

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:23-26** – Jesus says: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

**F. B. Meyer** (1847–1929) asks “Does your brother have something against you? Why does God care about this?”

He goes on to say “Ask his forgiveness as you would ask God’s and your approach will bring a flood of repentant and protesting words, which will show that you have won your brother. But if these do not follow, and he receives your apology as his right, or without remark, still you have done your part, and there is nothing to be said against you further.” What is he saying?

**Henri J. M. Nouwen** (1932–1996) says “Just imagine that there was no longer fear among people, no longer rivalry, hostility, bitterness, or revenge....We say, “I can’t imagine.” But God says, “That’s what I imagine, a whole world not only created but also living in my image.” Have you thought of this?

**George MacDonald** (1824–1905) says “Whether he pay you what you count his debt or no, you will be compelled to pay him all you owe him. If you owe him a pound and he you a million, you must pay him the pound whether he pay you the million or not; there is no business parallel here.” Why do our actions supersede the facts or logistics of a situation?

**Matthew 5:27-30** – Jesus says: “You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

What does the “right eye” and the “right hand” represent in this statement from Jesus? What are some examples?

If causes of sin are so destructive to our spirit, what drastic measures are we to take? Why?

And why are destructive actions to our spirit so important?

**J. Heinrich Arnold** (1913-1982) was a German publisher and founder of the Bruderhof community. He says “It is impossible to defeat one’s sinful nature by will power alone, because the will is never wholly free, but bent this way and that by conflicting emotions and other forces at work on it. In fact, it may end up entrenching in our mind the very evil we are struggling to overcome, or even drive it to the point of becoming reality.”

What is he saying here? Who in history has attempted to overcome their own sinfulness?

**Romans 7:14-17** – Paul wrote: “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.” What is he saying? What is a slave? What do slaves do? What are some examples of slavery in history that God has used to show us right from wrong? “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.” Why can’t Paul do what he wants to do? “And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.” Why is Paul saying “the law is good” if he does what he does not want to do? Why do we need the law?

**Exodus 2:23** – The Israelites are in Egypt while Moses is in the desert. Moses wrote: “During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.”

Why did the Israelites groan? When do we groan?

Why did God hear the prayers of the Israelites? Why does God hear our prayers?

**Romans 6:6-7** – Paul wrote: “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

Who is the “old self”? And if the “old self” has died, what also has died?

**Arnold** says “...as long as we try to conquer evil by sheer willpower, evil will get the better of us. Yet as soon as we give ear to that innermost longing of heart that cries out for Jesus, the evil in us will retreat.”

What examples of evil retreating do we see in the bible?

**I John 3:2-3** – John wrote: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” The hope John speaks of is an unshakable confidence concerning the future. What is John saying?

**Francis Chan** (1967 - ) is an American Evangelical pastor, teacher, and speaker. He is the former teaching pastor of the nondenominational Cornerstone Community Church, an Evangelical church in Simi Valley, California founded by Chan in 1994. He says “My pursuit of sexual purity has been a discipline. I have said with the apostle Paul,

**I Cor. 9:26-27** - “Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Here Paul uses the figure of boxing to represent the Christian life. How does this analogy compare to your life?

**Chan** goes on to say, “Early on in my Christian journey, I focused only on running away from sin. I believe it was good and right, but not complete. It was later that I discovered the truth of **Galatians 5:16** – Paul wrote: “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” What is one thing the Holy Spirit does for us in our daily lives?

**2 Timothy 2:4** – Paul wrote to Timothy: “No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer.” What are the civilian affairs Paul is referring to? Who is our commanding officer and what is the mission?