

# Fresh Start: Dealing with Personal Sin

12.30.18

Mark Series

Message 43

CP: Confession and Repentance of sin lead to a new, and better, life.

Mark 9:42–50 (CSB)

<sup>42</sup> “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup> “And if your hand causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and go to hell, the unquenchable fire. <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge 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, <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 should lose its flavor, how can you season it? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

Intro: A New Year brings the hope of a fresh start.

A. I love this time of year.

1. I am a person who loves to start things and to see those things finished.

a. I love putting things on my checklist and feeling the accomplishment of checking them off.

b. I love starting books, and I love it, even more, when I finish it.

c. I even get a weird thrill by finishing off a box of cereal.

2. You may not be as weird as I am about finishing and starting new, but many of us enjoy the end of the year.

a. It’s the time to start over, and hope for a better year.

b. Maybe this will be the year that:

1. You exercise regularly.

2. Maybe you will kick that bad habit.
  3. Learn an instrument, or read more or go to church more often.
  4. Maybe this is the year you read your Bible through for the first time or maybe the New Testament for the first time.
3. This time of year is when we have the most momentum and willingness to get things done.
- a. That is a good thing.
  - b. We all should strive to be a better person, a better spouse, a better employee, a better follower of Jesus this year.
4. How many of you want to be a better follower of Jesus this year?
- a. As I lead this church into 2019, the Lord has placed several things upon my heart that will help aid you to be a better follower of Jesus this year.
  - b. Just a few examples are our week of prayer and worship starting January 6<sup>th</sup> through Jan 9<sup>th</sup>.
    - c. Each night at 6:30, I want to invite you to join with me as we pray for ourselves, our church, our city, and our nation to see a move of God take place.
    - d. Coming soon will also be a month focused on the Blessed Life by Robert Morris on being generous people.
    - e. In 2019, we are working on a family revival with the hope that present and future generations will be radically changed by the Holy Spirit.
    - f. I am believing that this will be a year of great growth personally and as a church.

B. Many of us here are looking for a Fresh Start.

1. We are ready to lay aside our junk and baggage and start fresh with Jesus.
2. We want our future to look completely different than our past.
3. You want to break the cycle of hurt and pain in your life so your kids and grandkids will not have to deal with what you are dealing with.

C. The good news is that, in Jesus, we receive a Fresh Start.

1. In Jesus, we are a new creation.
2. In Jesus, our old sins are laid aside and we are given new life.
3. The future you have been dreaming of starts with Jesus.

D. And for all of us, the Fresh Start we have been hoping for starts with allowing Jesus to deal with our personal sin.

1. You can't will yourself to be a better person.
2. You can't make yourself in a perfect, sinless, person.
3. You will not overcome the decades of sin, abuse, hurt, and pain in your life and family by yourself.
4. You need the help of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.
5. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is possible for you to have victory in life.
  - a. But victory will not happen if you are not willing to deal with the sin in your life.
  - b. Confession and Repentance of sin bring life and freedom.
    - c. In Mark 9:42-50, Jesus uses some violent metaphors to illustrate the danger of sin in our lives.
    - d. Jesus is using metaphors, so he doesn't want you to cut off hands or feet.
    - e. But He is serious about the danger of sin and the reality of hell.
    - f. Let's look at Jesus' teachings on personal sin.

1. Jesus used violent illustrations that remind us to take sin seriously.

A. Jesus' culture didn't refer to abstract activity.

1. Where today we may say "I was in a bad place when I did that act", Jesus' culture would attribute the sin committed to the part of the body that did the act.

