

Our Lord's Most Aggressive Command for Holiness

by Tim Conway

Open your Bibles to Mark chapter 9. The title of my sermon this morning is: Our Lord's Most Aggressive Demand For Holiness. Mark chapter 9 verse 43. Before we read let's pray once more.

Father, undoubtedly there are 10,000 reasons that You give us to sing Your praise. And, Lord, I pray that we would have many more reasons in hearing Your Word after this meeting, being under the sound of the Word this very day. Father, we pray that You would feed us. Man doesn't live by bread alone, and we need what You have to feed us with. I ask for that in Christ's name. Amen.

Our Lord's Most Aggressive Demand For Holiness. Oh, you could argue that, perhaps; but I don't know that you'd... [Microphone disruption] But Mark 9:43 - I can't imagine that we read these words and then you would want to argue with me that there's something more expressive, more dogmatic, more to the point, that our Lord has ever said regarding holiness. These are strong words.

Mark 9:43. Let me just tell you right off that this is one of those places where your ESV is actually going to go from verse 43 to verse 45 to verse 47, and you're gonna say, "Hey wait, where's 44? where's 46?" Well, verse 48 in some manuscripts, including the KJV and the NKJV, verse 48 is what you find in verses 44 and 46. So it's not like it's not here, it's here. It's just if you are holding a King James Bible, you're going to see the same statement made 3 times. I'm going to read it according to the ESV, but you know, I just want you to know what's there. It is a textual issue, but it's not like something is lost. Verse 48 is here, it's here in all of our Scriptures, just so you have an idea about what's being omitted there.

Mark 9:43, "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, where their worm does not die." Isn't it interesting that here in our ESV anyway, I didn't specifically look at this, but isn't it interesting that 'their' is not T-H-E-R-E? It's T-H-E-I-R. Isn't it amazing that there are some people, some even in this room, who have worms assigned to them? Their worm. It's the worm that chews and gnaws you. Their worm does not die - that is an expression of the unending reality of hell. You know why the worm doesn't die? Because it's always got something to eat. It's never totally consumed. "And the fire is not quenched." Why? It's got something - there's fuel, perpetually, ongoing.

Our Lord's Most Aggressive Demand For Holiness. And you know, this kind of language isn't just found here in Mark 9. It's also found in Matthew 5. It's also found in Matthew 18. Now we know this, that what we have in our New Testament, you remember what John said? Listen, if we took everything that Jesus did and said, and we put it in books, John didn't think the world could contain them. We have little snapshots, little summaries, of what Jesus said. The very fact that this kind of language shows up three times in the Gospels, it probably was something Jesus said pretty often when He talked. Pretty common to His teaching. Common expression.

If we are honest, there's nothing gentle about these verses. Jesus, yes He is called the meek and lowly One, but I'll tell you what this meek and lowly One did. He looked men directly in the eye, and He said, and He warned: "You – you – will be thrown into hell, not gently placed there. You will be thrown into unquenchable fire unless you cut off hands that cause sin, and feet that cause sin, and eyeballs that cause sin." That's what He says. That's serious. And if we're honest, we might just stop and say, "This doesn't feel much like grace. It sounds like it's saying I have to work; I have to do something; I have to work at amputating, and work at gouging out eyes, tearing out, in order to avoid hell." And listen, if that's what it sounds like it's saying to you, well I think you're right on target. If words have any meaning, that is exactly what Jesus is saying in these statements.

These are conditional statements. You will go to hell if certain things are true about your life. You will avoid unquenchable fire if certain other things are true about your life. That is exactly what He is saying. And isn't it interesting, He doesn't talk in third person. You know what I mean? First person is me, second person is you, third person is somebody else. He doesn't talk in third-person language. He rarely did. He isn't talking about some guy over there, far away in another place or long ago at another time, who might have done this thing, that thing or another, or been like Adolf Hitler. That's not what He is saying. He is saying, "You. You." – direct second person approach. It is your hand – you. It's your hand, it's your foot, and it's your eye that are the issue here, and you are the one who will go to hell if it's not cut off. Pretty direct stuff. Very personal. There's no dodging this. Well, people do dodge it, but if you just take Jesus at face value and listen to His words, He is speaking to you, He is speaking to me.

Now the first thing that I want to stress here is this: This is obviously a metaphor. When He talks about cutting off a hand, cutting off a foot, tearing out an eye, obviously it's not literal. Now I probably don't even need to explain that because it's obvious by looking at you people that you don't think it's literal. If you did, you would look different than you look. But Jesus often spoke in metaphors. He spoke in hyperbole. I mean, He spoke like we do, and He used expressions of

language. I mean, if anybody used expressiveness in language, our Lord Jesus Christ did. "We must feed on His flesh and drink His blood if we would have eternal life." Scripture is full of metaphors. "We must hate mother and father." Full of hyperbole. But one dead giveaway that this is not to be taken literally is simply comparing scripture with scripture. What do I mean? Well, if you go over to Colossians chapter 2, do you know what Paul said? Don't turn there please, but you know what Paul said? He said, "Severity to the body is of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." We're told by Paul that any kind of severity to this body, any mutilation of this body, any asceticism, it doesn't kill the flesh. It doesn't make you more holy, it doesn't make you more righteous. It doesn't stop the indulgence of the flesh.

