

## **How Serious is Sin?** Devotional #18, Mark 9:30-50

*<sup>30</sup> They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, <sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand the saying and were afraid to ask him.*

*<sup>33</sup> And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup> But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup> And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."*

*<sup>38</sup> John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." <sup>39</sup> But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. <sup>40</sup> For the one who is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup> For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.*

*<sup>42</sup> "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. <sup>43</sup> And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' <sup>49</sup> For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup> Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."*

- Mark 9:30-50, ESV

A popular misunderstanding of Jesus and the Pharisees is that Jesus was softer and laxer on issues of sin and obedience than the Pharisees. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth!

An external legalism, such as the Pharisees taught and practiced, is based on a very light and trivial view of sin. To think that we can arrange and manage the details of our lives and get our sin under control by a long list of rules is to be deluded and to fail to see sin for the deadly and persistent enemy it really is. Jesus' view of sin was much more serious and His call to holiness much more radical.

The real Jesus we find in the Gospels is not a Jesus of cheap grace and easy living. His voice is closer to the call echoed in John Owen: "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you!" Jesus calls for a radical, all-out war against sin. His saving grace gives us the power to kill sin by the indwelling Holy Spirit, not to manage, control, limit or play with it.

Salvation given by Jesus Christ brings a grace into our lives which is powerful and life-changing, not cheap and sin-coddling. We do remain subject to the influence of remaining indwelling sin in our lives until we reach glory and are made like Jesus. But we do not remain unchanged and powerless against sin. We can - we must - cut it out, throw it away, put it to death. No sacrifice will be too great, no loss too costly, when

we are fighting and killing sin.

But let's make sure we understand something: We cannot do this on our own. We are powerless against sin. The truth is, we love it too much! Only Christ in us can kill sin. He overcame every temptation and defeated sin utterly and completely. We must abide in Him and have His words abide in us, so that He can kill sin in us.

We have His promise that He will never abandon us in this fight. We also have His promise that one day the fight will be over, and we will be victorious in Him!