- a. If you stole, it was your hand that caused you to sin because it was the “hand” that physically stole.
- b. If you lust, it would be the eye that was guilty because the eye was the part of the body that led to the thoughts of lust.
- c. What is Jesus doing with this illustration?
- d. “Jesus speaks of the offending hand, foot and eye, all members which have highly important functions to fulfill. They characterize a man concretely as one who acts and who is responsible for his actions.”<sup>1</sup>

B. Jesus was teaching that **we must own our sin before we can have it forgiven.**

1. We must accept responsibility for our actions.
  - a. God requires us to confess our sin.
  - b. That means to say the same thing about our sin that God does.
  - c. God knows we have sinned, but He does require us to admit it.
2. A necessary part of confession is our responsibility to admit that we **HAVE SINNED.**
  - a. We must take responsibility.
  - b. Denial never results in forgiveness.
  - c. **People don't go to hell because of mistakes, they go to hell because of sin.**
3. Blaming others also will not result in your forgiveness.
  - a. When Adam and Eve first sinned, what did they do?
  - b. They blamed someone else for their sin.
  - c. Jesus is teaching his disciples that nothing short of taking responsibility for our personal sin will lead eternal life.

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<sup>1</sup> William L. Lane, [The Gospel of Mark](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 348.

- d. I can't blame my sin on someone else and expect to be forgiven.
- e. We will not stand before the Judgment and answer for our mistakes.
  - 1. We will stand before God and answer for our sin.
  - 2. This is serious business.

C. Jesus said, "If YOUR HAND, YOUR FOOT, and YOUR EYE" causes you to fall away.

- 1. Jesus is not talking about someone else's sin here.
- 2. Jesus is talking about your sin, and your problems, and your destiny.
- 3. At some point in our lives, we are going to have to stop focusing on what everyone else has done wrong and start focusing on what I have done wrong.
- 4. The key to a Fresh Start is found in dealing with our personal sin.
- 5. Before you can experience a Fresh Start in Jesus, you must confess that you have sinned.

Why?

2. We must deal with our sin Because Jesus takes sin seriously.

A. What is sin?

- 1. Sin comes from a Greek word that means "to miss the mark".
  - a. Therefore sin is to aim at something different than what God intended.
  - b. Sin isn't simply missing the target, it's aiming at the wrong target.
  - c. Sin is to "fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- 2. God has created all of us to be in fellowship with Him.
  - a. To live in relationship with him.
  - b. The sin in us makes that impossible.
  - c. Because of sin, we CANNOT aim for, and hit, God with our life.
  - d. The result of sin is a lot like having a bad scope on your deer rifle.

e. No matter how hard you try, you will never come close to hitting what you were called to hit.

3. This is serious business.

a. Without God's help, we are all shooting at a target we have no chance to hit.

b. Many of us are aiming at a fulfilling life:

1. We try new toys, new relationships, or new careers.

2. We get desperate and turn to drugs, alcohol, or illicit affairs.

3. In our pursuit of trying to find fulfillment, we keep getting further and further away from what God intended.

c. This is sin.

d. Sin is the conscious and unconscious choices I make that take me further away from God.

e. Sin results in a downward spiral that takes you further than you wanted to go, costs you more than you wanted to pay, and hurts more than you can bear.

B. Jesus' seriousness towards sin is expressed in two ways:

1. First, His teachings on hell.

2. Second, His death upon the Cross.

3. First, Jesus taught hell as a real place.

A. Did Jesus believe in a real heaven and a real hell?

1. The answer is yes. (The word hell is found 12 times in the NT and 11 of those times it is Jesus teaching about it.)

2. Jesus wasn't warning his disciples so they would miss an imaginary place of torment.

3. Jesus was warning his disciples so they would miss a real place of torment.

B. Jesus' depictions of hell are scary:

1. Mark uses the word “Gehenna” which refers to the Hinnom Valley.
2. This valley had first been the site of human sacrifice in 2 Kings until King Josiah made it the garbage dump for Jerusalem.
  - a. Gehenna was a place where fires were lit to burn trash and where worms and unwanted creatures performed their functions.
  - b. Jesus uses this image to illustrate what hell is like.
3. Hell is a place of Fiery torment.
  - a. Where the worm never runs out of dying flesh to eat.
  - b. Where the pain is unbearable.
  - c. Where darkness reigns and the unbearable becomes a person’s constant experience.