You all know who Origen was? You've probably heard that word. I'm not here to argue whether he was a heretic or not a heretic, some people say both ways. But it is reported that he was doing harm to his body. Because he was so grabbed hold of by lust, he actually sought to do harm to his body. And he eventually gave it up. And you know what the primary reason was? He saw that it didn't work. He saw that however asceticism or harm or severity to the body, [it didn't work]. And some of you may have read this. I believe it was Lloyd-Jones' days in Sanfields before he went to Westminster Chapel. A woman came up to him one time with an empty eye socket. And upon speaking to her, Lloyd-Jones was not convinced this was the most godly woman he ever met. She actually had gouged out her own eye, alluding to this passage or one of the parallel passages. He did not think she was holy, he thought she was weird.

Anyway, the reality is, asceticism in Scripture is said to be of no value. But I mean, if this were to be taken literally, we'd know who the true Christians were in our church, wouldn't we? We would know it by their empty eye sockets and those that have the prosthetic devices. But the thing is, where would it stop? Because, certainly, if you gouge out your right eye, listen, are you going to now find sin dead? It won't be long before you'll be taking the left eye. And if you cut off the right hand, you know what you're going to find? You're going to figure out how to use the stump to do the same stuff. And now you're gonna start pairing away on your body till your whole body is just a stump. And what if you get to the place where you say, "Oh no, my mind, that's the real problem," what are you gonna do? Lobotomy? or you're just going to take your head off altogether? Obviously, this becomes totally ridiculous.

Yes, this is imagery. But I tell you, you know this: it's radical imagery because He is calling for something radical in your life. This is life and death imagery. Listen, everybody in this room wants to wake up, because this deals with you. And it deals with you going to hell or not going to hell. I was just talking to a

sister before the first service. You know about the fear of hell. Jesus used the fear of hell. Now He appeals to mankind other ways, but you know the Lord Jesus appealed to our best interest in not going to hell. Fear of hell. You know what the reality is? Those who go to heaven attack their own sin right at the root cause. Those who get thrown into hell in the end, they may come to church, you may be here now. These four walls don't protect you. Religion doesn't protect here. If you're casual about your sin, you are in danger. That's what Jesus says. You continue down that path, He shows you where it leads.

So let me ask you something. We might think this: "Hey, doesn't Scripture say we are saved by grace through faith, this is not of ourselves? Doesn't Scripture say that it's not by our works, but it's a gift of God? I mean, wouldn't you think the Lord would have at least tried to make this statement sound more like grace than what it sounds like?" Well, let me tell you something. This is exactly where multitudes of professing Christians go wrong. It's precisely because people cannot find how this can be grace, where the connection is with grace. I'll tell you, people who just cannot find the connection with these verses and grace, it is oftentimes a dead giveaway that they're not partakers of grace. Look, the truth is, grace produces individuals who amputate sin.

Now you think with me here. "They're going to call His name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins." People say, "Oh yeah, that means from hell, that means from the penalty of sins." That is not what the text says. It doesn't say that they're going to call His name Jesus because He's going to save His people from the penalty of their sins. He does save His people from the penalty of their sins, but that isn't what the text is saying. It says He's going to save them from their sins. I'll tell you this, Peter hits on this, , what do you have? Jesus Christ, He Himself, bore in His own body; He bore our sins there. He bore the punishment of God there in Himself. "He bore our sins in His body on the tree," Why? "So that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." Now you listen to that. By His name, by His crucifixion, do you know what Scripture tells us? "He came that we might die to sin."

If you take 1 Peter 2:24, and you just put it in Mark 9 terminology, let me tell you how it reads: Jesus Christ bore in His body on that tree, He bore our sins that we might amputate the cause of sins in our life and live to righteousness. That's exactly what that text says. It's exactly the truth of Mark 9. This is what grace does. And you see, the person who comes along and does not get that radical with his sin, is showing that the Christ who came to this earth to save His people from their sins, that isn't happening there. And that means that they're not trusting Christ, because to trust Christ is to have Christ go to work on you.

