

Mark 9:42–50 — Get Radical About Sin

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If you watch the news, there is a lot of talk these days about people getting radical. We hear about radical Islam. They are shooting everyone as they try to convert the world to Islam. If people won't convert, the radicals pull the trigger. Sometimes people convert and they pull the trigger anyway. That is radical. Today we also hear about the radical left. These are politicians trying to lead the democratic party toward socialist ideas. It seems everyone wants to get radical.

Getting radical is not always a bad thing. Sometimes getting radical is the right thing to do. When the doctor says you have cancer, you don't want your doctor to treat your cancer casually. You want your doctor to treat the cancer aggressively and radically if necessary. After all, cancer can take your life!

Today, as we continue our study in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus will tell us there is a time to get radical. We need to get radical when dealing with something far more deadly than cancer. We need to get radical when dealing with sin. While cancer can take away your earthly life, sin takes away your eternal life.

Before we look at the passage we are about to study, you need to know these verses have some interesting features to them and some real challenges that go with them. I will show you the interesting features at the beginning of our study, and we will run into the interpretive challenges at the end of our study.

Turn in your Bibles to Mark 9:42. I don't want you looking at your notes right now. I want you to look in your Bibles. When you get to Mark 9:42, find Mark 9:44 and 46. Can you find those verses? For most of you, those verses are

missing. What happened? Where did they go? Were they written with disappearing ink? Did someone take them out of the Bible? What happened? Let's find out.

The Gospel of Mark is a letter in our Bible that was copied by hand for more than a thousand years. Photocopiers didn't exist. One scribe, hundreds of years after the Gospel of Mark was written, when he was making his copy of this Gospel by hand, added two verses. Since people eventually made a handwritten copy of his copy, there are some old Bibles that had these two verses in them that the rogue scribe added while most copies did not. The big question is, "Should those two verses be in your Bible?" Let me briefly answer that question. Those verses shouldn't be in our Bible. The scribe who added those verses added them hundreds of years after the Bible was already in existence. None of the copies of the Gospel of Mark that were written before that time, and that is more than a hundred copies, have these additional verses. The adding of any verses to the Bible is almost unheard of since the Bible was always copied with painstaking accuracy.

In the 1500s, verse numbers were added to our Bibles to make it easier to find Bible verses. Since some old Bibles included these verses from the rogue scribe, verse numbers were given to these verses so people knew where they went. Today, with additional archaeological research and the many additional ancient copies of the Gospel of Mark that we have in our possession, we know beyond a shadow of doubt that these two additional verses do not belong. This is

why they were taken out of your copy of God's Word and the verse numbers are missing.

Second, what did those two missing verses say? Verse 44 and verse 46 simply said the exact same thing as verse 48, which is "where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." So our rogue scribe added verses to the Bible but didn't add any new information. All he did was repeat verse 48 for emphasis.

In the ESV Bible, there is a footnote that explains a bit about these missing verses. In the NIV84 there is also a footnote that explains a bit about these missing verses. Other translations, like the NASB, include those missing verse in the text but put brackets around them and include a footnote telling the reader these verses were never in the original.

That is the story on the missing Bible verses in our passage and why their absence shouldn't concern us. Let's read the verses that actually belong in this passage and study them together.

"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. 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. 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. 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, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' For everyone will be salted with fire. 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 9:42–50 (ESV)

This passage is all about the importance of getting radical in our struggle against sin. The first half of the passage shows us two ways to get radical as we struggle against sin. The last half gives us two reasons why the radical struggle

against sin is worth it.

What does it mean to get radical about sin?

Stop doing what might cause a young Christian to stumble into sin.

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. Mark 9:42 (ESV)

One of the ways to get on my good side is to help my children. I love my kids. One of the ways to get on my bad side is to hurt my kids. Parents are very protective of their children, and they should be. If you think I get upset when someone hurts my children, you haven't seen the mama bear in the family. I am harmless compared to her. The mama bear in our house is super protective of her cubs. I am sure the mama bear in your house is the same way.

In this passage, Jesus was talking about his kids, spiritual children, young Christians. Jesus is super protective of his kids just like we are super protective of our kids. We must address sin in our lives and not do anything to lead a young Christian to fall into sin.

