

33. Jesus Talked About Others Who Served Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to come to Jesus for salvation with the faith of a little child. We saw that we also want to help them reach out in acceptance to little children as well as to adults. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus taught the disciples to recognize that there were others who also served Him, in addition to those who were following Him.

In Mark 9:38-41, we read, “Now John answered Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.’ But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.’” Since the disciples were in the house with Jesus, we see that John told Jesus about something that had happened when Jesus was not present with them.

They saw a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus. This man was not one of the disciples that traveled with Jesus. As a result, John, and the other disciples with him, ordered this man to stop casting out demons in the name of Jesus. Although Jesus had not been present with the disciples when this happened, Jesus knew exactly what had happened, because He knows all things. First, He knew the man was actually casting out demons. This meant the man was not a false teacher but rather a true believer in Jesus. Second, Jesus said that a person who did miracles in the name of Jesus could not immediately begin speaking evil of Jesus. Third, Jesus said that someone who was not against Jesus and the disciples was on their side.

In contrast, Jesus had given a very different answer when the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Satan. Luke 11:20-23 says, “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.” Christ had defeated the demons, because He was stronger than Satan. In the same way, Jesus allowed this man to cast out demons, which meant that He was on the Lord’s side, not on Satan’s side.

Then, Jesus went on to make a very important statement about spiritual rewards. Jesus told the disciples about anyone who gave them a cup of water in the name of Jesus because they were disciples. Jesus said that such individuals would not lose their reward. Jesus made a similar statement about rewards when He said, in Matthew 10:42, “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” Both of these verses show that Jesus is very eager to give rewards to Christians for even a small act of service, like giving a cup of water in His name. Jesus explained the reason for His eagerness to give rewards in Matthew 25:40, which says, “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’” Jesus said that when we serve His followers, we are serving Him.

Jesus went on to warn those who would cause a little one to stumble. Mark 9:42-48 says, “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’”

First, Jesus warned about causing a little one who believes in Him to stumble. Since this verse talks about a little one who believes, it can refer to either a physical child or a person that is a new Christian. 1 Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” In this verse, we see that new Christians are compared to newborn babes. John had just said that the disciples had forbid someone to cast out demons in the name of Jesus. These verses help us to see that forbidding new Christians to do what they can to serve the Lord could cause them to stumble. Jesus pointed out that such a sin is very serious, because He said it would be better for such a person to have a millstone hung around his neck and he be thrown into the sea. A millstone is a large stone that was pulled by a donkey to grind the grain.

Second, Jesus warned about letting your hand cause you to sin. Sin is really a heart issue, because Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” However, a sinful attitude in the heart will result in sinful actions. Jesus then went on to compare life and eternal judgment. He pointed out the fact that it would be better for a person to choose life, instead of rejecting that life for the temporary pleasures of sin and then receiving eternal judgment. Hebrews 11:24-25 says, “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.” These verses show us that Moses made the choice to reject temporary pleasure and chose instead to receive eternal life. Jesus was pointing out the fact that such a choice is a choice with eternal benefits.

Third, Jesus used the foot and the eye to give two more illustrations of the fact that the desires of our heart can cause us to choose sin instead of choosing eternal life. Jesus also pointed out the fact that those who do not choose eternal life will experience eternal judgment. We see that Jesus said that in eternal judgment “their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. The worm translated “worm” speaks of *the kind of worm that infests dead bodies*. Spiritual death is eternal separation from God. Because those who reject eternal life are spiritually dead, their bodies will never stop experiencing eternal judgment.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 says, “Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know

God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” These verses remind us that those who choose the temporary pleasures of sin, and do not repent of their sin of unbelief, will experience eternal separation from God in the lake of fire and brimstone. Revelation 21:8 says, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” This is eternal judgment.

Jesus then said, in Mark 9:49-50, “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt *is* good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Believers will be seasoned with the fires of persecution and suffering while in this life. Jesus told the disciples, in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” In contrast, unbelievers will experience the fires of eternal judgment, as we saw in the earlier part of this topic, in Mark 9:43-44.

Then, Jesus explained the importance of salt. In the time of the New Testament, there was no refrigeration to preserve food. As a result, people would preserve food by adding salt to it. However, it is possible for salt, especially around the Dead Sea, to become contaminated and lose its flavor. When that happens, the salt becomes worthless, because it will not preserve anything and it will not add flavor to anything. As a result, Jesus told the disciples, and us, that we are to do two things as we follow Him. First, we are to have salt in ourselves. In Matthew 5:13, we read, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” We are to be a preservative in the world by sharing the Word of God and bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

Second, we are to have peace with one another. With Christians, 1 Thessalonians 5:13 says, “And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” Then, with the people of the world, Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” We see in these verses that we are to do everything possible to live at peace with all people, especially with other Christians. We want to show our physical and spiritual children how to be a preservative in the world by sharing the Word of God and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. We also want to help them learn to live in peace with Christians, and, as much as possible, with those who are not Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example how to a preservative in the world and have peace with others.