Jesus’ Several Calls To Ongoing Righteousness For Salvation

Due to the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace, you never hear that there is a salvation message in the Sermon on the Mount. You are told instead it is a list of impossible virtues. Jesus is supposedly directing you to realize you are irreversibly lost absent faith alone. The virtues He requires for salvation, so clearly stated in the Sermon, just could not possibly be required of sinful man. Only an easy and simple faith could ever be allegedly required by God for salvation.

Thus, even though you have read the Sermon on the Mount many times, you have become desensitized to its salvation promises and requirements. Cheap grace gives you a different paradigm on how to read its message. What Jesus is really saying alludes you. His message is as foreign to ourselves as it was to the Pharisees. In truth, Jesus was directing them to their faults of virtue (disobedience). He wanted them to repent from disobedience to obedience. The Pharisees were on a failing grade because the Pharisees taught only the lesser commands of the Law, ignoring the more important ones. So says Our Lord Jesus. (Matt.23:23.)

However, now look at the Sermon. See what activities of the heart by you, if performed, Jesus says result in salvation. Notice how “all addressed not the believing faculties, but to conscience, sense of responsibility, power of moral and spiritual decision.” (Congregational Review (May 1868) at 210.) In Matthew 5:3-12 (KJV), Jesus promises these Blessings (Beatitudes) of salvation for these behaviors:
It logically follows that if you are proud or you are not forgiving or you are persecuted due to sinfulness, you are not qualified to receive mercy or inherit the earth. You are lost. But if you are humble, are merciful, and persecuted for doing good (and bear up under it), then yours is the “kingdom of heaven” and you shall “obtain mercy.”

The salvation theme of the Sermon on the Mount is underscored in how Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus called us to have a “righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees,” absent which “you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:20.) Jesus is making obedience to several principles a condition of entrance into heaven. As discussed in the prior chapter, Matthew 5:20 is not Jesus pulling our leg. We are not free to ignore the literal import of Jesus’ words. (See chapter beginning at page 147.)

Rather, it is clear from the verses that follow in the Sermon that these are real directives. Jesus wants them truly performed. Jesus is explaining what it means to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees:

- You must not call your brother a fool (5:21-26);
- You must not lust after a married woman (gunaika) (5:27-30);¹
- You must not divorce your wife (gunaika) absent adultery by her (5:31-32);²
- You must not make false vows (5:33-37);³ and

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1. For the correct translation of *gunaika*, see the footnote at page 206.
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• You must not return evil for evil (5:38-48).

Jesus is not suggesting these commands are so lofty that you can ignore their literal application to you. Jesus is not opining on faith being the means to acquire this righteousness. Rather, Jesus is directly calling us to obey these principles. By doing so, we shall exceed the shallow righteousness of the Pharisees and “enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:20.) The Pharisees obviously committed all these sins. They taught a watered-down version of the Law. (See the chapter on the Pharisees beginning at page 147.) Thus, Jesus was promising “entry...into the kingdom of heaven” (5:20) for obedience to His restoration-of-the-Law principles.

A Good Analysis: Reading Jesus’ Words Literally

The lesson of the Sermon is clear but is lost on our modern ears. The best description appears from the pastor who runs Believe. When literally understood, Jesus’ message is clear:

Jesus concludes the sermon by setting up certain requirements that relate directly to one’s being saved or lost. He divides mankind into three classes: those who (1) follow him (7:13-14, 17, 21, 24-25), (2) do not follow him (vss. 13-44, 26-27), and (3) pretend to follow him (vss. 15-20, 21-23). To be saved one must actually follow the teachings of the sermon, but Jesus does not say they must be performed perfectly. The saved are those who accept and actually attempt to direct their lives by the sermon; the lost are those who pretend to follow or who reject these teachings....Mere pro-

2. For an arguably more valid variant in the Hebrew version of Matthew, which makes the failure to use a divorce certificate the focus, see my prior book, Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 140 fn. 5.

3. On the importance of the Hebrew variant, which contains the word falsely, see Footnote 10 on page 160.
fession of belief, without the following, will secure Jesus’ condemnation, ‘I never knew you. You evildoers, depart from me’ (vs. 23).\(^4\)

**Is Obedience Satisfied By Mere Faith?**

Is the response Jesus wants to His sermon a change in personal behavior or simply the adoption of a belief in facts like the atonement, Jesus resurrected, and so on?

