

**Matthew 18:7-9:** Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! <sup>8</sup> And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

**Intro:** Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus teaching that those who follow Him must humble themselves like He did. Jesus is the God-Man Who must be received in humility, like a little child, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, and those who receive Jesus will love and serve the least and most insignificant of the children of God.

We saw that to love & serve the least & most insignificant of the children of God is to love & serve Jesus Christ Himself: **Matt 18:5:** Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me

We also saw that if you touch one of these little ones who believe in Jesus, then you touch Jesus, & this really upsets Him: **Matt 18:6:** whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck & to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- If you touch God's people, then you touch Jesus: **Acts 9:4-5:** & falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" & he said, "Who are you, Lord?" & he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

- If you touch God's people, then you touch God: **Zechariah 2:8:** For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye

**Jesus is God! John MacArthur:** How you treat other Christians is exactly how you treat Jesus Christ!

Today, we see: Jesus is the God-Man Who warns us not to tempt others, He hates sin, and He commands us to fight for holiness with extreme measures lest we end up in hell. (This is grace and love to receive Jesus' warning today!)

**Pastor:** We protect one another: we're concerned for one another's holiness; we're concerned for our own holiness

### **1. Temptation Is Unavoidable In This Fallen World**

**Matthew 18:7:** Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come

**a. This world is cursed with sin & temptation:** This is because our first parents sinned. Woe is upon this world, God's woe, God's curse, God's judgment. We deserve this because of the sin of Adam & Eve & our own sin.

**b. It is necessary that temptations come:** It is necessary because God cursed this world because of sin:

- **Genesis 3:15:** I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

- **Rom 8:20:** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

**D. A. Carson:** The necessity does not spring from divine compulsion but, like all things, falls within the sphere of his sovereignty so that he may use those very things to accomplish his plan and perfect his people.

### **2. Jesus Warns Not To Be The One Leading Others Into Temptation**

**Matthew 18:7:** but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!

**a. Jesus pronounces a woe/curse/warning on those who would tempt others to sin:** Remember Jesus has just warned in V. 6: but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

What does “woe” mean? **Craig Blomberg:** An exclamation of “how greatly one will suffer,” mingling doom with pity . . . a lament/[warning] of God’s coming judgment.

This world is cursed; this world is broken; this world is full of sin & temptations that are necessary & will come, but you should strive & fight & be careful to avoid all sin & strive & fight & be careful not to tempt others to sin or lead others into sin. We are responsible for our actions! And Jesus is warning those who sin and lead others into sin – He says woe to you! God will not be pleased with you – don’t lead others into temptation!

What does it mean to lead others into temptation? You do this anytime you lead someone away from God & His truth by your actions or lack of actions; or by your words or by your lack of words. Here are some examples:

- 1) We can lead others into temptation/sin by provoking one another to anger: **Ephesians 6:4:** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- 2) We can lead others into temptation/sin through sexual sin: **Hebrews 13:4:** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
- 3) Husbands can tempt their wives to sin by being harsh with them:
  - **Colossians 3:19:** Husbands, love your wives, & do not be harsh with them.
  - **1 Peter 3:7:** Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.
- 4) We can lead others into temptation with lust: **1 Timothy 2:9:** women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control

**Rosaria Butterfield:** (Five Lies) The fashion industry for girls sets them up to be tempters to young men. How many of you read that sentence & think I'm being unfair & 'blaming the victim'? . . . Modesty in dress, speech, & conduct are good practices, helping us safeguard against our own sin & against being a temptation for others. If a man sins, the sin is on him. But anything we can do to help prevent scandal in the church is a good work indeed.

**b. God’s sovereignty & man’s responsibility is illustrated in V. 7:** God is sovereign, mankind is responsible.

- **The Cross: Acts 4:27-28:** for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
- **Our Sanctification: Philippians 2:12-13:** work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### **3. Fight Sin With Extreme, Radical Measures In Order To Avoid Going To Hell**

**Matthew 18:8-9:** And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. <sup>9</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

**a. What Jesus is not saying:** 1) Jesus is not teaching that sin resides in our bodily members: **Mark 7:21-22:** For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (But you can put yourself in situations that are more prone to cause the sin to gush out of your hearts! Ultimately, we want & need heart change!)

