

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Mark 9:42-50**.
- B. From Roy H. Enoch (8-7-1994).
- C. Men often lose sight of how much salvation is worth and how much it cost:
 - 1. Some do not appreciate the worth of spiritual and material blessings.
 - a. They tend to take it for granted, and do as THEY please.
 - b. They do not want to be inconvenienced for the Lord's work or service.
 - c. If they want to do something else, that comes first.
 - d. If they are tired or feel bad, they go to work, but not to worship or Bible class.
 - 2. Some do not appreciate how much salvation cost:
 - a. There are some things that money cannot buy (Psa. 49:7,8).
 - b. It cost the Son of God the suffering of the cross.
 - c. It costs us a change of our life in turning from the practice of sin.

I. IT IS A TERRIBLE SIN TO CAUSE ONE WHO TRUSTS CHRIST TO STUMBLE.

- A. Our behavior always affects others, especially those who love us (Mk. 9:42).
 - 1. "...one of these little ones..." does not refer to infants; they are pure and innocent.
 - 2. These are "...little ones who believe in Me..." (Mk. 9:36).
 - a. But they may not be young in years, but are immature, as children of God.
 - b. The term is one of endearment for those of any age (1Jn. 2:1).
 - c. Peter addressed new Xians in this way (1Pet. 2:1,2).
- B. To cause an immature believer "to stumble" results in severe penalty.
 - 1. Stumbling does not refer to a casual slip, it is to entrap or trip up; make to offend.
 - 2. Figuratively, it means to stumble or entice to sin, apostasy or displeasure.
 - 3. So it really means to cause them to leave the truth.
 - 4. No penalty is too great for one who causes an immature Xian to leave X.
 - 5. The penalty described was not practiced by the Jews.
 - a. But it would make a vivid impression because the Romans used it.
 - b. It was reported that the Romans did this to some of the leaders of the insurrection under the Zealot leader, Judas the Galilean, mentioned by Gamaliel in Ac. 5:37.
 - c. Jesus says that it would be "better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (9:42).
 - d. The "great millstone" referred to a large mill pulled by donkeys rather than the smaller pulled by men.

II. ONE SHOULD MAKE ANY SACRIFICE TO AVOID STUMBLING.

- A. Three verses repeat the extent of sacrifice we must be willing to make to avoid being led to "stumble" or go back into sin (Mk. 9:43,45,47). Paul in Rom. 9:2-3.
- B. Having a hand, or foot cut off, or an eye gouged out w/o any pain-medicine or antibiotic is better than being cast into hell.
 - 1. "Hell" translates the Greek word "gehenna" which is explained as unquenchable fire.
 - a. It referred to the Valley of Ben-Hinnon, south of the wall of Jerusalem.
 - b. It was used for the sacrifice of children by burning them to worship of Molech. Josiah made it unclean for even idol worship (2Kgs. 23:10).
 - c. In NT times, it was the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem, where all refuse was thrown and also the bodies of dead animals and criminals.
 - d. The fires continually burned and maggots continued to feed on the decaying bodies.

- e. The emphasis is that this punishment will never end.
- 2. A doctor will sometimes have to amputate a limb in order to save a life.
 - a. This emphasizes the much higher relative value of eternal life as compared to the comfort or convenience of having the use of our hand, foot or eye.
 - b. Those who do not have the self-discipline to deny themselves things they want will deny themselves eternal life and receive eternal punishment.
 - c. Jesus loved people enough to tell them the consequences of their actions.
 - d. We hope that we love people enough to do the same and love ourselves enough to exercise this kind of discipline.
 - e. He also loved enough to tell people of the sacrifice that they will have to make to put Him first (Mk 10:21; Mt. 16:24).
- C. These verses also indicate the nature and duration of punishment:
 - 1. Hell is a place of eternal fire, and the worm does not die.
 - 2. Jesus gave the same duration for life and punishment (Mt. 25:46).
 - 3. The same Greek word is translated “everlasting” and “eternal”.

III. WE SHOULD BE "SALT" TO THOSE AROUND US.

- A. “Everyone will be salted with fire” (Mk. 9:49).
 - 1. He had been talking about those who left the Lord, suffering eternal fire as punishment.
 - 2. Now He speaks of fire as a purifying or seasoning influence.
 - 3. Paul said that all who live godly shall have persecution (2Tim. 3:12).
 - 4. Peter warned of fiery trials (1Pet. 1:7; 4:12,15,16).
 - 5. Persecution, like fire, can purify, make the genuine shine brighter and purge away the impurities and artificial.
- B. Salt can lose its influence if contaminated:
 - 1. “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?” (Mk. 9:50a).
 - 2. Jesus acknowledged that salt is necessary and beneficial.
 - 3. The salt in Palestine usually came from the Dead Sea.
 - a. When mixed with gypsum, mud, and alkalizes it reduced or nullified its effectiveness.
 - b. Jesus said that it was only good to be thrown out (Mt. 5:13).
 - c. It was thrown out on the road way to be walked on.
 - 4. If the Xian influence loses its “flavor” and becomes like the world, it is worthless.
 - 5. He is urging faithfulness to Him and His doctrine in our lives.
- C. Xian influence is characterized by peace with one another.
 - 1. “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another” (Mk. 9:50b).
 - 2. We are to live a pure Xian life that we might have a positive influence on each other and the world around us (Jn. 13:34,35).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. It is a great sin to make another fall, to stumble.
- B. It is a great tragedy for us to fall and stumble into unfaithfulness.
- C. Be salt and live in peace with each other.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.