As demonstrated in the chapter on the Pharisees, what Jesus is saying is that personal righteousness must start with a personal change in one’s view of the Law. You must bring back the forgotten key commands from the Law of Moses. Without personal knowledge of God’s commands, you have no compass. Your chance of following the Law’s commands is reduced to whatever your conscience can recognize on its own as right or wrong. God always insists conscience alone is insufficient to know God’s full will. The very purpose of the Law was to reveal God’s will. Knowledge of the Word gave the possibility of life where otherwise people would perish eternally. As Hosea 4:6 said, the people of his day were perishing (eternally) because “you [priests] have forgotten the Law” and dispensed a shallow obedience.

This is why in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus focused on the Pharisees’ oral teaching on adultery. They taught adultery was only by committing the actual act of adultery. The Pharisees’ Oral Law said that coveting a married woman was only wrong if it led to adultery. If the lust solely remained unacted upon it was supposedly not sin. The Pharisees shallowly insisted adulterous action must follow to make the lusting wrong.\(^5\) Jesus said this Pharisaical teaching


\(^5\) See page 166.
nullified one of the Ten Commandments. Among the ten, God declares it is wrong in and of itself to “covet your neighbor’s wife.” (Exodus 20:17.)

Jesus was thus restoring the Law’s principles. The purpose was to restore the path to life. This is what is behind Jesus’ statement that only if your “righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees may you enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20.)

However, others claim Jesus had no intent to raise respect for the Law. Instead, Jesus supposedly had an opposite goal — to engender disbelief one could satisfactorily ever keep the commands of God. To do this, Jesus in the Sermon supposedly gave impossible commands, such as against lusting against any “woman.” From this, it is rationalized Jesus was proving how futile it would be to think obedience to God’s commands is the path to life. Supposedly, then only faith can be the sole means of salvation.

However, while Jesus may have been translated to appear to give an impossible command in the King James Bible, Jesus clearly did not say what the King James Bible attributes to Him about lust.

For in Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus is simply telling all men, married or unmarried, to obey one of the Ten Commandments that prohibited lusting after your neighbor’s wife — gunaika. This word in Greek only means “married woman” or “wife.” It is everywhere else translated that way in the New Testament. See Matt. 5:32 (“wife”); Ephesians 5:22,33 (“Married woman....”) and Romans 7:2-3 (“a married woman is bound....”) I can only speculate what motivated the King James Bible Puritan translators to make Jesus ban sexual desire for any woman by all men. Jesus did not do so.

With this correction in mind, there is nothing too difficult for a man in not looking in lust at a married woman. Most men would agree that is something they can control. Jesus was not therefore insisting upon something crazily
impossible, as some contend. As God tells us: “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.” (Deut. 30:11.)

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The Earliest Gospel On Obedience To The Sermon

As noted above, a popular view today is that the Sermon does not represent principles to obey. Jesus supposedly wants merely to show us we can never meet God’s standards for salvation. Jesus allegedly wants us to see the absurdity of trying to actually do the principles in the Sermon on the Mount.

Yet, how did the early church which could read the original Greek understand Jesus’ words? Did they think the Sermon on the Mount involved principles to obey? Or did the early Greek-fluent church think the Sermon was a lesson on the futility of salvation by obedience? Did the early Greek-fluent church think Jesus, in effect, was pulling our leg?

6. The Greek word gunaika signifies a married woman, not a woman. If it had been gune, it can mean woman or wife. (See 1 Cor. 7:4, wife.) If it were gunaikes, it would mean women. (For a thorough and able discussion, see What Is Adultery? at http://www.brightfiles.com/findtruth/otherart/adultery.htm (last accessed 8-17-07).) Moreover, married woman is the only meaning that fits. Adultery by definition cannot be committed with an unmarried woman. (Lev. 20:10, “a man’s wife”; Deut. 22:22-24, “a woman married....”) Adultery, as defined in the Bible, is not what we typically assume. It always requires a married woman to be involved. A married man could not commit adultery with an unmarried woman. Instead, if a married man lusts for/has sex with a virgin, this could break either the marriage vow (binding with God—Matt. 12:36, ‘judged by every word that comes out of your mouth’) or it implicates other provisions in the Law not having to do with adultery. See, Exodus 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29. Hence, the only proper translation of gunaika in Matthew 5:27-28 is married woman.
It is important to examine the perception of the early Greek-fluent church to resolve this issue. After all, the early church could read the original Greek. It commented on this question within the lifetime of actual disciples of the apostles. These commentators must be closer to the original meaning. They necessarily enjoy a closer approximation to the apostles’ doctrines.

