

"Don't Stop Believin'"

Exodus 20; Matthew 5

I. Introduction

- A. Throughout the world today, wrong seems right and right seems wrong
 - 1. Isaiah 5:20
 - 2. The foundations of our society are crumbling beneath our feet
 - 3. As a nation, we have lost our way—we are no longer built on a solid moral foundation
- B. We must have a set of absolutes to live by
 - 1. The only way we can have growth and progress as a nation is if we live on a bedrock of truth
 - a. The idea of moral relativism is, at its core, a self-defeating argument
 - b. Is it an absolutely true statement to say that there is no absolute truth?
 - 2. Moral relativism is the rule of the day, and the result is the problems we face as a society
 - a. 67 percent of American people say there is no such thing as right and wrong
 - b. 83 percent of young Americans (ages 13-25) say that morality is relative to the individual
 - c. 41 percent of practicing Christians agree that whatever is right for each individual is the only truth one can know
- C. When you die on earth, you will live again, but the decisions you make while you're on earth determine where you're going to live
 - 1. Our society tells us that whatever we want must be good for us
 - 2. We must get back to God's absolutes for governing both society and our lives as individuals, based on the Scriptures
 - 3. It all comes back to what God says and what the Bible says about God
- D. How should we respond to absolute truth?
 - 1. Don't stop believing, even when it's hard or doesn't make sense
 - 2. Don't give up—find your truth, your reality, and your life in the Word of God

II. The Commandments for Righteousness

- A. The rest of the commandments stem from the first two:
 - 1. "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)
 - 2. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" (v. 7)
- B. If we take the first two commandments to heart, the others will fall into place
 - 1. The Ten Commandments are straightforward, concise, and simple; there are only ten absolutes to govern our lives
 - 2. If someone keeps God's commandments, they will be a whole person (see Ecclesiastes 12:13)
 - 3. If someone violates these commandments, their life will be out of balance
 - a. They've allowed desires, addictions, or things to sit upon the throne of their life

- b. They've left the true worship of God and are now worshiping something else
 - 4. If we truly keep God at the center of our hearts and on the throne of our lives, everything else will fall into place as we seek to live righteous lives
 - C. "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3)
 - 1. If God is who He claims to be in His Word, then He must be supreme in our lives—God must be in control
 - 2. Idolatry isn't always physical
 - a. It's much broader than that
 - b. An idol is anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our lives
 - i. Romans 1:25
 - ii. As a society, we have essentially fashioned the living God into our own image
 - iii. The first creature that man substitutes for God is himself; instead of worshiping God, man attempts to deify himself
 - c. Another form of idolatry can be the worship of our own bodies
 - i. There's nothing wrong with being healthy—it's good to take care of your body—but for some, this can become an obsession
 - ii. If the desire to be healthy becomes chief in your life, that desire has become an idolatrous desire
 - d. The idolatry of pleasure
 - i. If you want to know who or what your god is, pay attention to your focus when you're alone with your thoughts, desires, and imagination
 - ii. Pay attention to where your money goes
 - D. Our hearts are worship factories, and we are constantly worshiping something
 - 1. Self-gratification is rampant in our society, which says if you want it, it can't be that bad for you
 - 2. Whenever it becomes more important for us to indulge in a desire than to be righteous, that desire has become idolatrous
 - 3. Most people who are trapped in sin are there because they've failed to let God reign over their heart unopposed—they've allowed something to wedge itself between themselves and God
 - 4. It's also possible for righteous desires to become idolatrous desires
 - a. The desire for the people around you to be righteous can become idolatrous if that desire causes you to be unloving, unkind, or angry with others
 - b. You can become more focused on being right than being righteous
 - 5. Sin is pleasurable, but it comes at a cost
 - a. Philippians 3:18
 - b. I Timothy 5:6
 - c. Hebrews 11:25
 - d. Romans 6:23
- III. The Requirements of Righteousness
 - A. What does Jesus have to say about the Ten Commandments?
 - 1. Matthew 5:18-20

