

## **The Mind of Christ**

### **What Jesus Said About Sin - Part Three**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

- I. As we pointed out at the beginning of the lesson last week, the teaching of Jesus on the subject of sin was TRULY revolutionary.
  - A. One example of this is the fact that Jesus taught that everyone needs forgiveness – not just the rebellious and disobedient, but even “**RIGHTEOUS**” folks. We’re ALL guilty of sin.
    1. That means even those of us who, as they say, “go to church all the time” also have problems with sin – the only problem is that we generally don’t like to THINK of ourselves as sinners.
  - B. We’ve already seen that Jesus condemned:
    1. The sin of **SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS** – the sin of self-righteous pride.
      - a. We saw this in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. **(Luke 18:9-14)**
        - (1). We concluded by saying when WE become like the Pharisee – arrogant and high-minded, thinking we’ve got a one-way ticket to heaven simply because we’re Christians – we need to remember that we’re no better

than the tax collector who humbly prayed, *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”*

- b. We also saw Jesus condemn the sin of self-righteousness in the story of Simon the Pharisee and the woman who was simply identified as a “sinner.” **(Luke 7:36-50)**

- (1). The problem here was that Simon could see the WOMAN as a sinner, but he couldn’t see HIMSELF as a sinner.

- (2). We need to always remember that we’re ALSO sinners – as Paul said, *“for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”*

- 2. The sin of sin of EXTERNALISM – OUTWARDLY complying with the Commandments of the Lord, while INWARDLY remaining cold and indifferent to the cause of Christ.

- a. We looked at an incident **(Mark 7:1-23)** when the Pharisees condemned the disciples of Jesus simply because they didn’t keep the ridiculous man-made traditions of the Pharisees.

- (1). Jesus responded by showing these Pharisees that they NOT ONLY paid LIP-SERVICE to the commandments of God, but that they were MORE concerned about keeping their TRADITIONS than they were in keeping the COMMANDMENTS of God.

- (2). Furthermore, Jesus taught his disciples that what REALLY matters is the INWARD condition of our HEART, not the OUTWARD cleanliness of our hands (or lack of).
- (3). Sadly, many today believe that as long as they are doing all the right things EXTERNALLY, it doesn't matter about the condition of their HEART.
- (4). Some folks are going to be VERY surprised on the Day of Judgment when they discover that the Lord will not be looking SO MUCH at the EXTERNAL things we have done, as He will be looking at the INTERNAL condition of our HEART.

**BODY:**

- I. With all this in mind, let's now focus our attention on the ONE SIN that the Lord seemed to condemn MORE than any other – the sin of HYPOCRISY.
  - A. Originally, the word “hypocrite” was a theatrical term -- and pertained to those who acted on the stage.
    1. Actors in those days wore masks on the stage, and recited lines from “behind a mask.”

2. Lines of comedy were recited from behind a mask with a smiling face, while lines of tragedy and sadness were recited from behind a mask portraying shock and horror, or sadness.
    - a. Actors literally spoke from “behind the mask” – playing the part of some fictional character, or simply “play acting.”
    - b. Eventually, the term came to apply to anyone who MASKED THEIR REAL CHARACTER, or who OUTWARDLY portray themselves and one kind of person, while INWARDLY they were something COMPLETELY different.
  3. The problem with hypocrisy is that it’s the NUMBER ONE reason people in the world give for not wanting to go to church!
    - a. They say they don’t want to go to church because we’re all “a bunch of hypocrites” – and you know what? To some degree, they’re RIGHT!
    - b. There isn’t ONE of us who, at ONE TIME or another, hasn’t battled with the sin of “speaking from behind the mask” – EVERYONE OF US has to admit that there’s a little “hypocrisy” in ALL of us!
- B. I want to pause here for a moment, and speak from the depths of my heart to those of you who have felt you never wanted to be a part of a local fellowship of believers (such as this church) because you don’t want to be associated with those who may be hypocrites.

