

Inside -vs- Outside pt. 2

Mt. 5:21-30

5:25-26 - *“²⁵Come 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. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”*

There has been much confusion among commentators as to why these verses appear where they are in this text, and this confusion is caused by a misunderstanding as to whom is referred to as the ‘accuser’, or ‘adversary’ (as other translations permit)

Some have said that the ‘opponent’ represents God, however this does not seem to make sense because that would have God delivering the person up to God in that case

Some have said that Jesus has changed the subject here and that he is now speaking strictly about civil issues and the wisdom of resolving those quickly, however this view is just not supported by the context

Some have said that the ‘opponent’ mentioned here represents the devil, and that the exhortation then is to agree with the devil when he comes to condemn of sin, rather than trying to deny or justify it. It is accurate that the word translated ‘opponent’ here is the same word that is translated every other place in the scripture as ‘adversary’ and refers to the devil, the believer’s adversary, in at least one of those references (1 Peter 5:8).

Likewise, in Rev. 12:10, Satan is called *“the accuser of the brethren”*. The problem with this view is that it encourages us to agree with the Devil about some sin we have committed. That to me just does not make any sense at all. Satan wants to place us under condemnation, so we must never agree with Satan about our sin or sin in general. We who claim the blood of Christ as covering for the atonement of sin must never be in league with Satan at any level. If it is none of these things then what must Jesus be referring to?

I'm convinced that Jesus uses an everyday occurrence to illustrate the type of mindset we should have. If someone is suing us for something we HAVE done, we should be quick to agree to their terms and as we put things today, "settle out of court." I see this teaching of Jesus being that we should be quick to confess and repent of our sins whenever we find ourselves having sinned.

Whenever we are convicted of sin, we would be wise to not fight that conviction but rather just give in to the Lord and admit that we have sinned, confess and repent of the sin, and keep on walking with Christ. Have you ever noticed that if we refuse to confess and repent of our sins when they are pointed out to us, that conviction of sin will be relentless in our heart until we eventually confess and repent?

VS 5:27-28 - *"²⁷You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

Jesus gives us the second example of how the breaking of a commandment can occur through an attitude of heart and mind, the case of committing 'adultery'. In saying, *'You have heard that it was said'*, Jesus is again referring to the teaching of the Jewish leaders which comes from their traditions of men more than the commandments of God

Jesus teaches that looking on a woman with eyes of 'lust' and for the purpose of seeing her as a sex object is to commit the sin of 'adultery'. Again, in Jesus saying, *'but I say to you'* He is not teaching something that is new but rather bringing out the truth of the original commandment and contrasting that to what had come to be taught to the Jewish people which was nothing more than the traditions of men

Jesus always taught *"as one having authority"*. It does not matter to Jesus that this is what they had been taught – it was not the truth. So Jesus taught them the truth which is what the needed to be obeying to please God. The Jews were practicing tradition as worship rather than worshipping as God had commanded them. Jesus states boldly that this is NOT the way it should be.

As I mentioned earlier, these two teachings of Jesus concerning the sin of “murder” and “adultery” are just examples of how each of God’s Laws can be broken through the thoughts and motivations of the heart of men.

Since from Gods perspective it is the same as committing adultery for a man to look upon a woman for the purpose of lusting, then when a woman dresses herself in such a way as desiring to have men lust after her, she must also be guilty of encouraging and participating in adultery.

When I was in Grad School, I remember one young man that argued that if you are going to be guilty of committing adultery for looking, you might as well go ahead and commit the act. Of course, this is foolish because you will be twice guilty! Once for thinking it and now for doing the act. If one takes this thought to its conclusion, a person who got angry with someone would be justified for just going ahead and killing them.

I believe what Jesus is saying is that if we have these thoughts and we don’t address the problem, then it will only be a matter of time before you are willing to entertain the possibility of carrying out those thoughts literally. That’s why it is so important to flee temptation when it comes into our lives rather than to flirt with it.

I have known many good men and women that have fallen. Don’t think that you will be an exception to this rule. I can tell you that in each case that I know about, those who have fallen followed a pattern that they had allowed to develop in their lives that led to their fall

VS 5:29-30 - ***“²⁹If 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. ³⁰And 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.”*** - Jesus teaches that the believer is to remove from his life any member which causes him to stumble. Jesus wants us to be aware of those things in life that trip us up and make us vulnerable to giving into temptation that leads to sin. He wants us to be aware and rise above this.

Some people have taken this verse literally and mutilated their bodies when they discovered that they tended to sin in a certain area. Origen, the famous and often quoted second century preacher and author, had himself castrated because of his struggle with sexual lust.

There are monasteries all over the world where some have made the decision to separate themselves from all of civilization thinking that to do so would remove lust and sin from their heart. They have no contact with the outside world thinking this will help them keep whatever demon they have at bay. It will not work unless God is in the mix.

However, even if we mutilate our bodies cutting of the offending parts, we would still have to gain mastery over our minds and hearts in order to gain mastery over our sin. For example, if we were to cut off the hand that tended to steal, if in our mind we want to steal, we will still find a way to steal with our other hand or even our feet.

What Jesus is really teaching us is that we need to gain mastery over our body and its appetites, and ***“make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts”*** (Romans 13:14). Gaining mastery does not mean we won't be tempted, it means when we are tempted we can control our thoughts.

We need to do what the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 9:26-27 and “buffet” our bodies, ***“²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”***

Jesus warns us here in Matt. 5:30 just as Paul warns us that the person who does not learn to gain mastery over his body will end up spending eternity in hell if he does not change.

Jesus taught in Luke 13:24-28 that the Christian life is a narrow path of forsaking all evil ways and following the Lord, ***“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come***

from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.”

Paul taught the same thing in Rom. 8:13-14, *“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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons[a] of God.”*

In Gal. 5:24, Paul again taught the same principle, *“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*

Brethren, our inner man and our attitudes will determine where we spend eternity. We can learn to control our thoughts by listening to what God says to us through His word. We CAN control our minds.

Paul said in 2 Cor. 10:5, *“casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”*

This is a divine command from an Apostle of Jesus. We need to get this in our minds while we are this side of eternity. May God grant each of us the strong desire to capture our thoughts.