

Sermon series: Book of Mark
Sermon title: *Whatever It Takes*
Scripture passage: Mark 9:42-50
Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
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If you remember, the Book of Mark is likely written to the believers in Rome who are undergoing persecution for being followers of Jesus.

It is a “training manual” for discipleship...for them and for us.

In this section we have some core teachings from Jesus about what it means to follow him...sprinkled throughout Jesus saying that he’s going to suffer and die and rise again.

We learned in the beginning of Mark 9 that we need to **listen to Jesus**.

For us it means, we are to marinate in the Bible and be saturated with Jesus’ word.

We learned also that we need to **depend on Jesus in prayer** and not rely on ourselves.

We learned that we need to **serve one another and seek to be the last, not the greatest**.

And last week we learned to **fight for kingdom unity**, instead of fighting other Christians.

Today, we have another word from Jesus...for the disciples...for the church in Rome that Mark is writing to...and for us.

It's a word about '**Doing whatever it takes to follow Jesus.**'

- We could say, 'Doing whatever it takes to stay salty.'
- or 'Doing whatever it takes to be holy.'
- or 'Doing whatever it takes to stay close.'
- or 'Doing whatever it takes to not stumble.'
- or 'Doing whatever it takes to be a disciple.'

It's not an easy passage to understand.

So, I am just going to walk through it and explain it...to open it up...so that we can see what it means and how it fits together with the other passages that come before it.

Let's read it again.

42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And 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. **45 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.**

47 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,

48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' **49 For everyone will be salted with fire.**

50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

First, it is important for us to see that Jesus is using very graphic and harsh language to get his point across.

We shouldn't take it to the extreme but we also have to be careful that we don't ignore the seriousness of it.

Verse 42 is connected to the previous passages where the disciples are fighting amongst themselves and fighting against another believer who isn't a part of their group.

And Jesus takes this seriously....so he says....it is so serious that..**42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea."**

Little ones here doesn't mean little kids. It means simply 'any follower of Jesus'.

It's a term of affection for those who belong to Jesus.

Jesus is saying that we will be judged by how we treat one another....

And it is better to be dead.. than to be alive and doing things to cause a brother or sister to stumble in their faith.

It is not meant to cause them to actually tie a millstone around their neck and drown themselves.

It is spoken to cause them to stop acting the way they are; to repent.

So, we have verse 42 here and connected to it is verse 50 where it says, "Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another."

Literally, 'Have salt among yourselves.'

Verse 42 and 50 are about how we treat one another. "Do whatever it takes to not cause a brother or sister to stumble."

*That word '**stumble**' is the real meaning where you see the phrase "to sin" throughout the whole passage. It means a 'trigger of a trap'.

Don't be the trigger that causes someone else to fall.

The positive way to say it is....

“Do whatever it takes to season a brother.”

“Do whatever it takes to keep a brother salty.”

“Do whatever it takes to lift a brother up in his walk.”

“Do whatever it takes to support a sister in her walk.”

So, verses 42 and 50b are dealing with how we treat one another.

Verses 43-50a...are calling us as *individuals* to do **Whatever It Takes to not cause ourselves to stumble.**

To do whatever it takes. To take radical action because the cost is horrible —if we don't.

43 And 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.

45 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.

47 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

48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’

This passage is clear and this passage is graphic.

When something is mentioned 3x in scripture it is a big deal.

Here we have the phrase repeated 3 times...with hand, foot, eye being lost in order to gain the kingdom and avoid hell.

Again, like the millstone....it isn't meant to be taken to the extreme but to make a point.

The point is to be serious and stop doing what you're doing.

You can cut off every limb and eye but your heart will still sin.

The picture is graphic.

The word HELL here is **gehenna**.

It was a place outside of Jerusalem called the Valley of Hinnom, where originally the people sacrificed their children to the idol Molech.

It later became a garbage dump for dead bodies and trash that was forever burning- outside the city of Jerusalem.

So, get the picture.

There's a city...the kingdom of God, which is a wonderful place... and outside of it is a burning garbage dump..and it's a horrible place.

Imagine choosing the burning garbage dump of dead bodies and filth over the King and his kingdom.

Do whatever it takes. Take drastic action against your flesh and your heart.

Better to lose something now and gain the kingdom.
Better to lose anything.

Jesus is saying,

“Don’t let anything cause you to stumble.”

“Don’t let anything trip you up.”

“Don’t let anything keep you from taking up your cross and following me.”

But we like to do whatever it takes....except...the drastic.

We like to do whatever it takes except....the radical.

We aren't enough like Aron Ralston , a mechanical engineering major from Carnegie Mellon University, who in 2003, while hiking in a canyon in Utah..got his arm stuck when an 800 pound bolder rolled over it. For 5 days he stayed there fighting, until his water ran out. He tried to cut off his arm but the knife was too dull. Eventually, his will to survive was so great that he snapped both arm bones and sawed through his muscle, nerves and tendons with his dull 2 inch pocket knife. He then tied a tourniquet around his arm, repelled down a 60 foot wall and walked 5 miles, with a bleeding arm to find help.

We like to keep stumbling in that relationship...without breaking up.

We get tripped up by pornography without getting help or smashing our computer.

We like to keep getting trapped in debt without cutting up our credit cards.

Jesus calls us to fight for holiness, to take our walk with him so serious that we offer everything as a sacrifice to God.

That's what verses 49 and 50a mean.

49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again?

Salt and fire were both key ingredients in temple sacrifice. Jesus is saying here what **Romans 12:1-2** says,

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God.”

It's the same as saying...Do Whatever It Takes to keep dying to self, taking up your cross, laying down your life

for others, taking the form of a servant, being for Jesus and his kingdom.

Do whatever it takes to stay salty, as you offer your body as a living sacrifice.

Well, how do we do this?

Are we to just try harder?

We do have to try but our trying isn't good enough.

We need help.

In God himself...we have both the example to follow and the power to live as a salty, seasoned follower of Jesus.

Jesus Christ doesn't just tell us to do these things but he actually DID them.

He who said, "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me....did deny himself and took up a cross and died on it- in the place of sinners.

He who said, "The greatest among you must be the servant"....was a servant. He went so low- that he left heaven to hang naked on a cross outside the city for something others had done.

He who calls us to be living sacrifices, like a lamb being offered up to God in worship.....sprinkled with salt....was actually sacrificed like a lamb and died.

But he was proved to be right by God and so God the Father raised him from the dead.

He's alive and he has POWER. POWER over those traps we get stuck in.

He who says "Do whatever it takes to keep following me"...did whatever it took to take away the penalty of sin and the power of sin.

-Jesus has the power to cause you to stop others from stumbling.

-Jesus has the power to change our negative attitude toward others.

-Jesus has the power to help you get out of whatever trap you might be in/ whatever is tripping you up.

-Jesus has the power to make you a salty follower...a living sacrifice.

Will you trust him?

Will you humble yourself to say, **"I need help. I need to cut some things off and tear some things out of my life but I can't do it on my own."**

Do Whatever It Takes.

The King and his kingdom are worth it.