

## LIFE OR CONDEMNATION?

At the end of chapter 9 in the gospel of Mark, Jesus makes three consecutive hyperbolic statements that should impress on us the seriousness of sin and the value of eternal life: *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off”* (Mark 9:43). *“And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off”* (Mark 9:45). *“And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out”* (Mark 9:47). Jesus is not advocating self-mutilation as a cure for sin, because Jesus has already taught it is that which comes *“from within, out of the heart of men”* that defiles a man (Mark 7:20-23). However, Jesus is using strong imagery to communicate two key things we must understand.

**Sin is serious.** Jesus’ statements about cutting off or plucking out those parts of us which lead us into sin indicate the serious nature of sin and its effects. While self-mutilation is not the remedy for sin, the seriousness of sin may necessitate the removal of those things in life which tempt us or lead us into sin. If our television or electronic devices lead us into sin, it may be wise to remove those from our life. If a friend or group of friends repeatedly leads us down the wrong path, it would be wise to excise those relationships. A heart truly seeking God will work to take the steps necessary to remove the sources of the sin which separates us from Him.

**Life is better than condemnation.** Perhaps the main point of Jesus’ teaching here is the comparison between life and hell. Jesus said, *“It is better for you to enter life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell”* (Mark 9:43b). It is better to be maimed, lame, and/or have one eye and enter the eternal life available in Christ than to end up in hell, *“where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”* (Mark 9:48). Our lack of physical comforts or preferences is of no comparison to the anguish of eternal separation from our Creator and Father. Nor can our sufferings in this life compare with the glory in which we will share in eternity: *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2Cor. 4:17). Paul, reflecting on the things he had given up in his life, said he gladly *“suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”* (Phil. 3:8b), and that *“by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead”* (Phil. 3:11). Eternal life is the better option by far!

Where is eternal life found? Twice Jesus said, *“It is better for you to enter life... rather than... hell”* (Mark 9:43, 45). The third time He said, *“It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God... rather than... hell fire”* (Mark 9:47). The natural conclusion is that life is found in the kingdom of God. When we enter the kingdom through our entrance into Christ, we are choosing life, for *“there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1). Life or condemnation? The wise choice is obvious!

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