

BibleSanity.org – Remote Bible Study

The Sermons, Parables, and Teachings of Jesus Christ

Session 8 – The Sermon on the Mount, Part Three, October 4, 2022

Sins of the Heart

In Matthew 5:22-48, Jesus expands on the nature of sin.

Where the Law describes particular actions as prohibited or allowed by the Law, sin is evidenced by willfully breaking our fellowship with God, which happens at the point of intent.

Jesus is not reinterpreting the Law (v 15 "...not come to destroy the Law..."), but he is using examples of Law to describe sin. Sin being anything short of the holy righteousness of God (Romans 3:23).

Ye have Heard it Said

In Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43, Jesus starts each paragraph "Ye have heard it said" (or similar). The people have heard these things in the synagogues, as teachings of the law. None of these are traditions of the Talmud, all of these are from the Law of Moses, from Exodus, Leviticus, and/or Deuteronomy. **The one exception** is when Jesus states that they have heard it said to hate their enemies, which is not a scriptural command, but certainly a mindset common in that time (Ref historical document, Qumran Community Rules, specified hating and cursing of unrighteous, also recall the contempt Jews had for the Samaritans).

- 5:21 Thou shalt not kill Exodus 20:13
- 5:27 Thou shalt not commit adultery Exodus 20:14
- 5:31 Divorce allowed Deuteronomy 24:1
- 5:33 Thou shalt not forswear thyself Deuteronomy 23:21-22
- 5:38 An Eye for an Eye a Tooth for a Tooth Exodus 21:24
- 5:43 Love thy neighbor, hate thine enemy Leviticus 19:9-18, esp. verses 17-18 (no scriptural command to hate enemies)

Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill

Exodus 20:13

Thou shalt not kill.

Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery

Exodus 20:14

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Matthew 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement

Deuteronomy 24:1

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

Matthew 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

Deuteronomy 23:21-22

When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

Matthew 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth

Exodus 21:24-25

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Matthew 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

Leviticus 19:17-18

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Matthew 5:21-26

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 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.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

The escalation of anger/Raca/Fool:

1. The penalty for **anger** is equated to the penalty for murder “to be in danger of the judgement”. The danger of this judgment is that conviction meant death (Exodus 21:12, Leviticus 24:17).
2. Calling a brother, “Raca” (Hebrew) is understood asⁱ an expression of contempt. This is an escalation as being angry can be temporary, but holding a brother in **contempt** is an ongoing rejection – holding a grudge. Christ’s gives this escalation the seriousness of being judged before the Sanhedrin.
3. Calling a brother, “Moros” (Greek, as ‘moron’, rendered “fool” in KJV), is understood to beⁱⁱ an escalation of **malice**. Beyond anger, beyond contempt, but actual ill intent. The seriousness of which is danger of hell fire.

Note by John Wesley (d. 1791) – the local cities would be able to judge (“the judgement”) and convict for death by strangulation, the Sanhedrin (“the council”) would convict for a more dreadful death by stoning.

I found no commentary addressing the threefold nature of this warning in terms of purpose or significance of escalation (about a dozen checked). My own opinion is that perhaps Jesus uses escalations of hostility in parallel with escalations in penalty, in order to convey a sense of the progressive nature of unchecked sin – anger becomes contempt, becomes malice. Also, the threefold nature of

anger represented could be in order to convict His listeners who might personally relate to one or another of these various aspects of anger in their own lives and relationships.

How can this cause danger of Hellfire?

Jesus is stating that someone with this degree of hatred towards their brother is in danger of hellfire, i.e. this is an indication of someone who is in danger of hellfire – a non-believer. Christians can be maliciously hateful, but this is not a Christian characteristic, it is characteristic of unbelievers.

Matthew 5:23-26

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Just as Samuel tells Saul (I Samuel 15:22) that God desires obedience more than sacrifice, Jesus instructs us to reconcile our relationships with one another, and then bring our worship to God. This principle is also demonstrated in Isaiah 1:10-20

I Samuel 15:22

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Isaiah 1:11, 16

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

The clear implication is that when we break the commandment to love one another we are sinning against God, but another party is involved. We reconcile with whoever we have wronged (when possible), AND turn back to God, who enables us to love one another as we should.

The second part of this passage (v 25-26 Adversary >> Judge >> Prison) seems to be good advice for living, regardless of spiritual application, but this is a natural example pointing back to the principal of being reconciled with one another.

ⁱ The Gospel of Matthew, The King is Coming, by Ed Hindson, James Borland, ed. Mal Couch, AMG Publishers 2006

ⁱⁱ Ibid.