2. Not only are the Ten Commandments still valid and we are to follow them, but the requirement is that our righteousness must exceed the scribes' and Pharisees'
 3. How can we measure up to their righteousness, let alone exceed it?
 - a. Luke 18:10-14
 - b. This Pharisee did more than was required by the law—the law required only one period of fasting per year
 - c. At the moment the Pharisee thought he was at his strongest, God saw him at his weakest
 - d. The tax collector was at his weakest, crying out for the mercy of God, but God saw him at his strongest
 - e. God doesn't see as man does (see 1 Samuel 16:7)
 - B. Perhaps the most awful form of breaking the second commandment is hypocrisy
 1. The Pharisee was the worst kind of hypocrite—he didn't even realize he was a hypocrite
 2. The problem with the Pharisees was that they majored in the minors—they were more interested in details than principles, actions than motives, doing than being
 - a. Actions should follow a heart change, not vice versa
 - b. Matthew 15:7-8
 3. People like this are also the hardest to reach with the good news because they think that they can earn their own salvation and that they are in the process of doing so
 4. Rules and rituals enable people to feel spiritual when they're not
 - C. These Pharisees did everything, even things they didn't have to do, and even that wasn't enough
 1. Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of even the most righteous person
 2. Your righteousness must have something in it that the scribes and Pharisees didn't have—something inside instead of just something outside
 - a. Religion is a death trap—it can condemn people to hell just as certainly as immorality can
 - b. These men were trusting what they had done for God rather than what God had done for them
 - c. Hypocrisy in the church is far worse than profanity in the street
 - D. Before we look at the world and say that it needs to change, we need to look at our own hearts
 1. We need to focus first on changing who we are so that those who see our light will desire it for themselves
 2. To invoke His name but not obey His Word is to take His name in vain
- IV. The Fulfillment of Righteousness
- A. If the Ten Commandments are still valid, and if the only way we can work our way into heaven is by outworking the hardest workers, what hope do we have?
 1. Jesus cleared up a common misconception in Matthew 5:17
 - a. The Ten Commandments are still relevant to us today
 - b. Jesus came to do better than to abolish or destroy the law—He came to fulfill it

2. The scribes and Pharisees invalidated the Word of God for the sake of their tradition (see Matthew 15:6)
- B. Even if we kept all of the commandments, it still wouldn't have been enough—there had to be a fulfillment of the law, a propitiation for sin
 1. We still need the lamb without blemish, and that lamb had to die for our sins
 2. Even from the very beginning, the law wasn't enough
- C. Jesus came so that God can be with us all the time; God dwells in the hearts of men
 1. He came so that the law would be fulfilled in Him
 2. He came to show us that all our good things don't measure up
 3. We don't have to be identified by the stench of our sin—we can be identified by the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ as it washes us white as snow and makes us pure and holy in God's sight
- D. The maker of the law put Himself under it
 1. He experienced everything in this difficult world, but He still kept every aspect of the law perfectly
 2. Hebrews 4:15
 3. But even that wasn't enough—the law still required sacrifice
 4. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin (Hebrews 9:22)
- E. Not only did Jesus put Himself under the law, but He also became our sacrificial lamb—our fulfillment, the answer to our need
 1. The law, as far as the individual is concerned, wasn't to give us righteousness; it was to show us that we could never be righteous in our own ability or works (see Romans 3:10, 19, 23)
 2. The law is there to be a mirror—to show us who we really are, and the answer to our dilemma is Jesus Christ
 3. Galatians 3:24
- V. Conclusion
 - A. When Jesus died on that cross, He took the righteous requirements of the law and paid the price we could never pay
 1. The law was emptied out on Jesus and the law was satisfied
 2. We are no longer held under its rule—the law is emptied of its punishment
 3. Jeremiah 31:31-34
 - B. Our righteousness is not found in the law, but in Jesus
 1. We no longer have to follow the law—we want to follow it
 2. Mark 12:30
 3. When He rules and reigns in your life and you love Him with all your strength, the things you naturally want to do will be the things that God wants you to do, and everything else will fall into place
 4. We don't seek to live godly lives to find God's approval, but when we realize that we already have God's approval, we will want to live godly lives
 5. The law shows us what is right and wrong, but the fulfillment of the law—grace—enables us to do right

- C. God wants us to be truly righteous people, but not with the self-righteousness of outward observance—with the true righteousness purchased by Jesus at Calvary that will come from a truly changed heart
1. The Ten Commandments were given to drive us into the loving arms of Jesus
 2. You have a god—who or what is it?

Cross references: I Samuel 16:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 5:20; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 15:6-8; Mark 12:30; Luke 18:10-14; Romans 1:25; 3:10, 19, 23; 6:23; Galatians 3:24; Philippians 3:18; I Timothy 5:6; Hebrews 4:15; 9:22; 11:25

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