

The Deadly Nature Of Sin

Text : **Matthew 5: 20-30**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. In our text Jesus is explaining to the Pharisees that they have misunderstood the Law.**
1. They had practiced the Law for centuries, but had never comprehended its significance.
 2. Each generation memorized what was handed down to them from their fathers.
 - a. The establishment rigidly enforced conformity to their interpretation.
 - b. Thus insuring the perpetuation of the ancient errors.
 3. Jesus understood the Law and refused to be pressed into their mold.
- B. In our text Jesus is correcting the misconceptions of the Jewish leaders about sin.**
1. This is also an important lesson for us because one cannot fully appreciate the gospel until he comprehends the terrible nature of sin.
 2. Our love for God increases in proportion to our understanding of the cross.
- C. The Pharisees viewed sin as being limited to a violation of the letter of the Law.**
1. This gave them a different perspective of the concept of earning favor with God.
 2. They did not understand that sin is an issue of the heart.
 3. Thus, they kept the letter of the Law while ignoring the spirit of the Law.
- D. Many today have the same perspective of sin.**
1. They are concerned only about what they can see. (*Physical violations*)
 2. This is why Jesus said :
Matt. 5: 20- For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
 3. God has never been satisfied with empty rituals and robotic compliance to rules.
 - a. **Matt. 15: 8- This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.**
 - b. God wanted His people to have their hearts dedicated to Him, **not** to a system.
 4. The same is true today. *Salvation is not just a system of rules keeping.*
 - a. **Matt. 22:37- 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'**
 - b. If God doesn't have a person's heart, that person has no relationship with God.
 - c. One must realize that sin is an issue of the heart.

The gospel only makes sense when realizes how terrible sin really is.

1. How bad is sin ?
2. Our text is the master teacher illustrating the answer to that very question.
3. Basically He teaches that *“There is more to sin than meets the eye.”*

I. Observe what Jesus used two commands to teach about the nature of sin.

A. Jesus taught there’s more to “*You shall not murder*” than meets the eye.

1. Jesus is not changing this law; ... it is a universal and an eternal law. (*Cain & Abel*)
2. Jesus was correcting their erroneous interpretation of that law.
 - a. Their interpretation had been the same for centuries.
 - b. It was accepted by all their great teachers.
 - c. It was an incorrect.

*** Understanding this, we cannot assume our interpretations are correct just because they have been accepted by our great teachers for centuries. Study !!**

3. Jesus explained that one who hates his brother is just as guilty as one actually kills.
 - a. He who withholds love murders : (Remember : **Luke 6: 27... Love your enemies**)
I John 3: 15- Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
 - b. The word “**hate**” includes all manner of negative feelings and actions.
Matt. 5: 22- But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (Gehenna ... fiery garbage dump ... cast out by God)
4. **Thus**, there is more to murder than meets the eye; it is rooted within man’s heart.

B. Jesus taught there’s more to “*You shall not commit adultery*” than meets the eye.

1. Jesus is also not changing this law; ... it is likewise a universal and an eternal law.
 Prelaw examples :
 - a. Abimelech ... **Gen. 20: 9**
 - b. Joseph ... **Gen. 39: 9**
2. The Jews misinterpretation of this law was typical of their misinterpretation of all.
 - a. They had no problem with a man lusting after a woman so long as he did not act.
 - b. With this interpretation pornography or to strip clubs would have been fine.

3. Jesus explained there is more to the sin of adultery than meets the eye; the sin begins as an evil desire in one's heart.
4. **Thus**, Jesus defines sin as the desire to do evil, not just the act of evil.

II. Both the Jews and many today focus on sins when the problem is sin.

A. Sin is a fatal **heart** condition. (*Sinful acts are symptoms of that disease.*)

1. God will not accept service resulting from wrong motives.
 - a. **Matt. 6: 1-** Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.
 - b. Compare the fasting in **Matt. 6: 16**.
2. God will not accept worship that does not come from the heart.
Matt. 15: 8- This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.

B. God does not maintain a relationship with man based upon external acts.

1. The most important thing to God is that one devotes his whole heart to him.
 - a. Jesus clearly told us what God values above all else.
Matt. 22:37- 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' (*Not just compliance*)
 - b. You may be the most impressive Christian in the congregation, but the only thing that impresses God is the devotion of your heart.
Luke 16: 15- And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.
 (*God sees not just what you do, but also why you do it.*)
2. All through the scriptures God has been consistent in this emphasis.
 - a. **I Sam. 16: 7-** But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
 - b. **I Kings 14: 8b-** ... —yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight;
3. When we stand before God it will be on the basis of our hearts, **not** our merits.
 - a. **Heb. 4: 12-13** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

- b. **Rev. 2: 23-** And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.
(*Speaking of followers of apostate prophetess in Thyatira*)

III. The eternal principle is that sin is more than the eye can see, it's a disease of the heart.

A. If sin was only the committing of evil acts, the Pharisees could have been right.

1. If the only thing there was to sin was external action, we could all develop enough self-discipline to be righteous.
2. God doesn't reward cowardice. (*People can't be scared out of sin into devotion.*)
 - a. Those who do good only because they fear Hell live in sin.
 - b. All who desire to do evil sin.

