

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Mark (Mark 9:42-47)

If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in Me - to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Making ourselves or others feel comfortable in sin is not God's will

Jesus speaks in the strongest and clearest terms against sin. In all the divine teachings of Jesus, we find that the topic on which He speaks most vehemently against is the acceptance/tolerance of sin, and the leading of others into sin (cf. Mark 9:42-47). When He was on the earth in the flesh, Jesus welcomed sinners and shared meals with them, but that did not stop Him from harshly renouncing sin. The teaching of Jesus is clear and simple. It leaves no room for ambiguity and confusion, giving a good example for the teachers of the faith. Our 'yes' must mean 'yes' and our 'no' mean 'no' (cf. Matthew 5:37).

Unrepented sin is the only thing that separates us from God's love. St Paul teaches us that nothing in heaven or on earth, created or to be created can separate us from God's love (cf. Romans 8:38 -39). It is only our lack of repentance for our own sins that can eternally condemn us to hell. The Enemy of our Salvation, Satan and his demons can only tempt us. The wicked world and all its passing attractions can only lure us. Repentance is so vital to our souls that Jesus starts His public ministry on earth and ends it with His urgent call to sinners for repentance and conversion.

Lack of understanding of the gravity of sin leads to complacency in sin. There is hardness in human hearts due to sinfulness. As a result, we do not love God as much as we ought to, nor do we see the need or act upon it. The hardness in our hearts blinds and leads us to aspire after the lesser things of this earth, things that sap us of the energy and time we need in order to seek God and holiness. Unconsciously, we get evangelized by the world and forget to strive with all our strength and mind to love God and to grow in holiness as He commands us. We know Christ endures His sorrowful Passion for our sakes, yet we do not regularly and constantly recall and meditate on His sufferings. Lack of holy recollection and meditation leads to lukewarmness in our hearts, forgetting the high price Jesus paid for our redemption. *Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits (Psalm 103:2).* Instead of understanding how sin separates us from God, we judge the gravity of sin by the subjective feelings it invokes in us. When we get used to the sin and no longer feel any horror, sins get tolerated and complacency in sin sets in.

God's mercy is reserved only for the repentant. We should never presume upon God's mercy. All mercy comes from God for it is He whom we sin against (cf. Psalm 51:4). We should never carelessly assume God's mercy is always there for us without our first repenting. To every sinner, Jesus says: Go and sin no more (cf. John 8:11). True repentance is not a mere feeling but include a sincere resolution to turn away from the evil at hand, and doing everything with the grace of God to avoid committing again that sin. This includes removing ourselves from the temptation and rooting out the source of that sin. Far from feeling complacent with our sins, it is God's will that we are to do everything in our power and with the grace of God to distance ourselves from the only horror that can endanger our final glorious destiny.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You paid for my salvation with Your own Precious Blood shed on the Cross. You alone know the true gravity of sin in God's eyes. Fill me with the horror I should feel for my sins that can separate me from You for eternity. Let me never trivialize or tolerate the presence of sin in my soul. May I never be a bad example for others! No treasure on earth can equal the precious treasure of my soul. May I learn to guard this treasure by living a life of grace. Give me all the graces to seek first the Kingdom of God and then all other things I need will be given me as You promised (cf. Matthew 6:33). Let Your Kingdom be established first within my own heart. Give me the grace to rise with courage and wage the spiritual battle within my own heart. Fill my heart with Your love and compassion so that I may love others as You love me. May the love for God defeat all the evil in me and around me. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk