

Matthew 5:27-30 – “The Sinfulness of Sin and The Value of Our Soul”

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Intro: During my time in Latin America, I had the privilege to help with an SIM project called “*Pastor’s Book Sets*.” SIM had a number of reference books printed that could serve as the basis of a small pastoral library, something especially useful to many Paraguay pastors who lacked the funds to purchase books to help them feed their congregations a substantial diet of God’s Word week by week. Each pastor who received the books was required to attend a day-long seminar, carefully instructing them on how to make the best use of these resources. Many of the men who received the books came from very humble backgrounds that kept them from getting any kind of formal Christian training for their ministry, so these books proved to be a real help to the body of Christ in Paraguay. Interestingly, these resources were not gifted to the pastors. Each man was required to purchase his set of books, and the sets were priced at a cost accessible to most of these men. The sum collected didn’t come near covering the cost of the books. That wasn’t the point. We charged the men for their books so that they would appreciate the value of what had been entrusted to them. We reasoned it out this way: if the men didn’t pay anything for the books, they wouldn’t treasure what they’d been given. In order to appreciate their books, they needed to see the costly nature of what they’d been given. Similarly, tonight’s lesson is going to take us into the depths of the cost of our salvation. Why was our salvation necessary? And why was God willing to pay the extravagant price of the cross to purchase our eternal redemption? Through the lens of Jesus’ teaching on lust a window into the heart of God will be opened through which we can see the extraordinary graciousness that won us eternal life. I am indebted to Martyn Lloyd-Jones for tonight’s pathway through the Scriptures.¹

Proposition: Sin is repugnant to God, but the value of even one soul He counted worthy of the cost of the Cross.

Our pathway into Scripture tonight leads through only two points: (vv.27-28) The Sinfulness of Sin; (vv.29-30) The Value of a Soul.

(vv.27-28) The Sinfulness of Sin – In chapter five of Matthew Jesus used a series of antithesis to correct the thinking of His disciples and lead them into the helpful disciplines needed to form His character in their souls. As you scan through the chapter, you’ll see the phrase, “*You have heard that it was said...*,” followed by, “*But I say to you...*” And then Jesus would correct the thinking of His disciples concerning commonly held misconceptions of the meaning of God’s Law. Last week we listened in as Jesus addressed the mistaken ideas taught by the scribes and Pharisees of His day concerning commandment number 6, “*You shall not murder.*” You may recall that the problem Jesus was addressing was that of reducing the meaning of the commandment to a merely horizontal or external level. Each commandment of God points away toward a meaning far beyond the merely external, “*Don’t shoot anyone; don’t stab anyone,*” etc. As Jesus pointed out, far from being an external thing, the actual sin in murder occurs in the heart of murder all fallen men and women possess. He picks up this theme again tonight, this time using the lens of lustfulness: **Matthew 5:27–28 - 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*

¹ Sources consulted: D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; Warren Wiersbe; Harry Ironside; J. C. Ryle; C. H. Spurgeon.

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intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Again, we have a contrast between the outside sins of adultery and the inside sinfulness of lust. The scribes and the Pharisees were masters at reducing the Law to mere external acts. Here the idea that was commonly taught by them and accepted in that society was, *“As long as you’re not sleeping with someone other than your spouse, you’re fine. No sin problem there!”* They had reduced the sin to the mere act of adultery, rather than looking into the heart of the adulterer. But Jesus does not give His disciples that option. He was intent to correct their thinking in this matter by bringing them into a true understanding of the nature of sin. The Pharisees never understood sin. By concentrating only on sinful behavior while overlooking the inner cause of that behavior, they missed entirely the sinfulness of sin, failing to realize how deeply offensive sin is to God. If sin is only a matter of external actions, then all we really need to do to rid ourselves and others of sin is to give everyone a better education and to eliminate the physical conditions of poverty and want in our world - an external fix for an external problem. But the problem with sin goes much deeper than the merely external. It isn’t just that we commit sins; it’s that we ARE sin. All children of Adam have a sinful nature. We are ruined on the inside. A better education and ideal living conditions cannot eliminate our true problem with sin (as some suppose the Millennium will authoritatively show). To tell men what to do is not enough. There must be a deeper cure. Until we understand the true nature of our sin, we’ll never understand the necessity of our redemption.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERSTATE HOW DEEPLY SIN OFFENDS OUR CREATOR – Sin is repugnant to God. Think of the thing that is most repugnant to you. Perhaps it is something physical; maybe it’s something moral. Whatever it is, draw up its picture in your mind. Do you hate it? Does the thought of being in its presence disgust you? Do you want to squash it? Would you like to exile it forever? Consign it to flames of woe, perhaps? That is exactly the way God sees each one of us in our natural condition of fallenness. When Adam and Eve sinned, God cast them out of His presence, not only because of what they had done, but also because of what they had become: sinners. God cannot abide the presence of sin; Hell is the eternal abode of anyone cut off from God by the offensiveness of their sin. God hates sin.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ISSUE IS NOT SIMPLY WHAT WE DO; IT IS WHO WE ARE – The sinful things we do are merely the symptom of our disease. The disease that is silently killing us is our sinfulness. Jesus’ use of lust in these verses proves that each one of us are hopeless unless God somehow provides an inner cleansing, because as these verses show, we’ve all got the disease. Every single one of us without exception. Sexual promiscuity may not be how our inner lust manifest itself; we might lust for possession, powers or other pleasures, but our problem is the same. Until we recognize the nature of our condition; that we ARE sinners and that God ABHORS sin, we’ll never appreciate certain things:

- Until we see the sinfulness of sin, we’ll never appreciate the cost of the Cross. Jesus took all our filth onto His sinless shoulders; Jesus covered His stainless heart, with our sin-stained souls.
- Until we see the sinfulness of sin, we’ll never appreciate that all evangelism begins with the conviction of sin. A conviction-less evangelism produces unconvinced “believers.”
- Until we see the sinfulness of sin, we’ll never appreciate the necessity and rightness of Hell.

