



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Mark

Chapter 9

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Introduction

Chapter Outline

- The promise to behold the kingdom of God 9:1
- Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13
- A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29
- Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection 9:30-32
- Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37
- Using the Name of Jesus 9:38-41
- Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48
- Tasteless Salt Is Worthless 9:49-50

The Promise to Behold the Kingdom of God 9:1



- This verse properly belongs to the preceding chapter, and to the preceding discourse
- How can this be that *some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God?*
- It is very likely that the words do not apply to the final judgment, to which they are generally referred; but to the wonderful display of God's grace and power after the day of Pentecost
- Our Lord evidently speaks of the establishment of the Christian Church after the day of Pentecost, and its final triumph after the destruction of the Temple

The Promise to Behold the Kingdom of God 9:1



- The destruction of Jerusalem, and the Jewish economy, which our Lord here predicts, took place about forty-three years after this
- And some of the persons now with Him doubtless survived that period, and witnessed the extension of the Messiah's kingdom
- Our Lord told them these things before, that when they came to pass they might be confirmed in the faith, and expect an exact fulfillment of all the other promises and prophecies which concerned the extension and support of the kingdom of Christ
- Walking with Jesus doesn't just mean a life of death and crosses
- It also means a life of the power and glory of the kingdom of God

The Promise to Behold the Kingdom of God 9:1



- *the kingdom of God* May also signify the apostles and their successors in the sacred ministry, preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles in the power of the Holy Spirit
- Some believe that that promise was realized, when three of the disciples enjoyed the transfiguration of the Lord Christ
- St. Ambrose says: “Peter, James, and John beheld the glory of resurrection; so they did not know death.”
- Others understand here by the kingdom of God Christ’s resurrection from the dead, when Christ’s kingdom began to be fully made known, Acts 10:42

The Promise to Behold the Kingdom of God 9:1



- Others believe that the divine promise is always kept, being enjoyed by believers in every generation; when their souls enter into the inner splendor of God's glory; the kingdom is proclaimed in them, not tasting the death of sin, or getting overcome by the devil (death)
- St. John Saba says: "Blessed is the soul that kept itself free from offenses; entered to within itself, and beheld God reclining on His throne, which is the mind; and received from Him a new commandment, that is the spiritual love, which is the consummation of the Law."

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- The same experience is recorded in Matthew 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36
- However, St. Luke says, *after 8 days*
- St. Augustine and others taught that he left out of his calculation the day on which Peter gave his confession of faith and Jesus spoke the words concerning His kingdom in and the day on which they ascended the mountain, suggesting that the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark have simply counted the intermediate days between these two events and therefore used the expression "after six days"

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- St. Augustine and others believed it was on the seventh day after they arrived and the eighth day after they set out that they ascended in agreement with the Gospel according to St. Luke
- “Leaving out of their calculation the day on which Jesus spoke these words, and the day on which he exhibited that memorable spectacle on the mount, they have regarded simply the intermediate days, and have used the expression, "after six day." But Luke, reckoning in the extreme day at either end, that is to say, the first day and the last day, has made it "after eight days," in accordance with that mode of speech in which the part is put for the whole.” (St. Augustine, Harmony of the Gospels, 2.5)

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- Six days after this discourse with his disciples, in their way to Caesarea Philippi
- Having promised His disciples that there are some, standing with Him, who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God come with power, He did not designate the names of those who are going to enjoy that privilege, to protect them from envy or jealousy
- And now, we see Him taking Peter, James and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves , to proclaim to them the splendor of His deity

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- This experience with the divine is the revelation of the Kingdom for three of the Apostles
- The disciples must have been frightened and discouraged after Jesus' prediction of His death
- To give them a vision to grasp in their darkest hour when the prediction of His death is fulfilled, Jesus took Peter, James and John Zebedee, to let them witness a manifestation of His glory that confirms He is the Son of God and that He will come in glory when all has been fulfilled

