

“Radically Guarding Ourselves”  
 Mark 9:43-50  
 (Preached at Trinity, October 24, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this section Jesus has been confronting the disciples with their problem of pride – the same problem that plagues every human being.  
 Jesus embraced a child to use as an example.  
**Mark 9:36** – “And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,”
  2. Jesus summarized His teaching on the importance of sacrifice and humility in **Verse 37**  
**Mark 9:37 NAU** - "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."  
 Matthew’s Gospel is even clearer:  
**Matthew 18:4 NAU** - "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
  3. In **Verses 41-42**, probably while still holding the little child He continues by describing the importance of how we treat the children of God. In the desire to elevate ourselves above others we cease to remember our responsibility towards them. How we treat God’s people is of the utmost importance. Our love for them is a reflection of our love for Christ. Christ cannot be separated from His people. What we do to the brethren is done to Christ  
**Matthew 25:40 NAU** - "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to Me."
  4. In these verses we’ve seen the problem the disciples had with pride and selfishness, with intolerance and hardness of heart. Jesus closes this section with a strong admonition regarding the nature of discipleship. Instead of seeking to promote ourselves in rank and recognition we need to focus on humbling ourselves unto holiness.
  5. We must be cautious regarding the hearts of our brethren (**Verse 42**) and we must be cautious regarding our own hearts.
- I. The first thing we see is the radical nature of discipleship
- A. Jesus is speaking of holiness at any cost
    1. Most pass over or disregard the teaching of Christ with regard to His expectations
    2. We need to understand the nature of grace.  
 Jesus is a gracious Savior. He is merciful to us and He takes pity upon our weaknesses. But He had no mercy upon hypocrisy.
    3. With regard to His expectations for His people He is clear—We must follow Him with great passion and energy. He doesn’t give much comfort to the half-hearted.

4. We must be willing to part with all and embrace Him as our King. He uses powerful words to describe following Him.  
**Luke 13:24 NAS** - "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." ἀγωνίζομαι  
**Matthew 11:12 NAS** - "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."
  5. In this passage before us tonight Jesus speaks of the necessity of giving great importance to the matter of holiness.
- B. Jesus speaks of three precious body parts  
Our hands, our feet, our eyes
1. It could be He has in mind distinct categories of sin
    - a. The hand is an instrument of violence.  
We use our hands as the means of harming our neighbor—even committing murder  
**Proverbs 6:16-17 NAU** - "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:  
<sup>17</sup> Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,"
    - b. Hands are also the instruments of thievery and of Godly labor  
**Ephesians 4:28 NAU** - "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need."
    - c. Feet serve as a means of running to evil  
**Proverbs 6:16-18 NAU** - "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:  
<sup>17</sup> Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup> A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,"
    - d. Eyes are the portals to lust  
**1 John 2:16 NAU** - "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."
      - David looked upon Bathsheba to lust after her  
**2 Samuel 11:2 NAU** - "Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance."
      - Eve's eyes caused her to lust after the fruit  
**Genesis 3:6 NAU** - "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

2. It is more likely that Jesus is simply speaking of those parts that are precious to us.
    - a. Our hands, feet, and eyes are important to us. We would not willingly part with them
    - b. Jesus is saying it is far better to part with one all that is precious to us. It is far better to suffer loss now than to enter into hell
  - C. Jesus is teaching that we must go to great extremes to live holy lives. We must be willing to part with anything that keeps us from holiness
    1. If the TV is keeping you from feeding your soul are you willing to cast it away?
    2. If food is your God are you willing to bring it under the dominion of Christ?
    3. If the computer is causing you to lust will you give it up entirely? Or if it is consuming too much of your time are you willing to part with it? Would you be willing to turn off Facebook forever?
    4. There are many professing Christians that look upon Christianity as a sideline. Christ is just something else to add to their already full life. You can see it in how they treat the church. Everything else seems to take priority. The church is only important so far as it doesn't interfere with anything else.
- II. Jesus stresses the seriousness of this – He sets it in the light of eternal damnation  
**Mark 9:43 NAU** - "it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,"
- A. The nature of hell
    1. The word for hell here is γέεννα – It is a Greek word made up of two Aramaic words meaning Valley of Hinnom.
      - a. Gehenna was the valley on the Southwestern slopes of Jerusalem that was used as a refuse dump. It burned continually giving rise to this metaphor of judgment.
      - b. Jesus spoke of hell 11 times.
    2. Hell is a place described as place of unquenchable fire, a place of outer darkness, a place of torment
  - B. What does Jesus mean by the three fold statement:  
 (Actually, it is only threefold in the *Received Text*)  
**"THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED ."**
    1. The KJV adds **Verses 44 & 46** which are identical to **Verse 48**. It is widely agreed that the earliest manuscripts did not contain these verses. This is why the ESV omits them. The NASB puts them in brackets.
    2. Jesus is stressing the eternal nature of hell – the fire is not quenched. It burns forever and ever.
    3. "Their worm" has been described in various ways
      - a. It could describe vile nature of the sinner himself. Isaac Watts wrote, "Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I."
      - b. It could refer to the unending rottenness of the sinner. An uncovered corpse is soon covered with worms that remain until all flesh is consumed. Gehenna would have been filled with such maggots. In eternity the flesh is never consumed and the worm never dies.

**Isaiah 66:24 NAU** - "Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."

- c. Some have said that the “worm” describes the memory that will torment the condemned for all eternity  
**Luke 16:25 KJV** - " But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."  
 The sinner will remember every sin and every act of rebellion against God. He will also remember all that is lost.

4. The main point is hell is everlasting  
*Jonathan Edwards* - "There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling; and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains."

### III. The Christian must be absolutely committed to God.

"For everyone will be salted with fire."

- A. This obscure statement is found only in Mark
1. It probably was a reference to the OT sacrifice  
**Leviticus 2:13 NAU** - "Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt."
  2. The Christian offers up himself  
**Romans 12:1 NAU** - " Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship."
  3. The salt and fire represents the concept of purification. For the Christian it includes the suffering of hardship – the willingness to give up hand or eye for the sake of Christ.  
 This is clearly the teaching of Christ in **Luke 14:26-35**  
**Mark 9** ends the same way as **Luke 14**
- B. Christians are the salt of the earth  
**Matthew 5:13 NAU** - "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

1. Salt was used to preserve – Christians help make the defilement of this world clean.  
Salt is also enhances flavor  
The point is, Christian have a positive impact upon this world of sin. We stand apart from it. We are willing to part with anything in order to maintain our saltiness.
2. It doesn't matter what you call yourself. If you are not salty you are not genuine. Don't forget Jesus is speaking to His own disciples who also needed to examine themselves.  
The Dead Sea contained impurities such as carnallite and gypsum which might look like salt in appearance but they aren't salty. It is said that such minerals were used on the roadways.  
**Matthew 5:13 NAU** - "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."
3. Jesus gives the positive charge - "Have salt in yourselves"
4. And then He adds, "and be at peace with one another."  
This brings the whole passage into context and to a fitting close.  
The problem with the disciples was selfish pride. Holiness will not permit this. It must be aggressively cut away like a cancer.