

The Commands of Jesus: Overcoming Anger and Lust

I. SECTION TITLE: OVERVIEW

- A. Throughout the beatitudes, Jesus is addressing the matters of our heart. Actions manifest from motives rooted in the heart, and throughout Matthew 5 Jesus displays his pursuit for holiness to abound in our hearts. But why does our flesh resist the Spirit, how do we live out life in the Spirit when we feel inclined to the contrary?

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (Galatians 5:16-18)

- B. We need rescuing. If it were up to us to achieve holiness, the sermon on the mount teaching would be a great discouragement; however, this is not the case. Jesus foreknew our need for sanctification, and in his teaching He leads us to recognize our need to be delivered from our own flesh, as it wages war against the Spirit. Paul knew and experienced this, and writes in Romans 7:

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:21-25)

- C. It is important to recognize that in our own efforts we cannot “accomplish” life in the Spirit. In our own strength and willpower, overcoming these thorns of the flesh, such as anger or lust, is simply not achievable. Further, no one is more aware of this affliction than Jesus; in his instruction to us, He displays what living dead to sin and alive in Christ truly looks like. Abiding in Jesus and depending upon him is the only way to live life according to the Spirit.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.” (John 15:4)

II. SECTION TITLE: OVERCOMING ANGER

- A. Jesus addresses the Old Testament law given to Moses when He repeatedly states throughout the beatitudes that “you have heard this, but now I say to you...”. In doing this, Jesus is displaying that He holds all authority over the practices of righteousness; thus, He is now the one we must receive and follow.

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be

liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matt 5:21-22)

- B. Jesus reveals that “anger” is not simply a mere action, but rather a matter of an afflicted heart. In verse 22, the phrase we see as “you fool” was actually the greek word ῥακά (rhaka), which translates as “worthless.” Perhaps Jesus is showing us that in anger we are prone to dehumanize one another and become filled with hate, which will in turn make us liable to judgement. The Apostles also understood that whoever hates his brother has no eternal life abiding in him.

14 “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” (1 John 3:14-15)

- C. Offering your gift to the Lord may be understood in today’s terms as coming before the Lord in worship. Jesus shows us that unreconciled disputes between one another hinders our worship to Him. Even if it is someone else who has an offense or grievance with us—if we are aware, we too are responsible for making peace. To take a step further, we can even view reconciliation as an offering of worship to Jesus, as it is unto His glory and delight.

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matt 5:23-24)

- D. It is important that we come to terms QUICKLY with our accuser. Often times we hold to our offenses, either thinking they may pass, or rather that we are not wanting to release them. As they fester and grow, the consequences grow in severity. Look at how verse 25-26 progresses! We must rather choose peacemaking, as will not be released from the conflict until it is reconciled in full.

25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.” (Matt 5:25-26)

- E. THE ANTIDOTE: Anger does indeed have an antidote, and it is unrelenting *forgiveness*. It is to put off the flesh, and put on the spirit. Our flesh is indeed prone to hatred and anger, but we no longer belong to our flesh! Rather, we overcome by the grace Jesus has given us to die to the ways of the world, and walk instead according to the Spirit.

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. (Matt 18:21-22)

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on LOVE, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the PEACE of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be THANKFUL. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Col 3:12-17)

See also: (Eph 4:31-32, Rom 12:18, Jas 3:17-18, Isa 55:7)

III. SECTION TITLE: OVERCOMING LUST

A. Again, as Jesus addresses the commandment given to Moses and Israel, he takes it further to show that the root of the action comes from within the heart. Jesus shows us that he cares about what is within, not merely what comes out of us. Even if we are not outwardly engaging in a certain action, if the root of that motivation is within us it will inflict our soul all the same.

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 lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matt 5:27-28)

B. Jesus undoubtedly shocked the crowds when He says to tear out your eye and cut off your right hand. It is easy for us to chuckle and write off the extremity of Jesus’s language here. However, in this intensity from the very lips of love incarnate, Jesus reveals just how valuable holiness is to the Father. Perhaps he is admonishing us in that we must cut off what makes us sin, whatever that ensnarement is for us.

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.” (Matt 5:29-30) (See also Matt 18:7-9)

C. Seeing and doing: The eye is the organ of *vision*, and the hand is the member of *action*. When these two are under the leadership and authority of the Spirit, we will be both full of light and full of faith. But why does Jesus address lust through these two examples of body parts being removed? When we are under the yoke of the flesh and afflicted by lust, our sight is blinded by darkness and our actions are not fueled by faith. But when we address the roots and allow the Spirit to take authority in us, our sight is filled with light and our actions full of faith.

34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. 35 Therefore be careful lest the light in you be

darkness. 36 If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.” (Luke 11:34-36)

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

D. So, how do we overcome lust? How do we truly “pluck out our eye and cut off our hand?” We must live by the Spirit and follow Jesus. We must seek to serve Christ and one another and deny living to serve ourselves. We must not allow yesterday’s failures to dictate today’s grace: rather, we must become joined to Christ and allow Him to sanctify us into His likeness.

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:8)

TO SUM IT ALL UP: ROMANS 8

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God,

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of

God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Rom 8: 1-17)

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