

How To Deal With Sin  
 Tear Out And Throw Away  
 Mark 9:38-50  
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<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.”

The reality of being a follower of Jesus Christ is that, on one hand - you have been made alive with Christ, you are a new creation in Christ, you are born again, the power and the dominion of sin has been essentially disarmed because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. So, you are forgiven, justified, no longer condemned but have eternal life. But on the other hand – sin is not completely eradicated in you. Why? Because your body, your flesh is not redeemed yet. Sin still dwells in you.

So, what happens when you become a Christian? Conflict. Not with others but with your own flesh that still has the remnants or the vestiges of sin. The flesh wants to glorify the self. The spirit wants to glorify Christ. Many new believers wonder, “why this struggle?”. Because - on one hand you desire to please God and on the other hand the impulses of your flesh may be strong. Now, there are believers who say they never sin. You should be sinning less and less the longer you live your life as a believer. But to say you never sin is to deceive yourself and call Jesus a liar. (1 John 1:8, 10).

*What ought to be your response to sin?*

Isolation? No. Shifting blame? No. Denial? No. Passivity? No.

The answer Jesus gives for dealing with sin is quite radical.  
Tear out. Cast out. Not in a literal sense. Jesus uses hyperbole to make his point.

At the beginning of the passage, we see John asking our Lord a question. He saw someone *casting* out demons in the name of Jesus.

That is the first time we see the word *casting out*.

This is the word “*ekballo*” in Greek. It means to *throw away* or *cast out*.

In verse 42, we see the word *thrown* the second time. It’s the same word for *cast out*.

In verse 45, we see the word *thrown* again.

In verse 47, we see the word “*tear out*” and *thrown*. It’s the same word Jesus uses for “*cast out*” to deal with sin.

So, we are going to dwell a bit longer on Jesus’ teaching on how to oppose sin.

Let’s look at some context first.

Verses 38 and 41.

<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.

This is the irony. John was on the mountain with Jesus Peter and James. And the rest of the disciples could not cast out a demon. And yet John tells Jesus they tried to stop a man from casting out demons even if it was in Jesus’ name. Why? Because that man was not with their group. John was feeling a little clique-ish that he was with Jesus but not the other guy. So, Jesus tells him. Don’t stop him. He is doing a good work.

Christian tribalism, bias, competition is a problem today in Christian circles as much as in the secular world.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth that was very divided. One was following Peter, another Apollos and some Paul. Paul asks the church “Is Christ divided?” No!

The mission of the church is much bigger than individual agendas and preferences. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ not our disciples.

Making disciples of Jesus then implies making much of Christ. Jesus must increase and we must decrease. The Gospel must have primacy in all things. You know when Christ decreases in the life of the church? When we give the Gospel secondary priority.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:15 “*we are the aroma of Christ to God*”. How? He answers in the previous verse “*through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere*” .

God wants to use you to spread the knowledge of Christ.

So Jesus says “*the one who is not against us is for us*”. This is a general observation. Whoever does a good work in the name of Jesus belongs to Jesus even if they don’t follow your group, if they don’t dress like you or have your culture. Jesus calls all peoples to himself. Jesus knows those who are his.

In verse 41, Jesus gives an incentive— even a cup of water given to the least of his disciples is as if you have given to Christ. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, when judgement day comes, Jesus will say this to the sheep “*Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me*” Matthew 25: 40.

Implication:

Follow Jesus to promote God’s Kingdom.

So, after a correction and encouragement, Jesus turns to the main part of his teaching. Verse 42.

<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.

The “*little ones*” are the disciples of Jesus who are vulnerable. The “*little ones*” could also mean little children according to the Gospel of Matthew. Either way, Jesus uses hyperbole to teach how grave it is to cause the most vulnerable disciples to sin. The word used for sin is the word *scandalize* or to *make them stumble*. Jesus says that it is better if the millstone of a donkey (that is the exact phrase used) tied around their neck and drowned in the sea if anyone causes them to sin. Does not Jesus sound harsh? No. Sin is intolerable to God. And therefore, there is great danger awaiting those who make children or the vulnerable to stumble. A millstone in those days would be around 500 pounds.

Those who heard Jesus understood the force of his teaching.

So, Jesus uses hyperbole, meaning those who cause the vulnerable and the weak to stumble will face the worst judgment.

Recently, I received a call from a pastor who serves outside the U.S. He told me that his church members and Christians in general in that country are harassed, shamed and even persecuted by the outside population because they are growing in their hostility towards followers of Jesus. We must pray and help those who are vulnerable.

Observation:

*Causing Jesus' followers to sin is a great sin.*

After this teaching, Jesus gets very personal.

Verse 43 - 48.

<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.'

A few observations before we understand what Jesus means:

1. When Jesus says *your* hand, *your* feet or *your* eye, the pronoun "*your*" is plural. Jesus is teaching all his disciples.
2. The word *sin* is also not the traditional word for sin (*hamartia*) in the Bible. This is the word *cause to stumble* or *scandalize*.
3. The word *life* is interchangeable with eternal life, heaven or being in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is very forceful here because sin can ruin your soul. Jesus has died for your sin but sin is still a threat as long as you have your flesh.

Jesus teaches us to deal with sin head on. Don't delay fighting sin. Don't deny the reality of sin. Don't minimize or downplay sin.

*Oppose sin with all that you have in the strength of God.*

Jesus uses hands, feet and eyes to illustrate how to oppose sin. Jesus does not mean that other members of the body are not vulnerable to sin but your hands, feet and eyes are vital to your spiritual health.

