

WHILE I'M ON THE SUBJECT

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Mark 9

Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us

38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."

39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Causing to Stumble

42 "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. [44] [b] 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. [46] [c] 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck 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

"the worms that eat them do not die,
and the fire is not quenched.[d]

49 Everyone will be salted with fire.

50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Previously, we saw Jesus teaching His disciples the way to true greatness...

A way involving servitude - Mk 9:33-35

A way involving humility - Mk 9:36-37

Both important principles of discipleship

In response, John brings up what seems to be a totally unrelated subject...

How the disciples tried to prevent someone who would not follow them - Mk 9:38

Which Jesus answers, relating it to principles of discipleship - Mk 9:39-50

[The principles taught may appear unrelated (at least to my mind), but they all relate to the matter of following Jesus as His disciples. Let's consider them one by one, beginning with...]

HE WHO IS NOT AGAINST US IS ON OUR SIDE

THE PRINCIPLE...
SEEMS TO BE IN CONTRADICTION

Matt 12:30

"Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me

Stated in response to John's question - Mk 9:38

The disciples saw a man casting out demons in Jesus' name

Whom the disciples tried to forbid because the man would not follow them

Jesus' response: do not forbid Him - Mk 9:39-40

The man was clearly empowered to do works in Jesus' name

So empowered, it was unlikely he would speak evil of Jesus

So while he did not follow the other disciples, he was still on their side

THE APPLICATION...

Do not fault individuals or churches who may choose to do things differently

Assuming that what they do is "in His name" (by His authority) - cf. Col 3:17

There are often different ways to do the will of the Lord; if someone prefers not to do something "our" way, we should not forbid them doing it "their" way

[Next, we learn the value of...]

A CUP OF WATER IN HIS NAME GIVEN

THE PRINCIPLE...

He who gives a servant of Christ a cup of water in His Name will be rewarded - Mk 9:41

The principle further explained in Matthew's gospel - Mt 10:40-42

Even the smallest acts in helping others serve the Lord will be noticed by Him

THE APPLICATION...

When we help the brethren of the Lord, He takes notice - cf. Mt 25:34-40

When we support their ministries, we have fellowship in their work - Php 1:5; 3Jn 1:5-8

[Then we are warned of...]

CAUSING LITTLE ONES TO STUMBLE

THE PRINCIPLE...

Causing the little ones who believe to stumble is a great offense! - Mk 9:42

Again, Matthew's gospel expands on this theme - Mt 18:6-7,10

THE APPLICATION...

We should be very careful about our example and influence on the young

Every one is a role model, either for good or evil

The best way to show love for the children of God is by loving God and

keeping His commandments - 1Jn 5:2

[Another principle is that sometimes it is necessary to have...]

THE PROBLEM IS NOT FOUND IN OTHERS. RADICAL SURGERY TO AVOID HELLFIRE

THE PRINCIPLE...

Sometimes radical actions are needed to avoid hellfire - Mk 9:43-48
Eternal life is worth whatever cost it takes - ibid.

THE APPLICATION...

Not to be taken literally, because one could still sin with one hand, one eye
But anything close to us (family, job, friends, etc.) that would keep us away
from God must be removed if necessary - cf. Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26,33

SEASONING EFFECTS OF FIRE

THE PRINCIPLE...

We are seasoned with fire, like sacrifices are seasoned with salt - Mk 9:49
The salt makes the sacrifice better, so fire can make one better - Mk 9:50

THE APPLICATION...

Appreciate the purifying nature of trials and difficulties - Jm 1:2-4
As difficult as it may seem at the time, there can be glory in suffering - cf. Ro
5:3-4

CONCLUSION

Thus we find in our text five principles regarding discipleship...

- He who is not against us is on our side
- A cup of water in His name given
- Causing little ones to stumble
- Radical surgery to avoid hellfire
- Seasoning effects of fire