

# Sermon on the Mount - Relationships

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 June 2017

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[ 0 : 00 ] So tonight we are going to continue studying the Sermon on the Mount. We've been doing this for the past few weeks. And our study is entitled, Disciples Trained by King Jesus.

And we've chosen that title for two reasons. One, because that is what the Sermon on the Mount is. It's training for disciples in God's kingdom. Jesus is teaching us how to live.

And secondly, we've chosen this title because that's what we want to be. We want to be disciples who are trained by King Jesus. And we've made this diagram which is basically breaking the Sermon on the Mount into...

I forgot how many we have. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, ten, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen parts. And we're going through them one by one. Tonight we are focusing on the fourth block, Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 to 32.

And we're taking this under the heading of relationships. And we're going to read from that passage. But in order to get a bit of context, we're going to just read from verse 17 right through to verse 48.

[ 1 : 10 ] So the reading that we're going to do covers these four blocks together. So we'll read God's word together just now and then we'll start here in more detail. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Now as we read through the next verses from verse 21 to 48, you'll notice that Jesus repeats a phrase, a key phrase a number of times.

So I want you to look out for it and we'll see if you spot it in a moment. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder but whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

[ 2 : 22 ] Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you're offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

Reconcile to your brother and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court. Lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. It was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except in the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery.

[ 3 : 36 ] And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have

sworn. But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair black or white. Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil. You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles, give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

[ 4 : 49 ] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same. If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even Gentiles do the same.

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Amen. May God bless His word to us. As we've been saying, the sound of the mount is all about how we are to live as Christians. It's not about what makes us Christians, it's about how we are to live as disciples. And we've been looking at various things. We focused on the Beatitudes, which describe to us the character that God, that Jesus wants us to display.

And as we said, the characteristics emphasised by the Beatitudes are totally different to the world's usual priorities.

And as those who are citizens of the Kingdom of God, we enjoy immense blessings, immense privileges. And we said to her that echoes back to the Abrahamic Covenant, whereby Abraham was to be blessed.

[ 5 : 57 ] But alongside the fact that Abraham was blessed, he was also to be a blessing to the world. And that's what we covered in this section, whereby we are to be salt and light.

We are to be a blessing to the world. We are to be distinctive and visible in terms of their witness in order to do good to those around us. Last time we focused on this blog here, on the subject of obedience.

And we were looking at what Jesus was teaching concerning the law of God in our lives. And the key point that he highlighted was that he has not come to abolish the law, but he has come to fulfil it.

And we were saying that that basically means that Jesus has taken the law to a new level. He has not come to wipe out the Old Testament's teaching, but he has come to bring it to a new level, to fulfil it.

That means that the ceremonial law, which was in the Old Testament to do the temple and the tabernacle, that ceremonial law is now shaped by Jesus as once for all sacrifice on the cross.

[ 7 : 06 ] The civil law, which in the Old Testament referred to the geographical nation of Israel at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, that now is in reference to the new Israel, to the kingdom of God, to the church.

And the moral law has been reinforced and has been applied both externally and inwardly, because the righteous character of God, which defines the moral law, never, ever changes.

So as disciples we are not here to abandon the law, we are here to obey it. And obedience is a key part of our lives as disciples. As you may remember, we said that this block is talking about the law in our lives.

Jesus then goes on to give a series of examples as to how that law is applied in our lives. And these are summarised under these four blocks that we have here.

So these four blocks all belong together, and these three relationships in technically and temperament are examples of what Jesus is teaching in this block concerning obedience.

[ 8 : 22 ] So they kind of come as a bit of a package, all really explaining the key principles regarding the law that Jesus emphasised. We looked at that last time. In each of these examples that are included under these three headings, Jesus uses more or less the same phrase to introduce them.

Did you spot it? Exactly George, exactly. You have heard that it was said, but I say to you. You have heard that it was said, but I say to you. And you see that repeated with slight variations, but more or less exactly the same.

Now, that's a very easy thing to misunderstand. And I think some people have misunderstood it over the years, because some people think that Jesus is compasting what he is saying with what the Old Testament is teaching.

