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Representing *How We Can Represent Jesus Well*

Mark 9:38-50

INTRODUCTION

How We Can Represent Jesus Well

I. Cut Other Believers Lots of **Slack**

A. The Situation (38-40)

1. Earlier Context

a) Section of Gospel of Mark where Jesus is Teacher of His Disciples

All the more so in this section of the gospel you who regard yourself as a disciple of Jesus, you should be sitting on the edge of your seat, leaning in and listening to the teaching of Jesus. Ask yourselves, "Do I know this lesson? Have I understood what my Lord wants me to know? Have I become the person He is trying to shape me into? Have I rearranged my life based on these truths?"

b) Whole book: Who Jesus Is

(1) The Son of God

(2) The Christ -- But Disciples Expected a Different Type of Christ

c) Hard lessons about His own future, 8:31, 9:31

Hard lessons about His own future and the implications for the true nature of the KOG at that time, 9:31

d) Hard lessons about His disciples' future, 8:34-35

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me...

e) Yet His disciples had not understood

Yet His disciples had not understood that the Christ would have to suffer and die to restore the POG to Himself, nor had they pictured their role as entailing such humiliation.

8:32 Peter rebuked Jesus for teaching that He would have to suffer such humiliation

8:33 Jesus had rebuked Peter for not accepting His teaching and for holding onto another understanding which was contrary to God's intention. **"Get behind Me Satan."** Jesus had scolded Peter. **"For you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."** 8:33

9:32 after Jesus second predictive teaching of His humiliation and exaltation, Jesus disciples are reported to still not get it; but now they are afraid to ask Him.

Instead they engaged in topics of great interest...

f) Disciples had been arguing about who of them was the greatest, 9:34

g) Jesus' teaching on true greatness

Jesus teaching that true greatness in the KOG is caught up in being a servant and receiving into their company and into their honor the lowly believers who were like the little child Jesus had embraced in His arms in their sight.

2. Facts of the Situation (38-40)

3. Meaning of the Facts (Read and Comment)

a) What it is to do something in the name of Jesus

4. Understanding of the Situation

a) Portrait of the man Jesus is about to instruct how to relate to/interact with/deal with...

(1) Who this man is not

Jesus is not giving us instruction here about people in general. He is not giving us instruction about those who have no relation to Jesus.

(2) Who this man is

(a) "Someone casting out demons..."

One doing what Jesus came to do in the biggest picture of crushing the head of the seed of the serpent and restoring all creation to the order of God's original intention. (Gen 3:15...)

(b) "...in Your [Jesus'] Name..."

JP: in the power and authority of Jesus. It is unknown whether this person was given this power and authority by Jesus. If he had been certainly the disciples did not know it. Yet because He was invoking the name of Jesus and the demons were apparently effectively cast out I have to wonder if this man may have been vested with power and authority by Jesus but simply unknown to His twelve disciples and outside of the record of Scripture. It could be so or it could be that He simply had confidence in the power of Jesus and like a kid with a chain saw picked it up, fired it up and cut down some trees, not knowing the person to whom it belonged, yet.

(c) "...not following us..."

(i) Meaning of “us”

(a) *Possibility 1 – Jesus and 12*

(b) *Possibility 2 – Just the 12*

(c) *My informed hunch*

John meant the latter. This man was not one of the 12 or one of those following the 12.

(d) **“...there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name...”**

One who was performing miracles in Jesus name.

(e) **“...he who is not against us...”**

One who was not against Jesus and His disciples.

B. Jesus’ Instruction (39-42) (Read)

1. The prohibition (39) – Do Not Hinder Him!

2. Reasons Not to Hinder A Believer Doing God’s Work

a) 39

Such a one will not soon be able to speak evil of Jesus

b) 40

Such a one is “not against us” and in that sense may be considered “for us.”

c) 41

Jesus: Just as I value accept and even reward those who extend kindness to you even though they don’t know you, but just because they recognize you as followers of Me, so too even though you do not know some other person who is about the business of My kingdom, because they are working in My name, you should receive them. Though you do not recognize them, if they recognize Me, you should extend kindness and certainly not work against them. Who are you to say that I Myself have not charged them to do exactly what they are doing?

d) 42

(1) Meaning of “...one of these little ones who believe...”

