

Turn with me to Mark chapter

9. We're getting to the time for our sermon this morning. Mark chapter 9. The title of the message today is Co-Laborers and Extreme Measures. Co-Laborers and Extreme Measures. We're going to finish up the book of Mark today. Mark chapter 9, not the whole book. Don't worry, we're not going through chapter 16. just the chapter nine, okay? Unless you guys really wanna keep going, I guess I can, but Mark chapter nine, verses 38 through 50, we'll finish up chapter nine today. And once you've found the text,

if you would rise with me in honor of the one who gave us his word, as we read our text together this morning. Mark chapter nine, verse 38 through 50 reads, John said to him, teacher, We saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us. But Jesus said, do not hinder him. There is no one who will perform a miracle in my name and be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For he who is not against us is for us. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name because you are of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands to go into hell into the unquenchable fire. And where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than having your two feet to be cast into hell, and where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. where everyone will be salted with fire. 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 everyone. This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for your grace today. So thankful for the rain that you provide for the nature around us. We're so thankful for the gathering of the body by your grace. We're so thankful for the opportunity to sing praises, to hear each other, seeing that we can be encouraged to look to you and rest in you for all that you've done for us. We're so thankful for the opportunity to look at your word today. And I pray that the spirit would impact each of us with the word exactly as you intended. I pray, Lord, for myself that you remove any distractions. Give me the energy and endurance to deliver this message as you see fit. Make me the mouthpiece and nothing more that you would receive all

glory. I pray, Lord, that the impact of this text would carry with us through this day of rest and on into the new week as we seek to glorify you in our lives with the heavy challenge and call that you have in our text today. We love you and praise you in your holy name. Amen. All right, you can be seated. So as we've been going through

Mark, we're coming to the close of chapter nine. So it's been quite a while that we've been here since all of last year or so when we started. And as we close out chapter nine, Jesus is going to teach us something that sometimes is hard for us to hear, but something that is vitally important for us to understand. As normal with Mark, whenever there is a narrative captured in Mark, that's in all the synoptics, Mark, generally speaking, has a more robust way of saying it. The other two Gospels are more succinct. They generally have a shorter version of whatever Mark is recording. And this is no different, so you'll find this text in Matthew and Luke as well, maybe in different places, maybe not all together, but in shorter fashion. But here Mark puts them all together as he was dictated most likely by Peter, and Peter recalling with his teaching from Jesus. Now, when we think through the lessons that we're dealing with in Mark, if you recall back in Mark chapter 8, whenever Peter confessed Christ as the Christ, I mentioned to you that there's a pivot point in what we're looking at. And now we know that he's facing towards Jerusalem. He's no longer doing ministry in Galilee. He's heading towards the last phase of his mission, which is his passion in Jerusalem. And in that, he is teaching the disciples specifically about servanthood, about the cost of being a disciple, and today is no different. You'll see the tie-ins of what he's teaching to them here tie in so beautifully with what we've covered in the last two chapters. So as we go through here, remember, we're thinking of the idea of a discipleship and the idea of the cost of servanthood, the cost of being a disciple, and what it means to look to Christ for how we live in the context of what He's instructed us to do. We will see what it looks like to be co-laborers with others who may not share 100% of our mindset, that the ideal perfect thing, the thing that every believer must have is Christ at the center. You have to get Christ 100% right, but there are secondary and tertiary issues that are not necessary to put someone out of your idea of a co-laborer. So we're going to see that example today. And then we're going to close out in the second part of the passage with a view of sin that we must hold on to. We're going to see that the extremes nature of sin and the extreme measures by which we must address our sin. So let's dig into the text this morning. Number one, if you have your sermon notes from the table, if you don't, feel free to grab them. But number one, fellow servants, fellow servants look at verse 38 through 41 first verse 38 through 41 reads John said to him teacher we saw someone casting out demons in your name