1. I want you to know that hypocrisy IS a real problem among those of us who call ourselves Christians. We DON'T always practice what we preach – and you're RIGHT in calling that hypocrisy.
2. But I want to ASSURE you of one thing – there will be NO hypocrites in heaven. Let me say that again; there will be NO hypocrites in heaven.
3. And, here's the reason I say this.
  - a. In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus taught a parable about wheat and tares – tares are a grain that look a lot like wheat when it first starts growing in the field, but will make you sick if you eat it.
  - b. Let's read this parable together (**Matthew 13:24-30**): Jesus said, "*The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'* The servants said to him, '*Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30*

*Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.""*

- c. The disciples of Jesus didn't really understand this parable, so they asked Him if He would explain it to them. So, beginning with verse 37, Jesus gives the meaning of the parable. He said, *"He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*
- d. Did you hear that? Jesus said, *"at this end of this age. . . the Son of Man (that's Jesus) will send out His angels, and they will gather OUT of His kingdom, ALL things that OFFEND, and*

*THOSE who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the FURNACE of FIRE!” – INCLUDING the hypocrite – “and there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth!”*

- e. So, let me ask you ONE SIMPLE question. Would you rather spend a FEW YEARS having to put up with hypocrites in the CHURCH, or would you rather spend an ETERNITY with them in the fires of a NEVER-ENDING, ETERNAL HELL?
  - f. It’s a “no brainer” isn’t it? It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure THIS one out.
  - g. I can put up with all KINDS of GARBAGE in THIS LIFE, as long as I know that I won’t have to put up with ANY of it in HEAVEN!
  - h. So, don’t let the hypocrite keep YOU out of heaven! You give your life to serve the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with ALL YOUR HEART, and you live as FAITHFULLY as you can EVERY DAY of your life – and let the Lord deal with the hypocrites!
- II. There are MANY passages where Jesus openly condemned hypocrisy – especially in the Sermon on the Mount (particularly Matthew chapters 6 and 7).
- A. But the one that’s most frequently quoted is **Matthew 7:1-5** –

1. Let's look at this passage together.
2. Jesus said, *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”*
  - a. Allow me to clear up some basic misunderstandings about this passage. First, Jesus is NOT condemning ALL judging. In fact, in the verses that follow, He goes on to say:
    - (1). *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.” (Matthew 7:6)*
    - (2). *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:15-16a)*
    - (3). In BOTH cases, we're required to make SOME kind of DISCRETIONARY judgment. So, Jesus is NOT condemning ALL forms of judgment.

b. Rather, Jesus is condemning TWO things:

(1). First, He condemns those who set one standard of conduct for YOU, and another, more FLEXIBLE standard, for THEM.

(2). Second, He condemns those who want to criticize the relatively simple sins in YOUR life, while they are TOTALLY BLINDED to the ENORMOUS SINS in their OWN life. Jesus said they need to take care of their OWN sins before they start trying to help you get rid of YOURS.

B. However, in **Matthew chapter 23**, Jesus delivers one of the MOST SCATHING condemnations of the scribes and Pharisees, who, for the most part, were the BIGGEST hypocrites of the day. In this passage, Jesus revealed NINE characteristic marks of the Hypocrite:

1. They demand that OTHERS keep spiritual standards that THEY don't keep themselves. **(vs. 1-4)**
2. They do their works simply to be SEEN by men, and to receive the PRAISE of men. **(vs. 5-12)**
3. They "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men" – or **(cf. Luke 11:52)** "take away the key of knowledge" – meaning they are SO intent on promoting their OWN beliefs that they TWIST and

PERVERT the Scriptures so that OTHERS get so confused that they are NEVER able to see the truth for THEMSELVES. **(v. 13)**

4. They prey on those who are most vulnerable, while at the same time, making public displays of phony righteousness. **(v. 14)**
  5. They are intent on gaining as many followers (disciples) as possible, but end up making these disciples even MORE fanatical than themselves. **(v. 15)**
  6. They are COMPLETELY untrustworthy, and CONSTANTLY look for loop-holes so they don't have to keep their word. **(vs. 16-22)**
  7. They believe they are justified by their "good works" of super-religious service, but neglect the REAL essence of the Law – like JUSTICE, MERCY and FAITHFULNESS. **(vs. 23-24)**
  8. Their devotion to God is SUPERFICIAL and SHALLOW – only EXTERNAL – while INWARDLY, they are FULL of sin. **(vs. 25-28)**
  9. They HATE those who expose their hypocrisy, and PERSECUTE those who are GENUINELY righteous. **(vs. 29-36)**
- C. Now do you see why we say, "there's a little hypocrisy in all of us," INCLUDING those of us who are Christians?
1. How many of us can HONESTLY say that NONE of these nine characteristics of a "hypocrite" have EVER applied to us?
  2. To put it another way – how many of us can HONESTLY say:

