

Temptations to Avoid: Anger and Immorality (Mat. 5:21-30)

I. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW TO AVOIDING SIX TEMPTATIONS

- A. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most comprehensive statement about our role in cooperating with grace. We need faith teaching to equip us to experience grace to walk in the ***8 Beatitudes***. The promise of being blessed includes living with a vibrant heart by the Spirit's activity in us.
- B. Jesus identifies six temptations to avoid: ***anger*** (spirit of murder, Mt. 5:21-26), ***adultery*** (spirit of immorality, Mt. 5:27-30), ***disregarding the sanctity of marriage*** (disloyalty in relationships, Mt. 5:31-32), ***false commitments*** (spirit of manipulation for self-promotion, Mt. 5:33-37), ***retaliation*** for personal inconveniences (spirit of revenge Mt. 5:38-42), and ***inactivity*** when mistreated (refusing active love, Mt. 5:43-47).
- C. Allowing these temptations growth, poisons our hearts (1 Pet. 2:11), keeps us from enjoying our life in the Kingdom and hinders us from reaping internal, external and eternal rewards. In each of these temptations Jesus references the Law of Moses, teaching God's original intent meant to liberate the human heart in obedience.

II. TEMPTATION #1 - ANGER (SPIRIT OF MURDER)

- A. Jesus is showing us how anger grows in the privacy of our heart. If left unchecked it will lead you into great trouble, more than just in human relations, but before God. At that time, religious leaders were teaching only against murder, not addressing the defilement that occurs at the heart level for every person.
²¹You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder,” and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. ²²But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire. ²³Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you are thrown into prison. ²⁶Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. (Mat. 5:21-26)
- B. Jesus was not teaching against capital punishment (Gen. 9:6; Lev. 24:17; Ex. 21:12-14; Num. 35:16-17), being a vegetarian, defense of one's nation, nor against protecting ourselves from personal attack.
- C. Jesus was graciously revealing ***the danger of anger*** by addressing two pitfalls.
 - 1. ***Pitfall #1: Ignoring our anger*** (Mat. 5:22a). Unchecked anger is dangerous, able to grow like cancer, leaving our relationships, job, circumstances of life vulnerable.
²²...whoever is angry with his brother...shall be in danger of the judgment. (Mt. 5:22a)

2. **Pitfall #2: *Escalating our anger by giving it words and actions without repenting*** (Mat. 5:22b). “Raca” and “Fool” were insulting words spoken in anger to a person. Calling someone “Raca” was like calling someone an imbecile, an idiot, or stupid. It was a serious insult.

²²And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire. (Mat. 5:22b)

D. He emphasized that the only way to freedom is to deal quickly and fully with anger at each stage of detection

1. Anger progresses from *angry emotions* (Psalm 4:4; Eph. 4:26-27)

²⁶“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil. (Eph. 4:26-27)

2. To *bitterness*, expressed with angry words and vindictive actions (Eph. 4:29-30; 5:3-4; Heb. 12:15)

²⁹Let no corrupt [angry, harsh, sarcastic, etc...] word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:29-30)

3. To *a prison of anger* where one is dominated by the spirit of murder (1 Jn. 3:15; Mat. 5:25)

¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer... no murderer has eternal life... (1 John 3:15)

²⁵Agree with your adversary quickly [repent from anger], while you are on the way ... lest your adversary [anger] deliver you... and you be thrown into prison [of anger, hate] (Mat. 5:25)

4. Finally to *a hardened heart* unto *eternal judgment* (Mat. 5:22).

²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother... whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. (Mat. 5:22)

E. **Early Stages** are *defensiveness, easily agitated, complaining* versus *gratitude, angry or harsh tone, sarcastic speech and critical or pessimistic attitude*. These activities reveal that anger continually progresses. It is either lessening or increasing but it is not static. We can blame it on our nationality, our personality, our environment, including the people around us, but God highlights the source as our heart. We will all stumble in these early stages, but when we stumble in it, we should confess and repent of it.

F. **Passive-Aggressive Behaviors** are rooted in anger, including:

1. *Intentional mistakes*: purposefully making mistakes that would damage others
2. *Ignoring others* or saying nothing
3. *Deliberate procrastination*: Purposefully doing something later out of displeasure
4. *Backhanded compliments*: giving them a compliment with a put-down
5. *Repression*: Bottling negative emotions without finding sincere ways to communicate them

G. Anger is often caused by people blocking our goals (for honor, comfort, money, etc.). We think we should receive something better or more. God wants us to examine our expectations before Him.