Who are the children Jesus was talking about in this verse? Last week, we saw Jesus took his disciples to a house in Capernaum. Most likely it was Simon Peter's home. There Jesus instructed his apostles on greatness. Greatness is found in humility. Greatness is found in being a servant. As part of his teaching, Jesus picked up a child and used him as an object lesson. Jesus said, "Anyone who receives one *such* child, receives me." At first, it sounds like Jesus was just talking about the importance of caring about children, but last week we learned the word *such* is very important here. Jesus was not just talking about literal

children, but he was also talking about adults who can be like children. He literally said, “Anyone who receives one who is *like* a child receives me.”

In this passage Jesus continued talking about children, but once again, he used some intentional ambiguity in his language so we know he was not just talking about young Christian children but was also talking about young Christian adults. How do we know that? Jesus never used the word children in this verse. He uses the Greek word *micron*. Micron means anyone who is little, smaller, insignificant in importance or little of influence. A micron person could be a child or an adult. It simply means they are people that are not powerful or influential in society.

Jesus said, “Don’t take advantage of these vulnerable people and trip them up into sin. I am very protective of ordinary Christians. If you do trip them up into sin, it would be better if you went swimming with a really big rock tied around your neck.” Do you get the picture?

Let’s look at the word for sin in this verse. The word for sin is the word *skandalizomai*. That is not the normal word used for sin in Greek. That is *harmartia*. The word for sin used in this verse means to trip someone or cause someone to fall. The idea is you don’t want to do anything around new Christians or young Christians that would trip them up so they fall into sin. If you do, Jesus said there are severe consequences because he is very protective of his kids.

Then Jesus got graphic. Let’s look at the consequences. He said it would be better to have a great millstone tied around your neck and be thrown into the depths of the sea than to trip up a young and vulnerable Christian. In the Greek,

the description of this millstone is important. In the Greek it is called a mule millstone. These were the largest grinding stones. The base stone for this kind of mill was usually six feet wide and weighed several tons. The top stone that rolled around the big stone and crushed the grain was so heavy, even though it was round, it could not be moved by people. It could only be moved by horses or mules. That is why it was called a mule millstone.

Jesus said it would be better to have one of those mega rocks tied around your neck and be thrown into the depths of the sea to die a horrid death than cause a young vulnerable Christians to stumble into sin. Those are some extremely strong words to describe how protective Jesus is about young Christians.

Incidentally, this idea of drowning by a millstone around your neck was something that actually took place in history. The Romans dealt with a man who led a revolution against them by drowning him this way. His name was Judas the Galilean. After the Romans captured him, they decided to finish him off by tying a massive rock around his neck and throwing him overboard after they took him out to sea. They did this so there was no grave for people to honor. It worked well. It was a bad way to die.

Another reason Jesus said it is terrible to lead a young and vulnerable Christian into sin is because when a Christian falls into sin, he is not just taking himself into sin but he is taking the spirit of Christ with him into sin. That is never a good thing to do. Look what Paul said:

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 1 Corinthians 6:16–17 (ESV)

Paul said physical intimacy bonds people together in a deeply spiritual way. This is why sexuality outside of marriage is wrong. Then Paul shifted and said while a man and a woman bond through physical intimacy in a deep way, when we become Christians, the spirit of Christ comes into our lives and dwells in our lives. We become one with Christ in a deep way because the spirit of Christ lives within us. When we fall into sin, we drag Christ with us into that sin, which is never a good thing to do.

In a similar way, before the apostle Paul was Paul and his name was Saul, he was persecuting Christians. Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and sat him down on his backside and said these word to Paul about what was happening when Paul persecuted Christians.

And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul. Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Acts 9:4–5 (ESV)

So Jesus was very clear that when someone persecutes a Christian, he persecutes Christ. When someone causes a Christians to stumble into sin, he drags Christ with him in some way into that sin, and that is not good.

We must never be someone who leads others, especially other young Christians, into sin.

Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! Matthew 18:7 (ESV)

How can we lead young Christians into sin? Let me give you three ways.

1. Through direct temptation. Sometimes we invite others to join us in sin without realizing the negative influence we are having. An example might be, a mother and daughter go shopping for a day in Spencer. They agreed to meet Dad for dinner at 5 p.m. but are running late because they stayed longer than they should have at the mall. In the car on the way back, Mom says to her daughter, “Just tell Dad we are late because we were stuck in traffic at the Arnolds Park bridge.” That was a white lie but it was still a lie. It was a mother telling her daughter that complete honesty with your spouse is not important. Soon, the daughter is bending the truth just like her mother. Where did it come from? A mother who led her vulnerable daughter into sin.