- 2) Jesus is not teaching that we should literally & actually dismember ourselves: You still have one left to sin with!
  - **Author:** He is teaching us that it is our solemn duty to sacrifice what is nearest, dearest, most precious or most necessary to ourselves if the sacrifice is essential to avoid sin and to live a holy life.
  - **Edwards:** Eyes, hands, and feet are all-inclusive of what we view, what we do, where we go . . . Nothing – not even things we value supremely like eyes, hands, and feet – should stand in the way of eternal life.

3) Jesus is not teaching that we earn heaven by the radical way we fight sin: **GOSPEL!**

But people who have truly been transformed by the Gospel will fight sin with radical, extreme measures!

**b. Hands and feet are used in the Bible to describe what we do & where we go:**

1) **Hands: Proverbs 6:16-17:** There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him . . . hands that shed innocent blood

- **Ecclesiastes 9:10:** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might . . . .

- **Deuteronomy 11:18:** You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand . . . .

**Bob Utley:** The symbolism of the hand would speak to what we do, our actions.

2) **Feet: Proverbs 6:18:** feet that make haste to run to evil

- **Proverbs 4:27:** Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

- **Isaiah 58:13-14:** If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways . . . .

So if we are doing anything that is sinful or going anywhere to sin or that will lead us into sin, we should cut that doing off and cut that going off! We, by the power of the Holy Spirit, cut off that sinful behavior and do not do sin & do not go where we will sin or where we will be tempted to fall into sin!

**c. Eyes are used in the Bible to describe the desires of our hearts: Genesis 3:6:** the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise . . . .

- **Ecclesiastes 2:10:** And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure . . . .

- **1 John 2:16:** For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions - is not from the Father but is from the world.

So if we are desiring anything that is sinful or that will lead us into sin, we should cut that desire off! We must realize that not only the action is sinful, but even the desire for what God has forbidden is sinful & cut it off!

**Michael Green:** Does your hand offend you, the hand raised in anger or grasping at money? Does your foot offend you, the places it takes you to and the Christian service it declines to undertake? Does your eye offend you – the ever-unsatisfied eye of the consumer society? Be single minded! Deal ruthlessly with whatever causes you to stumble in your walk with Christ in the body of his Church.

**d. Hands, feet, & eyes are also very valuable to us:** You need hands to work & function & take care of yourself; You need feet to walk & work & take care of yourself. You need eyes to see! Without them you are helpless!

It's better to go without what is most valuable in this world and go to heaven than keep what is most valuable in this world and go to hell! Someone has said – it's better to suffer than to sin!

**Lloyd-Jones:** If the most precious thing you have, in a sense, is the cause of sin, get rid of it.

May we take what is most valuable to us and give it all to Jesus Christ!

- Give Jesus your hands: **1 Timothy 2:8:** I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling

- Give Jesus your feet: **Romans 10:15:** how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

- Give Jesus your eyes: **Hebrews 12:2:** Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith . . . .

**e. Jesus is calling for extreme, radical measures to fight against sin:** Fire Proof Movie; Change jobs; Move away; Get rid of phones/covenant eyes; Get counseling; Go without whatever you think you can't go without