*Ever wonder what Jesus did with his hands?*

- Jesus used his hands to *work*. Jesus worked with Joseph in carpentry or even stone masonry perhaps.
- Jesus used his hands to *serve*. Growing up, Jesus, no doubt, ran errands for his mother Mary. Jesus served his own disciples by washing the dirty feet of his disciples.
- Jesus used his hands to *heal*. Everywhere he went, Jesus touched the lowly, the marginalized, the sick, the poor, the lepers, the demon possessed and healed all of them.

- Jesus used his hands to *bless* others. The disciples were irritated by little children. But Jesus put his hands on the children to bless them. Before his ascension, Jesus raised his hands to bless his disciples for the work he had given them.

So, Jesus has sinless, innocent and holy hands. And yet what did they do with the hands of Jesus?

Mark 14:46 says that “*they laid hands on him and seized him*”.

And what else did they do with his hands? They hammered nails into the hands of our Lord to pierce him and inflict maximum pain on him. His hands received nails meant for the worst criminals. But because of his nail pierced hands, your hands are now redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Application: Use your hands to *work*, to *serve*, to *worship*, to *bless* and to *give*. Not to sin. Jesus does not mean you literally need to amputate your hand if it sins but rather find the root cause of your sin. Restrain your hands from doing evil.

- Paul says to the Ephesians “*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need*” Ephesians 4:28, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:12
- Paul wrote to Timothy that the men in the church “*should lift up holy hands without anger or quarrelling*”. 1 Timothy 2:8. Use your hands to worship God.

Secondly, Jesus used his *feet* for a good and holy purpose.

Jesus traveled on foot several hundred miles just for preaching and teaching the Gospel. No doubt Jesus’ feet had calluses and yet Jesus has beautiful feet. How?

In Luke 7, we see a very profound and emotional picture of a woman who treats the feet of Jesus with such reverence. It is a picture of worship and adoration. This lady anointed the feet of Jesus, her tears wet his feet, and she kissed his feet and then she wiped his feet with her hair. What an act of devotion and worship for Christ!

Jesus also had feet of peace. Paul says in Romans 10:5 – “*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news*”

And yet what did they do to the feet of Jesus?

They pierced and bruised his feet with nails.

So, your feet are redeemed by his blood stained feet. Why would you want to sin with your feet?

Don’t let your feet take you to strange places where sin traps you and there is no going back.

Paul says to put on the whole armor of God to stand against the devil. One of the pieces of that armor is what? Having feet adorned with the Gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:15).

Thirdly, Jesus teaches that if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. Same word for “throw away” or “cast out”. Again, Jesus does not mean literally to gouge out your eyes but he means to guard your eyes.

Jesus taught that your eyes are the gateway to your soul.

*“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,<sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”* Matthew 6:22-23

You see there are many things in this world that makes the eye curious for forbidden, illicit and sensual things.

It is said that GenZ has the highest percentage of addiction to the internet.

How do you guard your eyes?

- Here is a general principle: Psalm 101:3 *“I will not set anything before my eyes that is worthless or wicked”*
- Pray like the Psalmist in Psalm 119:37 *“Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things”*.
- Ask yourself. Do the things you see build up your soul and give any glory to God? If the answer is no, don’t see it.
- Remember the tenth commandment and recite it – *“You shall not covet”*.
- Remember king David sin and the consequences of sin – David was pacing his rooftop, his eyes fell on a woman and fell into grievous sin. Today, you don’t need to look out the window or on your roof top. The world has made it very convenient for you to bookmark sin on a digital device.
- Men, make a covenant with your eyes to God. Jesus said to his disciples, *“You have blessed eyes”* Matthew 13:16. Say with Job *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?”*
- Some people need to quit consuming substances because your eyes will cause you to sin. *“Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.<sup>32</sup> In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.<sup>33</sup> Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.”* Proverbs 23:31-33

Listen to what Solomon writes in Proverbs 6: 16-19

*“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him:*

*<sup>17</sup> haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”*

*What is the danger of not responding forcefully to sin?*

Jesus gives the same response in all the three cases. Whether it's your *hands* that cause you to sin, whether it's your *feet* that cause you to sin, whether it's your *eye* that causes you to sin, the danger is hell and unquenchable fire. The English word *hell* comes from the word *Gehenna*. This is an allusion to a garbage dump or a fire pit that existed outside Jerusalem. *Gehenna* was a place where dead bodies, dead animals were dumped filled with maggots and worms. And it was said the fire of that pit never extinguished. In verse 41, when Jesus says "*where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched*" it is a reference to Isaiah 66:24. This is the last verse in the last chapter of Isaiah. Those who fail to take heed to resisting and overcoming sin are in danger of an everlasting fire.

Jesus ends this passage on a positive note.

Verses 20 through 23.

<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."

How should we understand these verses? Verse 49 is little hard to understand. It could mean a disciple goes through trials. A disciple's life ought to have a particular character. Just as salt has many uses – cleansing, preserving, flavoring or seasoning. There's a danger of losing your "salt" if you don't deal with your sin. Jesus says "be salt". Be an aroma. Be a flavor in this world. Be a preservative.

As I conclude, some people may say they struggle too much with fighting sin and want to give up. The answer is you actually have not struggled too much. Because you never fight sin alone. Yes, resist, hate and fight sin but never forget looking at Christ while resisting sin.

*"Consider him (Christ) who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. <sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. You have not resisted sinned to the point of shedding blood. Hebrews 12:3-4*

----- Discipleship Questions -----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: How To Deal With Sin. Mark 9: 38-50

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Why does Jesus teach so forcefully with regard to resisting sin? What is his main point about resisting sin? What are implications if we don't resist and remove sin?
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
  - How serious is sin to God? Why? How does the Gospel help us understand our fight against sin?
  - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HEART For personal reflection: What will you do to tear out or throw away areas in our life that cause you to sin?