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- St. John Chrysostom believes that what the evangelists wrote concerning that event, was confined to what the language can express
- What took place was beyond human imagination, saying, “If He had become shining like the sun, the disciple would not have fallen on their faces, as they are used to the sun every day of their life; but He became shining with a greater splendor than the sun...; so they could not stand it, they fell.”
- What are these clothes on the Master, shining with splendor, but His Church, of which is said by St. Augustine that is the mark of true believers: exalted splendor

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- The law and the prophets were signified by Moses and Elias
- They appear together to bear witness to Christ as the true Messiah, the Savior of the world, prefigured in the Law, and foretold by the prophets
- St. John Chrysostom presents to us an explanation for it, that, when the multitude said that He was Elijah or one of the prophets, He intended to appear to His disciples together with Moses and Elijah, in order to demonstrate to them the difference between Himself and His servants

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- Also, because He was accused of being a breaker of the Law, and a blasphemer, taking on Himself the glory of the Father, He intended to bring with Him Moses the receiver of the Law, and Elijah, the zealous for the glory of God, to make known the insult of His accusers
- He might also have intended, through their appearance prior to crucifixion, to proclaim to His disciples, that they should not have fear of the Cross, as He accepted it by His own will, or else it would not have happened

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- As He is far greater than Moses, who rescued the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, and than Elijah, who asked for, and got, fire from heaven, that consumed the two leaders of fifties together with their men
- Our Lord brought with Him, at His transfiguration, Moses who had died, and Elijah who had not, that He might show His power over both Life and Death
- We learn from St. Luke 9:33 that Peter spoke just as Moses and Elijah were departing

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- Peter was excited, and there was fear mingled with his excitement
- His first idea was to seek that they might remain, for he saw that they were just preparing to depart
- The scholar Origen thinks what St. Peter the apostle said, out of his eagerness to stay in this site, only meant the Lord would stay there and not come down and would not go up to Jerusalem, and consequently He would not be endangered to death

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- God commanded Moses the prophet to build an assembly tent, or a tabernacle to dwell in it as a sign of His presence amidst His people and His care of them
- But our teacher St. Peter the apostle was not yet aware of the mystery of unity between the old law, the prophets and the gospel ... he did not ask for one tabernacles including the three of them as a sign of God's presence, he rather asked for three of them
- St. Peter did not know what else to make of it than that Moses and Elijah had come to stay

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- A cloud is a frequent vehicle for the manifestation of God's presence in Scripture, Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 24:15-1, 33:9, 34:5, 2; 40:34; Daniel 7:13; 2 Maccabees 2:8; Acts 1:9; Revelation 11:12, 14:14
- The disciples were admitted within this cloud that they might have a foretaste of future glory
- And that they might be witnesses of what took place under the cloud
- And especially that they might be able to give evidence throughout all ages of the voice which they heard come out of the cloud and St. Peter says, 2 Peter 1:18, *which came from heaven*

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- The same Voice which had been heard once before at the Baptism, Matthew 3:17, and which was to be heard again when He stood on the threshold of His Passion, John 12:28, attesting His Divinity and Sonship at the beginning, at the middle, and at the close of His ministry
- What does the voice of the Father wish, but, for us to receive the incarnated Word of God in our life; to hear Him, and to abide in Him
- The Father's desire is to see us glorified in His Son

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- *He commanded them that they should tell no one*, May be because He wanted them to spend some in contemplation as to what has happened
- As St. Hillary, Bishop of Poitier says, “He commanded them to keep silent about what they had seen, so they might be filled with the Holy Spirit, and they might preach the spiritualities.”
- That commandment, no doubt confused them
- They knew for sure that He is Christ, and bore testimony to that
- According to the Jewish thought, the Messiah does not die

