

# Inside -vs- Outside

## Mt. 5:21-30

In this next section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses a couple of examples from the Mosaic Law to explain that the whole Law must be kept not only in ‘external’ actions that one does, but also on the ‘internal’, in the thoughts, attitudes and motivations of the heart.

In these examples, we see how Jesus raised to the n<sup>th</sup> degree the standard of righteousness that the Law requires. This teaching of Jesus is so radical and profound that the Jewish religious leaders were not able to comprehend a righteousness that was internal. However, their Old Testament scriptures reveal the nature of this internal standard for righteousness, as the following examples show:

Proverbs 4:23 *“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”*

Jeremiah 4:14; 17:9, *“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you?”*  
17:9 *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”*

2 Chronicles 32:25-26, *“<sup>25</sup>But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup>But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”*

These examples show also that sin is in the hearts of men, and that all sinful acts originate in the hearts of men. In the NT, Jesus summarized what these verses teach in Mark 7:21-23, *“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”*

By the time Jesus arrived, the Jewish religious leaders had done something very similar to what the Roman church had done that led to what is known as the “dark ages”.

The Roman church took the scripture out of the people’s hands. The Jewish religious leaders had taken God’s laws in the Pentateuch and created their own interpretations of the fulfilling of the laws. They called this huge book of their own interpretation of laws, “The Talmud”. Then, instead of teaching the people from God’s word, they taught the Talmud.

In these examples, we see that Jesus is not contradicting the Old Testament scriptures by His teaching when He says in them, ***“But I say to you”***, rather He is restoring the original meaning which had been corrupted by the false teachers of Israel

You see what Jesus is teaching in the principles revealed in this next section is that you can try to keep the letter of God’s Law and toe the line spiritually, however if your heart or your motives are wrong, **you are still wrong, and your life does not please God**

Mt. 5:21-22 - ***“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 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.”*** - Jesus equates ‘anger’ and ‘cruel speaking’ to committing murder

First, we must identify to whom Jesus is speaking as ***“those of old”***. Some people have believed that Jesus is referring to Moses and the Old Testament prophets here, however that theory falls apart for two reasons:

1. Jesus would then be saying that the ancients were ‘told’ these things, and supposedly they would have been taught them by God, however God did not originate these man-made institutes.

2. Jesus had just said that not one jot or title would be removed from the Law until heaven and earth pass away, so it would not make sense now for Him to criticize what Moses and the Old Testament prophets wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit

Some people have believed that Jesus is referring to the general Jewish populace during the time of Moses and the Old Testament prophets. This would put Jesus at odds with the general Jewish populace, however this interpretation falls apart because Jesus seems to have another group which He is trying to confront here by saying this.

Some people have believed that Jesus is referring to the Jewish leaders since Moses' time. This view seems to make the most sense because what Jesus is confronting here is a false religious system, one which, pertaining to righteousness, ignored the internal attitudes and motivations of the heart. Pharisees were all about the EXTERNAL

Another reason that this view makes sense is because Jesus next tells us what the Jewish leaders taught the people concerning how justice was carried out in Israel. In support of this view, verse 21 can alternately be translated *'taught them'* instead of *'were told'*. Either translation is possible, and the translators of the NASB, chose the one which they preferred which is *"were told"*.

Even before the Law of Moses, we see in Gen. 9:5-6 that the Lord had determined that the punishment for premeditated murder was death, *"And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man"*

The Bible doesn't condemn a person who accidentally kills a man or kills him while in a military charge. The "court" mentioned in these verses consisted of a council of 23 men, and they could administer a punishment of strangling; the "supreme court" referred to here, the Sanhedrin, which consisted of 72 men. It was the highest court of the land, and it alone could administer a punishment of stoning

The word translated *'raca'* here means “empty head” and in using this word, Jesus was speaking of that kind of judging of another that condemns and despises a person for their lack of knowledge, particularly regarding spiritual things

Jesus is speaking of punishment coming from the court and the Sanhedrin when He speaks of actions like murder, but He is really speaking with reference to divine retribution. The sentence for one who committed premeditated murder was death, and by Jesus saying these things He is saying that if a person is ‘angry’ at his brother, calls him an “empty head” or a ‘fool’, then that person is guilty of murder because it is the attitude of murder which inspires such behavior

The Jews never considered it sinful for a person to hate or speak evil of another person. Remember that there is a “righteous anger” which is rare in occurrence, but which is justifiable. When a person becomes angry because of injustice as well as dishonor done to God, this is a justifiable anger. An example of this type of justified anger is seen two times in Jesus’ ministry; once at the beginning, and once at the end when He threw the money-changers out of the temple.

Paul wrote about this type of anger in Eph. 4:26, *“Be angry, and yet do not sin”*.

Not only is the person who is ‘angry’ at his brother, and calls him an “empty head” or a ‘fool’, guilty enough that he should appear before human courts and be condemned, he is also guilty enough because of this sin to deserve the punishment of hell itself.

The word here that is translated ‘fiery hell’ is “Gehena” in the Greek, and this is the word that is most often used for “hell” by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. It referred to the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where the Israelites who had once given themselves over to idolatry had sacrificed by fire their children to Molech, and where since that time a continual fire burned the garbage that people brought to it.

5:23-24 - *“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* Jesus tells His disciples that they must be reconciled to their brothers and sisters first in order to be able to serve and worship God in a way that pleases Him. Jesus reveals here that how we handle the relationships that we have with people in this world effects our relationship with God

If we commit sin against a brother or sister, then that sin is really sin against God first since man is made in God’s image and He has given us His Laws regarding how we must act regarding our brothers and sisters.

Jesus does not teach us that we should first worship God and then go and make things right with a brother or sister, but rather we should make things right first, then come and now there will be nothing that will hinder our worship of God and His acceptance of us as worshippers

In these verses Jesus teaches that we as Christians must keep our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ in proper repair if we are to be where He wants us to be