

Sermon Outline

Preserved and yet Persevering

Text : Mark 9: 36 -50

Message: Although Jesus has saved us from our sins, we must save ourselves from remaining sin.

I Introduction

1. Right at our doorstep, a gospel is daily preached that Christians have been perfected in this life because of Christ's once and for all sacrifice for sinners.
2. Repentance is taboo. So the pursuit of godliness is manifesting the practice of complete victory and minimizing the reality of our defeats.
3. Thousands accept this so-called gospel of grace or prosperity based on an over-realized eschatology
4. Our text reminds us that although Jesus has saved us from our sins, we must save ourselves from remaining sin.

II We must save ourselves from causing others to sin v42

A. Context

1. Jesus was here teaching his disciples. The disciples having been chosen to be part of the Jesus' team were getting preoccupied with position and status.
2. Greatness is about serving indiscriminately all including little children.
3. Greatness in the kingdom is not about how many servants are serving us but how many and how lowly we have served.
4. John confessed that they had tried to stop a non-disciple from casting out demons in Jesus' name. In reply Jesus said they should be more inclusive.
5. In this regard he added that whoever shows a little act of kindness like providing a thirsty disciple a cup of plain water,

knowing that he belongs to Christ, would be rewarded. They are not only serving the disciple but serving Christ.

B. Contrast.

1. It is against this background that Jesus exhorts his disciples that even though they are saved from their sins, they are to keep themselves from sinning by being holy for He is holy. 1 Pet 1:15-16.
2. The contrast is this. A little act of kindness done in the name of Christ is rewarded. Conversely, causing a little one who believes in Christ to sin, will not go unpunished.

C. Characteristic of “these little ones”

1. 1stly, these little ones are those who believe in the Lord Jesus and belong to Him.
2. 2ndly, even though Jesus used a child in v 36 for his illustration, it is obvious from the thrust of the teaching on greatness that it is not about age. It is about their lowly, insignificant and humble standing and status, both in society and in the kingdom.
3. Little ones are those who are still young in their faith and those who are sensitive, vulnerable, humble child-like adult believer. Little ones of course, do not exclude young children. For they can also believe the Lord.
4. At the first level, young children are “these little ones”. At another level, they are the other adult believers. To believe means to trust. Even in adults the essence of their faith, despite all their intellectual capacity, is childlike trust. In the matter of trust the child is the model for the man, not the man for the child as Lenski so aptly describes it.

D. Causing them to sin

1. To cause to sin or to offend is rooted in the meaning “to entrap”. The noun form of this word means, "the moveable stick or trigger of a trap or a snare. To offend is to act like the trigger that set off a trap to capture and imprison them.
2. The term goes beyond the idea of stumbling (from which one may rise again). It brings upon that one who is trapped spiritual

destruction. It is like an animal falling to its death in a pit of sharp stakes.

3. Jesus thus describes the worse scenario that could happen to these little ones to cover all forms of lesser mistreatment.

4. The sense is: whoever destroys or harm spiritually a child or a childlike believer incurs the greatest wrath of Jesus. That wrath is likened to being thrown into sea with a millstone hung around one's neck.

5. The extreme description of the great millstone and the deepest kind of water, sea pictures a certain and inescapable terrible death for one who cause others to sin.

E. Call to the followers

1. Jesus has a purpose in highlighting why such a sin is serious.

2. 1stly, "these little ones" are insignificant in the eyes of the world. As a result there is a tendency to be care less with them.

3. But 2ndly and importantly, Jesus had indicated how precious these are in his sight, for what is done for them is as if it were done for himself (v. 37). This is a word that should awaken all of us, parents, pastors, teachers, and all who hold positions of influence. What if only one humble soul be lost through our teaching, our conduct and our words!

4. We note that Jesus highlights the numerical "one."

5. Hence the call to every child of God who is chosen to be holy(Eph 1:4) is to persevere in being set apart for God's use. By his life, he by the power of grace given to them by God, purposefully builds and strengthens others and be a blessing to especially these little ones.

III We must save ourselves from sinning ourselves vv 43-47

A. Sin is dangerous

1. Leading from the exhortation of causing others to sin and destroying their spiritual well-being, Jesus in vv 43-47 turned to the thought that we may entrap ourselves similarly and do this through one or other bodily members.

2. . The whole illustration of cutting off hand and foot and tearing out eye is to show how dangerous sin is.
3. Remember Jesus was here speaking to followers and believers. This is instruction on living out the Christian life on this side of glory and to be sanctified. He reminded the followers although sin does not reigns over you, sin remains in you.
4. Our new life as Rev Dieleman puts it - is "already but not yet" – this means that our struggle against sin continues throughout all of life. We know we cannot attain sinless perfection in this life.

B. Sin is inside job

1. We can see why these 3 members of the body are singled out for mention. We lust with our eyes and then we manoeuvre our way to the desired object with our feet and then with our hands we grab it. It is a logical progression of the manifestation of sin
2. But because some disciples might say, I can't help it because these hands, feet and eyes are part of me. Jesus says cut them out or tear them out.
3. The repetitions found in this graphic illustration, hand, foot, eye, each treated separately in the same drastic way, aim to hammer home the truth that discipleship cost..
4. This warning implies that our bodily members are ready instruments of evil, but slow to do that which is good.
5. But ultimately despite the focus on the bodily members as instruments of sin, it is our own evil heart and will that misuse or misdirect these bodily members to make them the instruments of sin.
6. The solution to the problem goes beyond amputation and fleeing from sin. Our heart must be sanctified by the indwelling presence of God and His grace.