Now that's the first thing: just think about what Christ came to do – to bear our sins in His body on that tree, that we might die to sin. But think with me here. A radical change of desire, have you ever read Galatians 5:24? "If we belong to Christ, we have crucified the flesh (our flesh) with its - what? - passions and its desires." Listen: "If we belong to Christ" – you see, this is it. He has come to purchase a people. He has come to die for them, to break the power of sin in their life, that they might live to righteousness. He's come to make you altogether new, so that you have new desires. Those old desires are crucified. Listen, if you say, "Well, I was a non-Christian, I was controlled by sin. I became a Christian, and you know, I come to church now, but really, I'm just as controlled by sin as I was then," you're on your way to hell. That's what this is saying. You're deceived. You're on your way to hell.

But here is what happens: The desires of the flesh, crucified. But that's the negative side, let's go to the positive side. You remember what was said in the Sermon on the Mount? "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." You see, that's the opposite. Now you think about hunger and thirst. You see what's the driving factor in this? Hunger. Thirst. They are constant. You can eat now, you're going to be hungry again before the end of the day. Hunger and thirst keep coming. It was hot yesterday. I went for a bike ride, and I was really thirsty. I couldn't get enough yesterday; kept having to put away the water and the orange juice. Thirst. You know what happens when you really are hungry? I mean, you're hungry! You're thirsty! You're gonna get at that water. And if a hand or a foot or an eye stands in the way of what you really want, you're gonna get those things out of the way. That's the thing about hunger and thirst, they're unrelenting. They drive us. They move us.

Or how about this: The Holy Spirit. You see, once you have trusted Christ, you know the reality that we find in Scripture? We find that if you belong to Christ, you have the Holy Spirit. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're none of His. And if you have the Holy Spirit, you know what Scripture says? "If you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Well, how is that? By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body. That's life. That's the same reality that we get here. It's the same thing. One of the most obvious evidences of being a Christian: the Spirit of Almighty God enables you to put sin to death.

Or how about this: Fear. Do you know that in Jeremiah 32, you have one of those passages that deals with the New Covenant. Let me read it to you, you don't have to turn there, but let me read it. Jeremiah 32:40, "I will make with them an everlasting covenant (this is the New Covenant), that I will not turn away from doing good to them." Now notice this: "And I will put the fear of Me in their hearts,

that they may not turn from Me." It's the fear that I want you to see. If you belong to Christ, God has put His fear in you. Do you know what that means? That means that when you hear Jesus say, "Cut off that hand or go to hell," the Christian fears. We have a fear, we have a healthy fear of the warnings in Scripture; and we turn away. I heard Charles Leiter say it one time, it's like these warning signs that there's a cliff right there, and you got these signs. The Christian reads the signs, and he fears and turns away; and therefore doesn't go over the cliff. Whereas the unbeliever, he doesn't regard the sign; and he goes over and plays on the edge, and he eventually falls over that edge.

You see, some people here, I can tell you that if you don't attack the cause of sin in your life, you're going to go to hell. And you're going to go out, and you're going to play and dabble with sin, because there's no fear. You're going to be casual about your sin, you're just going to go out. And you're going to end up in hell, and you're going to say, when it's too late, "Oh, you know what? What God preached that day in March of 2018, that was true!" But you know what? It does you no good to figure it out then. Today is the day to figure this out, the reality of this. You do not want to downplay our Lord's threats. I know that many find it hard to take Christ at face value when He says this. You know why? Because of the doctrine of justification by faith. And we say, "Hey, I believe. I've been justified. These words don't have application to me." If you do that, you are on the path to deceiving yourself.

Listen, the doctrine of justification by faith is very real. We love it, we embrace it. But I'll tell you this, if you're justified, you have the Holy Spirit; and you'll put the deeds of the body to death. If you are justified by faith, you have the fear of God in you; and you will take these warnings seriously. If you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and your sins are pardoned by grace, then you are embracing the Christ who said that He has come and laid down His life, that you might die to sin. These things are a reality.

To the lost: I know we've got, maybe, girls from the Grace House, we've got children who come here because your parents bring you here, there's friends that visit: if the truth be known, if the truth be told, you don't know the Lord. You're here for one reason or another, but it's not because you're a Christian. It's not because you really desire to come here and worship Christ. There's some other reason that you've come. What I want you to do is just listen to me right now. Look at the stakes. Look at what's at stake: You going to hell. Unquenchable fire. That's what at stake. God throws people into hell, who live in sin and love their sin. Make no mistake. Make none.

And here's what I want to tell you. To come to Christ by faith does not make all your problems go away. In fact, as some people have said before, sometimes it's

coming to Christ that really causes all the problems to come. All hell breaks loose against you. I want to tell you this: If you lay down your weapons and you surrender to being saved by Christ, (I mean, saved, not just from hell, saved from your sin – He's going to break the power, and He's going to take the idols out of your life); if you're willing to lay down your weapons fighting against Him, and surrender to Him, I want you to know, life will become a fierce battle. It will not be easy. The battle for righteousness is radical, it is violent. You must attack sin. That's what your life will look like.