And so they would argue that Jesus is kind of, you know, whitening out the Old Testament, because you say, you've heard that it was said of old, but I say to you. And some people interpret it in that way.

[ 9 : 38 ] But he is not doing that. He is not contrasting his words with the words of the Old Testament.

You might ask, how do you know that for us? We know it for a couple of reasons. One, because of what verse 17 says, do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

So if it says that in verse 17, you cannot say that in verse 21, Jesus is abolishing the law. That would be to take things completely out of context. Jesus has not come to abolish the Old Testament.

So what is Jesus doing? Well, have a look at these verses. This is where I think it gets revealed quite interesting. So here we have Matthew 4.

And the tempter came to Jesus and said, if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. But he answered, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes to the mouth of God.

[ 10 : 45 ] Matthew 21, 521, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, whoever murders will be liable to judgment. Now, in both these verses, Jesus is quoting the Old Testament, but there is a vital difference between the two.

This is a quote from the Old Testament from here onwards. This is a quote from the Old Testament. But what's different? What key phrase is in the first one and not in the second one?

It is written. Yes, it is written. It is written is the phrase that Jesus uses to introduce the Old Testament, or something similar to that, the scripture say, it is written, or something like that.

He does not use that phrase in this section of the Sermon of the Night. He used a different phrase, you have heard that it was said. And the key point is that he is not comparing his teaching primarily with the Old Testament.

He is comparing his teaching with everything that had been said by the rabbis.

[ 11 : 56 ] Jesus is contrasting his teaching with the traditional rabbinic teaching that the Jews had built up over the years.

And that's confirmed by this verse, verse 43. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.

Now, the vital point from there is that this is a quote from the Old Testament. This is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament.

That's a rabbinic teaching. It's what they have heard. It's what they have been taught. So Jesus is tackling the teaching of the Jewish leaders, which of course was particularly embodied by the Pharisees and scribes of his day.

In other words, Jesus is saying the teaching of the kingdom of God stands in contrast to the teaching of the Pharisees. So when Jesus says, you have heard it was said, but I say to you, he is recently saying the Pharisees and the scribes and the leaders say this, but I say unto you.

[ 13 : 15 ] And of course, that's exactly why he said in verse 20, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

So that's a really important point to make sure we grasp. Jesus is contrasting with rabbinic teaching. As we said, he does it under three headings. Tonight we're going to focus on this one. How should we as disciples relate to other people? Well, that's a very, very interesting question. Jesus has a lot to teach us in these verses.

In the main part of this section that we're going to look at, Jesus takes two of the 10 commandments and he applies them to two key areas of personal conduct.

So he takes the sixth commandment. You shall not murder. And he applies that to anger.

[ 14 : 21 ] He then takes the seventh commandment and he applies that to lust. And this is the basic framework of his teaching.

Now, the first point I want to note in many ways is a preliminary point, is that Jesus is very, very deliberately emphasizing the internal aspect of the law.

Murder is essentially an outward act, or it's viewed in that way. Adultery, it's viewed as an outward act. But in both of these areas, Jesus is applying the principle inwardly to a very old heart.

And that of course ties in very clearly with the prophecies regarding the New Covenant era. This is Jeremiah's prophecy from Jeremiah 31 talking about the New Covenant.

For this covenant, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord, I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts.

[15:29] And I will be their God and they shall be my people. So as Jesus emphasizes the inwardness of it all, he is highlighting the fact that the New Covenant era has begun.

This of course is completely in contrast to what the Pharisees did. The Pharisees cared about the outside as Matthew 23, 25 emphasized.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of a cup and a plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. And so do you see the contrast that you have here?

Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for their obsession with the outside, the fact that the inside, they are full of greed and self-indulgence. In terms of God's plan, in terms of the prophecies of the Old Testament and what Jesus is inaugurating, everything should be inward, written on our hearts.

What the Pharisees were doing and what God intended for his kingdom were in complete contrast. So that was the preliminary point.

