

2026-03-15

## **Do What You Can Do**

Mark 9:38-50

Have you ever been in a conversation when the topic became uncomfortable. You were being convicted by the Holy Spirit or your own conscience by what was being said. You just did not want to continue on in that conversation. You wish you could have left but that would have been too obvious. Your only other option was to change the topic and talk about something else. It seems that John did this. In last weeks message the disciples were debating over who was the greatest (Mark 9:33). They were too ashamed to tell Jesus what they were disputing over. And it does not end here. James and John **go to Jesus requesting they be given** the positions of Number 1 and Number 2 under Jesus when He becomes king (Mark 10:35-37). In Mark 9, since the disciples did not answer Jesus, He told them, *“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all”* (9:35). I wonder if Jesus was looking more intently at John when He was explaining what it meant to be a servant to others. All of a sudden John interrupted this explanation of servanthood to ask Jesus a question.

**Mark 9:38** *“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.’”* John very masterfully gets the focus off of Jesus’ teaching about being a servant to a different topic. The disciples probably saw this man casting out a demon in the name of Jesus weeks ago. They never said anything about it to Jesus until now. Interestingly, John said twice that the man was not following *“us”* referring to the disciples. I would have thought John would have said the man was not following *“You”* referring to Jesus. The disciples as a group *“forbade him.”* What did they say? You are not allowed to do that. We are the only ones that can do that. Jesus gave us that power, not you. I hope they did not say something like that. Jesus responded to John and the other disciples in what I consider to be a mild rebuke. More to help them think correctly about situations they see and do not understand.

**Verses 39-40** *“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.’”* It seems as though Jesus is glad that there are **some people** around us who recognize people in need and step in to help them out in the name of Jesus. It seems that **most people** are too self-focused or legalistic to see the people in need around them. The disciples did not do anything to help either of the men, the one casting out the demon or the man demon possessed. Instead, the disciples stopped the man who was trying to help someone in need. Maybe they did more harm than good that day. Jesus does not want us to discourage people who are helping others

in His name. We should encourage them and pray for them. Jesus told the disciples not to forbid people who are serving in the name of Jesus. When they witness the miracle of God, they will know it was not them but God who brought about the miracle. Jesus believed, and we should too, that those people will not turn around after the miracle and speak evil of Jesus. Southern Baptists are not the only ones in the world serving and glorifying God. There are many groups and denominations serving and glorifying God in this world. We all need to work together to accomplish God's will of making disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all of God's commands (Matthew 28:19-20). As Jesus said, "*For he who is not against us is on our side.*" Jesus also made another statement, "*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad*" (Matthew 12:30). These two concepts work together when you understand that those who are not against Jesus are also working for the kingdom of God. People who are not working to build up the kingdom of God are not on God's side. They seek to scatter or destroy God's kingdom. Then Jesus brought the discussion back to serving others, which John was trying to avoid.

**Verse 41** "*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.*" When Jesus began His ministry, He healed everyone. He cast out every demon He encountered. At certain times He fed thousands of people. Why did He do these? Because He could! He is God! He was trying to get the people to recognize who He was. He even gave some of His power to His apostles. They did similar things. All these were done to get people to trust in and follow Jesus. When you repent of your sins and chose to follow Jesus, God gives each believer a special gift that He wants you to use to build up the church (Ephesians 4:11-13). I encourage you to know what your gift is and use your gift in the church to build up the church for the glory of God. **Then there are those things everyone can do as a Christian.** Who in here as a Christian can give a cup of cold water to another Christian? We know how refreshing, important and precious a cup of cold water can be on a hot summer day in southern Arizona. We can help each other. Do you know that there is a reward for every Christian when they give the smallest of gifts, a cup of cold water, given from Christian to Christian. When Christians learn to love and help one another then we can learn to help those outside the Church. Jesus told His disciples to love each other so the world will know we are His followers (John 13:34-35).

This month I have had the privilege of using our Benevolence Offering, the money we give each month to help each other out, to help out several of our members. Thank you for making that possible. Your cups of cold water, your monetary gifts added up to pay bills that were beyond the means of our members. Thank you.

