

Mark 9:41-48 – Are you helping or hurting God’s People!

TSK, GreekLexicon, Pulpit, Rienecker, INT, Geneva, Trapp, Poole, JFB, Robertson, Gill, Clarke, Gaebelein, Barnes, Calvin, Henry, Alexander,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: God’s message to you today is: Help my people; don’t hurt my people.

Our headings are:

Reward for helping God’s People

Result of hurting God’s People

Our goals are: **That you will be motivated to help, not hurt, God’s people, whom he bought with the blood of Jesus, knowing you will receive a righteous reward from your Father for helping his people.**

Reward for helping God’s People

41 "For whoever gives **you** a **cup of water** to drink **in My name**, because **you belong to Christ**, assuredly, I say to you, he will **by no means** lose **his reward**.

1. Jesus called his disciples (门徒) to show kindness to his ordinary people.

You will remember that disciples were clamoring (吵闹) for positions of authority and influence in the “expected earthly kingdom.” Their dream was to advance themselves. But now, Jesus told them that the one who would get the greatest reward was the one who **served the weakest**, the ordinary people, because those ordinary **people were special to him**.

What made these people special to Jesus? It wasn’t their race, gender, or social position. His children were special to him because they were **called by his name**, they were **partakers of his grace**, they **bore his image and likeness**, they were **loved by him**, they were **interested in him**, they were **given to him**, they were **redeemed by him** and **called by his grace**, and they will **share heaven in the future**. So whatever help they needed, he wanted to provide for them.

The disciples might have thought that it was okay to ignore the foreigners among them...the handicapped...the children...but the Lord did not allow that. The disciples’ focus was their lavish (奢侈的) meal in a palace, but Jesus’ focus was on the welfare of his meager.

2. Jesus called his disciples to show kindness to his ordinary people in little things.

One of those little things he wanted his disciples to do for his children was to give them a “cup of water” in his name?

Why did Jesus use a cup of water to illustrate his point? Water at this time was not provided by the local municipality as we have today. Water was directly provided by God through rain, rivers, or wells. So water was free and therefore insignificant in terms of cost. **A cup of water was possibly the cheapest gift possible.** And Jesus wanted his disciples to be willing to give a cup of water to needy Christians instead of focusing on their own lusts for prominence in a palace.

3. What reward will God give his disciples for giving a cup of water to his people?

They will receive eternal riches in heaven...a reward that none can take away. The Lord did not give the details of that reward to prevent man from becoming preoccupied (沉溺于) with it. The only thing we know is that **it was called a “prophet’s reward,”** (Matthew) a reward that someone received for helping a prophet of God.

Matthew 10:41 "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a **prophet’s reward**. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.

This meant that those who were kind to God’s children **received a reward equal to what one would have received for being kind to God’s prophets.**

And when the Lord said that ‘those who do good to his people would receive a prophet’s reward,’ he also intended to show how much he cherished his children. He cherished his children as much as he cherished his prophets.

4. This reward for helping others is certain, absolutely certain.

“By no means” means “Never, never, never!” So the one who is kind to God’s children (And we only become his children through Jesus Christ.) will never, never, never lose his reward in heaven.

5. Lessons:

a. Most people like to do big things that others will notice – extravagant (大量的) and eminent (突出的, 卓越的) things in the church, but the church cannot function without the little things that occur in the background. The church needs people to give a “cup of water.” That might mean giving someone a hymnbook and a bulletin. That might mean taking some snacks to a visitor downstairs. That might mean getting out of your comfort zone (安逸状态) and speaking to a visitor.

b. Most people like to be involved with people who are like they are or above them, but don’t ignore the one who might be shy, who might not dress the way you do, who might not speak English very well, who might be from a different race, or who might be from a different religious background. Invite singles, single parents, and old people to your home and show them hospitality (热情好客) . Help the sick (or a new mother) by visiting them or by cooking a meal for them. Help members in the church by organizing activities with other families. Help your children by taking a week off to teach them the catechism (教理问答) . Help the persecuted (被逼迫的) church by writing letters and raising support for them. Help the kids we sponsor (支持, 赞助) through Word and Deed by praying for them. Help foreigners by helping them find jobs.

c. Think about Christ’s love for his people when you serve. Don’t focus on the person you are helping. For example, don’t think about me when you tithe 交什一奉献, or you will not tithe as you should. If you think about how unkind your husband could be at times, you wouldn’t serve him as you should. But when you think of Christ’s love for you, that will make you endure even nervous or difficult situations, and you will show kindness.

d. Kindness shown to God’s people is kindness shown to Christ.

e. While you help others because Jesus saved your from your sins, you are nevertheless rewarded in heaven (and sometimes on earth) for what you do to help others. Rewards must not be your purpose for doing good works (love is), but rewards are a result of helping.

Result of hurting God’s People

42 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me **to stumble**, it would be better for him if a **millstone (磨盘石)**, **were hung around his neck,** **and he were thrown into the sea.** 43 "If your hand causes you to sin, **cut it off.** It is better for you to enter into life maimed (残废的), rather than having two hands, **to go to hell,** into the **fire that shall never be quenched (被熄 灭)** — 44 "where ‘**Their worm does not die,** And the fire is not quenched.’ 45 "And if your foot causes you to sin, **cut it off.** It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched — 46 "where ‘**Their worm does not die,** And the fire is not quenched.’ 47 "And if your eye causes you to sin, **pluck it out.** It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire — 48 "where ‘**Their worm does not die,** And the fire is not quenched.’

1. Anyone who causes one of God’s children to stumble...especially the ones who are young and the young in faith, will be severely condemned and punished.

2. What does it mean to make one “stumble?”

This was referring to a spiritual stumbling (灵性上的); it was not physical stumbling. A person

can stumble when someone puts an obstacle in his path and he falls.

These obstacles can be things in the words you speak, lifestyle, or actions.

A person can stumble from even a little obstacle.

This stumbling was pictured for us when harvesters (收割者) in the Old Testament times would throw stones behind them so that the gleaners (拾穗者) would not be able to pick the leftover grains.

3. How severely would Christ punish those who hurt his children?

Christ's punishment would be so severe that it would be better to die by having their necks tied to huge millstones and they were drowned in the deep part of the sea. (The word for millstone is "mulos" stone...or donkey stone, as it was a heavy stone pulled by a donkey.) This was a type of justice carried out by the Greeks to horrible criminals. But God's judgment would be worse than that... To die that way would be the nicer way to die!

4. How severely will Christ punish those who hurt his children?

God will not drown them with a millstone tied around their necks; **God will send them to hell.**
What do we know about hell?

a. Hell will be like Gehenna. There was no exact word for hell (for nothing could compare to hell), so Christ used "Gehenna," a place in the valley of Hinnom –where a constant fire was kept for burning of polluted things, to refer to hell. It was a smelly (恶臭的) place, full of worms around the edges. It was desecrated (被亵渎) by the sacrifice of children to Moloch so that as an accursed (被咒诅的) place it was used for the city garbage where worms gnawed and fires burned. It was therefore a vivid picture of eternal punishment. (There was no exact word for hell in any culture, so they took the worst place imaginable and used that word for hell.) You hurt God's children, God really hurts you!

b. In hell their worm will never die. Their worm is their conscience (良心). Their worm will continually gnaw (咬噬) on the hearts of men, giving them pain. Their worm will bring their sins to remembrance, accusing (控告) continually, correcting them, aggravating (使恼火) them, tormenting them, filling them with dreadful anguish痛苦 and misery (悲惨), making them sad, and it will continue without end. This guilty conscience will cling to their soul like a worm to a dead body.

Isaiah 66:24 "And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses (尸体) of the men Who have transgressed against Me. **For their worm does not die,** And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence (憎恶) to all flesh."

Isaiah referred to the place that was marked with the heaps and scraps of battle. There, there were so many bodies that the worms never died out. And with the bodies not eaten or burned, they stank.

c. Hell is a place of unquenchable fire. "Quench" in Greek is "sbestos," and "asbestos" means unquenchable.

5. Hurting God's children is so bad that the Lord urged his disciples to do everything they could to avoid hurting them.

a. Be willing to cut off their hand...

b. Be willing to cut off their foot...

c. Be willing to dig out their eye......Most people who donate organs will give everything except their eyes.

These words mean you must be willing to give up the nearest and dearest things to you so that you don't hurt God's children. So don't take this literally. God forbids willful desecration (毁坏) of the body.

6. Lessons:

a. Put yourselves to pain rather than bring hurt to others – especially the weak. Take those lusts for prosperity and prominence and remove them (just like you would do to a leg with gangrene坏蛆) rather than hurt others. If you are obsessed with work and ignoring your wife, you might cause her to stumble. If your language gets too colorful, you will block others from hearing the Gospel. If you are not honest in your dealings with your boss, he will not want to hear you talk about your Savior. (He will say: Jesus is a Savior from what?) Children, if you keep whining and crying, you will upset your parents' day and their relationship with Jesus, and that is a stumbling block!

b. When you keep obstacles from others or remove them...so that they don't fall, you will save yourself from hell.

c. Know that the fires of hell are not evidence of a vivid imagination; the fires of hell are real, eternal, and painful, and those fires are reserved for those who don't know Jesus and show it by abusing his children.

Conclusion:

There are rewards in heaven (and sometimes on earth) for those who help fellow Christians. On the contrary, there are great regrets in hell for those who hurt the weak: the young, the sick, the handicap, the poor, the foreigner, the widow, or the orphan.

So Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Help God's people, even in little things, even if helping is not going to make you famous, and even if they are just ordinary people. If you have been craving for prominence and power, and if you have ignored the weak, repent. And then work to help the church of Jesus Christ – whose you are by blood and baptism (洗礼). This is how you live for Jesus.

2. Examine your words, life, and actions and see if you are putting stumbling blocks in front of others – in front of your spouse, your children, your brothers and sisters, your co-workers, or your extended circle of family and friends, so they don't come to Christ or so that they don't grow in Christ. If you have, become afraid. Yes, become afraid of what Christ might do to you if you harm any of his children. And repent. Ask God to help you to live to serve his covenant people.

Finally, it may be that I and others here have put stumbling blocks in your path because we have not properly reflected Christ. We want God to forgive us. We want you to

forgive us. Please don't let the stumbling blocks in front of you keep you from coming to Jesus. Ask God to lead you into his kingdom. Entrance into the kingdom was paid by Jesus. It is free for you. There is no eternal life outside of the kingdom...only eternal death in hell.