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- So, what did He mean by saying, *till the Son of Man had risen from the dead*
- The disciples believed the resurrection of the dead, but they did not know what Christ meant by *His rising from the dead*
- Their thoughts were filled with the idea of a glorious kingdom in this world, in which they should enjoy great dignities and offices under the Messiah
- No doubt the general resurrection at the end of the world was an article of faith with which the disciples were familiar
- But they could not understand, when He spoke of His own immediate rising from the dead

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- So their perplexities led them at last to ask Him the question
- Or rather to make the remark to Him, *the scribes say that Elijah must come first* with a view to obtaining some clearer understanding
- They had just seen Elijah in the Transfiguration, and they had seen him disappear
- They wondered why he should have departed
- They thought, it may be, that he ought to have remained thinking he might be the forerunner of Christ and of His kingdom and glory, Malachi 4:6

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- Jesus clears up their confusion by identifying John the Baptist as the one who has come in the spirit of Elijah
- He just had his fiery thoughts and kindled zeal for God's glory
- Also his life of solitude in the wilderness, for he was paving the way for repentance in the preparation for the Messiah, the Savior
- Elijah did come; the angel says, concerning John the Baptist: *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah."* Luke 1:17

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- And as Origen says, that it is John, who carries the characters of Elijah, and not his person
- Fr. Theophlactius also says: “John rebuked iniquity; He was as zealous and a hermit as Elijah; but they did not listen to him as being Elijah, but murdered him in a vicious way, cruelly beheading him.”
- As though He is saying to them, they put all their hope on the coming of Elijah and Christ
- Elijah did come; and instead of listening to him, they killed him

Jesus Transfigured on the Mount 9:2-13



- And Christ did also come; and instead of believing in Him they are going to kill Him
- In other words, the Lord Christ demands from them to reconsider their way of thinking; to apprehend matters through spiritual concept and new faith
- If the transfiguration is the declaration of God's heavenly kingdom in us, then there is no way for this transfiguration in us without Elijah, that is, repentance



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- While the Lord Christ led three of His disciples up to a high mountain, to proclaim to them His kingdom coming with power, we see some of the disciples standing helplessly before an unclean mute spirit; until the Master came to reveal to them the need for fast and prayers, as the ways to overcome the devil by the Lord, the Grantor of victory
- Thus the kingdom is not just a revelation to be enjoyed by the disciples on the Mount of Tabor, but it is also the fruit of spiritual strife against the devil, by the Lord, the conqueror



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- *all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, The multitude were so ready to see Christ that they saluted Him when yet a great way off*
- Some imagine that the face of our Savior, being rendered more beautiful by His transfiguration, attracted the attention and admiration of the people
- They were affected by the glory, even though they did not know what had taken place on the mountain



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- Jesus inquires about the nature of the dispute and discovers that His disciples have been unsuccessful in casting a demon out of a boy, a power Jesus gave them when He sent them on their missionary journey, Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1
- Unlike other demons this one is mute and tortures the boy with fits that threaten his life
- The father of the sick boy was the one to answer explaining the situation laying the main stress of course on the terrible condition of his child



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- The Lord Christ rebuked His disciples for their inability to cast out the unclean spirit
- He rebuked them for their little faith even though they have witnessed so many signs of God's presence and grace in Jesus' works, then He took over the task Himself
- Some believe that this rebuke might have been addressed to the Jews and their scribes as well as at the weakness of faith of His own disciples
- The father of the child, and those that were with him, brought the child to Jesus



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- When the child saw Jesus; the evil spirit in him threw him into a violent fit, shook him, and convulsed him in a dreadful manner
- He knew his time was short, and being filled with rage, that he should be obliged, as he knew he must, to leave the child very speedily; and was therefore resolved to do all the mischief, and put him to all the pain he could
- The Master does not bear to see someone suffering; and yet, He let that poor fellow suffer for a short time, according to St. John Chrysostom, in order to persuade his father to believe