The Christian life is all-out battle. I'm not going to try to sell you on a bill of goods. There are shiny-teeth preachers who will tell you, "Oh, it's just your best life now, and you can come, and it will all be good, and your problems go away." You know, there's the preachers that will tell you, "You become a Christian, and you tithe, and then God's going to give you your Cadillac (car)." No, I'll tell you this: if you come to Christ, Satan is coming after you; and sin is going to try to reign in your mortal bodies; and the world is going to try to draw you away; and your own family members, Christ said He brings a sword in the family. And you know what? As James said in the first hour, it will be appointed to you to suffer for Christ's sake (Philippians 1:29). You know what Scripture says? Through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom (Acts 14:22).

I'm just going to tell you the reality right upfront. The Christian life is full of sighs and moans and difficulties. If it's full of joy... it's tough. You will not get everything you want. In fact, you will have to abandon many of your own agendas and your plans, but Christ is good and He's a gentle Master. But I'll tell you, even though He's gentle, He will lead you through the fire. But it's okay, because He has designed the fire to purify you. And in the end, there's eternal life, there's glory, every tear is wiped away. You see, the hard part is now; for eternity, it's good. Paradise. You see, the devil, he switches it the other way around: "Oh! You need sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. That's what you need. That will make life fun." You see, the devil, he wants to give you all the good now. You remember how it was: "The pleasures of sin for a season." Or you think of Moses: "The treasures of Egypt." "Look what you can have now." He said to Jesus, "Oh, you just fall down and worship me, you can have all these kingdoms of the world." You see, that's how he is, but in the end there's death.

We're not going to deceive you. But I'll tell you this: You come to Christ, He doesn't just save you from the penalty of sin, He saves you from sin. You see, don't go to Him just because you don't want to go to hell. That is a good reason to go to Him, but you need to know how He saves – He saves to the uttermost. Always. And if you don't want to be saved to the uttermost, you see, this is the problem: you've got lots of people that say, "Ah, I want to hold on to my sin, but I don't want to go to

hell in the end." Guess what? You can't have it both ways like that. You will perish. If you try to go down that path, you will not succeed.

Well, let's personalise this. Let's look at our text, Mark 9, "If your hand causes you to sin..." Verse 45, "If your foot causes you to sin..." Verse 47, "If your eye..." This is your hand. This is something that's true of you. You are the one being called to engage in this radical and persistent attack on your own sin. And really, I mean, we could say it this way: Fight or go to hell. You say, "Ah, that just grates on me. That doesn't sound like grace." Well, it is. And it's true: you fight and you succeed, because the Spirit enables you and Christ is for you, and you don't go to hell. Or you don't fight, and you embrace your sin (even if you're religious), and you go to hell. I mean, it's a reality.

Beloved brethren, this is a wake-up call, because you need to think about your life. You need to think about what's true. If the doctrine of justification by faith has put you to sleep, where you feel, "Oh, my sins are forgiven, I don't have to take this seriously. I can be lax about my sins," may these words shake you out of that death slumber. How many, how many professing Christians just are shocked: "LORD! LORD! We were at Grace that day! I have served when they had meals there! I went with David to the ministry!" Remember what He said? "Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness (or iniquity)." What does that mean? They didn't fight sin. They were lawless. They didn't fight, they didn't amputate the causes of lawlessness. They went to church. They were involved in the ministry. Don't let religion deceive you. Sin – Christ died, that we might die also; die to sin and live to righteousness. "I never knew you."

And you know, the thing about this is, Jesus says this is going to be true of many – many church goers, many religious people; not just a few, many. That means we've got people in here, I know it, you're not going to take this message seriously, you're going to go out and be casual about your sin. You're somehow going to convince yourself, "I'm okay," or, "Well, I heard him and I am concerned, but I am not going to deal with it today." And you know, the devil is that way. We heard recently from Craig about the devil picking up the seed. It's not the devil always coming and saying, "That's not true, that's not true, that's not true." You know how he picks up the seed oftentimes? "That was altogether true; but you're young, you're healthy, take care of it tomorrow. Live it up today. Take care of it when you get a few more years behind you." And you know, people like that wake up in hell all the time, and it's too late.

I want you to think, does this describe you? Be honest. Look at yourself in the mirror. Can you say this about yourself from the time you've been saved? I mean, I can go back. I was saved in 1990, and I can do the math; here it is, I'll be 28 years old in the Lord. Can I see during that time, that I had to eliminate – now if

you think: hands, feet, eyes, they're valuable. So it means it's things that are difficult to get rid off. It's things that are precious to us. It's things that are valuable to us. It's things that are attached to us. It feels like it's part of us. Oh, I remember so well the devil speaking: "You can't give up those friends. You can't give up that lifestyle, that's who you are." "Yeah, that's right." But then I would hear words like this: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" I was caught. Has your life resembled this? Have there been major things that you've had to eradicate, that you've had to take violent action against? You know, one of the first things: we've got to identify these things, and we've got to be honest about them. So much dishonesty. You know, you can look at something in your life, and it's dragging you hellward; and you look at it and you say, "No, it's not. It's not. It's okay." And so you justify this thing.