I think Jesus has in mind the genuine believers in Him who the Twelve, His inner circle, aren’t acquainted with.

(2) Meaning of “...stumble...”

Stumble in the sense that they are tripped up and knocked off course in their following Jesus. One who was following but has now been hindered.

(3) Identity of “Whoever causes one of these...”

Any of the Twelve who cause other believers to stumble.

(4) How v. 42 is a reason not to hinder

How is v. 42 is a reason disciples of Jesus should not to hinder other disciples in their ministry in response to Jesus?

The answer is the severity of the consequence. He doesn't even need to spell it out further...

(5) Millstone + Hung on Neck + Thrown into Sea = Death

The consequences of causing a believer in Jesus to stumble off of his course of following Jesus are worse than death!

This is meant to sound harsh and shocking so that we would not let this teaching be part of the unheeded noise of our lives.

With the shocking nature of the severity of the cost Jesus is highlighting this lesson. If you were reading it on a page of my notes it would be circled, highlighted, arrows pointing to it, in multiple colors.. Don't miss this!

TRANS. For all these reasons Jesus prohibited His disciples from hindering the work of other believers who they may have held as suspect because they don't know them and they weren't in their inner circle.

C. Where This Touches Down in Our Lives

1. Believers relationship with e/o in the same church

2. Believers relationship with e/o in different churches

Jesus would have us extend grace, cut other believers we don't know lots of slack and certainly not hinder them from either being followers of Jesus or doing what Jesus has called His disciples to do.

Where we are to cut others a lot of slack, when it comes to ourselves, the real people we should be worrying about, I believe the Holy Spirit would say ...

II. Cut **Yourself No Slack**

A. Note the Emphasis on Self Examination in vv. 43-50

[read with emphasis on your, you, yourselves...]

Jesus turns the disciples' attention off of others and onto themselves. He is asking us now not only to act in such a way that would stumble others, but to not stumble ourselves. It has been rightly pointed out of late that we are our own worst enemies and therefore we should make sure we don't take ourselves down.

B. He Calls Us to Holiness & Radical Discipleship

The drastic language again should make us aware of the intensity of Jesus passion regarding the importance of this teaching.

1. He Warns us that We Can "Stumble" Ourselves

Stumble indicating a falling into sin and a falling out of step in our following of Jesus.

2. He Exhorts us to Cut Off and Cast Out what Stumbles Us

a) What To Cut and Cast

(1) The Text

(a) 43 – If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off...

(b) 45 – If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off...

(c) 47 – If your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out...

(2) The Meaning

(a) What is Jesus referring to?

(i) Hand

It is your hand taking to yourself something desirable according to your old nature, when Jesus has called you to follow Him and live as a new creation according to your redeemed nature as members of Christ's body and adopted sons of God. What does your hand bring to yourself that it should not?

(ii) Foot

It is your foot walking into a place where sin is easy to indulge in, when Jesus has called for your repentance and your dwelling with Him in purity. Where does your foot lead you that it should not?

(iii) Eye

It is your eye wondering and igniting thoughts that fuel the actions of your pleasure-seeking self-serving old man, when Jesus would have you look upon and think about what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely... (Phil 4:8ff) What is your eye looking at that it should not?

Jesus is calling us to take radical action regarding our sin.

(iv) Our actions are important but not MOST important

b) Why We Should Cut and Cast

(1) 43 – it is better for you to enter life crippled than ... to go into hell...

(2) 45 – it is better for you to enter life lame than ... to be cast into hell...

(3) 47 – it is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, than... to be cast into hell...

(4) The consequence of stumbling yourself is hell as opposed to eternal life!

The consequence of stumbling yourself in the way Jesus is referring to is hell, further described in v. 43 as "the unquenchable fire" and in v. 48, quoting Is 66:24, as a place "WHERE THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED."

(5) But is Jesus here really teaching that if a disciple sins, he or she will be cast into hell and not be allowed to enjoy eternal life with God? Yes and No.

