

1) **REAL WARNINGS ABOUT SIN AND HELL - MARK 9:43-50**

**"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. 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. 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, [48] 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' [49] For everyone will be salted with fire. [50] 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."**

There are several important lessons in these verses:

**A) HOW TO DEAL WITH TEMPTATION (MARK 9:42-47)**

If we are going to obtain victory over sin we must ***deal with temptation at its point of application***. The hand, eye, etc. deal with the beginning of the sin process as temptation is ***taken into the body's sensual perception***. Before you look, before you touch, before you go - that is the only time you will be able to resist the pull of sin and keep it from further pulling you into the wrong path.

The lesson is so simple and powerful. ***If you give in to the first enticements of sin, you are kidding yourself if you think you will back off later on***. We talk a great deal about the ***strength*** of temptation. Usually victory is more a matter of ***timing*** than ***weakness***.

**B) THERE ARE ETERNAL ISSUES AT STAKE (MARK 9:44,46,48)**

Hell is not on the top ten list of favourite topics anymore. We talk about being ***"saved"*** without describing ***what we are saved from***. Jesus didn't make that mistake. He talked more about hell than heaven - perhaps because he felt more people were going there.

i) ***HELL IS A REAL PLACE, NOT JUST THE BAD RESULTS OF OUR CHOICES IN THIS LIFE-TIME*** - I don't know how one can deny the actual reality of hell, yet cling to the reality of heaven. They seem to stand or fall together in the Bible.

ii) ***HELL IS A PLACE OF SUFFERING AND PUNISHMENT*** - Just how literally are we to take all of the descriptions of hell in the Bible? Is the fire the same as the fire we know on earth? - remember that hell was made for the devil and his angels - does literal fire burn spirits? How do huge volumes of fire and "outer darkness" exist at the same time?

We just don't have all the answers to these questions. Surely, the sane position has to be that ***hell is as bad as actual, unending fire - or worse***. Jesus certainly wasn't trying to describe a picnic.

iii) ***THE PUNISHMENT OF HELL IS UNENDING*** - It is not just that ***hell itself*** will last forever. The ***inhabitants of hell*** will suffer eternally for their rejection of God (48). See also **Revelation 20:7-10** - ***"When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, {8} and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. {9} And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. {10} And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*** Link these words with **Matthew 25:41**.

**Daniel 12:2** - "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." It's true that the Hebrew word for "everlasting" (*olam*) can sometimes be used to refer to an limited period of time during one's own life. But most commonly its meaning is literally "**unceasingness**" or "**perpetuity**." Certainly that seems to be the most likely case here because it refers clearly to a time of division that is entered into **after** this temporal life and death and resurrection. Clearly there is no annihilation. There is everlasting joy and everlasting contempt. If annihilation were intended here it would be strange indeed that dead decayed bodies would be raised to life so they could cease to exist. The more natural reading is that they are raised in their bodies again so they can enter into their appointed destinies **bodily** and **consciously**.

2) **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE - MARK 10:1-12** - (see also **Matthew 19:1-12**)

"And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. [2] And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" [3] He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" [4] They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." [5] And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. [6] But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' [7] 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, [8] and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. [9] What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." [10] And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. [11] And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, [12] and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

**A) GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENTION (MARK 10:4-9)**

This was the big concern in the mind of Jesus. The Pharisees wanted to nit-pick. Jesus looked at the big picture. To capture **God's heart about marriage** you must go back beyond the **law of Moses**. You must also go back beyond the view of divorce the Pharisees had pulled from Moses' words in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**.

Jesus is clear that **God never intended divorce**. It was, in limited cases, a concession to man's sinful heart (**Mark 10:5, Matthew 19:8**). Jesus then repeats the general principle He had already laid down in **Matthew 5:31-32**.

**B) DIVORCE ISN'T THE UNPARDONABLE SIN (MARK 3:28)**

If I have been divorced, I must approach Christ like any other sinner. It seems that the Scriptures lay down some ground rules and principles to **help prevent divorce** and **help bring healing and reform to those who have sinned in this area**:

- i) If I have been divorced and remarried God doesn't expect me to leave my present partner to return to my first mate. This is made clear in **John 4:16-18**. Jesus said she had had five husbands, not **one husband and four adulterous relationships**. I must make the relationship I am now in God-honoring and permanent.
- ii) If I am single I must make sure that any plans for marriage are only with believers - **2 Corinthians 6:14** - "**Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?**"
- iii) If I am married to an unbeliever, I must be the one to work hardest to make that marriage work. If there's a separation, I must be the one to keep the door for restoration open as long as possible - **1 Corinthians 7:12-16** - "**To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. [13] If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. [14] For the unbelieving husband is made**

holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. [15] But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. [16] Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?" As the Christian partner, I must bear the greater burden in that situation.

- iv) If the unbelieving partner leaves, the Christian is not to live the rest of life under bondage and guilt - **1 Corinthians 7:15** - "**But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.**" He is not guilty of breaking up the marriage. God calls him to peace.

### C) **MARRIAGE IS NOT FOR EVERYBODY - MATTHEW 19:10-12**

"The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." [11] But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. [12] For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

We must never treat singles as second class members of the family of God. God has a special calling for many people. Paul describes singleness as a "**gift**" given by God Himself (**1 Corinthians 7:7**). Singleness isn't **incompleteness**. It is filled with God's good purpose.