The earliest post-apostolic church clearly thought Jesus meant for us to behave according to His commands in the Sermon on the Mount. In 157 A.D., Justin wrote First Apology where he quotes the entire Sermon on the Mount as he addresses Emperor Antoninus Pius. To prove to the emperor that Christians take these teachings as truly to be followed, Justin Martyr says:

And many, both men and women, who have been Christ’s disciples from childhood, remain pure at the age of sixty or seventy years; and I boast that I could produce such from every race of men. For what shall I say, too, of the countless multitude of those who have reformed intemperate habits, and learned these things? (Justin Martyr, Apology, 167-8.)

As Dallas Willard says, in this first three hundred years of the faith, Jesus “was the center of attention and devotion in their lives.” However, as time wore on, this focus slackened. By our day, the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace has replaced the gospel taught in that early era. And what was that gospel of the earliest era? Was it consistent with the salvation message of the Sermon on the Mount? Yes, indeed it was.

Salvation Message Of Early Church Had Sermon’s Message

David Bercot, an attorney, has synthesized the beliefs of the church leaders in the post-apostolic era between 125 A.D. to 325 A.D. He is the author of the 703 page comprehensive *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers* (Peabody, Mass.: Henrickson Publishing, 1998.) Based on this extraordinary research, Bercot claims “early Christians universally believed that works or obedience play an essential role in our salvation.”

There is a reason for this. When Jesus gets to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, He underscores that works are essential. Then Jesus says He clearly expects us to keep on obeying these principles to avoid the fire and destruction:

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits. Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who keeps doing [poieo, continuous tense known as present participle active] the will of my Father who is in heaven.... Every one then who hears these words of mine and keeps doing [poieo, present participle active] them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.... And every one who hears these words of mine and does not continue to do [poieo, present participle active] them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand....[whose end is destruction]. (Matt 7:19-21 and 24-27).

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The Modern Gospel Teaching That The Sermon Is Irrelevant

Those who today believe in the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace find it necessary to denigrate the value of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

One argument is that Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount are meant for a different dispensation. For example, Pastor Mike Paulson of Touchet Baptist Church in Touchet, Washington, in a sermon entitled What Would Jesus Do or What Would Paul Do? boldly dismisses the Sermon on the Mount. He claims its teaching belongs to a different dispensation. Pastor Paulson says it is heretical to teach the Sermon on the Mount literally as applicable today.

Unfortunately, most ‘modern’ Christians follow those teachings today—I call them Beatitudinal Christians and a simple reading of the Sermon on the Mount should [show] them that they can NOT live that sermon completely today—no way, not at all—not even close! The stuff in the Sermon on the Mount actually contradicts Paul’s teachings in everything from salvation to doctrinal belief! You would think folks would see this—but like Jesus said of them, ye err not knowing the Scriptures....

Pastor Paulson is not an aberration, but a normative teaching today. Walvoord published under the Moody Press is likewise typical:

The Sermon on the Mount, as a whole, is not church truth precisely...It is not intended to delineate justification by faith or the gospel of salvation. (John Walvoord, Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come (Moody Press: 1984) at 44, 45.)

This approach found its clearest exposition in the teachings of the founder of dispensationalism — Clarence Larkin. He began the movement by saying there is nothing for a modern Christian to worry about obeying from the Sermon on the Mount. His text, still cited today among dispensationalists, is *Dispensational Truth* (Philadelphia: Larkin, 1918). Based on dispensational logic, Larkin explains Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount “have no application to the Christian, but only to those who are under the Law, and therefore must apply to another Dispensation than this.” (*Id.*, at 87.) This notion thus divorces the church from Christ.