Sin – what are we talking about? – Sin. Sin is lawlessness. It's breaking God's commandments. Sin is wrongdoing. Sin is anything that's contrary to the character of God. You know what Scripture says? "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Faith – what does that mean? Do you believe that you have liberty to do it? You know, that comes right on the heels of eating meat, drinking wine, observing days. When you look at something, do you say, "Yeah, I feel like I have liberty to do this." But if your conscience is telling you, "No, you shouldn't be doing this," and you keep saying, "Be quiet, other Christians can do this. I know I can do this," but your conscience keeps... If it's not of faith, if you can't say "I believe that God is pleased" – whatsoever you do, whether you eat or drink, you are to do it to the glory of God. And you know, Romans 14, some eat to the glory of God, and some don't eat to the glory of God. Some observe the day to the glory of God, some don't. We need to be certain, because you know what all of this does? You know what all of this is? All of this, remember what Jesus said, "It's not everybody that says to me, 'Lord, Lord', it's those who do the will of My Father." You know that's what this is all about? It's everything in your life that is not according to the will of God. That's what sin is. Those who inherit the kingdom are those who do the will of the Father. That's what Jesus taught. We're not to be passive. Jesus says, "You are to cut your hand off." Listen, it is by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the body, but you're not to be passive. Jesus is saying, you've got to do it. He's not saying God will do it for you. He's not saying, expect the church to do it for you.

You know what? We have had people leave this church, who have gone out either through discipline, or they've just packed up and left and walked away immersed in sin, who have blamed the elders. I have not been given the knife to cut your hand off. Yes, there's a place for teaching, there's a place for counsel. You have that responsibility. If you don't take your hand off, it is not my fault, it is not James' fault, and it is not somebody else's fault down the aisle from you. You have a

responsibility to amputate, and if you don't, you go to hell. That's what it says. We have a personal responsibility here not to be passive. You must be proactive. You must be intentional. You must face your life with purpose. You must attack with purpose. You must be deliberate. You must identify the causes of sin in your life, and cut them off, and throw them away from you. And God doesn't make deals. I want to tell you this too: God doesn't tell you that it's okay to pluck out your right eye, when it's your right hand that offends. You get what I'm saying here? Ever notice, sometimes we have a tendency to do that? We feel like, in our conscience, God is telling me this thing over here is what really needs to be cut off, and we start cutting off over here. You know what we're wanting to do? "Well, Lord, will this appease you?" He knows where our real idols are. He knows the things that have roots that go down deepest into our heart. And He'll push that aside, and say, "I want that thing right there." And then, we try to convince ourselves, "Oh, He didn't say that. There's just my conscience, my conscience is ill-informed, because I know I got brothers and sisters who seem to have a clear conscience to do this." Don't fall for that.

God doesn't make deals, because I'll tell you this: God doesn't tell us all to go offer our children up on Mount Moriah, but He told one man. God doesn't tell us all to go sell all of our possessions, but He told that to one man, because, you know what the thing is? God is a personal God, and God personally knows each of us. And He knows the thing. You know, you've got things in your life that... I can remember the first time I heard Eric say that it was an idol to him to graffiti things. Never felt that in my life. I mean, if God told me, "You can't graffiti anymore," it'd be like, "Good, we got that one taken care of very easily." But for me it's something else. And it may be something that Eric says, "Men, I've never struggled with that in my life." Isn't it amazing the things, sometimes, that become an entanglement of our souls? Almost ludicrous things, sometimes.

These verbs here, aorist imperatives, it means it is a commandment, it is a commandment to you; and it is to be done by you immediately. You are not to procrastinate on this thing. When there is something in your life that is causing you to sin, you need to get rid of it and stop justifying. This is serious: if you justify, you will justify yourself into hell. That is what Christ is saying. I'll tell you this, too: It doesn't say "wound your hand," it doesn't say "slap your hand." Let me tell you this, sin – we see this in Romans 6 – sin seeks to reign in your mortal bodies; and if you don't kill it and cast it away, your little efforts to slap it, to do anything less than what is being commanded here, sin will thrive and it will kill you. That's the issue.