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- Our Lord's question, was intended, not of course for His own information, but to inspire the father with hope and confidence
- Having told briefly the affecting features of the case, the poor father, half dispirited by the failure of the disciples and the aggravated bitterness of the malady itself in presence of their Master, yet encouraged too by what he had heard of Christ, by the severe rebuke He had given to His disciples for not having faith enough to cure the boy, and by the dignity with which He had ordered him to be brought to Him, in this mixed state of mind, he closes his description of the case with these touching words, *have compassion on us and help us.*



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- The Lord responded, telling him that the key to healing is in his hands, if he believes
- The answer of the father is touching and beautiful
- In faith with humility, he cried out and said in tears: *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”*
- The man's plea is in itself a confession of his faith in Jesus
- He believes Jesus can not only heal his child but that He can reach into his heart and transform him, giving him the gift of the faith he needs



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- The crowd was constantly increasing
- Jesus seeing the crowd proceeds to cure without further delay
- So calling him, *Deaf and dumb spirit*, not because the spirit was dumb and deaf, but because he had been the cause of dumbness and deafness in the child
- He had at times taken away both his speech and hearing
- Christ, in an authoritative way, ordered the unclean spirit to leave his possession, and never attempt to regain it more



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- This He said, partly with regard to the devil, who would be desirous of repossession
- And partly with respect to the disease, which had its intervals, and returned at certain times
- And also with respect to the father of the child, to confirm his faith in the cure, and that he might be in no pain about the return of the disorder
- The rest of the narrative shows how malignant and powerful this evil spirit was, who dared so to resist and defy Christ that, in his departure out of the afflicted boy, he almost robbed him of life



A Boy Is Healed 9:14-29

- The disciples ask Jesus why they were unable to heal the boy
- It is possible that their success during their mission has made the disciples come to rely on their own efforts instead of acknowledging that all such powers come only from God through them
- Their failure is a lesson in humility
- St. John Chrysostom says: “They were afraid that they probably have lost the gift they were granted, namely, the authority over unclean spirits.”
- Truly, the disciples have got that free authority; yet, they need to get it kindled through life of piety, by prayer and fasting, to enjoy a deep fellowship with God in His Son

Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection 9:30-32



- Our Lord and his disciples now left the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi
- Their route would be across the Jordan above the Sea of Galilee, and so by the usual track through Galilee down to Capernaum
- As the time for His Passion is drawing closer, Jesus focuses His attention on preparing His disciples for the traumatic events and test of faith that they will experience
- He is also equipping them for taking up their mission as His messengers in carrying the Gospel of salvation to the world

Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection 9:30-32



- Indeed, the last time, Peter rebuked Him, 8:32
- But now, they did not understand what He was saying, and were afraid to ask Him
- Perhaps it wasn't so much that they did not understand but it was denial in that they did not want to understand
- They must have understood the sense of His words, which were clear and express; especially concerning His death, which affected their minds with trouble and grief; for Matthew says, *they were exceedingly sorrowful*, Matthew 17:23

Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection 9:30-32



- This lack of comprehension or unwillingness to understand might be because knowing Him to be God, they could not conceive how a God could die
- They have seen Jesus' acts of power in conquering the force of storms and His authority over sickness and demons
- It was probably inconceivable to them that He would not exercise the same power and authority over mere men
- It was not possible for human thought to appreciate the idea of establishing the kingdom of God upon the tree of disgrace, the Cross



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- If the Master has established for us the way of salvation through His Cross, contrary to what was expected by humans, He, in His love, desires to carry us with Him along that way through humility
- The arrival at Capernaum is given by St. Matthew in connection with the narrative of the collectors of the tribute money, Matthew 17:24
- *in the house*, Probably of Simon and Andrew, very likely where He used to be when at Capernaum



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- *on the road?*, Whilst in their journey from Caesarea Philippi, to Galilee
- Or as they travelled through the parts of Galilee to Capernaum
- This question Christ put, not as ignorant of what had passed among them, but in order to have the case laid before Him
- That He might reprove them for their pride and ambition, and have an opportunity of teaching them humility and of informing them of the nature of His kingdom, and subjects; concerning which, they had entertained very wrong notions



