

James 5:13-20

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest. My brothers and sisters if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Mark 9:38-50

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. "If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you 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 to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. "For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

"Freedom of Conscience"

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Mark 9:38-50

Years later (from 1636-38 to be exact) and in the "New England" land of the free and the home of the brave, it was the Puritan Church Clergy and General Court in Boston who charged, not a man but rather a woman with casting out demons in Christ's name. Her name was Anne Hutchinson. Because she did not stop when the leaders of the church and city told her to do so she became a key figure in the development of religious freedom in England's American colonies and the history of women in ministry. She is honored by Massachusetts with a State House monument calling her a 'courageous exponent of civil liberty and religious toleration.' So what do you think? What demons in Christ's name did she refuse to stop casting out? Let's take a look into her words and actions to help us see. 'Smart, outspoken and opinionated, Anne Hutchinson was the daughter of an English minister, well versed in the Bible and devoted to the teaching of the popular preacher John Cotton. In 1634, Anne and her family arrived in Boston, where her husband built a house directly across the street from the renowned and respected three-time Massachusetts governor, John Winthrop. Trained as a midwife and nurse and mother of 15, Hutchinson began to hold small meetings in her home to discuss John Cotton's sermons. Soon the meetings were attracting up to 60 people—men and women. For a woman to engage in theological discussions posed a challenge to the patriarchy that governed the Bay Colony: In church and society women were suppose to be subservient to men. From across the street, John Winthrop characterized Hutchinson as "a woman of haughty and fierce carriage, of a nimble wit and active spirit, and a very voluble tongue, more bold than a man." Hutchinson gave Winthrop ample reason to worry. In the fall of 1636, she accused Puritan ministers of making salvation dependent on an individual's good works rather than on divine grace, which was contrary to Puritan teaching. The ministers

denied this charge, arguing that good works are evidence of conversion and not the grounds of salvation. Hutchinson went further, claiming that God had communicated to her by direct revelations and declaring that she was capable of interpreting the Scriptures on her own because of inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. Hutchinson's charges constituted a frontal attack on the spiritual authority of both the church and society. For Puritans, the ultimate source of authority was the Bible as it was interpreted by duly authorized ministers. And women, so the male church leaders said, could neither teach nor do theological reflection because their brains were too weak. In November 1637, Hutchinson was put on trial before the Mass Bay General Court, which was presided over by Winthrop, on charges of heresy and "traducing the ministers." Winthrop described Anne as an "American Jezebel, who had gone a-whoring from God" and claimed the meetings were "a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God, nor fitting for your sex." Anne was found guilty and her punishment was banishment from the church and colony. Upon leaving the courtroom she retorted: "The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth. Better to be cast out of the church than to deny Christ." (composite of on-line biographies)

Hutchinson claimed that she possessed the authority to interpret the Bible; she claimed to receive immediate revelations from God; she challenged official church doctrine. From her point of view, when gender inequality and top-down power got mixed and ruled, good souls became sin sick. Demons. She cast out not one, but many stumbling blocks that the unsalted men in charge of both church and state affairs put in her way to make her fall. Demons. By casting them out in Christ's name she helped to burn the idea of freedom of conscience into the faith of souls desirous of better understanding the teachings of Jesus and needing encouragement from the Holy Spirit.

In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus. Her simple deed of power gave birth to the historic 381-day bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which for many marks the beginning of the civil rights movement in the United States. Hear the conversation that went on between Rosa and

an unsalted religious that day on the bus. 'When he saw that I was still remaining in the seat, the bus driver said, "If you don't stand up, I'm going to call the police and have you arrested." I said, "You may do that." Two policemen came and wanted to know what was the trouble. One said, "Why don't you stand up?" I said, "I don't think I should have to." At that point I asked the policemen. "Why do you push us around?" He said, "I don't know, but the law is the law and you're under arrest."

Jesus taught them saying: "Truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose the reward." A few years ago, in the home of the brave but not the free, Muslim teenage Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai was shot down by the Taliban for advocating childhood education for women in Pakistan. After recovering and thanking everyone worldwide for their healing prayers, she decided to continue and expand her work by forming an organization to make concrete changes in education. Whenever she is asked why she is not mad at the Taliban and has forgiven them, she responds: "I believe that the world is a happy place. I believe that the golden rule to do unto others as you would have them do unto you is the way to turn unhappy people into peaceful ones."



Unsalted religious seem to be in the business of putting stumbling blocks in the way of humanists and social justice activists working for the common good, common wealth, and well being of all people. To these unsalted religious in every generation and sin sick souls in every nation, the command of Jesus is clear: "Do not stop the ones who are combating evil with good. . . Whoever is not against us is for us."