and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us But Jesus said, do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name and be able to soon afterward to speak evil of me. For he who is not against us is for us. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name because you are Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. And there's a fly up here, so if you see me waving, it's just the fly, not the Holy Spirit or anything. As we look here at this text, this opening here, and I wanna recall with you what we just came off of in chapter nine last week. He tells us about his death and resurrection last week, and he made sure that the disciples knew that they were supposed to be a servant of all. If you remember, they were talking about who was gonna be greatest in the kingdom. And he instructed them, no, it's not about who's greatest. If you wanna be first, you have to be a servant. And John, it seems he's rather proud of himself, comes in with, hey, just so you know, we told someone to stop doing miracles, because they weren't with us. And it's interesting that Mark, in this particular passage, for the first time in Mark, and the only time in Mark, John is mentioned by himself. Every other time in Mark that John is mentioned, he's always mentioned as the brother of James. And it's interesting that there's a name attached at all. If you recall, as we went through Mark up till now, generally speaking, whenever there's a conversation from the disciples, there's very seldom, there is some, but there's very rarely a specific name attached to a question or a saying. So Mark is making sure that we know it's John by, of course, inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So John seems to be here very proud of himself. He wants to bring up something that he thinks should be commended. Jesus, we told him to not practice exorcism, because he's not with us. And it's so interesting to think through this, because what happened in chapter 8, right after the transfiguration for the disciples, do you guys remember? The disciples were unable to cast out a demon. I think that had a little bit to play into John telling this exorcist not to do what he was doing. And so right after a teaching of servanthood, right after Jesus said, as we looked at last week, you have to be last, you have to serve all, talking about the meekness of a child and addressing everyone the same and how we don't play favorites and how we don't push people aside, John immediately turns around and tells an exorcist not to do what he's doing. And so with this thought of turning the spotlight back to themselves, the disciples show once again their extreme need for Christ. John, right out of the gate of this passage, comes out and shows, hey, even though you just taught about servanthood, we're gonna turn the spotlight right back to ourselves. We told this guy that he is not with us. John may be coming from a point of frustration that they weren't able to cast out the demon or a point of elitism. If you remember, John got to go up and see the transfiguration, so maybe he

just thinks that they're better than everybody else. But regardless of the reason, the motivation that John has here is not one that Christ would exemplify or encourage. And so what Jesus says as he thinks about this exorcist here, and then John brings up this exorcist, he moves on to say, do not hinder him in verse 39. For there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name and be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Now notice what Jesus does with the wording here. John at the end of verse 38 says, because he was not following us. Wouldn't a more proper way of saying that being because he was not following you? Jesus corrects that in the way he words that do not hinder him for there is no one who will perform a miracle in my name and be able to afterwards speak evil of me. So with this correction, Jesus is bringing their focus back to himself and telling them to put aside this elitist attitude, this elitist mentality. For whatever the full motivation for John saying this, we don't know for sure. Again, it could come from the fact that they weren't able to perform an exorcism. It could come from the fact that, hey, we're chosen of God. Jesus chose us to follow him. It could come from a plethora of different things. But the bottom line is Jesus puts them back in their place because those who have my power will not be able to speak afterward evil of me. So that gets us thinking a little bit here. about this exorcist, we don't know who he is, we don't know his name, but clearly if he was able to perform an exorcism and perform it in a way that Jesus does not condemn him, he has to have the power of Christ, right? Something that we've established all throughout Mark. In order to do a miracle in the name of Jesus, you have to have the power of God within you. You cannot do otherwise. So it's clear that this exorcist had the true power of Christ. We can all agree with that. Why he wasn't already following the disciples we don't know, they're in Capernaum now, perhaps he was a convert from when Jesus' early ministry was there and he just didn't follow the disciples, we don't know much more than that. But the point that we have to take away from this is that just because this exorcist was not following with the disciples, there weren't 13 disciples, there were just the 12, and this exorcist was not following them directly as they were walking around, doesn't mean that he wasn't a true member or follower of Christ, or member of the church. And the reason why I'm driving this home so heavily is because one of the most attacked, or reasons for attack, I should say, of the world against the church today, especially Protestantism, is that there's something like 400,000 plus denominations in the Protestant church. That's a lot of different churches, a lot of different associations or groups of people that have differing views. And sometimes we as believers have a very elitist mentality, don't we? Well, that church down

the road, although they have Christ 100% right, they disagree on this one particular issue. Or that church over there, they don't do things quite like we do, so obviously even though they have Christ and the kingdom issues correct, they're not quite like us, so clearly they're not as good as we are. And the point that Jesus is making here is that co-laborers should not be shunned. Because in verse 40 he says, he who is not against us is for us. Paul echoes this same mentality in 1 Corinthians 12, 3. He says, therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says Jesus is accursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. So if someone majors on the majors, which is Christ, and they profess Christ, and they know that Christ is who he is biblically, we should, although we may differ on tertiary and secondary issues, we should count them as co-laborers with us. If you have a problem sharing the gospel with a different church who is a solid biblical Christ-honoring church that may not agree with you on every single issue, if you have a problem doing service with that person, I would encourage you to reflect on this text. There are co-laborers of Christ in different denominations, in different churches, in different groups, and I've heard someone wisely say, that's a dugout issue. We can have a dugout conversation about those particular issues. It doesn't mean we take it to the field. when we're out witnessing to the world. We can have disagreements with different churches, we can even have different disagreements within the same body, and still be seen as co-laborers who serve the same Christ when we major on the majors. And this is a really clear example of Christ teaching just that thing. And so what I would encourage you to do is, if there's someone at your work that goes to a different denominational church, don't shun them. Embrace them as co-laborers in a dark work environment that you can utilize each other's strengths to share the gospel. Now you can have good discussion. We can have, I love a good theological debate. Anyone that knows me very well knows that. I will sit and discuss it for hours. I have no problem with that. And there's times for that. But when we are shoulder to shoulder facing the world, the only thing that matters is Christ and Christ alone. And that should be our focus, because we have to have co-laborers. This world hates Christ and everything about him. We need our co-laborers, even if they're not a Baptist or a Presbyterian or Assemblies of God or whatever the case may be. Do you follow what I'm saying so far? Now again, I'm not saying that the secondary and tertiary issues aren't important. And I think for the unity of a local body who gathers, they should have like-minded confessional teaching of doctrines they agree on. But what we have come to