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- It has been well noticed that this passage, given in substance in all the synoptic Gospels, is a striking evidence of the truthfulness and impartiality of the disciples
- This dispute of theirs might easily have been suppressed as scarcely creditable to them
- But in writing the Gospels the evangelists thought more of what exalted the Savior than what belittled themselves



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- This dispute of the disciples shows how thoroughly they realized the nearness of His kingdom, and at the same time how much they had yet to learn as to the qualifications necessary for admission to it
- It is not unlikely that the preference given by our Lord to Peter, James, and John to witness Jesus in His glory in the Transfiguration experience may have given occasion for this contention
- They probably do not answer because they are embarrassed, and they know He will not approve



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- They wondering who should be advanced to the highest post, and have the greatest place of authority, honor, and dignity
- The subject was introduced, not by our Lord, but by the disciples themselves, who came and asked Jesus who should be greatest
- Perhaps one or two of them first referred the matter to Jesus, who put them off till they should all be assembled together at Capernaum



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- He sat down, with the authority of the great Teacher, to instill solemnly a fundamental principle of the Christian life, *If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.*
- In the secular world greatness is based on social rank, wealth, or a special ability
- It is Jesus' teaching in this passage that those standards of greatness in the world are not what count in His Kingdom
- *set him in the midst of them*, This beautiful trait is mentioned by our Evangelist alone



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- He presented them with a practical demonstration, by taking in His arms a child, in order to exhort them to receive humanity with the spirit of love, as a child
- Jesus is also using the little child as a metaphor for the lowly and vulnerable in society
- Greatness in heaven is measured by child-like humility, obedience, self-denial and total dependence on God
- Whoever is more child-like in this way is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- Contrary to "greatness" according to the world's understanding, Jesus defines "greatness" in the Kingdom as childlike faith and humility
- St. Mark omits part of what St. Matthew records, *"Therefore whoever humbles himself. . ."* Matthew 18:4
- And he adds the last clause of St. Luke *"Whoever receives Me . . ."* Luke 18:17
- When we love a little child in the name of Christ, i.e., for His sake, and after His manner, we are sharers in His spirit



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- And when we love or receive Him who was one with the Father, we enter into fellowship with Him who is the Supreme and Eternal Love, John 14:10,23
- *Whoever receives one of these little children*, That is, such in simplicity, in innocence and humility, such as this little child is in age and stature
- *In My Name*, That is, with special regard to my Name
- He thus seems to link all that is good and beautiful with His Name; as all that is really good and excellent in man is a reflection of His goodness



Who Is the Greatest? 9:33-37

- Our Lord, therefore, speaks first, literally of a little child, and secondly, in a mystical sense, of those who are like little children; making that little child in His arms the figure and type of all those who are like little children
- The sense, therefore, of His words is that humility, which is the foundation and the measure of spiritual perfection, so pleases Him
- And all who would be His disciples must become as little children, and so will they deserve to be received by all

Using the Name of Jesus

9:38-41



- This account that follows, omitted by St. Matthew, is recorded by St. Luke in the same connection
- It indicates something of the same zeal as that which desired that fire might come from heaven to consume the Samaritans who refused to receive our Lord, Luke 9:52
- The words were so far an “answer” to what our Lord had said, that they were suggested by it
- John has apparently not learned from the previous teaching

Using the Name of Jesus

9:38-41



- He desired to show, as in self-vindication, that he not only “received” His Master, but that he was unwilling to “receive” any who did not openly follow Him as a disciple
- Jesus’ answer reveals that that man who was casting out demons, was not against Christ or His gospel
- But was working for His sake with a true faith, although he did not have the chance for an obvious fellowship
- Our Church ecumenical unity, is not based on congregations, but on the unity of living faith