[16:34] God's law doesn't just apply on the outside, it applies to the very core of our heart and mind. Now, I want us to just rather looking at the two commandments one by one, I want to kind of look at them sort of both together in a way, because when you take them as a pair, it's quite interesting, because Jesus is teaching us about how we relate to other people.

And in terms of relationships with other people, Jesus is warning us all against two extremes. In verse 21 to 22, he is warning us against inappropriate aggression.

You've heard it said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire.

So inappropriate aggression. And then in verse 27 to 28, he's at the other end of the extreme, he's warning us against inappropriate attraction.

You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

[17:58] I think it's really interesting the way he's pushing us to both extremes. It's also interesting to note that the world is full of both of those things, isn't it?

You look at the world and it's full of inappropriate aggression. Maybe you've experienced that at work, maybe you've experienced that in a hobby, maybe football or working with sheep.

We are constantly exposed to inappropriate aggression. And you see it in the news all the time, between individuals, between parties, groups, even between nations, the world is often full of inappropriate aggression.

So you get that in the world. You also get this in the world, inappropriate attraction. Because the world is constantly trying to feed inappropriate attraction between people, whether it's music or literature or films or advertising, newspapers, and I don't need to go into any details for you to know that that is true.

The world is abounding with inappropriate aggression, inappropriate attraction. And of course, what's the great message of the sermon in the night concerning the world?

[19:11] Don't be like them. Be different. And so Jesus is warning us against both of these things. So we've got anger and lust, inappropriate aggression, inappropriate attraction.

And we'll look at these in a little more detail together just now. So we'll start off with the top one, what Jesus teaches about anger. In verse 21, Jesus makes the connection between murder and judgment.

You shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But then in verse 22, Jesus broadens the implications of the sixth commandment and he applies it inwardly.

It's not just murder, but anger brings the same liability to judgment. And he gives a couple of examples. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council.

Whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. There's two key words in this, this one and this one.

[ 20 : 16 ] Anybody got an authorized version for an NIV? What does it say for that? Whoever says to his friend, raka.

Raka, I mean, it's an interesting word. Raka, that's what it literally says, so the authorized version is a very good translation of this verse because it's conveying the actual word.

It's a very derogatory term. It basically means to be empty-headed. So a modern version would be like, I suppose like a numbskull or something like that. Somebody who's just got nothing between their ears.

So it's a very, very, very derogatory. This word, you fool, that's the Greek word moros.

What word do you think we get from that? Moron. How are you supposed to believe that word, dummy? Me? No. Moron, yes, again, not a compliment.

[ 21 : 23 ] It's a very, very, very derogatory term. Is that not also the same as the first one? Yes, so both are derogatory. Very insulting, very, very derogatory, very belittling terms that kind of arise from inappropriate aggression.

So you can imagine a situation where somebody gets angry and just starts calling somebody a moron, an idiot, a numbskull, a fool. And so it's got this element of losing control and this element of trying to just belittle and almost express the worthlessness and uselessness of the person that you are dealing with.

And so the modern kind of jagged for that might be character assassination, the kind of just trying to really lay into somebody. And of course we see this often in life, don't we? People get angry and they start hurling insults at each other.

It's quite fascinating if some of you may, sometimes if you look at a news item, something on the news on the internet, sometimes at the bottom of the news item they have comments where people can do public comments.

And it's astonishing how quickly it descends into exactly what Jesus is describing here. People basically calling each other morons and fools and dismissing each other in a really inappropriate way.

[ 22 : 54 ] Jesus is emphasizing that any behaviour like that is absolutely unacceptable for a disciple. We must never, ever be aggressive. Remember Jesus has already said he is looking for the meek and for the peacemaker.

And so as disciples we should never ever speak in a way that is belittling or derogatory towards somebody else. And so Jesus is warning us of a different words.

When you write there inappropriate aggression, does that suggest that there is an aggression which is appropriate or can be appropriate? Well, World War II, an example.

Sometimes there are situations where anger is justified. Very rarely.