do is overcorrect. You guys hear me all the time about a pendulum. You can swing the pendulum too far. And in American churches as a whole, we have swung the pendulum too far and we are so segregated that we can't see each other as co-laborers anymore. And that simply shouldn't be. The body of Christ is everyone who professes Christ regardless of those secondary and tertiary issues. So I would challenge us to think through this because we have to make sure that we are following Christ's teaching in something this obvious. It's clear what he's teaching.

There's no other way to interpret it. We are to look at those who are not necessarily in our local body as still being co-laborers. But don't hear me say I'm not

taking away from the local body. I'm not taking away from anything like that. I'm just asking us to challenge our mindset on how we view other believers. Now, I do wanna bring one thing to mind to mention here. In verse 40, it says, for he who is not against us is for us. Now in the other Synoptic Gospels, there's another passage that reads, he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. That exact same phrase is found in Matthew 12 in verse 30, and Luke 11 in verse 23. As we go through these books of the Bible, I do intend to try to show you what are common arguments from people that try to take away from our Foundation which is the authority and infallibility of Scripture and so some people

would say it says in Mark chapter 9 in verse 40 for he who is not against us is for us and Says hey, we need to focus on the co-laborers as we've just talked about for the last several minutes But over in this verse in Matthew 12 in verse 30 It says he who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters Isn't that saying contradictory things? Well on the surface it looks like it is saying contradictory things, but I want you to notice one specific aspect of these two texts that teach us again a valuable lesson. In verse 40 of chapter 9, it's in the plural. For he who is not against us is for us. But in Matthew and Luke, it's in the singular. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. Was the exorcist proclaiming the name of Christ whenever he did the exorcism? Yes, right? We know he was saying this is the power of Christ. So was this exorcist aligned with Christ, the central 100% kingdom issue, majoring on the major? Yes. The context of Matthew 12 and Luke 11 are those who are against Christ Himself. Do you follow the difference? So those texts aren't opposed to one another. In fact, they speak to one another in that Christ is teaching that He is the central. It is about Him that you must be correct. It is about Him that is the foundation of the church. We have to be with Him on His

side, but it doesn't mean we have to be with the same church body, the same local body who may have some differences on the precarious issues. And so this isn't a contradiction. I want to always, as much as I can, give you confidence in the infallibility of Scripture and ensuring that we know that it is correct and there are no contradictions. And that was one that does come up. So I wanted to bring that to your attention this morning so you can have confidence in that. So the two texts, in case you like to write in your Bible, is Matthew 12 and verse 30 and Luke 11 and 23. So if you want to be able to answer those later on, You might make a footnote there to be able to remember the difference. It's the plural versus the singular. And then building on top of what he's just said, keeping the idea of servanthood going that he just had taught the disciples in verse 35 through 37. Jesus then says, for whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name because you are of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. So he's getting a focus back and he's saying something as minuscule as a cup of water given in my name to a believer is still an act of service. They are still partners and co-laborers with you. Now I wanna take just a second here and correct a possible misunderstanding here. Some have interpreted verse 41 as if you give a cup of water to anyone, you're doing the Lord's work. I've even seen this poor theology taken to the point of making a giveaway water trailer that you would travel around with. You're not sharing the gospel, it just says, here's a cup of water in God's name. and they would hand out, there's no gospel presentation, it just says, so and so, whatever church or denomination or whatever case may be, here's a cup of cold water. Now is this text saying that? No. In context of this particular passage, this verse is specifically saying, if a believer gives a cup of water to a believer in the name of Christ as an act of service, that is still considered servanthood. He is simply building on what he just taught the disciples in verse 35 of servanthood. Now, do I think there's anything wrong with having cups of water to him? I'm not saying anything against that, but when you take Scripture out of context, even for something like that, it's still incorrect use of Scripture. We have to have our authority being scripture in context, correctly interpreted, and that's why our hermeneutics study is so important. Because in this context, Jesus is encouraging the disciples to continue to serve one another, even in something as simple as giving someone a cup of cold water. So you may not be able to have the gifting of someone who can stand out and street preach, but if you can give someone a cup of water who is preaching, that is still an active service of a believer to another believer

