

WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS THE EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH

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Mark 9:38-50

Jesus Forbids Sectarianism

"Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Jesus Warns of Offenses

"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.'

Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

"For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. 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."

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There are several messages in this dialogue that Jesus had with His disciples. The first part is Jesus saying that those who are doing miracles in Jesus' name should not be rebuked or hindered for, "he who is not against us is on our side." The title of this section in the Bible is labeled by many as speaking against sectarianism. Sectarianism comes from the root word "sect", which is where we get the word section. Just as the Pharisees were a sect (of the Jewish religion) so were the Sadducees a sect. Today we have Baptists, Methodists, Prebyterians, Catholics, Pentecostals, Church of God, Church of Christ, and on and on. We call them today, denominations. We see a lot of different denominations working together serving Christ within the community. If someone is doing the work of the Lord

in sharing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ then we are supposed to not be hindering them. "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." From time to time it is said of those who are helping the poor and the homeless that we are not called to a social gospel, that is, to just focus on the social problems by just trying to alleviate hunger and homelessness. That is true because we are called as Christians to share the love AND the gospel of Jesus Christ. "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." We know from the gospels that Jesus fed the 4000 and another time fed the 5000. He healed people, delivered them of demons, prayed for them, and surrendered Himself to the will of the Father to die on a cross for our sins, taken our sins upon Himself, and then raising on the third day, conquering death and giving eternal life to all who will believe on Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17) The bottom line then is, we are all called to share the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is inevitable that the paths of our "ministries" will overlap with others but is there really such a thing as having too much of the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ? I personally can't get enough of Jesus. Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21) You know one way that Jesus manifests Himself to us? Through others! Do you ever get to talking to a brother or sister in Christ about Jesus and you just get giddy with excitement? If one of your brothers or sisters in Christ is talking to you about the Word, or about Jesus and you become agitated or grieved, there's a problem. Maybe the problem is with you or maybe it's in how that person is talking. But we're all supposed to be as the Apostle Paul said in **Ephesians 4:11-16**, "And [God] Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, **for the edifying of the body of Christ**, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes **growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love**." Paul could have added other gifts of the Spirit to that list in how we can encourage and edify one another. Some have more of a

gift of compassion, or a gift of helps, a gift of encouragement, a gift of discernment to where they can see who is troubled and who needs some encouragement. We all have gifts from God in ways that we can uplift and edify one another **in Christ**.

The Apostle Paul spoke to the Corinthian church about the sin of sectarianism. In **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** he said, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" We may not all be of the same denomination or sect but we are all called to be one in Christ! Jesus' prayer before he was betrayed and turned over to the authorities to which He was then crucified on a cross, to die for all of our sins, He prayed to the Father the prayer that we find in **John 17**. Of what Jesus said in His prayer, He was praying for all of God's people who would be called into His eternal kingdom. He prayed, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (**John 17:17-21**) "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Jesus IS the TRUTH! Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." We are sanctified (set apart in God's holiness) in Christ Jesus and as Jesus said, "if the Son makes you free you shall be free indeed." (**John 8:36**) Are we completely free in Christ Jesus? Yes and no. Jesus didn't just say "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (**John 10:10**) if it were not possible. Nevertheless, Paul said in **Romans 8:18-23**, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." One day brothers and sisters in Christ, the sufferings of this present time will be done away with

and we will live eternally in the glorious liberty in Jesus. Yet, even now, we can abide in the image of that glorious liberty. Abide in Christ or pursue our worldly passions for the things of this world that will bear no fruit except grief and misery. We are being called into oneness in Christ. To be one of His living stones of His temple, to be one of the members of His body, to be one of the branches of the vine (Jesus) that bears fruit for His kingdom. Whichever analogy better suits your understanding, we are all to be one in Christ, to bear fruit for the kingdom of God, His eternal kingdom, to where we will be joint-heirs with Jesus, (**Romans 8:17**) and we will reign with Christ (**2 Timothy 2:12**) throughout eternity!