When I was a youth pastor, Cindy and I lived on Lake Michigan. Parents and kids in the youth group would get together on Sunday afternoon and go boating on the lake. There was one young couple that had an extremely popular boat. It was a twin engine race boat and everybody wanted to be on it for the afternoon. The problem is that boats have a capacity, and they are only rated for a certain number of people. This couple would routinely overload their boat with extra people. I talked with them. It is not a good idea to be a role model for the young impressionable Christian kids in the church by overloading your boat for church events. They agreed to abide by capacity restrictions when I was there, but when I wasn't at an event, they went back to overloading the boat. As I was thinking about this text, I realize I should have told them how Jesus feels about this. He has a large rock and a rope that he can tie around their necks to give them a swimming lesson that will not go well. They are already on a body of

water, so it wouldn't take much. Jesus is very protective of his kids. We must not do anything that would encourage them to stumble into sin by the example of our lives.

Another family in our church had teens over to their home because they were a fun family. What made it odd is they regularly watched R-rated movies. You know what most R-rated movies are like. They have lots of body bags. There is usually a nudity scene. You almost always have a couple of people in bed together that are not married and that just met. Those are not the kind of examples we want our children to follow. I talked with the father about the example he was setting for his own kids and the influence he had on the kids he brought into his home. Rather than avoiding that sin, he was encouraging the young Christians in the group to enjoy those kinds of sins. This verse teaches us differently. Jesus said, "You will wish I used a rock and a rope. I am super protective of my kids." Don't do anything to trip up the young, weak, and impressionable Christians that are looking up to you.

2. By indirect temptation. While direct temptation is the things we choose to do wrong, indirect temptation is the things we fail to do right. Every Sunday, people walk through the doors of churches across this country. Most visitors have come to check out Christ and see if he is real. The way they check out Jesus is by checking out his people. If the people of Jesus are different, then maybe Jesus is different. Do Christians love more than other people? Will the people of the church care about me more than other people or are they just like everybody else? Those are the questions most church visitors are asking. After church, in

the foyer, visitors will hang around for 15-30 seconds wondering if anyone will talk to them or will they just talk to their old friends. After 30 seconds of standing by themselves in the foyer, most visitors will leave. If that happens a few weeks in a row, most visitors will conclude church people are no different from other people. They just care about their friends. They are not warm. They are not welcoming. They don't want to open their lives and care about me.

After church, do not talk to your friends. Talk to the visitors you don't know. If they stand by themselves in the foyer for 30 seconds with nobody talking to them, they will leave. Talk to the visitors first. Make them feel welcome first. Talk to your friends second. Let people know that Christ loves them by you loving them. If we don't do this, we can inadvertently cause new Christians to stumble by not going out of our way to give them the love of Jesus they so desperately want and need.

3. By poor examples. As I was thinking about how young Christians can be led astray, what came to mind is the incredible power of church leaders on the life of an ordinary Christian. In my personal Bible reading, I was studying the kids of Israel and Judah. Some were good; others were terrible. The spiritual temperature of the leader determined the spiritual temperature of the people. Good leaders led people toward godliness. Bad leaders led people toward sinfulness. Here is the example of King Manasseh.

Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel. 2 Chronicles 33:9 (ESV)

Here we have someone who led many astray. It would have been better if they had the large millstone and God gave him a swimming lesson.

We see the influence of bad church leaders in many denominations today. The leaders of some denominations has gone wholesale against the Bible and endorsed the LGBTQ+ movement. As a result of those church leaders going against the Bible and normalizing abnormal sexuality, many in their churches are led astray. This is not good. Other church leaders in various denominations have a very low view of the Bible and its authority. They influence the people of their churches to treat the Bible casually. That is a terrible thing. This grieves Jesus, who is super protective of his kids, just like you and me. We must get radical about sin and not cause young Christians to sin by following our example.

Are any of us going to be perfect? Absolutely not! We just must know that we need to take sin seriously.

Do whatever it takes to keep from falling into sin.

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. 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. 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, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9:43–48 (ESV)

This is radical purity. Jesus said we must deal radically with anything is in our lives that is tripping us up and causing us to fall into sin. Jesus said be willing to cut off your hand, your foot or even take out your eye to get habitual sin out of your life.