Because the church paid these bills, this gave me and those members you helped an opportunity to share a witness of God's love and provision to several people. Then we had a "Clean the Church" day. I arrived late and I did not get to clean the back doors. Someone had gotten to them. There were over a dozen people doing all kinds of tasks. There were people with walkers and canes in here cleaning. They did what they could and it all helped. This chapel is cleaner than I have ever seen it. Some people even brought their used toothbrushes to clean in those hard-to-reach areas. Not everyone who helped were members. Several visitors were here helping us. Thank you! Another easy, yet important way to help is by giving food items. We collect nonperishable food items and take them down to Arizona Baptist Children's Services. We go there because they intentionally share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all who seek their help. Not every foodbank does this. ABCS does. God knows that there are times when what we think of as helping is really not helping at all.

**Verses 42-44** *"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.'"* A little one can be a young child. It can also refer to someone just beginning the Christian faith. It is important, it is our Christian duty to help other Christians. We must be careful when we help, that our help is not a stumbling block. When our help causes Christians to sin, we are walking on thin ice. When this becomes normal, consistent, that all of what we do everyday causes Christians to sin and live in sin, it would be better to fall through that thin ice and be dead. I believe Jesus chose His words very carefully when He talked about heaven and hell. He is the One who created both. He is the One who knows the truth about heaven and hell. He used the same language to describe both being eternal. If heaven is real and eternal, then so is hell. If hell is not real and eternal, then neither is heaven. I believe they are both real and eternal. That is how Jesus talked about them. You may not like it. I do not either, but my likes and dislikes do not change the truth of scripture.

When we talk about stumbling blocks, what causes people to stumble, we must begin with the truth. Christ's death on the cross is a huge stumbling block for the Jews (1 Corinthians 1:23). Sometimes the truth itself is a stumbling block for people to believe. Should we change the message? No! Somehow people need to overcome whatever it is that blocks them from believing the truths of God. If we change the message, people will believe in lies and lies will not save anyone. Only the truth saves. Jesus died in our place to pay the debt for our sins to keep us out of hell. Jesus described hell as Gehenna. It began as the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem. Kings

Ahaz and Manasseh both sacrificed their children to the idol Molech on the altar in the Valley of Hinnom (2 Chronicles 28:3 / 33:6). Later king Josiah destroyed the altar and the Valley of Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10). He made that place the garbage dump for the people of Jerusalem where they burned their trash. Fire burned night and day for decades. It became known as Gehenna. Jesus used that place to describe the place we call hell, where the fire always burns.

Jesus mentioned three areas of our lives that must show the evidence that we are changed. *“If your hand causes you to sin”* (9:43). *“If your foot causes you to sin”* (9:45). *“If your eye causes you to sin”* (9:47). We are to remove them from our lives. What causes you to sin? Does your hand, foot or eye cause you to sin? No, they do not. Your will, your choice, your conscience is what causes us to sin. We must die to our sinful self and live for Jesus. The evidence that this change has taken place in our lives is seen by what our hands do, by where our feet take us and by what our eyes see. If there are things that your hands do that are wrong, stop it. If there are places your feet take you, stop it. If there are things your eyes see that they should not, stop it. Remove those evils from your life! You must. If you do not, those things may take control of your life before you know it and destroy you.

**Verses 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.”* These verses are part of the same conversation Jesus is having with His disciples about, *“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all”* (9:35). Every sacrifice was seasoned with salt (Leviticus 2:13). Every person is seasoned with fire. We are seasoned with the fire of God, the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16) or the fire of hell. Allow God’s Spirit to change you. Salt is good. Salt can never lose its flavor. It can be so diluted that it cannot be detected. In essence, it loses its flavor. Can salt be separated out from all the pollution around it? Only by the power of the living God with true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. Have salt, have flavor, have the flavor of God in you, as you become the servant of God to enhance people’s lives.

**Your challenge:** Learn what is the covenant of salt (Leviticus 2:13 / Numbers 18:19)

**Actions to take:** Learn what it means to have salt in yourselves.

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Our mission statement: **Spread the gospel of Jesus Christ;  
 Teach believers to worship God; Foster growth in the Christian faith**