who can help grow the kingdom by that act of service. And in fact, Jesus even adds an extra step on here. Back in verse 35, when he talked about servanthood, he said, if anyone wants to be first, he should be last of all and servant of all. But in verse 41, he adds on, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. The most humble act of service has a connotation of reward in eternity. Now your motivation should still be to serve Christ, not the reward itself. We don't serve the reward, we serve the rewarder. But it still doesn't change the fact that the importance of servanthood, the importance of the simple acts, the importance of something as simple as cleaning the bathroom, or sweeping the floor, or giving a cup of cold water, are all acts of service. We are co-laborers together. And that is across denominational lines, that is across the local body lines, as long as the major things are prioritized and we know who Christ is. we should be joining shoulder to shoulder with other believers to take the gospel to the world. A couple points of application as you probably heard from this first one as we went through here. We have to watch out for the pride that so quickly comes within humans. The disciples put it on full display here. John said, you know what? He's not with us. Even if he does have Christ's right, even if he can clearly display the power of Christ and his actions in casting out that demon, he's not with us. So he's not as good as we are. We should probably tell him to stop. How thick our heads are. to miss such a blatant teaching. Jesus just taught them to be servants and to humble themselves. He just taught them that. You have to be last to be first. And yet John, in the very next passage, the very next pericope comes in and says, yeah, but we're better than everybody else, so we told them, because they're not with us, you better stop doing your work. Let us pray for the grace to combat that attitude and to combat that pride. But there's another aspect here that I would like to call you to as far as a point of application, and that is servanthood. He's continuing on the message of servanthood. Something as simple as a glass of water is seen as a reward-earning action when done in the name of Christ to a brother or sister in Christ. So I would call you once again to servanthood, just as I did last week. It is not about what you do, it's about who you do it for. Where is your motivation? Humble yourself, look to Christ, and serve those around you. Number two. So we've looked at the co-laborers part of our text today, the fellow servants. Now, point number two, the seriousness of sin. And we'll spend the majority of our time here, we only have the two points. the seriousness of sin, verses 42-50. Let me re-read that for us this morning so we can get our minds focused back on it. And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would

be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. And where their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than having your two feet to be cast into hell. And where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. For everyone will be salted with fire. 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. So as we begin to take on this larger section of this text, we will first look at the extension of what he was saying about serving one another. Verse 42 says, and whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if with a heavy millstone hung around his neck had been cast into the sea. I want us to understand the seriousness of this. So let's make sure we know who the verse is talking about first. The term little ones there is not about children. It's not about children. The little ones here in context is about exactly who he was just talking about, and those who belong to Christ. In verse 41, it says, those who drink in my name because you are of Christ, so in other words, belonging to Christ, this is in context of that same individual. The little one could also be translated as humble or poor in spirit. Think of the Beatitudes. So the word in the original language there does not mean children. It's an entirely other Greek word to mean children. This does not mean children. Jesus is humbling the disciples, calling them little ones or humble ones or those who should be poor in spirit. To combat pride, what do you have to do? You have to be humble. The disciples have shown their pride once again, right? John just turned the spotlight back on themselves. He taught about servanthood. They couldn't last, I don't know how long this was teaching here, because it's hard to say, but let's say just a few minutes, and they turned the spotlight right back on themselves. And so to humble them, he goes, little ones, humble ones, he humbles them right there in front of them, right here. But in context of this here, how serious it is, how serious it is, how we live our lives around our brothers and sisters. Whoever causes one of these little ones, or believers, so whoever causes a disciple or follower of Christ, or believer, or humble one, who believes, so we're talking about those who believe in Christ, whoever causes one of them to stumble, it would be better for him if