**Clear Invalidity Of Dispensationalism**

However, dispensationalism is clearly an erroneous doctrine as applied to render defunct Jesus’ teachings. After Jesus’ resurrection when the *atonement* was done and the era of grace had clearly begun, Jesus gave the Great Commission. Nothing in this suggests Jesus wanted His commands in the Sermon on the Mount to expire merely because the era of grace had certainly begun. To the contrary, we read:

> And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: (20) teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. 28:18-20

The Greek word for *observe* is literally *diligently do* and often is translated as *obey*. It is the Greek word *tereo*. Jesus was reiterating His commands had ongoing validity. They did not die at the Cross, as dispensationalists insist. Jesus is speaking after the Cross. Jesus is saying His teachings are as much alive as when He delivered them.
In fact, during His earthly ministry, Jesus warned His words would not expire at the cross. Jesus said His words would remain valid even though “heaven and earth pass away” (Matt. 24:35.)

Yet, dispensationalists harmonize away Jesus’ teachings as invalid because they claim to have found a better version of God’s grace than the one Jesus taught. Thus, Jesus’ words were only supposedly valid for another two years after Jesus spoke them, i.e., they expired at the crucifixion. “It is finished” for the Modern Gospel proponents means all of Jesus’ lessons are canceled unless they fit our Modern Gospel doctrine of faith-alone.

Cheap Grace Claims Jesus Does Not Mean What He Says

In the Law God gave Moses, God said that if we obey the law, it is imputed righteousness to us. (Deut. 6:25.) God in Deuteronomy 30:11 then assures us obedience to the Law “is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off.” (ASV.) As Apostle John said: “And his commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:2-3.)

However, many wed to the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace argue that since Jesus’ teachings about moral action are impossible for anyone (other than Jesus) to comply with perfectly, then His teachings are nothing more than an illustration. Jesus’ supposed point in commanding against adulterous lust, keeping your oath, etc., is not because He expects obedience. Rather, Jesus allegedly gave those commands to paint a picture of an unattainable perfection necessary for salvation. Jesus supposedly meant to show us how impossible it would be for us to attain salvation except by faith alone rather than striving to obey Jesus’ points. The Sermon on the Mount is thereby eviscerated of any literal meaning. It allegedly only shows how salvation for such imperfect beings is impossible except through the saving grace of faith. In fact, some claim Jesus wanted us to realize the futility of any attempt to obey the commands Jesus actually gave in the Sermon on the Mount.
Dallas Willard in his otherwise great book *The Great Omission* (San Francisco: Harper 2006) says precisely this:

Thus, for example, Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount...[are] illustrations of what living from the Kingdom God [should mean]....[However] to live in conformity with them...is like to attempt the impossible, and will lead to doing things that obviously are wrong and even ridiculous. (Id. at 105.)

Thus, Willard goes so far as to denigrate Jesus’ principles of conduct by claiming they actually reflect an impossible standard of conduct. Willard says it is just too hard to be humble, a peacemaker, and one who does not lust after married women, etc. Willard thinks it is obvious that Jesus does not expect us to actually change our behavior to conform to His teachings.

Not only that, Willard denigrates the Sermon by claiming Jesus would have us do things that are “obviously wrong” (he does not explain how) and “even ridiculous” if we should obey its principles. Oh my! What men cannot convince themselves when they start from a wrong assumption that they are free to ignore Jesus’ doctrine.

John MacArthur gives the same explanation.

Yet Jesus had stunned multitudes by saying, ‘Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt. 5:20)—followed by, ‘You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (v. 48). Clearly, He set a standard that was humanly impossible, for no one

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10. What is truly ironic is that Willard’s book is self-contradictory to the extreme. He claims the great omission of the church is the failure to teach obedience to Christ’s commands as a matter of obtaining proximity (not salvation). Then how is Willard’s mocking of Jesus’ commands in the Sermon as “impossible” and “wrong” and “ridiculous” going to correct this omission? It is more of the same problem, perhaps stated even worse than ever stated by any other cheap grace proponent!
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could surpass the rigorous living of the scribes and Pharisees.\textsuperscript{11}

MacArthur’s premise that the Pharisees were living obedient to the Law is a false premise in this statement, as we saw in the chapter on the Pharisees.\textsuperscript{12} The Pharisees had shallow doctrine on the Law. They were lost because they were teaching the less important aspects of the Law, while ignoring its more important aspects of Justice, Mercy and Faith. (Matt. 23:23). Thus, their followers could never be saved. They were being disobedient to the commands that matter, paying attention only to the lesser commandments. Hence, Jesus was totally serious in saying the listener must have a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees’ righteousness. This is what the Sermon then outlines.

