

# THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN - WEEK 1

## Read Mark 9:42-50

In this week's passage Jesus speaks very seriously about sin, but his instructions to cut off body parts is metaphorical and is used to paint a picture of the severity of sin. We know it is metaphorical language when looking at what the rest of scripture says, what the history of the church has always believed and what applied hermeneutical tools (the methods of Biblical interpretation) shows us.

### 1. Sin Is Serious

- Read Mark 9:42, Romans 6:1-2 & 12-14

Jesus makes the point of how serious sin is by suggesting that death by drowning would be a better option for us than leading someone else to sin. The fact that Jesus took the punishment for our sin on the cross should only highlight sin's severity and not cause us to become comfortable with it. Only when we realise the gravity of our sin and the fact that only death can pay the penalty for it, will we ever begin to grasp the profound nature of God's gift of grace.

- ❖ Q: What is Jesus' view on us causing other people to sin, particularly those who are "children" in the faith?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think Jesus started this passage with warning his disciples about not causing others to sin before addressing their own choice to sin?
- ❖ Q: Take a moment to think. Have you ever caused someone else to sin? (Some examples might be: Have you started gossiping to others where they are now engaged in sin, have you prompted friends to drink more than they should, have you told course jokes to others, have you made inappropriate comments to your friends about the ladies in your office, have you suggested a bribe to the traffic cops, have you badmouthed your boss in front of colleagues, have you and your friends started divisive talk in the church etc.)
- ❖ Q: If God has brought something to mind, what will repentance and faith look like for you?

### 2. Fighting Sin Requires Sacrifice

- Read Mark 9:43-48

Jesus was calling his disciples to take extreme measures towards sin. He wants us to be ruthless with sin too, which is highly unpopular today, even in the church. We should be supporting one another in our firm stance on sin in our lives. He wants us to do this in all areas: what we see, where we go and what we do.

- ❖ Q: In this particular passage, what kind of sins do you think Jesus is dealing with?
- ❖ Q: Have you ever criticized (either openly or just in your own mind) a Christian friend for taking an "extreme" measure on sin in his/her own life, suggesting that they are becoming 'fundamentalists' etc.? (E.g. for stopping drinking alcohol because of it leading to other issues, speeding, swearing, talking about others, spending time and money in different ways etc.)
- ❖ Q: What area of your life are you being too casual about sin, where you keep telling yourself it's not a big deal?



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## 3. Fighting Sin Involves Suffering

- Read Mark 9:49

The disciples would have understood what Jesus meant by being “salted with fire” to that of a costly and difficult sacrifice being made to God. Our lives will incur seasons of immense trial that bring about a certain level of depth and maturity in our faith that nothing else would be able to achieve. Following Christ will be costly and difficult at times.

## 4. Fighting Sin Requires Love

- Read Mark 9:50

The call as Christ followers is greater than just “not sinning”. In those days salt was used to preserve meat and enhance the taste. Without salt, the meat would rot and become useless. Salt that no longer worked would not taste great and could be really dangerous. Losing our ‘saltiness’ as disciples would therefore make us useless and dangerous in the lives of others.

- ❖ Q: In the last year, have you been ‘salted with fire’ (experienced suffering)? What has this done to your faith?
- ❖ Q: In what ways have we as Christians become ‘un-salty’ in our culture?
- ❖ Q: In what ways could we as a particular Gospel Community be “salty” in our community?
- ❖ Q: Are there areas in your life where you are compromising and being dull and ineffective as a Christian?

## 5. Fighting Sin Has Consequences

John Owen wrote about 3 things when expecting to put sin to death:

- I. The battle will be long because sin is in our nature
  - II. The battle will be hard because we have an enemy who hates us
  - III. The battle will see wins because God has given us the desire and power to defeat sin in our lives
- ❖ Q: How can we as a Gospel Community help one another to be ruthless with sin and encourage one another with the long term battle we are going to face with it?

Jesus resisted temptation because we couldn't; he suffered in our place and sacrificed his life for us. The penalty for our sin has been paid once and for all. This gives us hope as we battle out our sin in this life, knowing that ultimately he has conquered it.