- a. We've NEVER expected OTHERS keep spiritual standards that WE'VE failed to keep OURSELVES?
  - b. We've NEVER intentionally done things simply because we wanted to get NOTICED by others – to receive PRAISE for being “such a faithful Christian?”
  - c. We've NEVER FORCED an interpretation of the Scriptures to promote our OWN views on a controversial, or difficult-to-understand subject?
  - d. We've NEVER made a PUBLIC display of our righteousness – just to get noticed.
  - e. We've NEVER looked for LOOP-HOLES so that we don't have to keep our word?
  - f. We've NEVER been more concerned about doing GOOD WORKS of RELIGIOUS SERVICE (like making sure we're here every time the doors are open), than we were about keeping the TRUE essence of the Law, such as JUSTICE, MERCY and FAITHFULNESS?
  - g. We've NEVER been a little superficial and shallow as a Christian – making sure we OUTWARDLY appear holy and righteous, while INWARDLY hiding sins in our hearts?
- E. You see, there really IS “a little hypocrisy in all of us,” isn't there?

## CONCLUSION:

- I. Hopefully, this should help us all see the TRUE concept of sin Jesus was trying to get across to His disciples.
  - A. Jesus saw sin as an attitude of the HEART. Our OUTWARD actions may be BEYOND REPROACH – but it's the INWARD attitude of our heart that REALLY matters.
    1. The psalmist knew that obedience to God BEGINS in the heart.
      - a. **Psalms 119:112** – *“I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end.”*
      - b. David knew that his HEART had to be COMMITTED to the LORD before he could keep ANY commandments and statutes of God.
    2. The Scriptures tell us this is the very reason why King Rehoboam failed to remain faithful – because his heart had not FIRST been PREPARED to seek God.
      - a. **2 Chronicles 12:13-14** – *“Now Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king; and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD.”*

3. Quoting from Psalms 95, the Hebrew writer warns that our hearts can become hardened just like those of the children of Israel.
  - a. **Hebrews 3:7-11** – *“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.”’*
    - b. The psalmist was saying the people of Israel went “*astray in their heart*” FIRST, and BECAUSE OF THAT, have not know the ways of the Lord.
    - c. Apostasy ALWAYS begins in the HEART!
- B. The Law of God CLEARLY condemns COMMITTING sin. But Jesus wanted us to know that sin BEGINS in the heart.
  1. It’s the INWARD ATTITUDE OF THE HEART that matters.
  2. The condition of our heart will determine whether or not we are going to be obedient to God.
  3. And it’s the condition of our heart that will determine whether or not we’re going to obey God for the RIGHT REASONS – out of a genuine LOVE for the Lord, and NOT for the purpose of simply performing lip-service, or simply to win the approval of others.

4. But never forget – we can APPEAR to be faithful OUTWARDLY, while INWARDLY the condition of our heart can be totally corrupted by sins we refuse to acknowledge, and from which we fail to get forgiveness.
  5. That’s why, on the Judgment Day, the Lord is going to look closely at our HEART.
    - a. When the prophet Samuel was examining the sons of Jesse to see which one would become the next King of Israel, the Scriptures tell us:
      - (1). **1 Samuel 16:6-7** – *“So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, ‘Surely the LORD’s anointed is before Him!’ But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*
- C. What’s the condition of your heart?
1. If you’ve never been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, are you now willing to *“obey from the heart,”* and give your HEART to the Lord in complete obedience?

2. And, if you've done that but haven't lived as you should, will you genuinely repent out of a heart of godly sorrow, and begin doing *“the will of God from the heart?”*