



Sunday, 9/30 – 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 10/1 – 7 PM
19th Sunday after Pentecost / 18th Sunday after Trinity – 2018

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Try to picture the gate of heaven, *and realize that inside the gate is a RESTRICTED AREA* – so some will be welcomed in, while others will be shut out. Which kind of person are you: ➡ Authorized to enter *through continuing to know Christ* or ➡ Unauthorized to enter *because of continually rejecting Christ?*

In this sermon we will **identify** who is authorized and who is not, **consider** the topic of falling away from Christ, and **see** our great need for God’s Holy Word!

- We and They are Authorized:** Just before today’s text, Jesus said, “...whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me” (Mk. 9:37 ESV). Then, *possibly feeling uncertain,* ³⁸ **John said to [Jesus], “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.”** // In other words, *he was not formally attached to Jesus’ disciples.*

- a. ³⁹ **But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon [quickly] afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For the one who is not against us is for us. //** So the person **actually did** cast out demons in Jesus’ name – *meaning he had a true connection to Jesus*, not like this man in Acts 19: “Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.’ ...But the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?’ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded” (13-16 ESV). Therefore, *regardless of their Christian denomination, all who trust in Jesus as their Savior* are authorized to enter into heaven!
- b. ⁴¹ **For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. //** In other words, those who do such a thing **in connection with Christ** *show their faith in Christ!*

2. **Falling Away from Christ:**

- a. Someone causing a believer to fall away: As the “**cup of water**” points to someone who is **for Christ**, *these words point to someone who is **against Christ**:*
- ⁴² **“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [**fall away**], it would be better for him if [right NOW, before he ruins the faith of a believer,] a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. //** It’s never good if one person causes another to sin; however, here, Jesus is talking about *an unbeliever taking action for the*

purpose of destroying the faith of a believer! Lenski noted that the Greek term *σκανδαλίζω*, the source of our English word *scandal*, “**always denotes spiritual destruction [for example] as an animal is caught by touching the bait affixed to the crooked stick in a dead-fall trap**” (401). Jesus wants us to know that the *worst physical death* is better than destroying a believer!

- b. A part of our body causing us to fall away: This section deals with three of our body parts – all of which are pairs AND are controlled by our hearts: *hands, feet, and eyes*. Since eternal separation from God and eternal torment are so horrible – and the unbelievers will be **thrown** into such places, *Jesus calls us to strongly consider these very shocking statements*:
- i. Hand: ⁴³ **And if your hand causes you to sin [fall away], cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell [γέενναν]¹, to the unquenchable fire.** // What is better – *one hand and heaven or two hands and hell?* As we would want a decomposing limb to be amputated for the good of our bodies, *so we should want sin removed for the good of our souls.*
 - ii. Foot: ⁴⁵ **And if your foot causes you to sin [fall away], cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell.** // What is better – *one foot and heaven or two feet and hell?* But even one foot can cause us to fall away; *what we really need is a heart transplant!*

¹ A ravine south of Jerusalem where †garbage, †bodies of dead animals, and †bodies of executed criminals were dumped and burned. *That description helps us to visualize the place of fire for the punishment of the wicked* (Mt 5:22, 29f; 23:15; Mk 9:45, 47; Jn 3:6) (Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon, 38). In the NT *Gehenna* is translated *hell*.

- iii. Eye: ⁴⁷ **And if your eye causes you to sin [fall away], 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.’ // What is better – *one eye and heaven* or *two eyes and hell*? And, **don’t forget**, in hell ♣the worm keeps working on the inside and ♣the fire keeps burning on the outside 😞😞😞😞😞😞😞😞😞😞!**

3. **Our Great Need for God’s Holy Word:**

- a. ⁴⁹ **For everyone** [*thus, every believer*] **will be salted with fire.** // As **salt** removes germs from meat and **fire** removes impurities from metal, so the **Word of God** sanctifies believers (2 Timothy 3:16). Therefore, knowing that God works through His Word to bless us, *let us faithfully and diligently read, think, and apply!*
- b. 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.”** // When the prick of a pin no longer affects a person physically, *something is very wrong!* In a similar way, when the Word of God no longer affects a person spiritually, *something is very wrong!* Therefore, may the Holy Spirit through the Word *always have His way with us!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, ♣get our attention, ♣move us to open the Word each day, and ♣work through the Bible for our benefit and unto God’s glory! In Jesus’ name!

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