with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he'd been cast into the sea. Let's talk about this for just a minute. Does everyone here in our Western mindset, everyone here know what a millstone is? Some of you may not, so just to make sure I get the description correct, these are two stones that are so big, only a beast of burden can move them. In other words, they are immovable by a human hand. And they would be stacked on top of one another. And they'd be carved out just right where you'd get a little bit of grain in there. And then you would have a donkey attached with a pole or another beast of burden that would rotate in a circle around and around and around. And as you poured the grain down into it, it would grind it into wheat. It's a very ingenious way they can get it back out of there without having to move everything. But as they would grind it, this heavy millstone would grind wheat in the flour. That's how they would make bread. And so Jesus is saying a stone that's immovable will be tied around, it would be better for you, I should say, that a stone that is immovable by anything but beasts of burden would be tied around your neck and you'd be cast into the sea. So understand the context of who he's talking to. The Jewish people throughout their writings have a fear, fearful respect, I think is the best way to say it, a fearful respect for the sea. And one of the most horrific ways, according to Jewish culture, of dying was drowning. Just as a culture, they absolutely were petrified of drowning. So Jesus takes one of their worst fears, in a context of knowing exactly the weight of a millstone, and saying, if you cause a brother or sister to sin, the idea of stumbling here is the idea of losing faith, or losing belief, or sinning to the point where you no longer have the same focus on God. It would be better for you to be drowned with a millstone around your neck. And in the context, one of my biggest fears of the ways of dying is drowning. I don't know if anybody else is with me on that. I just, that seems like the most terrible way. And so for a context of people whose general most feared way of dying is drowning, he just told them it would be better for you to drown than to cause one of your brothers or sisters to stumble. Do you think that God takes sin seriously? And we haven't even gotten to the serious part, the extreme measures. But we should be so of the mindset that we are so focused on God's glory and His holiness that sin is such an egregious thought that we would rather drown than to cause someone to sin. So I would ask you, does your life reflect the kind of life, as Jesus calls us to right here, that we are protectant of those around us? So for example, if you know a brother or sister has a hard time with lust, do you talk about and promote movies or situations or social media patterns or whatever that may imply or insist that their lust grow? Or lying or theft or any other sort of common besetting sin? Or do you lift them up and encourage them to focus on Christ living a life of holiness and protect

them from that fall? According to this, we have a responsibility as co-laborers, remember the context of what we're talking about, he just came off the idea of co-laborers, we have a requirement, a responsibility, an obligation to ensure that those around us, both in our household and in our church, and in the other co-laborer that we come in contact with, to protect their holiness. We must. Is sin not hard enough to fight alone? Isn't it? Is sin not hard enough to fight alone, let alone if someone else is making it easier for you to do so? Think about that for just a moment. If sin is hard for you, what do you need your brother and sister to do? Help you fight it, not help you fall into it. Do you understand the seriousness of what he's saying? It would be better for you to have a millstone around your neck and be plunged into the sea than to cause a fellow brother or sister to lose their faith in me." And if that wasn't serious enough, he goes and switches the focus from outward protection of sin against the brother and sister to guarding yourself against sin. because guarding ourselves against sin should make it also easier to help guard those around us from sin, right? So he's bringing the focus, let's not cause a brother or sister to stumble, and here's a way that you can not only guard yourself, or excuse me, not only guard them, but guard yourself as well. So in verse 43 through 48, he's gonna give us some extreme measures. Now, before I dig into this, I want to just cover a textual difference here for just a moment. Verse 44, 46, and 48 say the exact same thing word for word, right? It says, and where their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. That particular verse is from Isaiah. In the original most trusted Markian Greek documents, verse 44 and 46 are not there. Only verse 48 is. What that's called is a scribal edition. So as people were making copies to help with the memorization, they would put those up there so you have this very rhythmic way of saying it, right? So you wouldn't forget where the worm does not die and the fires never quench. So as I continue through here, I'm only going to address that particular verse at verse 48. That will be addressed at one time as the original Markian translation as best as we can trust our most trusted Markian documents show us. That's where we'll address that. It's not that those other ones aren't important. It's just that it's not in the original document. So we're gonna address it where it was originally written by Mark. So as we think through these next few verses, you're gonna notice a couple of different things. So you're gonna see some repetitive words, a very repetitive style. This is called a mnemonic device. Anybody know what a mnemonic device is? A mnemonic device is a way of writing something that's very easy to remember. It's got repetitive sounds, repetitive

lengths of words, repetitive phrasing, so that it's very easy to memorize. Think of creeds like the Boy Scout Creed is very mnemonic. It's written in such a way that you can memorize it easily and go through it. It's the same idea. So this is a, it doesn't translate as well in English, but in the original language, it's very, very repetitive, which means it's part of the oral tradition. So this was passed down orally from Jesus in a way that was easily memorized so that you can remember it so very easily. This passage has a parallel in Matthew 18 and Matthew 5, and then also a parallel in Luke 14. So I mentioned earlier that I would give you the context of where these parallels are found in case you'd like to look how the other gospel writers use them. So as we continue in to discuss the extreme measures that Jesus brings, let's look at the first one. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. The second one in verse 45, if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. Verse 47, if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out. Now, Jesus is not talking about self-mutilation. Let me make sure everybody's clear. If you sin with your eye today, don't go physically gouge it out. This is called a metaphor, an analogy, a metaphoric hyperbole. This is Jesus, and he does this a lot in his teaching, using extreme ideas to teach an overall principle. And so the overall principle here is that we must take sin seriously and employ extreme measures to protect ourselves from sin. Because protecting ourselves from sin and honoring God is more important than our physical body. The overall message here is that honoring God and His holiness and following His commands and not continuing to sin as one of His followers, here this, is more important than our physical bodies. That includes comforts, decisions we make, And so Jesus is coming from this warning about sinning against brother and sister and takes it to another level and says, if you sin yourself, you're better off to take extreme measures than the igloo to dishonor God. So when you think about the extreme measures you have to take, what are some examples that you can think of? Well, Josh, what are extreme measures? What are these things we're supposed to do? I have, in counseling before, for those who might struggle with pornography or adult images, I've encouraged people to get rid of every electronic device that connects to the internet in their entire life. Stay off the internet. You may go, but I can't function like that in life now. It may be more difficult. But if that's what's required for the extreme measures to break the habit of sin and by God's grace He can maybe build you up where you can do that one day. So be it What about gluttony one that we don't ever like to talk about If gluttony is an issue for you stop bringing food into the house that you shouldn't be eating.