We are also all called to be like children, children of God. We are warned by Jesus not to cause other children of God to stumble. I don't find it coincidental that after Jesus said that, He talked about purging yourself of the things that cause you to sin. Our sins rarely if ever just affect ourselves. Even if our sins aren't directly harming other people, let's look at it from a different perspective. If we are living in sin, then we are not being a good witness that will bear fruit for God's kingdom. So yes, our own personal sin, even if we live out in the middle of nowhere in the deepest part of a forest, miles and miles away from other people, if we are not actively and regularly being used by God to edify, uplift, or encourage others then we are essentially robbing God of His glory, honor, and praise. I'm not saying that we are all called to be like Mother Theresa or Billy Graham. But if we are actively sinning against God, we are not only harming ourselves but others, be it sons or daughters, fathers or mothers, sisters or brothers, or just other brothers and sisters in Christ. You may say, but I'm poor, or I'm homeless, or I don't have anything worth giving to others. If you are in Christ, you have Jesus! There is nothing better that you can give someone than Jesus! "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (**John 14:21**) Two verses later Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." Do you want more of Jesus in your life? I do! Practice loving God and others and following God's commandments. There it is!

The greatest stumbling block to our faith and to our witness is sin. When Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly", right before that He said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." James, the brother of Jesus said in **James 4:17**, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." Yes, the devil is real, and though we can't blame the devil for our sinning against God, just as Adam and Eve couldn't blame Satan for deceiving them into eating the forbidden fruit, he is out to steal, kill, and destroy, by enticing us to do anything but what Jesus is telling us

to do. If a certain situation continues to trap you or lead you into sin, then get away from it. I could safely assert that God has better for all of us. Living on the streets and being homeless is most likely not the final place that God is calling you. That is not meant to talk bad about anyone for being homeless. But as some of you know, living on the streets is HARD! Don't get me wrong, temptation to sin is everywhere. You can be at the bottom of the sea and still sin against God. Although I am not giving a prosperity message that says that God wants to make us all rich (financially), God does want to bless us so that we can be a blessing to others. That is not always materially speaking, sometimes it is just in the spiritual ways that we can be a blessing to others. But God most definitely wants us to have a life most abundantly. The Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah in **2 Corinthians 6:17** saying, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." If something or someone is causing you to sin, you must separate yourself so as to not be "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.'" as Jesus put it.

We hear it said all the time, "I try and start living right for God and all hell breaks loose in my life." The devil is about to steal, kill, and destroy, but God's promise is this, ""God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore **submit to God**. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Once again, if all you can do is cry out, "Jesus help me!", you do well versus doing nothing. "As many as call on the name of the Lord shall be saved!" (**Romans 10:13**)

God doesn't care about your street cred, or how cool, or tough, or how marvelous, or smart you think you are. That is all foolishness to Him. All of the devices of Satan are to get us to try and be our own gods, to dishonor and discredit God Almighty and to cause division within the body of Christ. The pride of man is contrary to the will of God. Jesus said, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (**Matthew 10:16**) We are to share the love and gospel of Jesus Christ but "the battle is not yours, but God's." (**2 Chronicles 20:15**)

"For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. 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." When we believe on Jesus Christ and are born-again (which is God giving of His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him-**Acts 5:32**) and He then begins working in us His Righteousness, working in

us His sanctification, setting us apart in His holiness. It is therefore certain that God will be burning off the old stuff in us that isn't useful and instilling in us His Righteousness. Another analogy is that God prunes us from time to time. That seasoning that we get is in His Word. Paul says in Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." In other words, God will season us with salt from His Word, that preserves us and gives us the proper seasoning to share with others. If we don't let God work in us His Righteousness, that is sin! If we keep trying to tackle problems in pride, anger, or rebellion then Jesus says that we are in danger of hell fire. That is why Paul said, "I beseech you" or I beg you, let God have His way in you so that you can be useful for His kingdom, His glory, His honor, and His praise. Anything outside of that will one way or another burn up in the fire. Let us therefore pursue and practice righteousness, love of others and love for God, in humility, and He promises us that He will lift us up, in this lifetime and to His eternal kingdom, which is forever and ever. Amen.