' 21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' "*

Matthew 5:27-30 *You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

James 1:14-15 *but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death.*

- What is Jesus talking about?

- Deal seriously with sin
- Kill it
- Hell?

Note: Gehenna—place south of Jerusalem. It was a place where the Jews practiced child sacrifices to Moloch (**2 Kings 23**). Good King Josiah destroyed the place and made it a garbage heap. It was a vivid place where trash is burned and worms live in.

- What is Jesus talking about hell?
- If you are going to be His disciple, then you must choose holiness
- Consequence of remaining in sin is hell

Note: Hell is a real place. Jesus talked more about hell than anyone else and He warns us of it. By keeping our sins, we are in danger of the outer darkness.

- A believer's life is marked with purity and holiness
- This is an initial call to salvation
- Sin is so serious in God's eyes that we need to deal seriously with it
- Come to Jesus who can alone save us from death and hell and sanctify us
- Torments of hell (**v 48**)
 - External and internal (from **Isaiah 66:24**)

III. High Standard of Obedience (49-50)

- Everyone will be salted with fire
 - Very cryptic phrase—many interpretations
 - Salt with fire in OT

Note: The salt mixed with fire—sacrifice (**Ezra 6:9**). This is grain offering.

Leviticus 2:13 *Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.*

- Salt is God's promise, covenant (or enduring faithfulness)
- This is not a sin offering, but an offering of dedication (total devotion to the Lord)
- This is giving yourself totally to Christ

Mark 8:34 *If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.*

- How?
- Total obedience
 - Salt is good
 - Profitable
 - Preservative (no refrigeration in those days)
 - Salt is good unless it loses its saltiness
 - Many salt in Israel from Dead Sea
 - Many salt mixed with gypsum
 - Makes it useless (loses saltiness quite rapidly)
 - Salt is good when it is unmixed with gypsum
- Command

- Have salt in yourselves
 - Unmixed salt
- Be at peace with one another

Mark 9:33-34 *They 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.*

- They were salt mixed with gypsum—useless
- They were guilty of leading each other to sin
- Be at peace = command from the Lord
 - Stop fighting among yourselves
 - Stop the competition
 - Love one another

The Impact of Discipleship

Matthew 5:13 *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

We are the world's only hope for spiritual influence. If you cannot do this then you are useless. Your impact of the gospel as mixed salt is worthless.

1 Corinthians 11:17-21 *In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.*

1 Corinthians 11:29-30 *For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.*

There is no other salt. We are it. We are here for the glory of God. What is going to attract people into glorifying God is the witness you give. This is what God wants us to do when He calls us into His kingdom. Love one another. Kill sin and live a holy life. Live in obedience.