Don't buy it Don't give yourself an opportunity to sin. That's an extreme measure. Yeah, but I like having extra food in my house. Don't have it What about money? What if you spend money and you have a bad habit of spending money and you can't control that? Cut up your credit cards and debit cards. Make it where you have a cash only basis. It's extreme measures. Now I'm not saying everyone in here needs to go do all of those things. I'm not adding extra burdens to you. I'm not adding extra things to the law. These are simply examples of what extreme measures look like when it comes to sin and God through his spirit will show you what that looks like. None of those things I just gave you are a law in scripture that says you can't have a debit card or credit card or you can't have a cell phone. Okay, understand. These are wise practices that Jesus is telling us are extreme measures. Jesus says to take extreme measures. What does that look like in our cultural context? Those are just some extreme measures that may apply in certain situations. But the point is how extreme Are you going to be with combating sin? Where does your authority lie? Does it lie in Scripture or yourself? Because that's ultimately where this argument comes down to. Do you fall under the authority of Scripture? And you're going to take extreme measures to follow what is clear black and white sin in Scripture? Or are you not? And again, that's between you and the Lord and your conscience in Him. What measures you need to put in place are between you and Him. But the overall principle is 100% biblical. Get extreme with your sin. Take extreme measures to live the life that God has called you to. And I know this is not a popular conversation or topic. Sin is not popular for us to talk about. But that's what's up next in Mark, and that's what I have to preach. And so that's what we're gonna talk about today, is sin. And the extreme nature of sin, you know, each text has that mnemonic device and it repeats itself. It would be better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell. And it says the same thing about the foot, the same thing about the hand. And then in verse 48, it says, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. So in context of what hell is, Jesus also quotes from an Old Testament passage about what hell is. from Isaiah 62, their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. So when we think of hell, what does this mean? Well, some translations, and it's the original language, the word there is Gehenna. Anybody have Gehenna there in verse 47 for hell or each repetition of hell there? So I want to lay down the extremities here that Jesus is saying. Hell or Gehenna to a Jewish person is a physical, literal place. That's what they think, that's the context of how they understand what hell is when God sends someone there based on their own sins for eternity. So Gehenna is a valley that's

just southwest of Jerusalem. It's a very deep ravine, and it's called the Hinnom Valley. And the Hinnom Valley, was used by Ahaz and Manasseh in 2nd Kings 16-3 and 2nd Kings 21-6 to offer human sacrifice to false gods. Right outside Jerusalem. Do you know what the most egregious thing that God said over and over and over again in the law, one of the most egregious things for him, sacrificing humans to false gods, whether it be your children, other people, one of the most egregious, disgusting things to God is worshiping a false god by human sacrifice. And so this place that Ahaz and Manasseh, as terrible leaders of Israel, implemented this human sacrifice, was later turned into this Hinnom Valley, with the human sacrifice being condemned by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 7.31, and then abolished fully by King Josiah in 2 Kings 23.10. This valley then became, because in their minds they couldn't redeem it, This is where the egregious act of Israel happened. We can't redeem this, there's nothing we can do. They literally turned it into a deep ravine of trash for Jerusalem. This was basically their trash heap. Dead animals, carcasses, human waste, everything you can think of that is detestable to a society living together, went into this ravine. So now the Hinnom Valley is called Gehenna. And this physical imagery of Gehenna, there'd be fires there that would never stop. They would light a fire, and because of the decomposition and things going on there from a physical nature, that fire would literally just never go out. They would just keep adding stuff to it, and it would burn incessantly. The stench was unbearable. There'd be animals living in it, digesting the carcasses. And I'm painting this bleak picture because this is what Christ uses to describe hell. And he does this in context of adding Isaiah 62 to it that says, in hell there will be a worm that never dies and a fire that is never quenched. He is adding to this idea of Gehenna what God says hell is like. That's an extreme picture, is it not? That's an extreme place. That should not be a place that you want to go to. And I would encourage you to cling to Christ. If you're not sure that you're not going there, cling to Christ, call to him. Pray for grace and repentance. But the point I'm making here is that cutting off your foot or gouging out your eye or cutting off your hand is way better than dealing with a place like that. Anything physical that you have to give up is way better than an eternity of torture in a place like that. The measures are extreme. Jesus is telling us, take extreme measures with your sin. That begs the question for us as believers. Yes, we need to take extreme measures for our sin because we don't want to be punished like that. But let me ask you this. Let me frame it a little different way. Why would we embrace sin when it costs the Son of God His very life to atone for it? Being saved