Carl Stange, a famous religion professor at Koenigsberg in 1903 and commentator on the Sermon on the Mount, is another who speaks like Willard and MacArthur. For example, Stange similarly writes of the Sermon on the Mount:

> The teaching about the ideal.... only serves to make plain the reprehensibility of the human condition....The meaning of the moral demand is not that it gives us the power for the good but rather that it shows us our impotence for the good.\textsuperscript{13}

Bauman’s Response To Stange’s Dismissal Of The Sermon

Clarence Bauman, however, decried this hermeneutic. Clarence Bauman is Professor of Theology and Ethics at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Bauman says that

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\textsuperscript{12}See page 147.

\textsuperscript{13}Quoted in Clarence Bauman, The Sermon on the Mount, The Modern Quest for its Meaning (Mercer University Press: 1985) at 177.
Stange improperly makes Paul’s doctrine elevated above Jesus’ words by the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace, and then the improper lense through which to understand Jesus:

Stange’s central axiom is derived not from Jesus but from Paul and reflects not the content of the Sermon on the Mount but the influence of Reformation dogma.

Stange made claims about the Sermon on the Mount which its content does not validate. He read into it theories and experiences foreign to its sphere. Stange’s misinterpretation of the Sermon on the Mount exemplifies the characteristically Lutheran hermeneutical incongruity of superimposing upon the teaching of Jesus the theology of Paul.14

Bauman explains how far we have fallen from Jesus: “Jesus’ teaching of the Way of the Cross has been replaced by Paul’s proclamation of the Word of the Cross....” The Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace tells us it is too hard to actually follow Jesus’ commands in the Sermon. Thus, the Cheap Grace Gospel teaches us that it is absurd to hold these commands up as a standard. Rather, this pseudo-gospel tells us these commands were satisfied by atonement. So Bauman concludes “implicit in the logic of most atonement theories” of the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace is that “following Jesus is presumptuous and unnecessary.”15

In Pastor Paulson’s quote above, such a terrible notion is no longer implicit. Paulson openly says it is actually heretical to teach what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount as something to follow. Paulson said: “The stuff in the Sermon

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on the Mount actually contradicts Paul’s teachings in every-thing from salvation to doctrinal belief!” Paulson then rea-vons that we err in following Jesus’ teachings any longer!
 Leo Tolstoy, a Russian Christian remembered as one of the greatest authors of all time, likewise decried this mod-ern hermeneutic. He says it is wrong to see Jesus as speaking facetiously rather than seriously. Tolstoy said the Modern Gospel makes Jesus into someone who merely pretends to be insisting on obedience. We are asked to see Jesus as preaching things He supposedly thought too lofty to actually per-form. Tolstoy said this is unfair to Jesus. One must take Him at His plain meaning. It is insulting to the Lord to assume He is being deliberately misleading to make His point:

I accepted the fact that Christ meant exactly what he said. The least that can be required of those who judge another man’s teaching is, that they should take the teacher’s words in the exact sense in which he uses them. Christ did not consider his teaching as some high ideal of what mankind should be, but cannot attain to, nor does he consider it as a chimerical, poetical fancy, fit only to captivate the simple-minded inhabitant of Galilee.16

Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), professor at the University of Berlin and pastor of the Pomerania Confessing Church, likewise critiqued this view that denigrates Jesus’ words:

We Lutherans have gathered like eagles around the carcass of cheap grace, and there we have drunk of the poison which has killed the life of following Christ. The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works.17

Is Obedience An Inherently Absurd Path?

What about John saying we lie if we say “we have no sin” and “have not sinned”? (1 John 1:8,10.) Some read this to mean we never can do righteousness. This then supposedly rules out ever having to do anything in obedience to be right with God. This follows because if we can never truly break off from sin for even a significant time, God could not be just in making our salvation depend on not falling into sin.