I just recently heard a story about these nomads in the Sahara Desert. And they're shepherds (I forget the exact name of the people), but they shepherd, I

think they have goats, they have camels for sure. They live out there in the Sahara Desert, where it just seems like hardly nothing could survive. They've got these puff adders – really poisonous, kind of sidewinder, poisonous snakes. And one of the boys was out tending the animals, and he was bit in the finger by one of these puff adders. His people in this traveling nomadic tribe, they don't have anti-toxins, anti-venom. You know what they had to do? Immediately, what did they have to do? They cut his finger off. He got bit in the finger, they had to cut it off, immediately. You see, we look at that and we recognize, "Oh yeah, yeah." We recognize, there was urgency. We recognize, much better to lose one finger than to lose your life. Isn't it amazing we will then turn around to our souls, and sin; and we will not be as intense, we will not be as quick, as urgent? Isn't that amazing? Why? Because we take the one very seriously because we know, "If you don't cut that finger off, my boy is going to die!" Yeah, but that's exactly what Jesus is saying in a spiritual sense. And if you think that poison in that finger is more to be feared than the poison in sin, you are wrong. And I'll tell you, there's a multitude in hell right now, if they could stand here they would shriek, they would scream at you: "What a fool I was! I actually did think that poison in a finger would be far worse than what sin could do to me. And it's dragged me to hell."

Look, you notice what Jesus does? He doesn't start by saying: "Oh, you're Christians, so this doesn't apply to you. You non-Christians, you better take this seriously." You know, He did not deal with people like that. We tend to deal like that. "Well, I'm a Christian, that can't be true of me." Jesus didn't talk to people that way. He looked at the realities of life, and He said, "If this is true, then we can come to conclusions about what we really are." You don't want to start in the wrong place.

I would just say this also. You notice you're not told to pluck your neighbor's eyeball out. It's amazing, the hypocrisy. Of course, Jesus deals with this when He deals with the speck and the beam in the eye. I mean, why deal with that? Because we have a tendency to be able to see what's wrong in other people better than we can see what's wrong in ourselves, oftentimes. Yes, there is a place to help others and protect others and deal with sin in others, but the primary calling here is: "you deal with the causes of sin in your life".

Well, very quickly, what sort of hands, what sort of feet, what sort of eyes, typically take men to hell? In fact, we might just say this: what sort of feet, hands, and eyes, take people in the church to hell? because that's what we're dealing with. Let me give you a big one: False professions. Do you know Jesus said to some religious folks in John 5, "How can you be saved, when you desire the glory of men more than the glory that comes from God?" Have you ever read that? Do you know what I have found is true? If people say, "I'm not really saved," they're afraid that

they're going to be treated as an outsider; they're afraid that they're going to be exposed; because people want to be accepted. And there is this sense that if I come clean... There are some of you that profess to be Christians, you know deep down inside, you may come here because of the social life, you may come here because you're really trying to please God and somehow pay your sins off; but you hold to a false profession, and you would rather die and go to hell with that false profession than give it up. Chop it off. Be done with it.

It is amazing, people who know, they know deep inside, they don't want righteousness, they love their sin. They know inside, they don't have a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. They love themselves. They like to be accepted by people. The church often accepts people that society, at large, doesn't accept. And so, people can be attracted into the church. There's lots of reasons that lost people kind of migrate in, not the least of which, just the hope that somehow religion is going to save me in the end. A fear of hell. There are false professions in this church, I am certain of it, that are like a foot. It's causing you to sin. You know the kind of sin it's causing you? Deception. Hypocrisy. You're just a hypocrite, you're not what you say you are. Don't go to hell holding on to that. Cut it off. If you know it's true, because listen, the first step to being right with Christ is honesty. It's honesty. And if you're not being honest with the folks in the church, I guarantee you're not being honest with the Lord.

How about this, this is a big one: When Jesus Himself says, "You cannot serve God and mammon (or money)." That's a big one. You remember what Jesus said? "O, it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom." You know why it is? Rich young ruler. They won't cut it off. Listen, we have professing Christians in this room, you hear Jesus say, "Don't lay up treasures on this earth; lay up treasure in heaven." You also hear Him, Luke 12, "Sell your possessions." That wasn't just said to the rich young ruler, that's said to all of us. But you don't hear that. The truth is, you want stuff, you want a lifestyle, and you hold on to it. Be careful, covetousness is idolatry. And if you don't amputate; you see, you can comfort yourself, "Jesus never said to me personally what He said to the rich young ruler." I would say, yes He did. He does in Luke 12. You know, we read that; the rich, yep, Americans, by and large, are rich. All you gotta do is travel around the world. All you gotta do is pack up next time people go down to Reynosa, or take a trip over to Nepal, or wherever it is. You go down and see the Wilkinsons down there in Saltillo, and you go out to Santa Margarita. All you have to do is look around. Americans are wealthy. And Jesus said, "It's very difficult for wealthy people to get there." You know why they won't cut off? There is a reliance: people trust money. And Christ allows no competitors.