C. Sin and reality of Hell

1. The result of having been captured, immobilized and trapped was to end up in hell. Hell is mentioned emphatically 3 separate times in contrast to kingdom of God or life.
2. The 11 descriptions of hell in the gospels are awful pictures. Although it is a grave warning, it is always with sadness when we

speak of hell and the abode for the lost. It matters little whether we regard the description as figurative and emblematic or literal. There is a real hell, and that hell is eternal.

3. There is no mercy in keeping back from men the subject of hell. Fearful and awful as it is, it ought to be pressed on all, as one of the great truths of Christianity.

4. It is important to note that this clear word was spoken to believers. It is to followers that he was warning in their holiness journey unto life.

5. Hell is real and therefore sin is serious. What these verses are saying is simply this that the followers of Jesus should be prepared to give up anything that stands between them and the salvation of their souls and accept whatever pain the sacrifice may cost us.

IV. We must save ourselves from losing our saltiness vv 49-50

A. Salt and the Word

1. Lord if what you say about entrapping others and being entrapped ourselves are so serious and damnable, then what can be done ? Jesus' response is in v 50. Have salt in yourselves !

2. Everyone of his disciples will be salted with fire. But what does that mean? Some relate it to the OT sacrifices where all grain and even some burnt offerings were to be seasoned with salt (Lev 2:13, Eze 43:24). This is plausible. But Mark is written to Gentile readers, hence it is unconvincing. It would be easier to use its everyday meaning of that day.

3. Salt was used commonly to prevent food from spoiling and to make it tasty. It was also used as an antiseptic for cleaning wounds. In Matt. 5:13 the disciples themselves were called salt, the salt that is to counteract the corruption of the world.

4. In our text, the disciples are not themselves called salt, but salt is to be applied to them. They are to be salted or to have salt in themselves. This salt is none other than the salt of the Word and teaching of Jesus in all its saving, purifying and sanctifying strength. Joh 17:15-17

B. Salt and Fire

1. Added to this, the idea of fire suggests painfulness even as the salt purifies and cleanses wounds.
2. Yes salt is good. The Word of God is excellent. Its excellent quality through the power of the Spirit will salt or sanctify us through and through.

C. Salt and saltiness

1. But this salt must, of course, not lose its intrinsic power to salt.
2. Suffice to say that in the situation there and then where the only salt they knew was from the Dead Sea, there were just no salt substitutes.
3. Practically salt can lose its saltiness in those days.
4. What remains is a saltless salt. It looks like salt but not salty. That beloved is not a hypothetical case but a real one that Jesus' listeners could relate and understand.
5. In Matt. 5:13, where the disciples themselves are called salt of the earth, this loss of saltiness means that the disciples are straying and going back to their unbelief and worldliness again.
6. Here the salt is the excellent Word which is changeless and will always be salt(1 Peter 1:23,25). Here Jesus is saying that we are to have salt and to be salted with this salt. And it can become saltless for us when we do not apply it properly to ourselves. Or when we dilute the salt because it is too salty as it is. As Lenski in his helpful commentary said, You may have the whole Bible, but if you shrink from its sanctifying power you will not be freed from your corruption.

D. Salt and me

1. Jesus adds: "Have salt in yourselves." Note the command. It is applicable now and continuously i.e. Have salt now and all the time.
2. 2ndly, Have salt not in your hand, feet, eyes or even head, but "in yourselves," i.e. in your entire persons, hearts, hands, feet, eyes, and all your members. This having salt means using the Word constantly to keep us free from evil and spiritually clean and pure.

3. The application is therefore plain. Let us make sure that we have in our hearts the saving word of God, sanctifying, purifying, preserving from corruption, our whole inward man.

E. Salt and peace

1. Finally, Jesus speaks plainly – Have peace with one and another. Maintain the peace He would be purchasing for them on the Cross. Directly this was the command to the disciples to stop bickering about who was the greatest (v34).

2. Wrong desires of greatness could easily cause division and dissension among the disciples.

3. Similarly applied to us, only the salt of the word with much prayer through God's grace and mercy can remove pride, selfishness and narrow-minded, impatient, "be like me" outlook and preserve peace and harmony among us for the advancement of God's church and kingdom.

4. Jesus' last word in this text has great significance for us.

V. Conclusion

1. Our new life is "already but not yet." On the one hand, we are already a new people in Christ, a new creation (Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17). On the other hand, the new life is still hidden (Col 3:10) and is not yet fully ours. This is the tension God's people must live with in this life and on this earth.

2. We must make every effort – by the strength of the Spirit – to continually live up to what we are. We know we are new creatures in Christ, so we should want to live a positive and victorious Christian life.

3. We are preserved and yet persevering. We are sanctified and yet being sanctified until we are perfected forever in glory.

4. Till then be encouraged we are not alone. The Lord is with us