

3. He also gives "the spiritual anesthetic, or that which should dull the pain of such a loss:" Entrance to higher life, which more than compensates for any necessary loss (cf. Matt. 18:8,9). See Thomas, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 63, for illustration of man with deep Cobra bite, who cut off his hand instantly with a tremendous blow of his dagger, to save his life.
  4. Crucify, do not dally one moment, with any evil passion or sinful appetite: To indulge them is to give them added strength, and thus to encourage your own destruction.
- B. Cast it out: "And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (47,48).
1. Self-denial is the first condition of discipleship (Matthew 16:24).
  2. Because of the intensity of certain passions, their widespread indulgence, and dreadful consequences, against which Jesus is legislating (cf. Matt. 5:29,30), he advises the strongest possible motivation to godly life.
  3. The Lord here teaches that the passions of the flesh must be mastered or subdued at any cost: Extreme sacrifice may be necessary, and should be decisively performed.
  4. Self-denial is to be practiced only where there is a need for it: It is not an end within itself, although we should gladly give up any pleasure or thing which would cause us to stumble and be lost.
  5. Obviously these verses are not to be taken literally: To dismember the bodies of Christians would merely turn the church into a literal hospital and would not prevent the sins Jesus desires us to avoid.
- VI. THE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST MUST BE GOOD SALT (49,50).
- A. Salted with fire: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt" (49. KJV). The sacrifices enjoined in verses 45-48 must be made, for everyone will be tried "with fire."
  - B. Be at peace: "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another" (50).

## STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN

### Unworthy Ambition Rebuked

Mark 9:33-50; Matthew 20:20-28

#### INTRODUCTION -

##### I. LESSON LINKS AND CONTEXT.

- A. Having left the region of Caesarea Philippi after the transfiguration, Jesus led his disciples through Galilee to Capernaum (9:30-33).
- B. On the way to Capernaum, in Galilee (Matt. 17:22), Jesus again predicted his suffering, death and resurrection (9:21; cf. 8:31-33; 10:32-34).
- C. But the disciples "understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him" (9:32). Peter had been rebuked earlier for attempting to correct Jesus (8:31-33), so, grieved at his words, they kept silent (cf. Luke 9:45).

##### II. NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE LESSON.

- A. It is good to desire to excel, provided the desire is directed toward goals worth reaching: We should be ambitious to be humble, teachable servants of God to serve Christ and man.
- B. There is such a thing as true greatness in the kingdom of Christ, so let us understand and respect it, and be warned against false and unworthy ambition.

#### DISCUSSION -

##### I. DISPUTE AMONG THE DISCIPLES (9:33,34).

- A. What were you reasoning: "And they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, what were ye reasoning on the way" (33)?
  1. Matthew 18:1 indicates the disciples came to Jesus asking their question, evidently giving no intimation to him of their dispute.
  2. Jesus knew their reasoning already, however.
- B. Who is the greatest: "But they held their peace: for they had disputed one with another on the way, who was the greatest" (34).
  1. This shows they were men: thinking in terms of the chief seats of power and honor in an earthly kingdom they expected Jesus to set up.
  2. Their thinking may have been prompted by his recent teaching concerning the kingdom and the keys thereof (cf. Matthew 16:18,19).
  3. Seeking and loving the praise of men more than the praise of God is misplaced ambition and mis-directed energy (John 12:42,43; 2 Tim. 2:15).

## II. FALSE AMBITION REBUKED (9:35-37).

- A. Righteous ambition: "And he sat down, and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (35).
1. It is tragic that the church as a whole has not learned this.
  2. The desire for the preeminence in place and honor makes one last in character, wars against the graces of love, kindness and poverty of spirit, and generates pride, envy and selfishness.
- B. An example: "And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: and taking him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me" (36,37).
1. In this way Jesus told the disciples plainly they must put aside ideas of selfish personal ambition in his kingdom.
  2. The humble spirit of a child is in sharp contrast to their sin.
  3. To "go up higher" in God's kingdom, one must desire to serve, and then do it well.

## III. MISAPPLIED ZEAL CORRECTED (9:38-40).

- A. John's jealousy: "John said unto him, Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us" (38).
1. John thought his action just inasmuch as the man was not in the company personally following Jesus.
  2. As they saw him actually cast out demons in the name of Jesus, they should have known such power and authority had been given by Jesus, and he was therefore no rival, opponent or enemy.
- B. Jesus' reply: "But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me" (39).
1. Jesus addressed himself not to the man John rebuked, either pro or con, but to the misdirected zeal of the twelve.
  2. This passage has often been misapplied by those who misunderstand our Lord to mean that we should not rebuke those who choose to belong to some denominational church rather than serve in the body of Christ.

- C. Not against us: "For he that is not against us is for us" (40).
1. It is really impossible to be neutral with reference to Jesus (Matthew 12:30).
  2. Sooner or later one's position will be evident.

## IV. REWARDS WILL BE ACCORDING TO DEEDS (9:41,42).

- A. A cup of water: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward" (41).
1. He who is mindful of the sparrow's fall is not unrighteous to forget the works of love his children do (Heb. 6:10; Matt. 5:16).
  2. The most humble act of kindness done to one of the Lord's least disciples is registered in the book which will be open in final judgment (Matt. 25:34-40; Revelation 20:12).
  3. Honor done to one because he is Christ's is honor to Christ.
- B. Cause to stumble: "And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (42).
1. To cause one "to stumble" is to cause him to fall and be lost.
  2. Quarreling about greatness might generate this very result, because of its selfish nature and its bad ugly fruit.
  3. "It were better" to be drowned in the sea by a millstone because the final result upon the offender is worse.

## V. SEVERE OPERATIONS PRESCRIBED BY THE GREAT PHYSICIAN (9:43-48).

- A. Cut it off: "And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell" (43,45).
1. To avoid serious sin, we must, with strong determination, shut our senses to that which excites, inflames or arouses us to yield to temptation, however precious be the member.
  2. Jesus is here teaching spiritual surgery: Drastic operations, the speedy and decisive amputation of any pleasure or hindrance to spiritual and eternal life (Cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27).