Are you really willing to live by faith? Are you really willing to trust the Lord? Look, I'm not saying that having some savings, I'm not saying that thinking about how your wife is going to be taken care of when you guys get into your 60s and 70s and maybe 80s or 90s. There's a place to take care of your household. There's a place, but just be careful. Family relationships: when Jesus said "you need to hate your mother and father", when He talked about "a sword is coming", that is something people wanting to please their parents, people wanting to please their children. They will go to hell for those things. Jesus said, right at that point, "Let the dead bury their dead." I'll tell you this, young people, you got parents that are not Christians, you are to honor them. Honoring your parents, very good, very biblical. But you be careful, when those parents want you to go down a path that you know Christ does not want you to go down, you need to stand for Christ's truth. Jesus said, "Follow Me." If you're not willing to follow Him, just like, remember those guys, "Let me go home and say 'goodbye' to the family; let me go home and bury my father," and Jesus is like, "No. No." You better hear that. People will cling to family relationships and go to hell.

My own life: Jesus said that I need to hate my own life. I need to die. You know what that means? It means I take my ambitions, and my goals, and my plans; and I put them on the altar. You know what? People who say, "I'm going to do it my way," they go to hell. Who is the guy that sang that? He's in hell. Bank on it. "How can you say that?! He might have been converted in the last hour!" Yes, if he was converted in the last hours of his life, then he did not. But if he died the way he lived, if he died the way he sang, he is in hell; because you don't live the Christian life your way. It's surrender. Jesus said it: "If you don't forsake all that you have, you cannot be My disciple." You can create a different Christ, but that's what the Christ of Scripture said. You can say, "I don't believe it." You'll go to hell. It's surrender.

You say again, "Is this really grace?" Yes, yes, because you have to remember, Christ came to save, and He means to save you from everything that's bad and wrong. And any thing that's not according to His will and His purpose in guiding your life, is wrong and bad. And listen, He is good. You can trust Him. He often, just like the trials we heard about in the first hour, "No, Lord, I'd rather not go down that path." But you know what, that's the path you need to go down. Why? Because it's best, and it is going to make you most like Christ.

This is close to false professions, but there are those who need to give up false religion. They need to give up bad teaching. There are those who need to cut off bad companionship. You do not want to say, "Yeah, I hang out with brother so and so. Hey, he's part of the church." Yeah, but I'll tell you, if that's a cause of sin in your life, you need to cut it off. You need to be honest. We can justify, "Oh, but

they're a Christian. They're in the church." If they're leading you to sin, cut it off. Cut off what leads you to sin.

Whatsoever is not of faith. You want to live a life of faith. I mean, look, if you know that having too much money in the bank causes you not to live by faith... Look at your life, if there are things that challenge you living by faith, be rid of it. It's not healthy. It's not good.

Let's talk about sexual sin here. I guarantee, I guarantee, there are going to be professing Christians – professing – I'm not saying true ones, but they're professing, and to all of us they look true and genuine right now. You will not give up your cellphone, you will not give up your laptop computer, and you will go to hell. Now listen, Jesus isn't just dealing specifically with sin itself – yes, it's sin that He is interested in having rid off your life – but it's causes to sin. You know what? If your phone, your computer, your iPad, your iPod; if they're continuously sources of sin and you can't control it, get rid of it. You say, "Ah, ah, ah. I won't be able to do Facebook." You know another thing we need to get rid of? It's time-wasters. You ever really let that resonate with you, what Craig said a couple of weeks ago? That third type of soil, the thorns choked, so that it wasn't fruitful. Imagine how many people waste their time on the Internet, and their life is going to end up being unfruitful. And as Craig rightly said, these are people that don't bear fruit. In the end they're not genuine.

Are you ready to take Christ at His words? Look, if you look and you say, "That television, you know what? I make these resolutions: it's NOT going to lead me into sin." But then, it is. It is. You know what? We are in the first generation. My oldest daughter, born in 1994. In the beginning I didn't have to deal with the Internet. We didn't get our first computer until '99. The Internet was terribly slow, that old dial-up something. So, what has happened is, in the last two decades, we are in a place now where we have communication coming at us with an accessibility. Let me tell you something, parents: Every single young man who gets saved, will tell you he viewed Internet pornography. I suspect that every one of you parents that has a child who lives at home, who is old enough for you to allow free access on the Internet, I suspect if I pulled them aside and asked them, if they were honest, they've viewed it. That's a reality.

What are we doing? You see, we are caught by this because these things come, you know, the technology comes degree by degree. And suddenly, we look up, and we're like the frogs being boiled away in the boiling water. What are you allowing into your family? What are you allowing as far as the TV, as far as cellphones? You say, "Really? Are those things that need to be cut off or we go to hell, or our children go to hell?" Listen, are you not hearing Jesus? If something causes you to sin, you need to cut it off. You say, "Well, how can I communicate

with people by email then?" Well, maybe you don't need to! Listen, would you want to carry your laptop, you know, you got it down there in the flames with you, unquenchable fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth? "Well, I wouldn't give it up." Why? "Well, I had to communicate with my friends." I mean, it's amazing! I watched a documentary the other day on all the refugees around the world, including the Syrians. I'm trying to see these people, people coming across from Afghanistan, and coming out of Iraq, and coming from Syria, into all these countries. And they're out there walking around, they have nothing but a tent and the clothes on their backs, and they've got cellphones! Everybody has gotta have a cellphone! I'm driving up Commerce; I'm driving by somebody; I'm recognizing you know, the guy, it's during the day, he's on the street, he probably doesn't have a job, he's got a cellphone.