C. **Hell is the opposite of life with God.**

1. We often say the opposite of hell is heaven, but that isn’t completely true.
2. The opposite of hell is life with God, and the opposite of life with God is hell.
3. **Sin is so serious that it separates us from God.**
4. If sin is left alone, and not dealt with, it will lead to our eternal separation from God.
5. “Entrance into hell indicates spiritual ruin in the starkest terms.”<sup>2</sup>

4. **The seriousness of sin is seen in the Cross.**

A. By this point in Mark, Jesus is marching towards the cross.

1. Jesus knows where he is going and what He is going to do.
2. Jesus knew he was going to the cross to deal with the power of sin.

B. Jesus’ death paid God’s price for the forgiveness of our sin.

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<sup>2</sup> William L. Lane, [The Gospel of Mark](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 349.

1. Jesus did not buy us back from the devil.
2. Sin is an offense against God, so it was to God that Jesus offered His blood as the price for our sin.

3. When we believe upon Jesus, our debt of sin is paid for.

C. This does not give us an excuse to continue in sin.

1. Just because we are saved by grace, through faith, it does not give us an excuse to keep on sinning.

2. Jesus is teaching His disciples to reject a lifestyle of sin.

a. It is not appropriate for a child of God to continue to live in sin.

b. No sin is worth losing out on life with God!

## 5. What is at stake is life with God.

A. Jesus wanted his disciples to deal with their sin because their life depended upon it.

1. Jesus doesn't say eternal life here.

a. In verse 45 he says "It is better for you to enter (the) life..."

b. In verse 47 he says, "It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God..."

c. Jesus isn't just talking about a future life but a present one.

B. For those who take sin seriously, Jesus offers a life that begins today.

1. John 10:10 says the "Thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I have come to give life and life to the fullest."

2. This is life both in the present and the future.

3. As important as eyes, hands, and feet are to us—or whatever else claims ultimate allegiance—they are not life; the kingdom of God is life, and nothing in this life should be allowed to prevent one from entering the kingdom. The choice is literally between God's kingdom and "the fire that never goes out."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 294.



C. Some of you here today are not only in danger of missing out on eternal life, but you are missing out on life today.

1. You are living far below your privilege and calling because you would rather live with your sin than to deal with it.
2. "The work God needs to do in your life may be painful for a moment, but the pain won't last forever."
3. For many of you here today, 2019 may be the best year you've ever had if you are willing to let God deal with you.
4. Perhaps God is already convicting you of personal sin and now it is time for you to decide if you are ready to deal with.

Conclusion: We should take sin in our lives so seriously that we will deal with our sin with extreme measures if necessary.

A. Dealing with our sin is painful.

1. Confession is painful.
2. Repentance is painful.
3. But they are only painful for a moment.
4. Because confession and repentance bring healing.
5. The moment that the poison of sin is removed, we find that God replaces it with peace, joy, and freedom.

B. Jesus knows that dealing with sin is painful.

1. It may feel like cutting off a hand, a foot, or putting out an eye.
2. Sin becomes like an appendage: We grow used to having it around.
3. Removal is painful, for a moment.
4. But the pain does not compare to the eternal pain and separation that awaits us if we do not deal with sin through the Blood of Jesus.

C. This morning, if you are ready for a new and fresh, start, we are going to take time to pray today.

1. Some of us need to spend this time confessing and repenting of sin.
2. Others need to pray for healing in your family, your mind, or your body.
3. For someone here today, your prayer is for hope.
  - a. You aren't sure things can be different.
  - b. You may not believe life can be better.
  - c. What you need is hope and picture of a better future.
4. Today, we pray "Lord, Give us a fresh start and the power of the Holy Spirit to be all you want us to be!"