from hell is an amazing thing. Being saved from that torture is an amazing thing. But do you realize that when you sin, you are, in effect, spitting in the very face of the one who atoned for the sin you just committed on the cross 2,000 years ago? So I'm just adding another layer of motivation. We need to take extreme measures with our sin. Practically, what that looks like is, if you have to cut something out to prevent from sinning, cut it out. But I want you to think about from just the aspect of Christ doing the work that he did, in Mark here, we're looking at him going towards the passion. So in context of where we are in the book, he's almost there. He's about to go through a week of unimaginable torture to atone for the sin that you and I will commit today, tomorrow, the next day, and we're never gonna reach perfection. So understand there's always gonna be that aspect of us still battling our flesh. But the motivation of being extreme should be, I don't want to go here, but I also don't want to spit in the face of the one who went through that for me. So when I talk about resting in Christ, that's what I'm talking about. When I talk about looking to Christ to combat the motives that we struggle with, the sin that we struggle with, the things that continue to beset us, there should be two aspects to our motivation. Take extreme measures because you don't want to be punished for that. Two, the one who was punished for what you've done by you sinning, you're spitting in his very face for the atonement that he gave for you. So I call you again, be extreme with your sin. Then he goes on in verse 49, for everyone will be salted with fire. Whenever you first read this, Everyone will be salted with fire. I pictured a salt shaker with fire coming out. What does that even mean? The idea of fire, as Jesus quoted Isaiah 62 and verse 48, has caused him to then speak about fire in a positive fashion. because there is two different aspects of fire spoken about throughout scripture. There's a purifying fire, which is a positive aspect, and there's a condemnation fire, which is the idea of justice and condemnation and wrath being poured out. And so in talking to the disciples about fire, he tells them about the purifier of justice and wrath, and now he's switching gears to teach them about the purifying fire. And so when we think about the use of fire, we will all be salted with fire. Now we know that salt is good, it purifies, it maintains, and it, what's the word I'm trying to think of, when you salt meat and it, preservative, there we go. My brain just went, nope. So, preservatives. So, salt not only seasons something, but it also preserves something. So, we are the salt of the earth, right? We're the preservative of the world. God uses his church to keep the world from being so much worse than it could be, or so much worse than it already is. But there's another level to this, as digging in here,

that I had never seen before, and it is beautiful, and it's amazing, and the connections of Scripture as we go through Mark have been growing and growing. I want to share that with you. So if you would turn to Leviticus chapter 2 and verse 13 with me. So thinking through salt and fire, verse 49 and verse 50 are in tandem together, meaning the same thing. Verse 50 elaborates on verse

49. So turn to Leviticus chapter 2 and verse 13. I'm going to read this for you.

Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt. So every offering you bring, that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall bring salt near. So salt is a key piece of an offering. You can't offer something to God without salt. You could not follow the biblical command to go to sacrifice to God for the atonement or the celebration or whatever sacrifice that he commanded in whatever particular situation without having salt. In fact, he calls his first covenant

a covenant of salt. Numbers 18 and verse 19. All the contributions of the holy gifts, which the Son of Israel raised up to Yahweh, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you as a perpetual statute. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before Yahweh to you and your seed with you, a symbol of the covenant of God with Israel for all eternity as salt. And what did every sacrifice have in common? Fire. Every single sacrifice of the Old Testament had fire involved. You were to offer it on a fire. So to be a sacrifice for God, you must be salted and have fire. You must be salted with fire. And so the connection here that