Jesus threw the tables over the tables in the temple. That kind of thing. So there is times when it's appropriate. Sometimes it's incredibly hard to judge.

[ 24 : 21 ] But in a conflict situation... It's more justified. It's more justified. Sometimes it is justified, at times. And that was the way it was going to say. This doesn't mean that a disciple is never hurt when somebody angered us.

Because we can be hurt and we can be appropriately angry. But we have to be very careful. Very, very careful when we are angry.

That's one of the key points that's been emphasised. There is a righteous anger. Do not let the sun go down and get angry. But be angry and do not sin. There is. But it's something to handle with real care.

Why did Jesus say, I remember correctly, two in the morning, that he was angry? Yes. As they say, you fools. Yes. The term fool is a biblical term in one sense.

Because there is the whole balance between wisdom and folly. We were looking at it on a Sunday morning in Proverbs. This choice has been presented before you. You can be wise or you can be a fool. But I think that it's very much the way in which that term is being used.

[ 25 : 44 ] You can describe somebody as a fool in an appropriate way. But you can also do it in an inappropriate way.

I'm trying to think of another example. If there is one. If you think of another term that can be used. You might say, this isn't a very good example.

You might say somebody you're daft. You're silly. Yes, you're silly. You might mean that in a way you're daft. Almost affectionately. But you might mean it in a very insulting way as well.

I think the thing in this verse is not so much to be homing in on the precise vocabulary.

But to homing on the principle. It's the idea of being angry and how that's a seed that is putting you on the same path towards murder.

[ 26 : 53 ] You've got the insulting here, fool here. Just the idea of hostility towards you. Jesus called people fools. He's trying to show them the end of their ways.

He's not trying to insult them. Is that the entire notion of the use of the word, the contrast of fools and wise in the program? Yes, absolutely. And ultimately the old test of definition of a fool is somebody who doesn't believe in God.

It doesn't follow God. So that's used in a religious theological sense. But I think Jesus here, remember he's contrasting with the Pharisees and they're teaching.

And I'm quite sure the Pharisees probably went away with their nose in the air dismissing other people as fools. I think that's the kind of thing that he's getting at. Interesting though, that verse, verse 22 is teaching us that a split second comment.

How long does it take to say you fool? About a tenth of a second. It can have serious consequences.

[ 28 : 04 ] So split second mistake. That's the key point I think is to be careful. So Jesus is warning us against inappropriate accolation. He also warns us against inappropriate attraction.

And here Jesus is pointing us into the realm of sexual immorality, which arises from the inappropriate handling of attraction towards other people.

And again, Jesus is broadening the commandment. He quotes the seventh commandment, but he brings that, he broadens that and applies it internally and says how it affects inward thoughts.

And again, the key point is that we've got to be careful. Because every single human being has got a factor of characteristics. And every single human being is affected to characteristics in others. That's part of the beauty of how God has created us. But it has to be handled appropriately and carefully. The principle in this area is always that intimacy and security always belong together.

[ 29 : 12 ] We should never ever have one without the other. Again, that's a huge contrast to the world because the world wants intimacy without security. And the Cernan mountain always remind us don't be like the world.

Don't be like them. And so we have to be careful here. This here, these verses are highlighting in many ways our speech, what we say.

Apologies for my writing. These verses here are highlighting our thoughts, what we think. But we're very careful what we say. We're going to be very careful about how we think.

Jesus is wanting us to be pure in heart. And that of course doesn't mean that you should never ever, never find anybody attractive. It just simply means we have to be careful.

Jesus is telling us to watch what we say and to watch. Watch what we say in terms of anger. Watch how we think in terms of attraction.

[ 30 : 11 ] So is it simply cultural that it's only for women looking at a woman? It doesn't say for example that a woman looks at a man as loud as she says. Yeah, you have to remember who sat down around Jesus for this thing.

Mainly men, I would have shown. Yeah, mainly his disciples. Yeah, directed towards his disciples. So and the culture would be predominant towards men dealing with women.

But the same principle applies. It absolutely applies. So that's the basic teaching that Jesus gives. I think it's interesting that he's kind of pointing to these two extremes of behavior to avoid.

