

Mark 9:42-50
Warning Signs

Hey good morning church. So good to be with you this morning as we continue our time of worship through the Word of God. Today we're in Mark 9, as we continue to work through the Gospel of Mark – 1 chapter at a time. We are set to finish our study in the book of Mark on July 10, and I'd encourage you to make being here and working through this book with us a priority.

As we saw last week – what does it mean to follow Jesus – basic Christianity 101 – in Mark 8, this week and next continue on that same theme. What does basic Christianity look like. And in the text that I've selected for this week – Jesus is giving a series of warning signs. And I started thinking about warning signs. Take a look at some of these...







So, I started down this path of why we pay attention to some warnings but ignore others. All about risk management – what signs we ignore and what signs we pay attention to. (1) Our opinion of the downside of ignoring it – notice I said opinion not reality. (2) Our likelihood of ignoring it. And maybe (3) our own personal experiences.

And while I found some funny warning signs here – Jesus in Mark 9 gives us some not so funny warnings. A warning about how we live our own lives for him – influencing people for their good and God’s glory – and how we guard our own lifestyles.

If you have a Bible – I invite you to turn with me to Mark 9. I will be in the CSB this morning. If you are using a device – my encouragement to you is to go to the CSB on your device. I’m going to read a handful of verses starting at 9:42 – 9:50

READ Mark 9:42-50

Warnings from Jesus

⁴² “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away — it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

⁴³ “And if your hand causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and go to hell, the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge 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 For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt should lose its flavor, how can you season it? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

PRAY

So we have in these verses a series of warnings that Jesus gives us and the first is how we influence people – specifically other Christians and newer Christians.

Godly Influence

All of us influence people – whether we know it or not. And right here in 9:42 Jesus gives us an incredible warning about how we influence people.

- Whoever – this is a warning that all of us need to hear
- Causes – influences or leads others
- Little Ones – not specifically children, but children certainly are included – more generally Christians and even newer Christians

- Fall Away – Some translations say to sin or to stumble – It’s clear here that Jesus is referring to leading people, influencing people, in a way that is inconsistent with the Scriptures and the Gospel. Influencing people in a way that leads them to sin, and to denying the Gospel.
 - Things we commit and things we omit

The Warning – you’d just as well have been drowned in the ocean.

And see, **I think the motivation for influencing people in a Godly way – this motivation must be love. Love for God and a love for others.** Not sentimentalism – but real Biblical love. Not like go along to get along kind of thing. But real Biblical love for people.

- Love that risks
- Love that encourages
- Love that challenges
- Love that speaks truth in the context of relationship
- Love that builds upon truth
- Love that sacrifices

In John 13 – after washing his disciples’ feet – Jesus gives them a new command. To love each other. To love as he loved them – laying his life down for them. And Jesus said “By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”

We have to allow the Scriptures to give us our definition of love.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, ⁵ is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. ⁶ Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends.

You want to influence people in a Godly way – allow your love for God to lead to a Biblically rooted love for them.

And while you do – guard your own lifestyle

Guard Your Own Lifestyle

Jesus gives us this extreme example of how we are to guard our own lifestyle – how we live. And while, he’s certainly not suggesting we start chopping off our limbs – I think he’s unquestionably telling us that sin needs to be dealt with seriously! All of it. From the “little” stuff to the “major” stuff. All of it needs to be dealt with seriously! And to be clear – a blind guy with no hands or feet can and will still sin – because sin starts in the heart.

James reminds us that sin starts in the heart – when we’re drawn away and enticed by our own evil desires.

And so Jesus’ warning sign here – he’s talking about first believing – turning from our own sinful desires, lifestyles, choices – and turning to Him. Removing anything and everything that would get in our way of following Him. Similar to last week’s scripture that we looked at.

But then – he’s talking about long-term repentance and obedience. There should be a pattern of repentance and obedience in the life of a Christian. As we allow the Holy Ghost to keep changing us – **focusing not on instant perfection but progression in Godliness**. As we see that we’re not the same person we were 1 or 2 months ago – or maybe even 3 or 5 years ago. We see this ongoing pathway of repentance and obedience as a major part of our life with Christ.

We guard our own lifestyle and we remove anything that prevents us from following Jesus in obedience.

And the reason this matters is because **hell is real and it will be absolutely horrifying**.

To describe the horrifying nature of hell – Jesus quotes Isaiah 66

- Hell – Gehenna – the Valley of Hinnom – the unquenchable fire
 - This was a place of horrifying wickedness, child sacrifice, all kinds of pagan stuff
 - That eventually became Jerusalem’s garbage dump where trash would be burned
 - And the fire burned nonstop
- We have to see this warning sign – with the horrifying nature that Jesus intends. Hell is real. Hell will be horrifying. We can’t ignore this warning. For the one whose life is marked by turning from Jesus and running to sin – the unquenchable fire waits.

Sin is serious. Sin isn’t something to be played around with or kept around. Like you’d never tell a guy with an unhealthy food addiction to just leave the bag of Oreos in the pantry. You can ignore them. No, you like empty the pantry. You cut it all out.

Or the guy or girl that’s looking at terrible stuff on the internet – just keep it there in case you get bored or something. Nonsense – we tell people to get rid of your computer. Get a flip phone. Disconnect the internet at your house. Drop Netflix. Start reading books instead.

Illustration – Dude and his wife and his porn addiction.

Take radical steps to deal with the sin in your own life – as a new Christian and in an effort for ongoing obedience – as we allow the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to shape us, and to change us.

The Sacrifice

In Verse 49 – Jesus says that everyone will be salted with fire. Now I’ve read several different opinions on this verse and where I’m landing is that this is a reference to one of the Jewish

sacrifices required in Leviticus. Leviticus is the 3rd book of the Bible – contains the instruction of God’s people in worship, in offering and instructions to the religious leaders of God’s people.

And in Lev. 2:13 – in describing one of the offerings, or one of the sacrifices we read “You are to season each of your grain offerings with salt”. Later in this same verse it’s referred to as the salt of the covenant.

And so where I land on this verse – that we are salted with fire – is that we are to sacrifice ourselves for the glory of God and the good of others. We are the sacrifice – and we are salted with fire – as we submit to God, as we obey the instruction of the Lord, as we follow Jesus regardless of the cost.

Fire burns. Fire hurts (I was a bit of a pyro when I was a kid – have the scars to prove it). But fire also purifies. And Peter as an older man, pastor, gives us this similar picture in 1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶You rejoice in this,[Ⓜ] even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials ⁷so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Don’t Lose Your Flavor, and Don’t Be A Jerk!

Jesus is giving us another warning here. Says – don’t lose your flavor. Don’t lose your influence. To be clear – we don’t ever sacrifice this book – but we don’t have to be jerks about it.

Live at peace with one another. In the church, and outside of the church. Live at peace. Rejoice in the gifting of others,. Rejoice in the blessing of God over your friends and family’s lives. Celebrate the grace and mercy and sovereign provision of God over people you know. It’s easy to be a jerk. It’s easy to fall into jealousy, maybe even bitterness when you see others thriving in ways you wish you’d be thriving. But the call to follow Christ is a call to focus on God and others – not a call to focus on ourselves.

Here's how Paul puts it in Romans 12. He would say, under the caption “Behave Like a Christian” in some translations (note that the headings are added after the fact so they can vary a bunch from translation to translation) – Behave like a Christian:

READ Romans 12:9-18

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. ¹¹ Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit;[Ⓜ] serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. ¹³ Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute

you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. ¹⁸ If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

CLOSING

Draw back to the warning signs & basic Christianity...