

## “If Your Right Eye”

Matt. 5:29, 30, 18:8,9; Mk. 9:43-48.

MAT 5:29 "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

MAT 5:30 "And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

Jesus speaks here of the “right eye” and the “right hand.”

MAT 18:8 "And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. Lit. the fire eternal

MAT 18:9 "And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell. Lit. hell of fire

Jesus speaks here of the “hand” or “foot” and “eye.”

MAR 9:43 "And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,

MAR 9:44 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.]

MAR 9:45 "And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having your two feet, to be cast into hell,

MAR 9:46 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.]

MAR 9:47 "And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell,

MAR 9:48 where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Jesus speaks here of “hand” and “foot” and “eye.”

Verses 44 & 46 are not found in many Greek manuscripts..

1. These are among the most difficult utterances Jesus ever made.
  - a. Nearly all are shocked by them and cannot imagine Jesus uttering such words.
  - b. Many have ignored these teachings or rejected them as a part of the sayings of Jesus.
  - c. Surely Jesus would not suggest or command mutilation of the body.
2. He had earlier talked about committing adultery in the heart. (Matt. 5:27, 28).

MAT 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery';  
MAT 5:28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already **in his heart.**

- a. Most people believe that adultery is only a physical act.
- b. They are shocked that Jesus taught that one who continuously lusts has committed adultery “in his heart.”

- c. They believe lusting is harmless and certainly not sin.
  - d. Evil thoughts may enter the mind, but we are not to dwell on them.
3. In Matthew 18 he had earlier talked about the seriousness of causing others to stumble. (Matt. 18:5-7).
- MAT 18:5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;  
 MAT 18:6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.  
 MAT 18:7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!
4. **In the lesson texts Jesus addresses the things that cause us to stumble.**
- a. The word “offend” in the KJV has the idea of causing to stumble, that is, sin.
  - b. The Greek “skandalizo” [skahn dah lee zoh] means to “cause to stumble, cause to sin.”
  - c. “Stumble” has the meaning of “sin” as used in the verses we are studying.
5. We can see that Jesus regards causing others to stumble [sin] as a most serious matter. (Matt. 18:6,7). See 1 Cor. 10:32.
6. He says “it is better” to “enter life” maimed than to be “cast into hell.”
- a. Physical deformities will not keep one from entering heaven.
  - b. Any physical deformity will be quickly changed at the resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:49-58; Phil. 3:20, 21).
7. **Note:**
- a. Most people would be willing to amputate a body part to save their physical life.
  - b. If it would do any good, most people would give up a body part to enter heaven.
  - c. Nothing is more important than life with God.

### **Jesus Believed In Hell**

1. It very apparent that Jesus believed in “hell.”
2. Jesus had more to say about “hell” than anyone else in scripture.
  - a. The word "Gehenna" is used twelve times in Scripture, all but once by Jesus. (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5).
  - b. The word “fire” [pur] in reference to “hell” is used many times in the gospels mostly by Jesus. (Matt. 3:10, 11, 12; 7:19; 13:40, 42; 13:50; 18:8; 25:41; Mk. 9:43, 44, 46, 48; Lk. 3:9, 16, 17; Jno. 15:6).
3. He did not view it as the grave or something temporary.
  - a. “Eternal hell” - Matt. 25:46

- b. “Eternal fire” - Matt. 18:8.
- c. “Fiery hell” - Matt. 18:9.
- d. “Unquenchable fire” - Mk. 9:43. Gr. “asbestos” [**ahs** behs tahs] - “unquenchable, inextinguishable.”
- e. “Furnace of fire” - Matt. 13:42.

### **Was Jesus Speaking Literally Or Figuratively About Maiming Body?**

1. This question is never addressed in scripture.
2. Whatever conclusion we draw must come from looking at all related scriptures and using our deductive reasoning.

### **Here Are Some Facts That Are Revealed Elsewhere In Scripture**

1. We have no example in scripture of those sinning maiming their bodies or being reprimanded for not doing so.
2. This was once a very abused passage of scripture.
  - a. William Tyndale, 1492?-1536, was an English reformer and martyr.
  - b. He translated the New Testament into English and it was first printed in 1525 A.D..
  - c. Many resisted the publication of the New Testament into English and the circulation of it because it was argued that the simple reader might mistakenly take such language literally and pluck out his eye or eyes. They warned the whole realm would be filled with blind man.
  - d. Tyndale resisted this restriction maintaining simple people were able to distinguish between literal and figurative terms.
3. Our bodies are called “the temple of the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). See Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; 1 Jn. 3:24.
  - a. Paul had earlier spoken of the whole church as the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).
  - b. It is obvious, from the context, that Jesus speaks of the individual Christian as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 6:12-18).
  - c. He gives the fact that the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit should motivate him/her from committing fornication.
4. **Let’s examine the examples of Christ.**
  - a. He talked about plucking out an eye.
    - 1) “right eye” Matt. 5:29.
    - 2) This was presumably the more precious of the two.
  - b. Jesus talked about cutting off the hand.
    - 1) “right hand” (Matt. 5:29).