ILL - The girl who wanted to steal a new purse from the store, but was afraid she would get caught sinned.

ILL - The boy who wanted to punch the guy who took his girlfriend, but was afraid he would be expelled sinned.

3. WHY *is it sin to desire to do evil* because *it is to desire not to obey God.*

B. It's within man's nature to be tempted (*flesh is weak*), but sin is always a choice.

1. In Ecclesiastes the preachers laments that mankind naturally does evil.
Eccl. 7: 29 - "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices."
2. Jeremiah agrees that it is the nature of man to contrive wickedness in his heart.
Jer. 17:9- The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (NKJV)

- b. Compare : **James 1: 13-15**

3. God limits Satan and ALWAYS provides a way of escape. (**1 Cor. 10: 13**)

C. Man can choose not to sin, to do good, and to love God above all else.

1. **Gal. 5: 17-** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (*You choose*)
2. Man must make a conscious choice to love God more than he loves the world.
 - a. **Col. 3: 2-3** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (*You choose where to establish your loyalty.*)
 - b. Compare : **James 1: 13-15**

IV. Our eternal destiny is more important than our earthly desire

A. Text ... Vs. 29-30 If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

1. This is not to be interpreted literally.

Rules of interpretation :

- a. The scripture mean just what they say unless there is reason why they cannot.
- b. A passage can't mean what it can't mean. (*Basically, the bible interprets itself.*)
2. Just getting rid of the physical symptom does not resolve the spiritual issue. *Desire*
 - a. When the eye is gone, the lust remains.
 - b. When the hand is gone, the desire to steal still lingers.
3. *A maimed earthly body is preferable to a damned eternal body.*

B. These verses teach the gravity of sin and the comparative value of the spiritual.

1. No matter what it cost on this earth ... **get rid of sin.**
2. If it requires forfeiting all or part of this life, the Christian must do it.
3. Sin will cause one to be discarded by God. (*Condemned to Hell.*)
 - a. Hell (*Gehenna*) is the garbage heap for rejected souls. (*Note origin of Gehenna.*)
 - b. The scriptures tell us those rejected by God will be punished for ever away from the presence of the Lord. (**II Thes. 1: 9**)

IV. Four consequences of these truths :

A. God is pure and holy ... without sin. (**James 1**)

1. All who sin fall short of the glory of God. (**Rom. 3:23**)
2. God does not want to be in the presence or proximity of wickedness.
**Psa. 5:4- For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;
 No evil dwells with You. (Remember : II Thes. 1: 9)**
3. No sin can escape His knowledge - and - every sin is an affront to His holiness.

B. Sin is so bad that it makes the gospel essential.

1. The gospel is the only power which can deal with sin. (**Rom. 1: 16**)

2. Only the sacrifice of Jesus can atone for the sins of another.
 - a. He is both God and man. .
 - b. *Sin came by man; wages must be paid by man.* **Rom. 5: 12**
 3. Jesus lives without sin; **only** He kept the Law perfectly in letter and in spirit.
- * **The cross reveals just how much God hates sin.**

C. Sin is so bad that we must constantly be on guard against it.

1. Jesus taught us that it is better to take a loss now than to lose eternally.
2. Both Peter and Paul warned us to be on guard against it at all times.
3. We must always expose it ... never be amused by it.
 - a. **Eph. 5: 11-13**
 - b. **Rom. 1: 32**

D. Sin is so bad that we must hate it.

1. Christians must hate what God hates.
 2. We must destroy all sin in our lives.

Rom. 8: 13- *for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*
 3. There must be no place for sin in the Christian's life.

Rom. 13: 14- *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*
- * **No one sets a gas can down beside the fire.**
It is just as foolish to be near sin or the temptation to sin.

CONCLUSION :

- A. As bad and as dangerous as sin is, there is victory in Jesus the Christ.
- B. The cure for the disease of sin is the cross.
 1. Learn of Jesus and put your trust in Him to save you.
 2. Love Him so strongly there is no room left for sin in your life.
 3. Surrender your life to Him beginning with obedience to the gospel.

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :**Matthew 5: 20-30**

20 “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ **22** “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. **23** “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. **25** “Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. **26** “Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; **28** but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. **30** “If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.