Jesus then gives us reasons why we are to be careful in these areas. And again, it's interesting. In verse 23 to 26, he speaks about consequences.

In verse 29 to 30, he speaks about causes. Consequences and causes. And we'll look at these together.

[ 31 : 21 ] Okay, here's your next test. Okay. If you look at verse 22, verse word up there.

Apart from the little word to that word there, apart from that B word, what's the most frequent word in that verse? Yes.

I am. Kathleen, excellent. Liable. Liable. Liable.

As all pointing us towards consequences. Jesus said, if we are an aggressive, it makes us liable to judgment. Now, it's really interesting to think about this because if you look at what Jesus is saying there, he's saying, if you insult your brother, if you call them a fool, if you're angry with them, the key point is that all of those things are acts of judgment, aren't they?

You call someone a fool, you're judging them, aren't you? You say to them, rack up, you're insulting them. If you get angry with them, you're judging them. If you get angry with somebody, you are judging their conduct.

[ 32 : 40 ] Jesus is saying that if we judge others, we make ourselves liable to judgment.

Which is exactly why he goes on to say in chapter 7, judge not that you be not judged. But with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged.

With the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And that word liable is pointing us to the fact that sin brings consequences.

It brings serious consequences. And Jesus goes on to elaborate in verses 23 to 26, both why we should avoid, how we should avoid those consequences and also the ultimate implication of those consequences.

Jesus says, don't judge your brother, don't insult them, don't call them a fool. And then he goes on to tell us what to do if that happens. If you fall out with somebody, if there is a breakdown in relationship, what do you do?

[ 33 : 53 ] He says, if you're offering your gift to the altar and they remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.

When disciples fall out, we must seek reconciliation. That's one of the strongest, the emphasized things in the New Testament.

It's in the Lord's Prayer where we have to forgive one another. It's in virtually all of Paul's letters where he tells us not to be dividing and hostile between one another. And it is at the heart of so many theological doctrines.

Union with Christ, an adoption into one family, the oneness of the church, the headship of Christ, the hope of forgiveness, the doctrine of reconciliation. And these doctrines make division and hostility among disciples a disgrace.

And yet this has been a problem that has plagued the church for 2,000 years. Would you say that and then come and offer your gift?

[ 35 : 02 ] It would be the equivalent today to coming to the table. On any worship.

As we said last time, that's a ceremonial law. We were saying last time we were involving on the controversial because people would say that the ceremonial law has been ceased.

We were saying last week that it hasn't. We were saying it just applies to a different sphere of reference. The Old Testament ceremonial law applied to the tabernacle and temple teaching.

The New Testament is full of ceremonial laws, all of which apply to the New Covenant era whereby there is no dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, where there is no dividing wall between men and women, no dividing wall between slave and free, sojourner, resident, etc.

That's a ceremonial instruction in a certain sense. Anyway, that was last time. We won't get to that.

The key point, undeniably clear, in this version and every other version, is that we should always, always, always seek reconciliation.

[ 36 : 17 ] And Jesus emphasises the consequences of avoiding reconciliation in the next verses. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court.

Let's get accused of handing over to the judge, again, judgment, liability, judgment, same concept being emphasised here.

Best, you hand you over to the judge, the judge to the guard, and you'll be put in prison. And now that's an image conveying the idea of consequences. And Jesus sums up in verse 26 where he says, Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

And that verse is emphasising to us that the consequence of failing to reconcile is costly.

And he's asking us the question, is it worth it? If we fall out with some of them and we refuse to reconcile, is it worth it?

[ 37 : 26 ] And of course it never is. It never is. The beauty of reconciliation is that it removes the consequences. It removes the judgment, it removes the payment of the penalty, it heals the situation.

And that's a vital part of our conduct as disciples. So Jesus here is talking about consequences of sin. And it's something to bear in mind. We should pray, pray to God that we would always be aware of the fact that sin is never worth it.

