

"DIRE WARNINGS"

Mark 9:38-50

By Carl P. McMurray



In my NASV of Mark 9:38-50 the subtitle to the text is the heading of this article. I know Mark didn't divide up and title the text when he wrote this, but as I read through the text I couldn't help but agree with those who added this little title as a study aide. Besides the fact that it caught my attention as I read, it also identifies some words of our Lord for what they truly are, i.e. serious cautions on our behavior. Notice for example, Jesus warns...

Do not hinder a busy man. In verses 38-41 the disciples are instructed plainly that all do not have to be "with them" in order to be doing right. Jesus tells them to let the man alone who was doing right according to his own time and ability. A good lesson for us also, I believe. One does not have to be doing as "I" think he should in order for him to be busy in his service to God. Preachers sometimes draw a little heat because no matter how busy they may be, they will not be able to do things to suit all of those who may be watching and expecting. Church leaders are sometimes criticized because their critics don't know all they do and expect them to meet some arbitrary standard laid down by the critic. Church members are sometimes raked over the coals by leaders who expect all others to meet their personal expectations of giving, sacrificing time, effort, etc. In all these cases we would probably be wise to listen to Jesus. Don't hinder some one who's busy doing right. There's always the danger of "overloading the mule." If I'm busy with my own responsibilities and encouraging you to do the same, I will have all I can handle.

Do not cause another to stumble, that's the message of verse 42. We know how serious it is to lead another to sin when Jesus says it would be better to be drowned than to do so. Those who think that they don't have to answer to anyone or that, "it's nobody else's business what I do," had better think again. Before I take that drink, go to that dance, tell that off-color joke, start in with tobacco or use any drugs, before I "forsake" that Bible class or stay home from worship, before I dress (or undress) in a questionable manner or visit questionable places, these words of Jesus should cause me to think..." whether I sin or not, will cause another to sin by following me or be weakened by my example.

Do not allow self to cause you to be lost. Verses 43-48 goes right along with the previous thoughts as Jesus colorfully describes one's battle with himself. Our desires may speak loudly to us to "go ahead" and look, go or do. Jesus says it is not worth it however. Better to be hopelessly handicapped and lacking in something that "everyone" else has or does, and have eternal life, than to enjoy whatever our self wants and perish because of it. A hard lesson in self-discipline

and sacrifice is found here, but a necessary one.

Do not let your good flavor slip away. Verse 50 is where Jesus says, "have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." This salt is a good influence that God's people should have. I've known some "salty" people that were more like "shriveled up and pickled." That is not what Jesus speaks of here. He wants his brethren to be "full of flavor" in a dead and tasteless world, not shriveled up like a salty slug. There's a big difference. The difference is explained in His words, "be at peace with one another." That simple statement speaks of forgiveness, patience, gentleness, kindness, brotherly love, forbearance and much more. Whatever people do or "we think" people do to us in this life, we're being warned away from bitterness, grudge bearing, fault finding, back biting, etc. Always cultivate a flavor that draws people in and "seasons" their life.

The above are serious warnings indeed and worthy of our consideration. The rewards, like the penalties, will be much greater and far reaching than we can at first imagine. Let us all work together in encouraging one another and watching out for each other as we walk in God's light. God bless.

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