

## SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the Week of August 24

**SERMON: “The Seriousness of Sin”**

**TEXT: Mark 9:38-50**

**PREACHER: Matt Ryman**

**This week’s main point:** Jesus is against sin and he is especially hard on those who cause others to sin. In this week’s passage we see: a man whom the disciples believe is sinning but is not; a warning against causing others to sin; and a clear teaching on the reality of Hell.

1. Did you grow up in a different Christian tradition than the PCA? How was the theology different? Or maybe you grew up in a completely different faith, or with no faith at all in your home. Share about your knowledge of God as you grew up.
2. In verse 38 John appears to believe that the man who is casting out demons in Jesus’ name is some type of false teacher. What does Jesus say about the man?
3. It seems odd that someone is doing works in Christ’s name who is not following Jesus along with the other disciples. What does this tell us about the way God works?
4. Something to provoke discussion and thought: In v.41 Jesus says that anyone who gives someone water for the simple reason that he/she is a Christian will be rewarded. In Iraq right now, there are kindhearted Muslims in Baghdad who are helping persecuted Christians. If they are not worshipers of Jesus, how can they be rewarded simply for a kind act towards a Christian?
5. In v.42, Jesus gives a dire warning to anyone who causes a Christian to sin. What does this say to those in our culture or any culture who are attempting to destroy faith in Christ? What does this tell you about God’s love?
6. What do you think Jesus means when he mentions “saltiness” in vv.49-50? See Exodus 30:35 and Leviticus 2:13.
7. Jesus is working in other denominations besides our own! There are true believers among Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Lutherans, Mennonites, etc. However, false teachers are also a reality. Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses are two cults who clearly deny the divinity of Christ and reject Christian doctrine. Read 2 Peter 2:1-3 and discuss how we can recognize false teachers when we see them.
8. Next time you look at someone lustfully, will you pluck out your eyes? Discuss.
9. When spreading the gospel to your neighbors, would you use anything from this passage? It speaks of some hard things, such as the reality of Hell and the seriousness of sin. Talk about how this passage could be useful in evangelizing.

10. In America, there are a lot of people who think they're Christians simply because they go to church or were born into a Christian family. Discuss how you can share Christ with "nominal" Christians.

### *Commentary*

2) *Jesus clearly tells the disciples to not stop the man because "no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me." Jesus is showing that the man is a believer in Him and that it is alright for believers to work apart for the spread of the gospel.*

3) *God the Holy Spirit regenerates the hearts of believers all over the world, usually when they hear the Gospel preached to them. This may not happen in the midst of other believers (such as the Apostles) but it is nonetheless an authentic conversion. This shows us that it is definitely God who does the work of saving a sinner with the Gospel, not by our works, but by His grace.*

4) *The balance of rewards vs. punishment for our works is a hard one to understand. We believe that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, yet the New Testament also teaches that there will be rewards for our good works. This verse clearly states however, that those who do good works to you "because you belong to Christ" will receive a reward. When non-Christians help us out, are they helping us BECAUSE we belong to Christ? Most likely, no. They may love their fellow man, or love you because you have befriended them, or in the case of the kind Muslims in Iraq, they may be caring for the Christians because they are holding the Muslim rule for hospitality above religious differences. It comes down to a matter of the heart. Those who help Christians BECAUSE they are Christians above all, show that they love Jesus.*

5) *Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world. And he loves them so much, that he uses the harshest warning possible for those who would attempt to destroy the faith of any Christians, in particular here new/young Christians.*

6) *In the Old Testament, sacrifices were regularly salted before being offered. This goes for us as Christians now, as we live as living sacrifices (Romans 12). We are to be salted with fire...the fire of the Holy Spirit who causes us to love each other and be at peace with each other, not causing each other to sin.*

7) *False teachers are real and they need to be known by Christians so we can warn others. Just because someone says they are Christians, doesn't mean they are. If their message denies the divinity of Christ; salvation by faith in Christ alone; the Triune nature of God; the resurrection of Christ; the pre-eminence of Christ; the person of the Holy Spirit; the doctrine of Christ as*

*fully God and fully man, among others, they are false teachers, heretics and should not be trusted. Unfortunately in Christian circles, a lot that passes as Christianity is anything but. Rather it is rooted in materialism, new age beliefs and even universalism. We need to understand heresy when we see it and call it like it is, even when others don't like it. As the Christian rapper Shai Linne says "Today the only heresy is saying that there's heresy." That being said, Jesus is clearly working through other groups of Christians. The gospel is spreading through faithful Christians all over the world.*

8) *Jesus' warnings to cut off our hands and feet and pluck out our eyes if they cause us to sin are meant to be a severe warning of the seriousness of sin. Jesus doesn't believe that taking these drastic measures will solve anything because back in Mark 7:14-23 Jesus clearly teaches that it's a man's heart that is wicked and causes sin. Therefore, we need to cut our hearts out!! Not in a "Temple of Doom" kind of way, but that is exactly what the Holy Spirit does to us when we become Christians. He performs heart surgery, replacing our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26-27).*

9) *"There is no mercy in keeping back from men the subject of hell. Fearful and tremendous as it is, it ought to be pressed on all, as one of the great truths of Christianity. Our loving Savior speaks frequently of it. The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, often describes it. The servants of God in these days must not be ashamed of confessing their belief in it. Were there no boundless mercy in Christ for all that believe in Him, we might well shrink from the dreadful topic. Were there no precious blood of Christ able to cleanse away all sin, we might well keep silence about the wrath to come. But there is mercy for all who ask in Christ's name. There is a fountain open for all sin. Let us then boldly and unhesitatingly maintain that there is a hell, and beseech men to flee from it, before it be too late. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," the worm, and the fire, let us "persuade men." (2 Cor. 5:11.) It is not possible to say too much about Christ. But it is quite possible to say too little about hell." **JC Ryle***