



## **Difficult Conversations with Jesus - part 5 - Sin is Serious**

Jesus spoke frequently about money, hell, and sin. In Mark 9:42-50, he speaks about sin in a way that many churches today would prefer to overlook. We could sum up Jesus' point in three words: **sin is serious.**

### **Leading Others to Sin**

It is possible that Jesus was holding a child in his arms while speaking in verse 42, *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea."*

Jesus is not simply talking about little children; he is talking about all of his disciples. Woe to anyone who misleads a fellow Christian, causing them to sin. We must be constantly on our guard to be careful not to cause anyone to sin. We can be guilty of misleading someone unintentionally. What we condone and what we talk about can easily be a stumbling block for someone else.

## **Leading Ourselves to Sin**

Jesus then highlights three body parts as avenues for sin. Using shocking language of amputation and disfigurement, Jesus calls his followers to respond radically to the presence of sin in their lives.

### *Hands (v. 43)*

Our hands can be used for theft, fighting, and murder. With our hands we can make dishonest trades or give and receive bribes. We can be guilty of withholding help by keeping our hands closed. Our hands need to be consecrated to the Lord, using them for good works, diligent work, and life-giving activities.

### *Feet (v. 45)*

Our feet can also be used to sin. With our feet we can walk towards an argument when we should walk the other way. Like the Levite and the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:25-37), we can sin by walking away from a need. Our feet can lead us into sin by going to establishments where a child of God should not be. Our feet must be consecrated to the Lord. Walking with God is not a theological concept; it is a way of life.

### *Eyes (v. 47)*

Jesus teaches in Luke 11:34-36 that the health of the eye has an effect on the whole person. If your eye is good—if you look at and dwell on pure and holy things—then your body will be filled with light. But when you look at impure and unholy things, your body will be full of darkness.

Psychologists are beginning to study and document the terrible effects of pornography on the human body and brain. It leads to darkness. There is a brain fog and a darkness that comes over someone addicted to pornography. In the same way, mindlessly watching social media videos can

lead to depression and a dull mind.

What we see can also lead to covetousness. When we covet something, we are expressing that what God has given us is not enough. Covetousness is an ever-hungry idol.

Eyes consecrated to the Lord can witness and dwell on beauty and worship the Creator. A good eye sees things the way God designed them to be. Consecrated eyes bring light and life to our bodies and lives.

### **A Radical Response to Sin**

What does Jesus tell us to do with our hands, feet, and eyes when they cause us to sin? Cut them off and gouge them out!

While Jesus never intended for this teaching to be applied literally, it gives us a dramatic picture of how seriously we need to view sin. The verses have a sense of surgical removal; there is a finality to it.

#### *Remove It*

When we identify the sin in our lives, we need to be aggressive in removing the temptation to sin. We can be tempted to grade sins in order of destructiveness. We all agree that murder and violence are bad, but we domesticate other sins, cultural and “acceptable” sins that we allow room in our lives. No sin should have any part in our lives. Jesus wants us to aggressively remove them all.

#### *Hate It*

The problem is that we don't value holiness and purity enough to be aggressive with the sin in our lives. We accommodate, we compromise, we justify, all the while living in darkness, far from the joy and the peace that Jesus has for us.

We wonder why there is no answer to our prayers and no victory in our lives, but we are compromising with the world.

Do we hate sin enough to remove the thing that enables us to sin? It might be our cable service, our smart phone, or our shopping habits. It may be our job or our friends. Whatever is tempting us to sin needs to be cut off and permanently removed. Hate sin enough to take drastic action.

### *Sacrifice It*

The Christian life inevitably involves sacrifice (see Romans 12:1. Jesus is talking about this sacrifice when he discusses saltiness in verses 49-50. In ancient times, salt had impurities that could cause it to lose its flavor, thus rendering it useless. Once a Christian loses the character of Christ, because of impurity, we become useless in the kingdom.

This is not about losing one's salvation but one's effectiveness. A Christian who compromises with the world has lost the ability to impact the world for the kingdom of God. Compromise creeps in slowly and infects the body.

There is no corner of our lives that we should not invite the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit to inspect and to convict us of sin. Ambition, pride, lust, greed, covetousness, gossip, slander, laziness, an angry temper, and more must be exposed and brought into the light if we are to live fully alive and effective for Jesus Christ.

### *Confess It*

But there is incredibly good news. Jesus took our sins and paid the price that enables us to live in the light. When Jesus went to the cross, he went to be the perfect and final sacrifice for our sins.

Romans 2:4 reminds us that it is the kindness of God that leads us to

repentance and for all who repent of their sins, we are promised forgiveness and cleansing from all our sins (see 1 John 1:9).

Confession is the key . Confession needs to be part of our daily spiritual disciplines.

Sin is serious, but forgiveness, freedom and peace are available through Jesus Christ.