Using the Name of Jesus

9:38-41



- There is no room for jealousy in the spiritual warfare that is necessary to advance the Kingdom
- *Do not forbid him*, Neither him, nor any other they should hereafter meet with, who might be casting out devils in His name, giving this as a reason for it
- We notice here, that the Lord was conservative in His words, as there are also, those who work powers in the name of Christ, but harbor evil in their hearts, as for example heretics who cause dissensions, and are evil in their own lives

Using the Name of Jesus

9:38-41



- The heretics of whom the Lord says, *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* Matthew 7:22-23
- *for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me.* Such a man can never reproach and blaspheme that name, which he makes use of in doing, and by which he does wonderful works

Using the Name of Jesus

9:38-41



- No man can call Jesus accursed, who casts out devils in His name; 1 Corinthians 12:3
- If he has spoken evil of Him before, he cannot do it "again"
- He cannot very easily and readily go into a way of blaspheming that name, by which he does his mighty works
- His conscience will not admit of it; and besides, it would be contrary to his interest
- It must worsen his credit, and he lose the esteem and applause of men, he had gained by his miracles; for to dishonor that name, would be to reproach himself

Using the Name of Jesus

9:38-41



- There is no such thing as neutrality in reference to Christ and His cause
- We must be either with Him or against Him
- No one will readily speak evil of Him who has the faith to do a miracle in His name
- If he who gives a disciple a cup of water to drink in His Name, and out of regard for Him, does well, and shall be rewarded of God, much more shall he be rewarded who casts out devils in His Name

Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48



- This verse stands out as the severe contrast to what has gone before
- As he who receives and encourages Christ's little ones and those who are like little children and believe in Him, receives Him, and so shall receive from Him the glorious rewards of Heaven
- So, on the contrary, whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Christ is guilty of deadly sin
- *And it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea*

Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48



- The offender of the little ones is still more an offender against himself
- Our Lord makes special mention of the Hand, the Foot, the Eye, those members, whereby we do wrong, or walk astray, or gaze on what is sinful
- The hand, or the foot, or the eye represents any instrument by which sin may be committed; and it applies to those who may be the means of drawing us into sin
- If your relative or your friend, who is useful or dear to you as your hand, your foot, or your eye, is drawing you into sin, cut him off from you, lest he should draw you into hell

Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48



- St. John Chrysostom says, “He is not talking here of our body members, but of our intimate friends, whom we consider indispensable to us, as our own body members; nothing could harm us like a corrupt and evil friendship.”
- *where “Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched,*
These words are a quotation from Isaiah 66:24
- The metaphor is very striking as well as awful
- Some say that the worm that never dies is the memory of the past which never ends to distress the conscience of the unrepentant

Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48



- It is repeatedly said of the wicked, *their worm will not die*, as well as, *the fire is not quenched*
- , *cut it off*, Jesus is not speaking literally; He uses overstatement to make His point that one must do whatever it takes to avoid sin and therefore to avoid eternal condemnation
- Hell is the place or state where the wicked are doomed to an eternal fiery punishment which is often referred to as the Hell of the damned
- God severely punishes acts of evil

Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48



- *And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out*, Nothing is dearer to man than the eye
- It being very tender, and exceeding useful, this metaphor the Lord sometimes makes use of, to show how dear His people are unto Him, and what a tender concern He has for them, “*He kept him as the apple of His eye*”, Deuteronomy 32:10
- Jesus sums up His comments on sin by saying that sin not only causes others to stumble into sin and brings suffering to the world but one must avoid sin at all costs because sin can ultimately lead to eternal death

Jesus Warns of Offenses 9:42-48



- Many people, even Christians, find the Hell of eternal separation from God a difficult subject
- Yet, the teachings of Scripture and the Church affirm the existence of Hell and its eternal aspect
- *where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'*
This is repeated again, not only to assure the truth of the thing, but to raise the attention of the mind unto it, and fix an awful impression upon it

Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

9:49-50



- *For everyone will be seasoned with fire*, In the Old Covenant, sacrifices had to be seasoned with salt, before offering it to be burnt on the altar
- So also, if our life is to be offered as a sacrifice of love, God will not accept it, unless it is seasoned with the salt of brotherly love
- Some think that the Lord speaks here of the good and the evil which are alike and shall be "salted with fire"
- Both the salt and the fire are here used in a metaphorical sense
- There is a fire which is punishment, and there is a fire which purifies

Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

9:49-50



- In the case of the wicked the fire is punishment; and the salting with fire in their case can only mean the anguish of a tormented conscience
- But there is a fire which purifies
- St. Peter, addressing the Christians of the Dispersion, 1 Peter 4:12, asks them not to think it strange concerning the "fiery trial" which was among them
- As some believe it is their "salting with fire."
- Those persecutions which they suffered were their discipline of affliction, through which God was purifying and preserving them

Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

9:49-50



- This discipline is necessary for all Christians
- They must arm themselves with the same mind, even though they may not live in a time of outward persecution
- He who parts with the hand, or the foot, or the eye; meaning, he who surrenders what is dear to him
- He who parts with what he would rather keep, for the sake of Christ, is going through the discipline of self-sacrifice, which is often painful and severe, but nevertheless purifying

Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

9:49-50



- He is salted with fire; but he is pro-served by the power of God through faith unto salvation
- Others believe that the meaning is as the salt, loses its identity, if it loses its capability to season food, so also a Christian would lose his identity as a Christian, if he loses his love to, and peace with others
- Love, is not merely an essential feature of our life
- It is our whole life, without which we lose our Christian identity

Tasteless Salt Is Worthless

9:49-50



- The reference is to the visible community of believers, the Church of Christ, as preserving the world from corruption
- We must live according to Jesus' teachings in order to be a good influence in the world
- Christians who lose their commitment to Christ are not able to be a force for good in sharing the Gospel of salvation
- Jesus commands His disciples to keep the "salt" of their commitment alive so that they might have the unity that promotes peace

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- If we lose the true properties of salt
- If our Christianity loses its heart, its hastening, stimulating influence; so that on account of the love of the world, or the fear of man, or through lust or ambition, we fall away from the heavenly doctrine and life
- With what can salt itself be seasoned when its own chemical energies are lost?
- Our Lord plays upon this figure of salt, and cautions His disciples, lest by any means they should lose the qualities of this mystic salt

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- Verse 50 fitly winds up the whole
- Have the salt of wisdom and purity, and of a Christian life, namely, humility, charity, hatred of the world, and especially peace
- He is telling His disciple to not be idly competing about place or position, as not long ago they were disputing, verse 33
- Our Lord foresaw that this kind of contention and these ambitious aims, would prove a great problem and a great hindrance to the progress of His Church in the future ages of the world

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- But He also knew that if His disciples in every age would endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," their influence would be irresistible, and they would draw all men to them and to Himself



Discussion

- What did Jesus mean by saying that some among his hearers would not taste death before the coming of the kingdom of God? When will the coming of the kingdom be complete?
- Why was the transfiguration important to the early church?
- On what is the expectation of the “second coming” of Elijah based? What is the Old Testament context for the promise of Elijah’s return?



Discussion

- Does the father's perception of healing coincide with Jesus' understanding of healing? Why or why not?
- Why does Jesus use hyperbole in connection with his remarks on avoiding sin in verses 42-48? How does St. John Chrysostom view the meaning of these verses?
- What does it mean for you to be "first of all" by being the "last of all"? In whose name must the little child be received? What kind of person would that "little child" be in your life?



Discussion

- What is your besetting weakness, the area where you are most likely to sin? What have you done to correct it? How do your efforts compare with the solutions Jesus suggests?
- If God had written this chapter only for you, which words or phrases would he have underlined?