

用火腌出来的基督徒生命——马可福音 9:38-50

The Kind of Life That's Salted with Fire—Mark 9:38-50

Introduction & Outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 9:33-50; Matthew 5:13-16

Mark 9:38-50

38 John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.” 39 But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 For he who is not against us is for us. 41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. 42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] 45 If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, 46 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] 47 If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, 48 where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. 49 “For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

- Aron Ralston’s story: He was canyoneering alone in the Bluejohn Canyon. While descending this slot canyon, he accidentally dislodged a huge boulder which landed squarely on his right arm, pinning him up against the canyon wall. As time went by, the food and water he carried gradually ran out, and there was left only one way to survive: cutting off his arm with the knife he carried.
- Extreme danger sometimes calls for extreme actions. In today’s Scripture, Jesus asks the disciples who want to follow him to deal with their sins with the most extreme determination in order to escape the danger of hell.
- Outline:
Title: The Kind of Life That’s Salted with Fire
 1. Life of Mutual Love (vv.38-42)
 2. Life of Mortifying Sin (vv.43-50)

Life of Mutual Love (vv.38-42)

- “John said to Him”: Last time I analyzed this incident from the perspective of humility. John’s report reflects the kind of extreme sinful pride. One fruit of pride is sectarianism which thinks only one’s own small group is doing work for God and cannot tolerate others outside the small group being used by God.
- “Do not hinder him, for...”: Don’t be quick to doubt others’ salvation. As long as they haven’t publicly denounced Jesus, do not doubt what they have done in Jesus’ name.

- “For he who is not against us is for us”: We must have a magnanimous and optimistic attitude and realize that the kingdom of God is vast and Christians all belong to the same spiritual kingdom.

1 Corinthian 12:13 “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”

1 Corinthian 12:26 “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

1 Corinthian 13:7 “Love...believes all things”

【Insights】 **A humble person believes all things; a prideful person doubts all things** — always suspecting something seriously wrong with others’ heart, motive, or their basic understanding of salvation. He says he wants to serve God, but really he just wants to satisfy his own selfish desires. He says he’s willing to confess and repent, but in fact he just wants to win others’ sympathy. This is called doubting all things! **Such a mentality is not only a fruit of pride, but also a direct obstacle to loving one another in Christ.**

- “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ.....”: The motivation to serve one another is “because of your name as followers of Christ”! When a Christian sees another Christian in thirst, the love of Christ will compel him to offer a glass of water. No other motivation is needed. Just because the other person belongs to Christ is enough.
- “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble”: Verse 41 is positive encouragement, while verse 42 is negative warning! This may be the most serious warning of all that Jesus ever said to his disciples! To hammer this warning into the heart of his disciples, Jesus paints a picture before us.
- “It would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”: **Please fix this image in your head!**

Sea was the most feared natural force at that time, and dying in the sea was itself a most horrific way to die; a large millstone was one of the heaviest objects in daily life, usually weighing hundreds of pounds. **Imagine wearing such a big stone on your neck, thrown into the middle of the sea, and sinking all the way to the bottom. Even dying such a cruel death is better than “causing one of these little ones who believe to stumble”, that is, than causing one Christian to sin because of you.**

【Further Explanation】 “Stumble” here does not mean losing salvation. No one can cause other Christians to lose salvation. Here, Jesus warns disciples **never to cause another Christian to stumble in their faith, because this is exactly what the disciples did twice in a row!** **What they did in verses 34 and 38 were things that would directly cause others to stumble!**

【Important Truth】 **It is of course possible for a true Christian to stumble in faith. Though the basic saving faith cannot fall away completely, the faith of trusting God in everything can stumble. If your faith stumbles in anything, you’re sinning against God, falling short of God’s glory, incurring discipline in this life and forfeiting eternal rewards on that very thing.**

【Consideration】 Why does Jesus speak so harshly here? Because He deeply loves every one of His disciples! **He cannot tolerate anything that hurts them, let alone those who cause the hurt are also his disciples!**

【Analogy】 Nothing hurts a father's heart more than watching his own children quarrel and fight among themselves, hurting one another!

Matthew 18:10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

Genesis 12:3 “And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse.”

Psalms 105:15 “Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.”

Zechariah 2:8 “... He who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.”

【Application example】 If you want to do something, even a good thing, even if there are 10,000 reasons to support you doing it, if you find doing so will cause one little one who believes in Jesus to stumble, you must stop immediately. Even if the thing itself is good and God-honoring, you can't trip other Christians in order to do it.

【Application Extension】 Three ways to cause other Christians to stumble: First, directly enticing others to sin: talking things that shouldn't be talked, inviting others to movies that shouldn't be watched, or to events or activities that aren't even proper, all of which put others directly into sinful temptations; Second, abusing Christians' freedom and tempting others to do things beyond what their conscience allows (Romans 14); Third, failing to fulfill the responsibility of church life and neglecting to serve one another, thereby indirectly causing brothers and sisters to stumble (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25), so withdrawing from church life is definitely not a way to avoid stumbling brothers and sisters!

【The Way Out】 The only way to avoid causing others to stumble is to be diligently committed to church life while working hard at killing your own sins, so that you're always encouraging others with a progressively sanctified life. That's why Jesus followed up with the point below.

Life of Mortifying Sin (vv.43-50)

- “your hand... cut it off; ...your foot ... your eye...”: Not just with “You shall not commit adultery” (Matthew 5:27-30), but all sins must be dealt with in this way! It doesn't mean to cut the body literally, because:

Colossians 2:23 “... self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

Mark 7:23 “All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

【Correct Interpretation】 Jesus is using the most bloody images to show us the seriousness and importance of dealing with sin! Christians must deal with sin with the strongest determination, even when it costs extreme pain! This principle is not an exaggeration!

Romans 8:13 “for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Colossians 3:5 “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

Galatians 5:24 “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

1 Corinthians 9:27 “but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

- “It is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire...”: Jesus mentioned hell and eternal life three times in a row. People with wholesome hands and feet will go to hell; people who treat their own sins lightly will go to hell; people who only see the sins of others and the goodness of themselves will go to hell!

【Application】 Now that you are determined to deal with sin, what should you do? **1. Sorrow and contrition** (2 Corinthians 7:11). Never try to avoid guilt; rather, fill your conscience with guilt until you can truly grieve over your sin! **2. Pray earnestly**, and pray with fasting when necessary (Matthew 17:21). **3. Avoid temptation** (1 John 5:21). **4. Help one another in the church** (Gal. 6:1-2). **5. Pursue Christ** (2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 4:8-9).

- “For everyone will be salted with fire”: Salt and fire appear together in sacrificial offerings (Leviticus 2:13; Ezek. 43:24). Salt is for preservation, while fire in the context can be the fire of hell on the one hand and the price for killing sin on the other. Sin must be tackled with a refining fire in the soul, and this refining fire is the salt that preserves our purity.

【Principle】 Everyone must be salted by fire. Either be salted in the fire of hell or be salted in the fire of sanctification. Sin must be tackled with a refining fire in the soul. The only way to escape the fire of hell is to mortify your sins now with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

- “Salt is good ...Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.”: If there is no salt, the church will be corrupted from the inside, and there’ll be no peace with one another. Only by killing your own sins resolutely can you continue to live a life of loving one another.

Summary

The Christian life salted with fire is a life of loving one another and a life of killing sin with the utmost resolution.