Jesus is making is one very similar to Romans chapter 12 and verse 1, bringing back suffering into the idea of discipleship, because fire is a purifying element, right? When you walk through the fire, it purifies you, you grow, you become more pure before God, it cleanses you, but the fire still hurts, does it not? When you're walking through the fires of life, as we're often called the trials of life or the fires of life, we see that being an element of pain that brings us purification. God purifies us through those fires. But in Paul in Romans chapter 12 and verse 1, then tells us, as he elaborates on this idea of sacrifice that Jesus is clearly bringing back to the disciples' attention here, he elaborates, therefore I exhort you brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. So now when we think of sacrifice and we now understand that the Old Testament sacrifices had two elements involved in every single one of them, salt and fire, this text suddenly opens

up. We're gonna be salted with fire.
We are the sacrifices of God. We are the sweet smelling aromas of the Old Testament. That type and shadow of the sacrifices are now seen living in us day to day as we are living sacrifices of God that he has redeemed to himself who salts us and fires us as we bring glory to him as a heavenly aroma in heaven. You see how that language co-mingles from the Old Testament and the New Testament and how all those things come beautifully together? And so being extreme with our sin, we put those things aside so that we can be salted with fire and raised up as a sacrifice that's holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service to be that living sacrifice as disciples and servants of God. You see how Christ beautifully ties us back into what he's been teaching since the beginning of Mark chapter eight, changing his focus. And so the encouragement is,
We don't salt ourselves. God salts us. We don't fire ourselves. We don't purify ourselves. God purifies us. And so this idea of being extreme with our sin, yes, we are called to do that, but the Spirit does that by lifting us up by grace, showing us where we've sinned by Scripture and the hearing of the preaching of the Word. And we see the things that we have to change. And by God's grace, through the salted fire, He purifies us and makes us a living sacrifice that only He can make acceptable to Himself. So my prayer is, as Jesus does here in verse 49 and verse 50, is that we look to Christ as the one who purifies us. We look to Christ as the one who gives us the grace and strength to be extreme with our sins. We look to Christ for him to change us and to continue to grow us so that we can be the living sacrifices that he just made mention of. Because I can tell you, you don't have it in you to cut your hand off, metaphorically speaking. You don't. I don't. We collectively do not have the strength within us to gouge out our eye to be extreme with our sin. We don't have that strength. We don't have that grace. We don't have that ability within ourselves. but Christ through his grace will change your desires through repentance. Repentance simply means changing your mind. That's what the full definition of repentance is, is a change of mind. So by repentance and changing our minds, the Christian life, has anybody heard the Christian life say that the rest of your Christian life is a life of repentance? That's why, because God changes your mind about different things throughout the rest of your life as you continue to be more extreme with sin. And then he sums this up beautifully at verse 50. Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another. What a beautiful way to wrap

up a teaching about co-laborers. Be at peace with one another. Get along with one another. Don't pose useless debates and arguments. If you can't discuss something with a level head, study it some more because you're not at a point to have a conversation about it. Be at peace with one another. Don't cause each other to sin and stumble. Be at peace with one another. Look to Christ for his purifying grace. So a couple of points of application, and you've probably already kind of figured out where the application is as we went through this this morning, but just to make sure we're all on the same page, we must, must understand the seriousness of causing a brother or sister to stumble. We must. It is a very serious thing before the eyes of God. Guard your brothers and sisters' holiness to the best of your ability. And we must ensure that we not only guard against causing others to sin in the body of Christ, but also guard with extreme measures against sin in our own life. Be extreme with your sin. Because so often sinning ourselves will bleed over to sinning others, and then you've messed up the first part too. And the last thing, there is a cost to discipleship. That salting fire can be painful. It can be uncomfortable while we're going through it. If you've ever had a wound cauterized, it doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel good, but it's for your own benefit. To cease the bleeding that will one day cause your death, you have to cauterize the wound. Fire doesn't necessarily feel good in the moment, but it has its purposes of purification and for your benefit. And that's what God uses it for, for us. But there is a cost to discipleship. So let us be living sacrifices that are living our lives salted with fire for the glory of God each and every day along our walk of discipleship. In conclusion, there's no coincidence here that Jesus taught these things in tandem. Co-laborers and extreme measures. Let's remember not to be antagonistic towards those around us. Let's get the kingdom issues right and agree to disagree on the secondary and tertiary issues when we are facing the world so that the kingdom of God can grow as he has deemed it should. And at the same time, guard ourselves that when we are with our co-laborers, we are protecting their purity. But the main thing I want to leave you with today is keeping your eyes on Christ. For He, we must get 100% correct. He's the focus. He's the major that we major on. He is who we rest upon. He is who our strength comes from for the grace and mercy to do the things that He has called us to do in this text. Please don't leave this morning with the idea that you're a terrible believer who never can get life right. You never will, but Christ can through you and in you. Rest in Him and depend on Him. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are

so thankful for your grace this morning to see through your word and I pray the conviction of your spirit that we must look to you to combat the sins, that we must take our sins extreme and ensure that we are looking to you instead of our sins, that we are protecting one another in the body and our co-laborers around us, and that we seek to glorify you in all that we do. Lord, we need you for that. We cannot do it ourselves. And I pray that this text helps us to take our sins seriously while looking to you, dependent upon your grace, so that we might be the living sacrifices that you call us to be. We love you and praise you in your holy name.