

September 21th, 2008 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 16”

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Luke 11:37-41

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Then the Lord said to him, **“You Pharisees carefully clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but inside you’re full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish people! Didn’t the one who made the outside make the inside, too? Give [to the poor] from the abundance of your heart, then everything will be clean for you.**”

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last lesson, I made the point that there is only one solution to our familial and societal problems, and that is the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of His sacrifice, of His death, His burial, His three days in the grave, His resurrection and His admonition to us to obey the Word of God. Contrary to popular opinion, there is such a thing as right and wrong, and it is important for us, as Christians, to recognize the difference and do that which is right.

However, it is important that we do not trivialize the Word of God by failing to differentiate between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. It is our job to yield to the ministry of the Holy Spirit so that we can understand the point that God is trying to make by codifying a law. It is necessary to remember that the ceremonial things that God tells us to do are symbolic likenesses of things in heaven. Listen to the law of God in the Old Testament, as **Exodus 24:3-8** informs us:

3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has said we will do.”

5 Then [Moses] sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

6 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.”

8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.”

To commemorate the covenant between God and the Nation of Israel, the Israelites celebrated this first of many annual ceremonies in which they sprinkled animal blood on the altar, the tabernacle and the people to symbolize the covenant between Israel and the God. These annual sacrifices, however, did not really solve the problem of sin. **Hebrews 10:1-4** tells us:

1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

In other words, the Israelites were performing an annual ceremony to symbolize the removal of their sins, but the ceremony was only a symbol, and not the actual removal process. Neither the altar upon which the Jews made sacrifices, the sacrificed animals or their sprinkled blood were actually able to make any substantive changes in the lives of the Jews that performed the ceremonies, nor did the sacrifices actually atone for their sins. The true Tabernacle of God is in heaven; Moses just built a copy of it, as the Bible tells us, in **Hebrews 9:23-28**:

23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these [animal sacrifices], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

As I mentioned last week, Jesus Christ was not a Levite, but from the tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ never went into the Most Holy Place of the earthly Temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifice, because that was not His role. Just as Jesus Christ did not come to create a political kingdom, Jesus Christ also did not come to be a priest and offer animal sacrifices in the Temple. Jesus Christ came to be a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable before God. Jesus Christ came to live the type of perfect life among men of which God would approve. Jesus' life was without blemish, just as the bulls and goats that the Jews sacrificed on the altar in Jerusalem were without any physical blemishes. Then, after Jesus did all of the work on earth that God had for Him to do, Jesus voluntarily allowed Himself to be captured, to be tried by the Jews and the Romans, to be condemned and sentenced to death, and then to suffer the most ignominious death possible.

The “a” portion of **Romans 6:23** tells us:

23 For the wages of sin is death.

But, the record is that Jesus committed no sin. **Isaiah 53:5-10** describes the reason that Jesus allowed the Jews and the Romans to kill Him, although He had not earned death by committing sin. The Bible says:

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

9 And they made His grave with the wicked— But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

Jesus was wounded for our transgressions; in other words, Jesus was killed in our place, which is the purpose of a sacrifice. When a soldier throws himself on a grenade and absorbs the explosion in his own body, the soldier is sacrificing himself for the welfare of his fellow soldiers. Jesus threw Himself on the Cross in the same way and absorbed the wages of sin, which is death, hell and the grave, for us.

All of those animal sacrifices that the Jews performed between the time that God gave the law to Moses and the time that Jesus died were of no actual effect. They were symbolic, meaning, that they reminded the Jews that performed them of their obligations to God, but they had no real power to improve anyone. They were much like the wedding ring that I wear. The ring reminds me that I am married, but it has no power to make me love my wife or to keep me from committing adultery. It is simply symbolic. Suppose I suffer a terrible accident, and sever all of the fingers on my left hand. Am I now free to commit adultery because I can no longer wear the ring? Of course not, because the ring is only a symbol of the commitment that I have made, not the commitment itself. I am under the same obligation to keep my marriage vows whether I wear the ring or not.

Here is the question of sin drilled down to its' essence: Who can tell me what to do?

The sinful opinion of mankind is: no one can tell me what to do. I'm a free agent, and I make up the rules as I go along, depending upon how I feel at any given time.

