

Mark 9:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

Analysis

Jesus commanded radical action against sin: 'if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched' (ἐὰν σκανδαλίζῃ σε ἡ χεὶρ σου, ἀπόκοψον αὐτήν· καλὸν ἐστὶν σε κυλλὸν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν ἢ τὰς δύο χεῖρας ἔχοντα ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὴν γέενναν, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον). This is hyperbolic language—Jesus doesn't command literal self-mutilation (bodily mutilation wouldn't cure sinful hearts). Rather, He emphasizes that avoiding hell justifies any earthly cost. 'Cut off' (apokopson, ἀπόκοψον) means ruthlessly eliminate whatever causes sin. Hell (geenna, γέενναν, from 'Valley of Hinnom' where child sacrifice occurred) is eternal conscious punishment, described as 'fire that never shall be quenched' (pyr to asbeston, πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον). Better to lose anything—even precious body parts—than face eternal judgment. This teaching confronts contemporary minimization of sin and hell.

Historical Context

Gehenna (Valley of Hinnom) was Jerusalem's garbage dump, continually burning. It had dark history as site of child sacrifice to Molech (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31), making it apt symbol for final judgment. Jesus used Gehenna as image for hell—place of eternal punishment. First-century Judaism recognized hell's reality (Daniel 12:2; intertestamental literature describes punishment). Jesus' teaching on hell is extensive (Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 13:42; 18:9; 23:33; 25:41, 46; Mark

9:43-48; Luke 12:5; 16:23). The phrase 'fire that never shall be quenched' emphasizes eternal duration—not temporary purgation but everlasting punishment. This contradicts annihilationism. Reformed theology affirms hell as eternal conscious punishment, though specifics of 'fire' may be metaphorical for indescribable suffering.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' hyperbolic language about cutting off body parts emphasize the supreme importance of avoiding hell at any cost?
2. What does Jesus' repeated, explicit teaching on hell reveal about the reality and seriousness of eternal punishment?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ ἐὰν σκανδαλίζῃ σε ἡ χεῖρας σου ἀπόκοψον
And **if** **offend** **thee** ^{G3588} **hand** **thy** **cut**
G2532 G1437 G4624 G4571 G5495 G4675 G609

αὐτήν· καλόν σοι ἐστίν κυλλὸν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν
it **better** **for thee** **it is** **maimed** **into** ^{G3588} **life**
G846 G2570 G4671 G2076 G2948 G1519 G2222

εἰσελθεῖν ἢ τὰς δύο χεῖρας ἔχοντα ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὴν
to enter **than** ^{G3588} **two** **hand** **having** **to go** **into** ^{G3588}
G1525 G2228 G1417 G5495 G2192 G565 G1519

γέενναν εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον
hell **into** ^{G3588} **the fire** ^{G3588} **that never shall be quenched**
G1067 G1519 G4442 G762

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 25:41 (Parallel theme): Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Hebrews 12:1 (Parallel theme): Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Matthew 5:22 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Galatians 5:24 (Parallel theme): And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Colossians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Romans 8:13 (Parallel theme): For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Matthew 3:12 (Parallel theme): Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Luke 14:13 (Parallel theme): But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

Titus 2:12 (Parallel theme): Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

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