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- Until we see the sinfulness of sin, we'll never appreciate the necessity of holiness. If sin is only in our actions, then holiness is only in our actions as well. But what about the heart?
- Until we see the sinfulness of sin, we'll never appreciate our need for a power greater than ourselves to deliver us.
- Until we see the sinfulness of sin, we'll never appreciate the love God has lavished upon our undeserving souls.

SIN IS THE DISEASE; SINS ARE THE SYMPTOM – In order for the disease to be cured, radical surgery has to be done on our hearts, and at the Cross God, at great cost to Himself, accomplished that surgery for those who put their faith in Jesus.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Sin is abhorrent to God; at the Cross He graciously dealt with it at great cost to Himself.

[ILLUSTRATION] Have you ever been in danger without realizing it? Perhaps you had a near miss on the highway that only became apparent after the danger had rushed past you. Maybe you almost stepped in a hole in the darkness and only became aware of your peril when you came into the light. What if you came near to stepping on a poisonous snake and were only spared because a friend saw your danger and pulled you back?

[APPLICATION] At the Cross God saw our danger; turned on the Light; pulled us back. And He did all of this at great cost to Himself. He took our filth upon His sinless shoulders. The grace that has bought us is precious beyond the telling. Have we seen this?

(vv.29-30) The Value of a Soul – Why would God go to such expense on our behalf? A couple of years ago our friend Jim Critchly gave us a memorable phrase that brings the answer into focus: The Value of a Soul. Turns out that there is nothing more precious to God than the value of a soul. Jesus drew His disciples' attention to this in these verses: **Matthew 5:29–30 - 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.”* Let's begin by expositing these verses. What did Jesus mean to convey? Was He saying that we literally need to tear out our eye; cut off our hand? Some have thought this over the centuries, but that would only result in a church filled with the blind and the maimed. No. The truth being conveyed goes much deeper. God valued our souls so much that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem us from our sin as we have said above; and now He expects that we should value our redeemed souls so much that we should want to put aside our most valuable possessions so that He can have first place in our lives. In Jesus society the right eye and the right hand were thought to be a man's most valuable possessions. What Jesus was saying, then, was what He said in other places: **Luke 14:26 - 26** *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”* **Matthew 16:26 - 26** *“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his*

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soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” The idea here is that the soul of man is so valuable, that God’s purchase of our souls at the Cross demands our response: setting aside anything that would keep us from faithfully following Jesus, and that if we won’t do that after all He has done for us, it probably means that we have yet to truly become one of Jesus’ disciples. Given this, the question in focus for the redeemed is, *“How are you prepared to respond to God’s generosity?”* Let us be clear about the fact that in these verses Jesus is not suggesting that we have to do something to keep out of hell. He has already done that something at the Cross as we have noted. No. What He’s talking about here is our reasonable service in view of all He has done for us. Paul expressed this idea in **Romans 12:1 - 1** *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”* In other words, in view of what God has done for us we should be willing to lay aside even our most valuable possessions if they cause us to stumble in our worship and faithfulness to Him. This is totally reasonable in view of the great cost of redemption.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] *“Everything, no matter its importance, must be laid aside if it keeps us from [Jesus] and is harmful to our soul.”²*

[ILLUSTRATION] How much would you be willing to pay a surgeon that saved your life by removing a deadly cancer? I would guess that no matter the size of his fee, you’d gladly write the check! So, in view of God’s abhorrence of sin and His costly rescue of your soul, what are some things you can do to “sign the check” in gratitude for His grace? Let me suggest a few disciplines of the Christian life to concentrate upon daily:

[APPLICATION] (Courtesy of MLJ)

- Stop feeding the flesh – *“There is a fire within you; never bring any oil anywhere near it.”³* Stay away from anything that tempts you to sin.
- Avoid foolish talk and jesting – We often get into difficulties because we are careless about what we approve.
- Be careful of the company you keep – Associate with those who know and love the Lord, while not withdrawing yourself from unsaved friends and relative who need Jesus. Reserve your closest relationships for those who are disciples.
- Concern yourself with pleasing God – Remind yourself often of the price He paid for your deliverance.
- Admit your need of the Holy Spirit – Lean into His grace day by day.

Conclusion: Do you appreciate the value of what has been entrusted to you? Do you understand the sinfulness of sin? Do you realize the value of a soul? What is your proper response to the grace you received when you put your faith in the Savior? These are some of the questions we’ve been dealing

² Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

³ Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

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with tonight. Do you now have a better answer than when you came in? If so, then thank God, for He has been at work in your heart, correcting your thinking, shaping your character into the image of His dear Son.