**f. Does God motivate His people to obey Him by warning them about His wrath in hell? Yes!**

**Kevin DeYoung:** The Grace of Fear: We see a different kind of motivation in Colossians 3:6. Paul tells the Colossians to put away earthly desires & then says, "On account of these the wrath of God is coming." Paul is motivating them by the grace of fear. Some people have a very hard time understanding that threats & warnings are in the Bible for our sanctification. Of course, it's wonderfully true that God will keep his elect & preserve them to the end. But how do you think he accomplishes this work of preservation? One way is by warning them of what will happen if they do not persevere. In God's people, warnings like the one in verse 6 stir us up to love and good deeds. The Christian doesn't despair at these threats of judgment. He pleads, "O Lord, keep me in the love of God as you have promised." We ought to see the warnings in Hebrews & in passages like this as God's means of preserving the saints. Sometimes in an effort to be gospel centered, we shy away from the warnings in Scripture. I understand the impulse. We know that many tender souls need to hear how much God loves them. We need to hear about our new identity in Christ. We need to know God is for us and not against us. But there are also hard hearts in the church – maybe some reading this book – who need to know that the way they are living right now and the stuff they are into right now is why the wrath of God is coming. Some people need to be shaken from their lethargy & realize that the wrath of God will be poured out on the earth for the things they consider light & trivial offenses. Some people need the literal hell scared out of them. But you say, "Shouldn't we be emphasizing God's grace? Isn't it all of grace? Shouldn't our preaching & counseling be all about grace?" And, of course, it should be. But what makes us think that the warning of God's wrath is not his grace to us? We are not giving to our friends, or to ourselves, or to our people, all the grace that God has for us if we do not make known that the wrath of God is coming. God is nothing but grace to his children, but this grace can come to us in brighter and darker hues.

**g. How often do you warn people about the wrath to come in hell? Jesus spoke of hell more than anyone in the Bible combined. Why? Because He was the most loving Man Who ever lived. John Piper tells this story about warning a young lady who was sleeping with her boyfriend about hell:**

**John Piper:** This is a letter a young woman wrote to me in 1992 . . . She came into my office in 1985, a young 20 something, living with her boyfriend, having sex together outside marriage, feeling guilty, professing Christian . . . I'll just read you what she wrote . . . this is seven years later, first I'd heard from her: "I wonder whether you remember a very much younger me, sitting in your office [in 1985] & telling you I was afraid God would have to use a car accident or some other awful event to get my attention. You pointed out that the consequences of my deliberate choice to continue sinning would be nothing short of hell itself. No one had told me ever before that I was headed for hell, missionary's kid that I was, "saved" at the age of six . . . It was a turning point in my life, & I have wanted to thank you & tell you that, ever since . . . A warning such as that 1985 conversation made me feel all the more loved, after I heard what you really think of hell. That you cared enough to tell me, a stranger at that time, means more than ever with the echo in my ears. Your compassion certainly came through." For twenty years, she's sent me a Christmas card thanking me. I just saw her at the Bethel Christmas Gala last December with a smile on her face, hugging me. That's what wrath is for!

**h. Jesus' life, death, burial, & resurrection sets us free to fight sin with extreme or radical measures & we will want to fight sin this way if we are truly born again: Piper:** The only sin you can successfully defeat is a forgiven sin! Through the Gospel, we are in Christ! We are born again! We have new hearts! We have God's Spirit!  
- Yes, all sin is ultimately a matter of the heart, but we must guard what we allow to influence our hearts! And the amazing truths about our identity in Christ will only serve to make us hate sin more!! God grants new hearts!

- **Charles Spurgeon:** Everything that offends God ought to offend us!

- **Al Martin:** Christ died & the Spirit was poured out & the privileges of adoption & justification are given, not to make us indifferent to cutting & plucking out but to make us effective in that exercise. The privileges of grace are

not to make us careless regarding sin but to intensify our hatred of it & to give us power to conquer in the fight against it.

- **Romans 6:13:** Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

- **Romans 12:1:** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

**i. Everlasting life and everlasting death are worth this fight against sin:** 1) Everlasting life: Fullness of joy!

2) Everlasting death (eternal fire/the hell of fire): Do you know Who the greatest hell-fire preacher in the Bible is? Jesus! The word “hell” is used 12 times in the N. T., and 11 of those times it comes from the lips of Jesus Himself! **Hell:** Gehenna from Hinnom Valley where human sacrifices took place and King Josiah made it a garbage dump.