Before we go too far in this direction, we need to understand that Jesus was using hyperbolic language. That is language of exaggeration to make a point. Jesus does not expect us to literally pluck out our eyes. The point is we need to deal with sin radically in our lives, not just tolerate it in our lives.

To prove to you that getting rid of a body part does not solve the problem of sin, we need to remember that a person with one eye can lust just as well as a person with two eyes. A person with one foot can get herself into sinful situations just as easily as a person with two feet. Sin is always rooted in the heart, not in a body part.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
James 1:14 (ESV)

While this is language of exaggeration, it is being used to make a point. There were people in history who were misguided enough to take this passage literally. The classic example of this was the early church father Origen who struggled with lust while discipling young women. He took this passage too literally and cut off a part of his body that he hoped would stop his struggle with lust. In truth, he was using the wrong Bible verses. The better Scripture to apply is that it is better to marry than to burn with passion, not cut off a part of your body to stop your lust.

So while the struggle with sin is always sourced in our hearts, in all practically, when we fight sin, we need to make practical choices to avoid putting ourselves in tempting situations where we can easily fall into sin. This is what Jesus was talking about when he said we need to get radical in our fight with sin and even be willing to remove an eye, a foot, or a hand. What that means is we may need to remove from our lives the opportunity we have to see sinful things with our eyes, go sinful places with our feet, or do sinful things with our hands. We need to get radical in our lives and cut off the gateways that lead us to sin. Let me give you some examples.

Let's talk about the eye. There are things we can look at that cause us to consistently fall into sin. Many men struggle with pornography. Sixty-70 percent of men are viewing pornography with some regularity because it is only one computer click away. Jesus said that if you are struggling with the sin or pornography, it is time to get radical. Do whatever you must to cut off access to porn in your life. That may mean getting a porn blocker on your computer like [Covenant Eyes](#). The best part about the Covenant Eyes porn blocker is that it does not just block pornography but it gives you an accountability partner. It reports to your accountability partner the sites you are looking viewing. If you are married, I suggest you have it report to your wife. That is getting radical. When you come home and there is no dinner on the table but there is fire in your wife's eyes, it will solve your pornography problem in a hurry.

I know some men that refuse to use a smartphone. They use a dumb phone. When they are tired, when it is late, when they are lonely, they start viewing material they shouldn't online. To get radical in their fight with pornography, they were willing to get rid of that high-tech phone because that cut off a frequent gateway to sin in their lives. That decision to fight the sin of pornography in their lives by those radical actions was not a sign of their weakness; it was a sign of their wisdom. Other guys have gone as far as disconnecting the Internet from their homes because when they find themselves sitting at home for many nights in a row, it is too easy to drift into sin. That is obeying this passage. It is getting radical in the fight with sin.

Let's talk about getting radical with our feet. This means to stop going places that we know repeatedly lead us into sin. When you become a Christian, or as you live as a Christian, you sometimes find you need to cut some friends out of your life. You can't use your feet to walk over to their houses anymore. When you go over to their houses, you find yourself repeatedly walking into sin. I had some of those friends in college. Every time we got together, there was always something stupid happening by midnight. Those friends built up a track record of poor choices and leading others into the poor choices with them. I realized that I needed to make a radical choice and not let my feet walk me over to their house anymore because I would make poor choices later that night if I did.

When you find yourself at the point that you need to make that tough choice and cut some friends out of your life, that can be hard because it may mean you don't have friends for a while. It may mean you are alone for a while. That is OK. That is what it means to get radical in our fight against sin. That is what it means to be willing to pay a high price in our fight against sin. This is exactly what Jesus was talking about in this passage.

Jesus said we need to get radical with our hands. There are things we do that can lead us to sin with our hands. A few years ago I had a friend that struggled with gambling. He came to me one year between Christmas and New Year after blowing several thousand dollars in the casino. For him, he needed to get radical and not just refuse to let his feet take him to the casino because he knew he would gamble, but he also needed to refuse to let his hands on a deck

of cards. That doesn't mean that playing cards is necessarily wrong, but playing cards was wrong for him, because he always wanted to gamble when he played them. He needed to get radical and cut all access to gambling out of his life.