From elsewhere in Scripture we know that the sin your hand, foot and eye may get you into will NOT send you to hell. What does?

Lack of true faith in the true Jesus is what does that. The sin of your hand, foot, and eye is simply the product of no or non-true faith in the true Jesus or a genuine faith in a false Jesus. If you truly believe in the true Jesus, you will follow Him and follow in such a way that sacrifices the desires of the old/natural man and replaces them with the desires of the new man recreated in the image of Christ, the man born again of the Spirit.

(a) The Root Issue Is You and Your Relation to Jesus, NOT What You Do

The root issue is not so much your actions, but yourself, your nature, your identity, who you are and **whose** you are. The diagnostic question here is: Are you a follower of Jesus and a slave of His and servant of others, are you an adopted child of God's; or are you autonomous from Him and the master of your own life, servant to none, child only of your earthly parents? Who are you in relation to Jesus?

(b) But what you do is an important indication of your relation to Jesus

Disciples should live lives of faith which express themselves in obedience and holiness as you would expect of one who follows and is just like Jesus.¹

Trans. So yielded to God, as an outworking of our faith in Jesus and our following Him as His disciples we cut off and cast out the desires of the flesh that ask us to indulge them. The last two verses of this passage help us understand this cutting off and casting out as the expected sacrifice of our discipleship.

3. He Calls us to Expect to be “Salted with Fire” (v.49)

Verse 49 and 50 present two figures of speech that need unpacking if we are to understand them and go about doing them with any assurance that we are responding to what Jesus wanted.

a) “For everyone will be salted with fire.”

b) What “fire” Pictures

(1) Fire is the emphasized thought, being salted is just an expression of how the fire comes upon us.

(2) William Lane sees “fire” as speaking to purification that comes through suffering and trial. And he sends us to 1 Peter 1:7, 4:12.

(3) Robert Gundry sees fire as indicating the final judgment which was spoken of in verse 43-48

(4) I wonder if Jesus could have used fire here to indicate both, fiery trials that are used by God to purify and perfect us and even the ultimate “trial” of judgment when Jesus comes again

¹ Jesus has in mind here not faith in the Christ according to their misinformed expectations of Him, but faith in Christ who came to suffer and die and rise in order to restore creation to the order of God's intention.

Jesus has in mind here faith of the type that produces, as a natural fruit, obedience to God's revealed will.

Jesus has in mind here faith that endures suffering and death of old self.

as a shepherd who divides the sheep from the goats (Mat 25). It is true that everyone will face both these types of “fires.”

Context of 43-48 would speak of the fiery trials of temptations that must be overcome with radical measures if we are to be true followers of Jesus.

Overcoming these fires can even be seen as proving our faith in Him.

c) What Salt Pictures

(1) Salt

(a) Lane: Cultic Use (Religious Practices of the Jewish People)

Salt attended sacrifice (Lev 2:13, Ezek 43:24, Ex 30:35)

(b) JP: Salt appears to have been a part of preparing a sacrifice to be acceptable to God. Probably indicating purity and life.

(2) Salted with Fire (49)

Undergo temptations and trials and even the final judgment.

d) What Jesus Meant

(1) 49 – “For everyone will be salted with fire.” Means everyone will be prepared as a sacrifice to be offered to God by the trials they endure.

In context: Jesus has just commanded His disciples to take the drastic measures of cutting and casting off parts of their body that cause them to sin and therefore separate them from Him. And in v. 49 he supplies **a reason** (indicated by “For”) they should take such drastic actions.

Cut and Cast **for** everyone faces these fires, they are going to come. It should be a universal expectation that all of us – “everyone” -- **will undergo** temptations and trials and even the final judgment. There is no way to live our lives and avoid these fires. So don’t think you can. **“Everyone will be salted with fire.”**

Instead of hoping to avoid them, we must prepare ourselves to encounter and overcome them as one would expect of someone who is truly a follower of Jesus, i.e., one who has genuine faith in Him, the kind of faith that produces the actions expected of a follower of Jesus.