¹Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? ²You lust and do not have... You fight and war... (Jas 4:1-2)

H. **Solution #1:** *Act in the opposite spirit of anger with urgency* (Mat. 5:23-24). When we act in the opposite spirit, it begins to heal our hearts from the poison of anger.

a) **Therefore:** Jesus connected the offense of our brother (v. 23) to the angry words that we spoke to the brother that He described in verse 22. Jesus is not referring to *everyone angry at you*. Verse 23 is in the context of a person being wounded from an angry behavior or word which came from us.

b) **Leave your gift:** Our gifts to Jesus are an expression of our love for Him. He does not receive them if we ignore the offense we caused a brother by our angry words or actions. This includes our ministry, money, time, use of our natural and spiritual gifts. We cannot separate how we treat others in relationship and our “worship” to the Lord. He doesn’t want our “worship” if we have not addressed the people we have wounded in our anger.

I. **Solution #2:** *Repentance allows for God’s grace to bring freedom from anger and it’s bondage* (Mat. 5:25-26). We must recognize we pay the full debt for the anger we refuse to repent of. In the ancient world, someone who could not pay their debts were held in prison until the debts were paid. Jesus is saying unrepentant anger will affect every area of our lives: our emotions, relationships, and circumstances and bring a further, more severe penalty, even robbing us of our eternal inheritance in the Lord.

III. TEMPTATION #2 - IMMORALITY (ADULTERY)

A. When Jesus taught about avoiding adultery, He included *all forms of sexual immorality* as God originally had this in mind when giving Moses the seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:1-30; 20:10-21; Mark 7:20-23; Mat. 5:17). The Pharisees taught at that time that avoiding adultery was only avoiding physical act.

²⁷You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not commit adultery.” ²⁸But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...it is more profitable that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. ³⁰If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off...for it is more profitable... than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Mat. 5:27-30)

B. Immorality includes all sexual activity (physical, verbal, technological) outside of a covenant of marriage between one man and woman. Jesus knows that immorality grants Satan legal doors of access to oppress and damage our heart and our relationship with God, our family, and others.

C. The Lord set all sexual expression within the covenant of marriage. He knows that the only place where sexual activity enriches one’s life is in a covenant commitment to their spouse’s life story, pain, weaknesses, joys, goals, family, parents, children, dreams, sickness, prosperity or poverty, etc.

D. Sexual immorality *defiles one's spirit* (Mark 7:20-23), *dulls and injures one's heart* (1 Cor. 6:18; Rom. 6:23), *causes lust to increase* (Gal. 6:7-8), *devalues another's story*, and *despises the Lord* (2 Sam. 12:10).

²⁰ *And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries [sexual immoralities], fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man."* (Mark 7:20-23)

¹⁸ *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.* (1 Cor. 6:18)

⁷ *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.* (Gal. 6:7-8)

E. Jesus taught to avoid sexual immorality tenderly as a good shepherd. He used the phrase ***"It is more profitable for you."*** (Mt. 5:29, 30). Every command and blessing from God is loving and a blessing for us who follow them, liberating our hearts and keeping us from the pain of sin.

F. Jesus focused on the ***two most important principles*** when teaching on avoiding sexual immorality. There are other important principles in this battle, but Jesus focused on the most neglected and most important.

1. ***Principle #1:*** The spirit of immorality does not start in one's actions, but in the eyes and then moves to heart (Mt. 5:28). Adultery progresses from *eye adultery* to *heart adultery* then to *physical adultery*. Eye adultery includes looking directly at someone or through media (internet porn) in a way that stirs up lust. Both David (Ps. 101:2-3) and Job addressed this issue (Job 31:1, 9). Therefore, if we can control the "eye-gate", we can have better chances in walking in purity and enjoying the Kingdom Life.

² *I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. ³ I will set nothing wicked before my eyes...* (Psalm 101:2-3)

2. ***Principle #2:*** We must make radical, even costly and painful decisions to remove whatever stirs up lust (Mt. 5:29). *Jesus emphasized how important it is to deal with immorality in a radical way.* We must make radical, even costly and painful proactive decisions to remove whatever stirs up lust in our members (Mt. 5:29-30). This means that some of what we cherish (people, places or things) may need to be removed.

G. Immorality is dangerous in that it grows quickly and more difficult to control. Many people believe they can "dabble" in it but don't understand how over time their defiled consciences, darkened mind and deadened heart will have become increasingly defiled from it and more opened to demonic activity (Gal. 6:7-8).

H. ***Dangers of not repenting*** from sexual immorality: *Jesus Himself judges it in this age* through Church leadership and discipline, *leaving the unrepentant, defiled, spiritually dull, sick, in tribulation, unprotected from Satan, weak and even dying prematurely* (Rev. 2:12-16; 18-23; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:30-32; Mk. 7:20-23).

I. Those who resist the Lord and choose sexual immorality over following Him will bring something far worse upon themselves: *eternal judgment* (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5-6; Rev. 21:8; 22:14-15).