

New Covenant Truths - the Inner Life - Part 5

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living an inward life, where our righteousness is of higher quality and based on God's nature, which is a gift that we receive and distribute.

Duration: 8:44

Topics: "New Covenant", "Inner Righteousness"

Description

This sermon delves into the deeper meaning of the law as explained by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus emphasized the importance of internal righteousness surpassing external actions, highlighting the need to address the root issues in our hearts that lead to sin. He taught that true righteousness involves qualities like mercy, purity, and peacefulness towards others, not just following external rules. The sermon also emphasizes the New Covenant's call to love even our enemies, showcasing how God's nature of love is freely given to us in contrast to the Old Testament's focus on external actions and manufacturing righteousness.

Transcript

That's the meaning of the same thing. So I want to emphasize that, and then it goes on to, I don't have time to go through all those Beatitudes, but you'll see that everything is inward. You know, mourning for sin, a gentle attitude towards others, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and being merciful in our heart, and pure in our heart, and an attitude of peacefulness towards others, etc.

It's all inward. And he went on to say in Matthew 5, I have not come to abolish the law, verse 17, but to fulfill. So what did he mean? What did it mean when it says we are free from the law? What Jesus was saying there was, I have come to fulfill the true meaning of the law, and I will explain what that means.

He was saying the true meaning of the law was not just don't commit murder, but get rid of the seed in your heart that produces murder on the outside. I haven't come here just to say don't commit adultery, but deal with the seed in the heart that produces that adultery. That's what he meant.

I've come to fulfill, not abolish. And he explains that later on in verse 20 when he says, Matthew 5, 20, If your righteousness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven. What did that mean? Pharisees fasted twice a week.

Do we have to fast four times a week? They prayed three times a day. Do we have to pray six times a day? They paid their tithes. Do we have to give 20%? What did he mean by surpass? See, our way of thinking is always in terms of quantity, quantity, quantity.

More in terms of quantity, whereas Jesus' emphasis is always on quality. The quality of your righteousness must be superior to the quality of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. In other words, their righteousness was only external, yours must be inward.

That's what he was saying. And then, after having given that introduction in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, he explained what that meant. He says, for example, I'll explain what that means, he says.

The Pharisees, verse 21, they were told, don't commit murder. Your righteousness must be more than that. You must not just overcome murder, you must overcome, verse 22, anger.

And if you got angry with somebody and yelled at somebody and lost your head, and after that, verse 23, you go to the altar to pray, you can't pray. God won't accept your prayer. How many of you know that? How many of you know that if you lost your temper at somebody, you can't pray after that till that one matter is settled? He said that.

You go and say to your brother, you fool, or you say to your wife or your husband something, because you're upset, and then you go and pray. God won't accept your prayer. Go and settle matters with your wife first.

You know that most Christians don't even bother to read these chapters, because they don't understand the new covenant. Leave your offering, verse 24, go first and be reconciled to your brother, wife, husband, and then come and pray. God won't accept your money.

He won't accept your prayer. He won't accept a single thing that you do for the rest of your life, if you haven't settled that one matter. There's no use saying, well, that happened 20 years ago, so what? For 20 years, He didn't accept your offerings.

You may not have known it, but He didn't accept it. Okay. The righteousness of the Pharisees, verse 27, you shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you, don't lust in your heart. That which is outward for the Pharisees has got to be inward for you. And like that with all the other ones, He went on to say, you know, the Old Testament law was, you know, when you swear, don't tell a lie.

I say unto you, never tell a lie. Let your yes always be yes, verse 37. And your no must be no.

That's it. In other words, you don't have to give a signed document to somebody. You know how people say, well, I signed that document, and I can't go back on it, because it is a court document.

A Christian says, I never gave a signed document. I just said I would do it, and I can't go back on it. I said I would pay that much for that item.

I can't go back on it. And the worldly man says, but did you give it in writing? No, I didn't give it in writing, but I'm a Christian. Where do you find Christians like that? Those who are New Covenant Christians.

There's a wonderful verse in Psalm 15, which says, Who shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord and ascend to the holy hill? And the Living Bible says, one, many conditions there, and one of the things mentioned there is one who keeps a promise, even if it ruins him. Have you ever made a promise to somebody, which you went back on, because you say, I didn't give it in writing. I didn't sign it.

Well, you're probably a good Pharisee, but you're not a Christian. That's all I can say. Jesus said it's not like that for a Christian.

His yes is yes. His no is no. And the only way I can go back on a promise is if the man whom I made the promise to releases me from it.

If I go back to him and say, I'm sorry, I said that in haste, I'd like to permit me to withdraw from it. He says, OK, then I'm released. Otherwise, my yes is yes.

I followed that myself for many years. And I want to say, I'm a very happy man today. Maybe I would have had more money if I broke my promises somewhere, but I'd have lost my soul.

I prefer my soul to money. I don't know about you. So, the other thing he said, I don't have time to say all the Pharisees said, you should love, verse 43, love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, you've got to love your enemies too. You see, if God has given you his nature, which is love, you can't turn it on and turn it off. How can you do that? In the Old Testament, they didn't have any insight.

So, they look at the person, oh, that's my friend, I can love him. Look at another person, that's my enemy, I don't love him. But the New Testament is not like that.

God gives you his nature and it flows out. It flows out whether it's an enemy, it flows out whether it's a friend. It's love.

You don't have to manufacture it, by the way. God gives it to you. God's nature is a gift.

In the Old Testament, you have to manufacture it. You have to manufacture purity in the Old Testament. What a job it is.

I praise God that in the New Covenant, we are not in the manufacturing business, we are in the distribution business. Isn't it easier to distribute than to manufacture? You tell me, is it easier to sell a car or to make a car? Or, take a small thing, is it easier to sell a pressure cooker or to make a pressure cooker? Thank God, he doesn't want us to manufacture his nature, because we cannot. I can try and manufacture a good life, but I cannot manufacture God's nature.

That is impossible. This is the wonderful thing about the New Covenant. I don't have to manufacture it.

So, when you read the Sermon on the Mount, you say, boy, this standard is so impossible. That's exactly what he wants you to recognize. And we have only finished Chapter 5.

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