If 1 John 1:8,10 means this, it rules out de facto all Jesus’ commands to be righteous for salvation sake in the Sermon on the Mount. Yet, is this what Apostle John is saying when those verses are read in context? Absolutely not.

What John meant in 1 John 1:8,10 is that some thought by the atonement God does not see their sinning. This is how verse nine clarifies the context of verses eight and ten. John is declaring it wrong to say that by atonement God does not see them when they sin. John Wesley, the famous pastor, comments on this, pointing out how the context of verse nine dictates the meaning of verses eight and ten: “The ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth: ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’”

John means they lie to themselves if they say they do not sin because of atonement. Instead, only upon confession, repentance and “walking in the light” does the atonement apply. The quoting from 1 John 1:8 or 1:10 out of context has been used to actually overthrow the meaning of the passage. It is seriously argued based only on verse eight or ten that atonement means God never sees us as sinning. This is precisely what John was refuting in context.


19. See page 14 et seq.
In other words, John intends us to understand those who say they have no sin (verse eight) stand in contrast to those who are cleansed by the blood of Christ by walking in the light (verse seven). John then says those who say ‘we have not sinned’ (verse ten) stand in contrast to those who have confessed sin and are now cleansed from all unrighteousness (verse nine). John is not saying we never can stop sinning. Far from it! John says in verse seven as “we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus keeps us clean.” Verse seven specifically contemplates obedience. Yet, this message in verse seven appears completely controverted if you lift verse eight or ten out of context. Yet, to lift a verse that says one thing in context and use its opposite out of context meaning is the grossest of misrepresentation.

Furthermore, if you read verses eight and ten to say we lie if we say we do not keep on sinning and are ever obedient, as faith alone apologists read them, then this creates a second fundamental incongruity. If you start at verse seven through nine, John says if “we walk in the light, we have fellowship with him,” but if we “walk in darkness,” “we lie” if we say “we have fellowship” (1 John 1:7,9.) He who “abides in [Jesus] ought himself to walk even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6.) Hence, if the reading of verses eight and ten really meant we are never free for a moment from sin or we never experience obedience consistently (i.e., walking in the light, walking as He walked), then no Christian is in “fellowship” ever with Jesus. This is the incongruous result of lifting verses 8 and 10 out-of-context from 1 John 1:7,9.

Conclusion

Jesus tells you in the Sermon on the Mount that it is destructive of your salvation if:

- You lust after a married woman.
- You take a false oath.
- You hate your brother.
- You take vengeance in your own hand.
• You divorce your wife without her being guilty of adultery or you fail to use a certificate of divorce.
• You sow discord rather than peace.²⁰
• You fail to show mercy (forgiveness) to others.
• You are impatient.²¹
• You collapse under persecution for righteousness sake and for Jesus’ name sake.

All those who practice the contrary — who practice the opposite noble virtues — are promised salvation.

If you thus are committed to following Jesus, you will memorize these principles and call them to mind throughout every day. The Sermon is not indicating an impossible standard. Nor is it passé. Instead, the Sermon on the Mount is the life-blood of your daily walk. Jesus tied a big promise — salvation — to those who follow His directions. Thus, there is never a moment you can treat these principles as optional.

Those who teach that you can ‘skip all that’ are bringing you a false Gospel. A gospel that cancels the words of Jesus. What is deplorable is they are completely aware of what they are doing yet persist in doing it anyway. In fact, they claim anyone is a heretic who is not willing to cancel Jesus’ directions in the Sermon on the Mount as “impossible” (Dillard), “ridiculous” (Dillard), “not church truth precisely” (Walvoord), “wrong” (Dillard), and as having “no application to the Christian.” (Larkin.) Oh My! How far we have fallen from Jesus!

²⁰Jesus, however, taught that peace should not be gained by compromising truth. His message would cause division and a lack of peace within families. (Matt. 10:34-39.) His own message caused divisions between the Pharisees and Himself. Thus, a Christian must sow peace and harmony, but not fail to preach the true gospel in order to keep peace.

²¹The verse “blessed are those who mourn” was a Greek translator’s error. The original Hebrew Matthew says who are patient. See George Howard, The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew (Mercer: 1989).