I hear Jesus saying, I told you following Me would require picking up your cross. I’ve told you that greatness is not about rank but about selfless sacrifice and service. Deal with it boys. If you are truly followers of mine the fire that comes upon you will serve to prepare you yourself as a sacrifice acceptable to Me.

Paul in Rom 12:1 sees our whole body as a sacrifice. Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Jesus is helping us see that all disciples are prepared to offer themselves as sacrifices by the trials they face: temptations of the hand, foot, eye...

Let me put flesh and blood on this from my own life without getting overly personal. I have been tempted by things my old nature wants to grab hold of and walk to and look at, but I have been compelled by the faith God has given me and the Holy Spirit that lives within me NOT to indulge

those desires but to put them off. Why would I not do what the lingering voice of my old man says I should? Because ...

[Galatians 2:20](#)

"I have been crucified with **Christ**; and it is no longer I who **live**, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now **live** in the flesh I **live** by faith in the Son of God, who loved **me** and gave Himself up for **me**.

I say that in affinity with Paul, yet with the very next breath I have to acknowledge that I need to die daily (1 Cor 15:31) and pick up my cross daily, and submit my life daily because that old man dies hard.

Everyone of you will also be salted with fire. You will be prepared to live your new life in Christ by the trials and temptations which place before you a crisis of faith. Will I operate as the follower of Jesus or will I be a follower of the old Johnny? We must die to your old nature and live in the newness of life that is found in union with Christ.

Verses 43-49 focus us on ourselves as sacrifices unto the Lord. Verse 50 puts the focus on our usefulness in the His kingdom and especially to each other.

4. He Calls us to "Have Salt in Ourselves" (v. 50)

a) "Salt is good but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

b) Understanding Salt in Verse 50

(1) Salt

(a) Lane: Domestic Use -- To preserve food and by that the life it sustains

(b) Gundry: Peace

(c) JP: I'm going with Lane as the primary meaning. **Salt = That which preserves food and thus life.**

(2) Salt is Good (50)

Lane: **It preserves life!**

Gundry: "Peace between believers is good"

c) What Jesus Taught

(1) The Potential Problem with Salt –

(a) **It can lose its saltiness, i.e, it's life preserving qualities**

Lane quotes an ancient writing indicating, "...salt from the Dead Sea can lose its savory quality and becomes insipid." Pliny the Elder Lane p. 350 This then is salt that has lost its useful qualities.

(b) **When is this the case? When there is too little of it in relation to the thing it is supposed to preserve.**

(c) We can lose our usefulness in our capacity of preserving life if we are not salty enough.

(2) *The Solution*

(a) **“Have salt in yourselves.”** What does this mean?

(b) Solution Explained

We are **NOT** to be diluted and overrun with bacteria, but refined and pure. It means that we are to be in Christ and not in the world. Ultimately we know that life is bound up in our union to Jesus and hence our separation from sin. And this takes us back to the vine and branches and to our essential connectedness to Jesus through faith. Apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5b); yet “All things are possible to him who believes.” (Mark 8:23b)

If we touch with our hands, go with our feet and take in with our eyes that which pollutes and dilutes and separates us from Christ we are losing our salt. If we on the other hand sacrifice all that is related to the old nature and we live lives of faith in Christ we will retain our saltiness and therefore our usefulness in the KOG.

(c) The Result

Peace with one another.

If we are living genuine lives of faith in Jesus God will be transforming us into people like Christ and we will be making life choices like He does, not living for the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life² but living lives of humble service regarding each other as more important than ourselves³ and stumbling neither others nor ourselves, but instead being a good witness of Christ who lives in us.

If we are being the people Jesus has saved us to be and living with one another according to our new nature, there will be peace amongst us.

² [1 John 2:16](#) -- For all that is in the world, the **lust** of the **flesh** and the **lust** of the eyes and the boastful **pride** of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

³ [Philippians 2:3](#) -- Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as **more important** than yourselves;

Conclusion

Cut believers not in your circle lots of slack.

Cut yourself no slack.

Focus on your relationship with Jesus. Let that be so genuine that your actions flow from your being.

It is not about behavior modifications, it is about transformation which comes from your union with Christ through faith.

Let's pray.