I listened to a video segment on the Fox News website this week discussing the views of the various Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates on the subject of abortion. One of the experts on the panel discussing the issue framed the abortion debate as the issue of "reproductive choice". The expert took the position that the question as to whether or not abortion is a good thing is irrelevant, and to define whether or not abortion is actually murder is unnecessary. The expert's position is that regardless of that which you call life in the womb, be it a child, a fetus, a mass of cells, or anything else that you wished to call it, that each individual female person of

childbearing age in the United States of America should have the personal ability to decide for herself whether the life form that she was hosting should continue to survive using the oxygen and nourishment carried to it by her bloodstream or not, with no interference from the law. In the expert's expert opinion, each individual woman should be a free agent, making up the rules as they go along, depending upon how they feel at any given time. That is, by the way, the opinion handed down by the group of experts that are supposed to be the moral compass of our nation, the "Supreme Court", in the Roe v. Wade decision.

So the question is; who can tell me what to do? Are there actually any absolute rules, is there any such thing as right and wrong, or are we all simply free agents? This is the crux of the matter; the implications of this question are the basis of our relationship with God.

Our God, the God of the Bible, tells us that right and wrong exists, that He, God defines right and wrong, and that He, God is sovereign, meaning that He, God tells us all what to do, our own sinful opinions notwithstanding. Let us see an example of this concept in His Word in **1Samuel 15:1-3**:

1 Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD.

2 Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

Here is the picture. God could have caused an earthquake to swallow up every single Amalekite, as He did with Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their families who opposed Moses in **Numbers 16**. God, however, preferred to use Saul and the Israelites as the instruments of His wrath against the Amalekites. God, through Samuel the prophet, gave Saul the command to kill every living thing, man or beast, associated with the nation of Amalek, and God gave Saul the military power to do so. However, **1Samuel 15:7-9** says:

7 And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

8 He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

Saul, what did God tell you to do? Why would you keep the king and the good animals alive? I know you understood the prophet when he told you to kill everyone and everything living among the Amalekites. I also know that you don't have an objection to killing, because you killed every single person, including the babies, the young children and even the nubile young girls, everyone except the king. You killed all of the cattle except the best. Saul, what is your problem? What part of "utterly destroy" do you not understand? **1Samuel 15:20** records: **20 And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.**

21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”

Listen to Saul. Saul first said that he obeyed the voice of the Lord and utterly destroyed the Amalekites, and then, in the same sentence, Saul said that he brought back Agag, the king of Amalek. Saul, what are you talking about? How could you have utterly destroyed the Amalekites if there are still Amalekites that are not destroyed? If there are Amalekites that are not destroyed, then, by definition, you did not utterly destroy the Amalekites.

But Saul does not want to discuss the definition of utterly, just as the expert in our earlier example did not want to discuss the definition of abortion. Just as the expert wants individuals to have the right to define abortion individually, Saul wanted the power to define the word “utterly” himself, which allowed Saul to disobey God while maintaining that he was obeying God. By changing that one definition, Saul declared that he was obeying the letter of God’s command while he was obviously disobeying the spirit of it.

Then, Saul changed his argument. He acknowledged that he had not destroyed everything, as he had been instructed, but declared that he was not responsible, because the people took the things that were to be destroyed and he had no control over the people, although he was the King.

Then Saul changed his argument again, and said, finally, that they kept the things that they should not have had in order to give them as a sacrifice to the God that told them to destroy them in the first place.

Saul has three arguments for disobeying God. First of all, he didn’t disobey, but secondly, if he disobeyed, he was not responsible, and thirdly, if he was responsible, he disobeyed God to please God.

However, **1Samuel 15:22-23** tells us:

22 So Samuel said: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.”

As I said earlier, the God of the Bible tells us that right and wrong exists, and that He, God tells us all what to do, our own sinful opinions notwithstanding. God is not impressed with our efforts to justify our disobedience, to find a loophole in the law, or to try to define the words of the law to change the intent of them so that we can disobey God in reality while being in compliance with the law technically. That is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, in **2Corinthians 3:5-6**:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In our text, in **Luke 11:37-41**:

As Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited Him to dinner. He accepted and reclined at the table. When the Pharisee saw this, he was shocked that Jesus did not ceremonially wash before dinner.

Then the Lord said to him, **“You Pharisees carefully clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but inside you’re full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish people! Didn’t the one who made the outside make the inside, too? Give [to the poor] from the abundance of your heart, then everything will be clean for you.**

The definition of trivializing the Word of God is capsulized and summarized in Jesus’ rebuke of this Pharisee for his behavior. Let’s examine Jesus’ argument. In the Mosaic Law, God made washing the outward sign of spiritual cleansing. **Leviticus 22:4-7** records:

4 ‘Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who is a leper or has a discharge, shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen,

5 or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean, or any person by whom he would become unclean, whatever his uncleanness may be—

6 the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening, and shall not eat the holy offerings unless he washes his body with water.