Can I come up with a two? Yes. I think that I'd better be put in prison. Locked in prison has not been locked in hell. Now when it says, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Well, if you go into hell, you'll never get out. But when you are in there, you never will be able to pay the last penny. Yeah, I think I know exactly what you mean.

I used to sometimes read that verse and think, is that talking about purgatory?

[ 38 : 43 ] I think actually it's more helpful not to consider prison as an image of hell. Don't think that Jesus is actually talking about hell in this verse.

It's not debt of prison. Possibly, possibly I don't know. This is all an image. You have to remember Jesus is using imagery. It's like a parable.

Imagine you're walking along with somebody. You're with your accuser. He's using this as a parable to say, you reconcile with it. Now, you and I all know that when you are fallen out with somebody, it's like being in bondage, isn't it?

And when you reconcile, you are freed from that. So consequences. I'm going to blast on because I'm taking too long as always. But we're nearly finished.

Jesus also teaches about causes. Isn't it interesting? The ultimate act of aggression is murder. The ultimate act of attraction is adultery in form of sexual union.

[ 39 : 50 ] Jesus highlights the fact that the cause, the seed of both of these things lie in our daily thoughts, words, and actions.

And so there's a direct link between small things and hugely catastrophic things. And so Jesus is saying that we've got to deal with the causes of sin and he uses this immensely vivid language to convey what he's saying.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. But it's better for you to lose one of your members than to, and your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it up and throw it away, but it's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Jesus is emphasizing the fact that one small sin can lead on to another and another and another and another. And we know that that is true.

The key point in this verse is that Jesus is telling us to be serious. To be serious about sin, we must be ruthless with sin in our eyes.

[ 41 : 01 ] Obviously he is not speaking about literally mutilating our flesh, but he is teaching about being absolutely ruthless with sin. There was a great old fashioned word for that.

Mortification. Here we have Colossians 3, Put to death, therefore what is earthly and new, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires and covetousness, which is idolatry.

In the A.V. that is the word, mortify, which basically means to put to death. And that is a key part of life as a disciple.

We don't want to dabble with sin, we don't want to play with it, we don't want to toy with it, we want to mortify it. We want to deal with it absolutely seriously. Now the key point to remember as well is that different things affect different people.

Your eye is not inherently sinful. Now either it is your hand, but it can be if it is used in the wrong way. For example, the cause might be publication, it might be certain company, it might be certain activities, whatever it is.

[ 42 : 08 ] If it is causing us to sin, we must modify it, we must put it to death, we must be on guard. But the great truth to remember is that because the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you can do that.

By His power we can modify the flesh. One key point I want to just highlight quickly, because you can be very, very patient tonight, very patient indeed.

Why should we do this? Why should we do that? Well, sometimes when you read a verse like that, it's easy to feel really, really guilty, isn't it?

And a huge sense of failure as you recognize your sin. But Jesus gives us the reason why we should do this in these verses.

And in both in verse 29 and in verse 30 there is a key word in terms of the reason why we should do this. It's the word that's conveying the cause.

[ 43 : 13 ] It's conveying the reason why we should do this. What's the word? Better. Better.

Jesus is not trying to hammer us into guilt and shame in these words. He is showing us that He has got something far, far better for us.

And that's why modifying sin is not about our own guilt and shame. And when we are motivated by guilt and shame and failure, it very rarely brings good results.

Modifying our sin arises from the fact that when we have our eyes on Jesus, we see that He is offering us a far, far, far better way.

And it inspires us to turn away from the world and to live as disciples of the King.

[ 44 : 17 ] Let's pray. God our Father we thank you for the teaching of your word.

We pray that you will keep us from worry, keep us from inappropriate aggression, keep us from inappropriate attraction. Help us Lord to live in your way.

Help us Lord to bear in mind the consequences of sin and to always have that perspective that can see that it is not worth it. And help us also Lord to deal seriously and ruthlessly with the causes of sin.

And we would put to death the works of the flesh within us and that we would live by your spirit as our guide.

And so we pray for your help in these things that you enable us to live more and more at your works and to your glory. In Jesus name. Amen.