Notice what Jesus said the consequences are of not addressing sins that habitually trip us up and cause us to fall into sin. The consequence is not that we become a carnal Christian or that we come some kind of second-rate Christian because we continue to fall into the same sin and do nothing to stop it. No, the end for someone that chooses to enjoy habitual sin rather than get radical and battle habitual sin is hell. I didn't make that up. Read the verses!

Now for some of you, this is freaking out your theology. You thought we were saved by grace through faith in Jesus, and not by works, so it doesn't matter if we continue in sin because we are always forgiven for sin. In one sense, that is true.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

That is true. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone but saving faith is never alone. With saving faith comes a desire for purity in our lives. With saving faith comes a desire to battle against in in our lives, not to tolerate sin and enjoy it. If there is no battle against in in our lives, but instead we consistently accommodate sin and enjoy sin, there is reason to believe there may have never been a legitimate conversion experience to Christ in the first place! Genuine saving faith will always lead to a radical battle against sin.

These verses are some of the strongest statements in the Bible on the importance of being willing to take radical steps to battle against sin in our lives.

Be willing to deal radically with sin. Don't continue in sin or the end result may be the eternal garbage dump called hell.

The Bible tells us we should expect the Christian life to be a battle against sin.

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1 (ESV)

Paul also told us in Philippians the importance of pursuing holiness.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

I know Jesus' warning to get radical in the battle against sin or face hell is really messing with our theologies. I want to be careful to let the Bible determine my theology, not my theology reinterpret my Bible.

As I thought about this, I kept wondering if we could find an example of this in the Bible. Is there someone that looked like he or she was] right with Christ but refused to battle against consistent sin in his or life life, and as a result, we find he or she ended up in hell and it appears he or she never knew Christ in the first place. The best example I could think of was Judas.

Judas looked saved. He was one of the twelve. He presumably exercised some spiritual gifts and even performed miracles, like the rest of the apostles when Jesus sent them out. None of the apostles returned from casting out demons and said, "I wonder why everyone could do these miracles but Judas." Judas acted no differently than the other apostles, even when it came to miracles. The problem was that Judas drifted into sin. John 12 tells us Judas was

the keeper of the money bag for the apostles and that he was in the habit of stealing money out of the bag. The tense of the verb tells us he didn't steal money once but stole it repeatedly. He never confessed his sin. He never got radical and dealt with his sin. He never took steps to ensure he wouldn't steal from the bag again. He did it repeatedly, consistently, and unrepentantly. Since he never got radical about sin, where did it lead him? Lesser sin opened the door to greater sin, and he betrayed Jesus. Look what Jesus said about him later in the Gospel of Mark.

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. Mark 14:21 (ESV)

Judas went from one of the twelve to betraying Christ and Jesus saying that for him, it would have been better if he was never born. How was his life destroyed? He continued in sin. He never faced his sin. He never confessed his sin. He never took steps to keep him from returning to his sin. In the end, it was disaster. I think the example of Judas and the words of Jesus are poignant reminders of the importance of addressing persistent sin.

Before I leave this, let me be clear that Jesus has the ability to forgive sin. Jesus alone has the power over sin. Jesus alone is the one who gives us victory over sin, but we have a responsibility as we battle sin to get radical and make the hard choices to cut off easy access to our favorite sins.

Why should I get radical about sin?

Our fight against sin is one of the ways God creates spiritual maturity.

For everyone will be salted with fire. Mark 9:49 (ESV)

I told you earlier that we have some very hard texts by the end of the morning. This is one of them. There is not a lot of agreement among scholars about what Jesus was talking about. I will give you my best understanding of this cryptic saying that was commonly understood in Jesus' day but coming 2,000 years later is obscure in our day.

Salt was used as a preservative in the ancient world. There was no refrigeration. There was no Kenmore or Frigidaire. Everything was salted to make it last. You salted the fish from the Sea of Galilee to preserve them for transport. You salted your vegetables by pickling them. You salted your meats. All this salt meant everyone had high blood pressure, but at least your food didn't rot.

Jesus said here everyone will be salted with fire. Jesus said everyone will be preserved through fire. Fire is suffering. "Everyone will be salted with fire," means everyone will find themselves facing times of suffering in this life. For the Christians, times of suffering in our lives serve to preserve our faith. They serve to sustain and strengthen our faith for the long haul. Suffering for Christians is never an easy thing, but it is a good thing because of how suffering strengthens our faith.