7 And when the sun goes down he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat the holy offerings, because it is his food.

Washing with water, in the Old Testament, symbolizes purification. It is important to understand, however, that washing with water only symbolizes purification. Jesus makes the point in the text that washing with water only really cleans you up on the outside.

Actual purification before God has to do with living a pure life on the inside; to be pure means having a pure thought life, because all actions start in the mind. Pure thoughts lead to pure decisions and actions; impure thoughts lead to sin.

Jesus is living a publicly pure life, both on the inside and on the outside. Jesus is going through the countryside healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, and cleansing lepers. He is feeding those that come to hear Him preach, not charging them for the food, but producing the food miraculously. But the Pharisee did not come to worship, or even to judge rightly. The Pharisee came to find fault. He could not challenge Jesus’ actions or motives, so he looked for and found a loophole in the ceremonial law of washing about which to be aggravated. Now let’s examine an incident that spotlights Jesus’ argument in totality, beginning with **John 9:1-14**:

1 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

3 Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.

4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

6 When [Jesus] had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.

7 And He said to him, **“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”** (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?”

9 Some said, “This is he.” Others said, “He is like him.” He said, “I am he.”

10 Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”

11 He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, **‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’** So I went and washed, and I received sight.”

12 Then they said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.”

13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees.

14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

Jesus displays the power of God with a pure heart. Not only did Jesus not receive any advantage or compensation from the blind man for healing him, Jesus did not even hang around long enough to get the accolades from the crowd. Jesus did not heal the man with a great display, but rather put mud on the man’s eyes and sent him on his way. But, those that wanted to examine the miracle further brought the man to the Pharisees. **John 9:15-16** records:

15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “[Jesus] put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man [Jesus] is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

So, the first argument is that Jesus was working on the Sabbath. I mentioned that Jesus did not receive any advantage or compensation to highlight the fact that Jesus was not working in the sense that the commandment prohibited. When the Bible says, in, **Deuteronomy 5:12-14**:

12 **‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.**

13 **Six days you shall labor and do all your work,**

14 **but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.**

God is referring to common definition of work, which is gainful employment, which God calls labor, not any kind of activity whatsoever. But the Jews have developed a complicated definition of activities considered work on the Sabbath day to exercise control over the people. The man born blind is not a Pharisee; but he knows the significance of having his sight restored, as **John 9:17** records:

17 They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

The blind man is glad to give glory to Jesus Christ. The Jews found this irritating, and tried to discredit the blind man, as **John 9:18-21** tells us:

18 **But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.**

19 **And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”**

20 His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.”

Now, the Pharisees are faced, once again, with the obvious miracle of the blind man. And even a blind man could see the obvious truth of the situation, as **John 9:24-33** records:

24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.”

25 He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”

26 Then they said to him again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

27 He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?”

28 Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples.

29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.”

30 The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes!

31 Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.

33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

The blind man’s brilliant analysis showed the Pharisees the logical futility of their irrational argument, and so they had no choice but react emotionally, as **John 9:34-41** concludes:

34 They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

36 He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”

37 And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”

38 Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him.

39 And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”

40 Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?”

41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.

If you live by the letter of the law looking for loopholes and technicalities, your sin remains. If you choose to live according to the Spirit of the Law, that is, always striving to do that of which God would approve rather than looking for the loopholes in the law, your sins will be forgiven.

We, as Christians, no longer make the sacrifices of bulls and goats. We no longer celebrate the Sabbath, which is a commemoration of the creation of the world, but we now worship God on the first day of the week, which is a commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has replaced the animal sacrifices of the Jewish sacrificial system with the shedding of His own blood. Jesus Christ has offered His sacrifice, and it is a full, a perfect and a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and sacrifices never have to be offered again. We can live confident of our relationship with God, because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse us of our sins.

So we no longer have to parse the Law of Moses to figure our proper behavior, but now we look to the law of love to govern ourselves. **Romans 13:8-14** tells us:

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

So when we are faced with decisions about our behavior toward others, let us not try to redefine right and wrong to give ourselves an advantage, but let us ask ourselves: what would we do if we truly loved the person about whom we are making this decision? **Mark 12:33** tells us:

33 And to love [God] with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

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