- 2) This was presumably the more precious of the two, but it would not be to left handed people.
  - 3) Being left-handed was rare, but not unknown. (Jud. 20:16).
- c. He talked about the cutting off of the foot. (Mk. 9:45).
- d. It is unlikely that:
- 1) A thief cutting off his hand would end his thievery.
  - 2) A thief or adulterer cutting off a foot would end his/her sins.
  - 3) A person who lusts or is filled with greed for another's goods would cease these activities by plucking out an eye.
- e. Some people would end up with no eyes, no hands, and no feet. They might also need to cut out the tongue, destroy their hearing or even destroy the mind.
- f. Since sin comes from the heart, the temptations would still be there. (Matt. 15:19, 20).

MAT 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.  
 MAT 15:20 "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

### **What Are The Meaning Of Christ's Words?**

1. We can be confident that Jesus is not speaking literally.
2. There is no record in the New Testament of anyone mutilating himself because of these words of Jesus.
3. We have no commandment from any apostle for the first Christians to literally mutilate themselves nor do we find any examples of it.
4. The idea is that it would be better to go through this life without certain things than to lose our souls in hell.
5. To pluck out the eye or cut off the hand or foot is a hyperbole stressing the pressing need to curb passions of evil at all costs.
6. Eternal life with God is more precious than these precious members - eyes, hands, feet.
7. It is the will of man that needs to be brought under the control of God.
8. The members of the body here represent the cause of stumbling whatever it might be.
9. From the illustrations He is using one would be forced to conclude that He is talking about things that are as near and dear to us as our hands, feet, eyes.
10. So much so, that we need to remove whatever is close and dear to us if it causes us to sin!
  - a. Jesus is using hyperbole, of course, for what good would it be to pluck out only one eye or both eyes for that matter? A blind person can have evil desires and sin.
  - b. Sin is like cancer; sometimes "radical surgery" is the only solution!

c. **The surgery is on the heart and blind - not the body.** (Matt. 15:16-20).

11. What are some possible things Jesus might have in mind?

a. It could be **a friend or relative that drags us down.** (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14).

b. It could be **a business or job opportunity.** (2 Cor. 6:14).

c. It could be **where we live.**

1) Some people are faithful if they are near the church building and the saints.

2) Some become very unfaithful if they are a distance from them.

d. It would be **a mate.**

1) One must not leave a mate merely because he/she is an unbeliever. (1 Cor. 7:12-16; 1 Pet. 3:1).

1CO 7:12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away.

1CO 7:13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away.

1CO 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

1CO 7:15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

1CO 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

1PE 3:1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

2) One should not stay with a mate if the mate is forcing him to sin.

3) Marriage is important, but not as important as the soul. (Matt. 16:26). See Lk. 14:26

LUK 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

e. It could be **wealth.**

1) Some people can serve God and have wealth.

2) Jesus taught most who have wealth will not enter heaven. (Matt. 19:24). Rich young ruler. (Matt. 19:16-23).

f. It could be **power.**

1) Some people are able to handle power well.

2) Some people become arrogant or abusive or even sadistic.

g. It could be **sexual perversion.**

- 1) Some people enjoy pornography.
- 2) Some people enjoy the gay life style.
- 3) Some people enjoy the permissive, heterosexual life style.

h. It could be **alcohol**.

- 1) Some people can take a single drink now and then.
- 2) Most cannot do this. Drinking becomes a problem. The nation has millions of alcoholic and problem drinkers who began drinking thinking they could control their drinking.
- 3) Even those who can take a single drink now and then, may influence others to take up this habit and cause them to stumble. (Matt. 18:6; 1 Cor. 10:33, 33).

i. It could be **adultery**. (Matt. 5:28, 29).

- 1) A man's eyes can readily lead him into sin.
- 2) King David is an example of lusting. (2 Sam. 11:2).
- 3) One must avoid fanning his/her lusts.

**Note:** Some at Corinth had given up these things for Christ. (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

1CO 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,  
1CO 6:10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.  
1CO 6:11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

### Closing Remarks

1. It is important that we be able to discern when Jesus was speaking figuratively.
  - a. The sayings of Jesus must be closely analyzed with other scriptures.
  - b. We should not dismiss His teachings because we do not like them
  - c. On the other hand, we must use some common sense in our interpretation of scripture. See 1 Cor. 11:25, 26; Matt. 7:6.
2. It is vital that we do not miss the spiritual message Jesus intended to convey by this strong language.
3. Absolutely nothing is more important than being right with God.
4. Absolutely nothing is more important than eternal life with God in heaven.

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