Jesus had just discussed a particular kind of suffering — the suffering we face when we get radical in our fight against sin. We may suffer because we are lonely because we cut friends out of our lives that are a bad influence. We may suffer because everyone else has a smartphone and we have a dumb phone so people look at us like we are weird.

Any of the trials we go through in our battle against sin are not bad trials. They are good trials. God will use the price we pay as we get radical in our struggle against sin to build our faith and strengthen our faith for the long haul.

Look how the Bible says God promises to strengthen our faith and when we are willing to pay a price for our faith.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, Romans 5:3–4 (ESV)

James also talked about the good things God does in our lives as we struggle against sin.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2–4 (ESV)

Our victories over sin through Jesus make Christ attractive to others.

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 9:50 (ESV)

Jesus was talking about salt as a preserving agent in the previous saying. In these verses, Jesus talked about salt as a flavoring agent. Salt makes things taste good. We like potato chips with salt. We like our pretzels with salt. We like popcorn with salt. Popcorn without salt may be healthy, but it tastes terrible. We like French fries with salt. As Jesus said, “Salt is good.” Can I get an amen on that? At lunch today, tell your family you are following the Bible when you sprinkle salt on your food. The Bible says salt is good!

While Jesus said salt is good because it adds flavor, Jesus was talking about salt that has lost its saltiness. Instead of making things flavorful and appealing, salt that isn’t salty would leave things tasteless and bland.

If you are a chemist, at this point you are having a problem. Chemists know salt is a chemically stable compound. Technically, it is impossible for salt to lose its saltiness. What was Jesus talking about when he talked about salt losing its saltiness and becoming useless? To answer that question we need to move from chemistry to history.

At this time, salt usually came from the Dead Sea. It was dried sea water. It was not pure salt. One of the common impurities in salt was gypsum. Gypsum is a mineral that looks like salt but is flavorless. When salt and gypsum were mixed together, they looked identical. When gypsum and salt were exposed to moisture, the salt leached out of the gypsum, leaving the gypsum behind. The gypsum looked like salt but was flavorless and didn't taste like salt. It was salt that wasn't salty. Once the salt was out of the gypsum, there was no way to put saltiness back in the gypsum. It was useless salt that was thrown away.

Jesus said, "You are my people. You are to have a salty quality about you in this world. My people should make God's kingdom attractive." We should make God's kingdom appealing. One way Christians make God's kingdom appealing is we are different from other people in the world. We are at peace with one another. We are not fighting with one another, like we see every day in American government and office place politics.

Two weeks ago when the apostles arrived in Capernaum after traveling from Caesarea Philippi, were they at peace with one another? Absolutely not. They were arguing with one another over who was the greatest. What was the fallout of their sin? First, their prideful arguing with one another didn't make the

kingdom of Christ attractive to anyone. The apostles weren't salty; they weren't appealing to anyone because they were not at peace with one another. They were fighting among themselves.

How was their prideful arguing with one another influencing the young Christians around them? It was causing them to stumble into sin. It was teaching them that they should argue with one another about who is the greatest because that is what they saw the apostles doing.

Continuing in their sin instead of getting radical and fighting against their sin could have had deadly consequences. If they didn't get radical and fight against this persistent sin, they would have followed the path of Judas, which leads to hell.

If they got radical and fought against this sin, and instead of pursuing pride over one another and pursued peace and humility with one another, that battle against sin would be one of the ways Christ produced the spiritual maturity they needed in their lives.

Conclusion

Jesus is calling us to be radical people. He is calling us to get radical in our battle with sin. While Jesus is the only one who gives victory over sin, we still need to get radical and make the tough choices to fight against sin.

As we studied this text, I know some of you felt the Holy Spirit putting his finger on your life. The Holy Spirit kept bringing to mind an area of sin where you consistently fall. You haven't been willing to pay the high price of declaring war against that sin and closing that gateway to that sin in your life because it felt too hard and too humbling.

Today, get an accountability partner. Today, make whatever radical choices you need to make to close that gateway to that particular sin in your life. It may be hard. It may be radical, but it is what Jesus commands us to do. As we rely on Christ for help in the battle and pay the costly price and take the humbling steps of shutting down access to our favorite sins, those hard choices will be part of what God uses to give the the spiritual maturity we so desperately need.

My friends, let's get radical in our fight against sin. The consequences of treating habitual sin casually are far too serious.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

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