**Isaiah 66:24:** And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.

Hell is everlasting, never-ending torment and punishment beyond the greatest pain we could ever imagine. The worm doesn't die because the food for the worm is always there: the food is unrepentant sinners. The fire never goes out because the fuel of the fire is always present: the fuel is unrepentant sinners. And it never, ever ends for them. **Hell is so bad because God is so great & good & holy! God doesn't lose His temper!**

**Jonathan Edwards:** How strange is it that men can enjoy themselves and be at rest, when they are hanging over eternal burnings . . . and not knowing how soon the thread by which they hang will break. And if it breaks, they are gone: they are lost forever, and there is no [hope]! . . . consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How [depressing] it will be, when you are under these [horrible] torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them. To have no hope: when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice if you might but have any relief; after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it. After you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your [greatly sorrowful] groans and lamentations, without rest day and night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered. After you shall have worn a thousand more such ages, you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one bit nearer to the end of your torments. But there will still be the same groans, the same shrieks, the same [sad] cries, [unceasingly] to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up forever and ever. Your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, will still exist to bear more wrath. Your bodies, which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast throughout all eternity, which will not be at all shortened by all the punishment you have already received before.

**Oh unbelieving friends, don't go there! Please, please, please don't reject Christ and go to this dreadful place! Where are you playing with sin in your life?**

**The Good News:** All the sinful hands that would ever be forgiven were counted as Jesus' sinful hands! All the sinful feet that would ever be forgiven were counted as Jesus' sinful feet! All the sinful eyes that would ever be forgiven were counted as Jesus' sinful eyes! And He was utterly cut off as no one in the history of the universe had ever been cut off, yet He was without sin and did not deserve to be cut off! He was thrown into the fires of God's anger and judgment where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched, in our place, when He died on that cross! But the worm did die! And the fires were quenched! Because the infinite God-Man did quench the infinite anger of the infinite Father! And then He rose up from the dead in victory! And now those dreaded fires of God's anger are quenched for us if we will only repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! And He rose up!

Jesus is the God-Man Who warns us not to tempt others, He hates sin, and He commands us to fight for holiness with extreme measures lest we end up in hell. (This is grace and love to receive Jesus' warning today!)

**Pastor:** We protect one another: we're concerned for one another's holiness; we're concerned for our own holiness

**Jesus Quenched The Fire And Cooled God's Ire On That Cross Dire - Now He's Our All - Our Great Desire!**

To speak of God's wrath, we must have tears  
For in God's hell are greatest fears  
It burns for everlasting years  
The heartache there will have no peers  
So please awake – open your ears  
The Christ Who saves through Word appears  
Trust in the Son with all your spheres  
He'll save you from these dreadful tears  
He died and rose – your guilt He clears  
He'll take away hell's fiery fears  
Replace them all with happy cheers!

God's heart is not for eternal damnation  
He longs for all to have salvation  
For He loves all His creation  
From every language, tribe, and nation  
From every walk of life and station  
So He sent the Incarnation  
God and man in one summation  
He died and rose – death's termination  
Believe in Him as your foundation  
And you'll enjoy no condemnation  
And give to Christ all adoration!

To stop your sin, cut off your hand  
This is your great King's demand  
So draw a line down in the sand  
Choose your King and sin withstand  
Oh come, our God, Who has all planned  
And grant the grace that You command!

Heaven's better, though you're not complete  
Avoid hell without two feet  
For there it's never-ending heat  
The worms don't die but always eat  
With many stripes you will be beat  
But heaven's joys are complete  
Nothing else can quite compete  
Plus they grow to more elite  
There all things grow more ever sweet  
Children play – dance in the street  
And how can we receive this treat?  
Escape the everlasting heat?  
On that cross, Christ took our heat  
And for our sins His body beat

Then rose your sins all to delete  
He crushed the devil in defeat  
Now sits up high upon His seat  
At God's right hand – His job's complete  
For He has done the greatest feat!

Christ Jesus Conquered Every Temptation  
He Sovereignly Rules Over All Of Creation  
He Hates All Sin – It's A Vile Degradation  
He Calls Us To Fight With Extreme Indignation  
So We Won't Go To Hell Under Fiery Damnation  
For Jesus Has Died – Took Our Wrath Separation  
Then Rose Up Alive For Our Justification  
By Faith Alone And His Imputation  
We Are Righteous In Him – Our Praise Fascination  
Now By His Power We Fight Sin Devastation  
And Love All His People – Our Joyful Obligation  
For The God-Man Has Come So There's No Condemnation  
So We Praise And Obey From His Spirit Inspiration!