What are we gonna do? We're Christians. Christ has given us instruction: sever! You say, "Aaaah! I could never give up my TV." Well, you see, that attitude is exactly what takes people to hell. Our attitude needs to be: "We will amputate anything we identify in our lives that threatens us or threatens our children. Anything that is a cause of sin, it's gonna go!" And He doesn't say you can just cut it off and leave it there. He says, "You throw that thing away! You gouge it out and cast it from you!" Listen, if this is not how you are going to live, then die and go to hell. That's basically what Christ is saying. Radical action.

Now look, I'm not saying that that means every Christian needs to go and throw their TV out, or that every Christian needs to go get rid of the computer. I'm saying, if it is a constant cause of you to sin, and you cannot get control over that thing, then maybe... You know, it's like some of my friends that I had when I was a young believer. I recognize, I wanted to evangelize these guys, but whenever I got around them I got drinking. Finally, I recognized that I'm not strong enough to be around them. Now I can be around them. It may be the same with the computer. You may have to say, "I can't be around a computer." Five years from now you may say, "It's not a problem to me." The issue is, what causes you to sin? And you need to destroy, and put to death, and amputate, and cast away, those things that are temptations to you and that lead you to fall.

Look: hell, do you see it in this verse? Just hang with me a second. Hell, you know what Christ is saying? Hell is real. Sometimes people would say, "Oh, that Old Testament God." Did you hear what was read in the Bible reading today? Those 23,000 fell dead in the wilderness because of their sexual sin. And what God says to us New Testament believers, that's an example for us.

Let me tell you about the God you're going to stand before on Judgment Day. It's the God who killed every single person in this world, except for eight souls, when He saw that every imagination of the hearts of these people in this

world were only evil continually. He dropped them all dead through a flood. That's the kind of God we're dealing with. He is a just God, and He deals with sin, and hell is real, and hell is severe. There is a fire that does not quench. There is weeping. There is gnashing of teeth. There is a worm that does not die. This thing is forever: don't think that the fires will ever be quenched. It is forever, and it is forever, and it is forever. God looks and He sees the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah; He drops down hellfire, brimstone. Do you know that this God takes His own people, Israel; and out in that wilderness, because of their unbelief, they die. And that's the argument of Hebrews 3 and 4. God killed them because of their unbelief. This is the kind of God we're dealing with. You can make up your own god, a make-believe god, who will not throw you into hell for your sins. But that god is not going to be there to help you on the Day of Judgment. The God you're going to come before is the God of Scripture, and He is the God that throws sinners into hell. This is real.

Now listen, this battle is not something we do in our own strength. Christ said to us, "Without Me, you can do nothing." This is a battle that we fight, clinging to Him, trusting Him, looking to the power that's unleashed in His death on that cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. It's trusting. This Holy Spirit at work within us, He's going to give us the desires and the power and the ability. But it's all out battle. It's all out amputation. It's fierce. Don't play with sin. You know what? Every person here ought to be able to look across the landscape of their conscience, and find nothing, nothing, that is standing between you and God right now. Nothing. If you know of something, attack it. If you can go week after week with this thing, you know it, you know it's not right, you just go week after week, year after year, what am I going to say to you? You've got this thing you won't amputate; look at yourself in the reflection of this passage, what is it saying? Should I assure you, "O don't worry, brother. Don't worry, sister. It's okay. After all, we're justified by faith." No, no, no, that's not what you want to do. I would say to you, you are in danger. Attack that thing immediately. Put it to death.

You say, "What if it rises up again?" Okay, attack it again. It raises its head, take that head off. It raises its head again, take that head off. It's a battle. I'm not talking about perfection here, but this is all out battle. The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence. This kind of violence. Make no mistake. Don't hide behind your profession. If there is no sincere battle with sin, trust in Christ, go to battle. Resting in Him, we fight. Without Him, we can do nothing.

Father, I pray the reality of this might seize upon us all and grip us. Give us a wartime, a militant mentality, in this fight for holiness to the death. I pray in Christ's name, help us to be a holy church, to live in the power of the cross – dying to sin, living unto righteousness. Lord, I pray that the intensity of our hunger and thirst for righteousness... Lord, I pray for a revival. I pray for a movement of the Spirit that

would just intensify the hunger we have to be like Christ. I ask this in His name. Amen.