

Hard Sayings Of Jesus

Lesson 13

I. This Week's Hard Saying

Matt 5:17-19 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. KJV

II. Why This Is Hard

- a. This is thought to be a hard saying by some because the words of Jesus are presumed to be **at odds with** the clear teaching of Paul that Christ is the “end of the law for righteousness” IE the law has no more effect for Christians.
- b. To some, it is thought that these words were not even attributable to Jesus, but were expressions of a group within the early Church who wished to maintain the full authority of the Law for **Christians**.
- c. Rudolph Bultmann, suggests that these words reflect the attitudes of conservative Jews of Jesus' day who were at odds with the permissive cultural ideas of **Hellenized Jews**.

II. Examining the Statement

- a. There is **no sound reason** to doubt that Jesus actually spoke these words when weighed in the balance of who Christ was and what His mission was during His lifetime.
- b. This is so because the law was the **revealed will** of God in the Old Testament and the mission of Jesus was to do the will of the Father. Hence, He came to fulfill the law.
- c. Jesus' statement is an uncompromising affirmation of the **eternal validity** of the law of Moses. Not even the smallest part of it is to be abrogated.
- d. The **descriptive** wording used by Jesus makes His intention clear to His hearers. For example:
 1. The “jot” is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the “**tittle**” was a very small mark attached to a letter to help distinguish it from other letters that may be similar to it.
 2. In the English alphabet ‘G’ is **distinguished** from ‘C’ as is ‘Q’ from ‘O’ by these “**tittles**”
- e. However, the statement is to be understood within the context of Jesus' whole teaching on “the law” and that teaching would have **differed** markedly from the understanding of the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees of His day.

III. Jesus VS The Rabbinical Teachers

- a. One cannot take an unqualified view of what Jesus meant in this passage because it must also be put into **harmony** with another of His statements in Luke 16:16-17 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. 17 It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. NIV
- b. The Pharisees taught and allowed the Jews of Jesus' day a cheap, formal religion of **superficial** and hypocritical reverence for God, one which spurned obvious sinners. Luke 7:39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. KJV Matt 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. KJV Mark 7:6-7 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. KJV
- c. Jesus taught that the true Kingdom of God would be obtained by those who are **excluded** by the Pharisees; it is these who must strive against the stream, must press against the crowd that is going the contrary way. Matt 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. KJV
- d. Jesus did not accept the rabbinical **interpretation** of the law and charged the Jews with violating the commandments by their traditions Matt 15:3 Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? KJV
- e. Jesus objected to their application of the law which had the effect of keeping men **out** of the Kingdom rather than drawing them into it. Matt 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on

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men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. KJV Matt 23:15 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. KJV

- f. By contrast the Kingdom offered by Jesus was one of grace in which the heavy lifting is borne by the Lord Himself. Matt 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. KJV
- g. In spite of Jesus' contempt for the hypocrisy of the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus did not deny the importance of keeping the law, but rather reaffirmed it. Jesus reshaped the "way" the law was to be interpreted and obeyed.
- h. First, Jesus maintained that the proper way to keep any commandment was to fulfill the purpose for which it was given. He did this repeatedly. For example, He did this with the sabbath law. Mark 2:24-28 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.
- i. Secondly, Jesus maintained that obedience or disobedience to any command or to the law began in the heart. It was not sufficient to conform one's outward actions and words to what the law required, the issue is the heart. Matt 15:19-20 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. KJV
- j. Jesus lived to keep the law perfectly which was only possible by delighting himself in doing the will of the Father. Heb 10:4-9 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. 8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. KJV
- k. Jesus emphasized that the law was kept ethically before it can be truly kept ceremonially. Matt 9:13 13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: Hos 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. KJV
- l. In the final analysis, genuine keeping of the law was framed in the context of living in relationship to others. Mic 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? KJV Matt 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. KJV
- m. The true worship of the Father that Jesus taught (and lived out) was focused on truth in the inward man and spiritual obedience rather than on the outward and material aspects of conformity to the law. John 4:23-24 23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. KJVPs 51:6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. KJV
- n. Jesus paid little heed to the details of ritual purification and food regulations because these had no ethical content. This was quite contrary to the teaching and practice of the Jewish leaders of His day. Mark 7:2-6 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. 5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. KJVMatt 15:20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. KJV

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- o. While it is true that the ritual washings and food regulations were indeed a part of the “jots and tittles” of the OT law, they are of secondary importance and can have **no merit** unless accompanied by a spirit that is right before God. Ps 51:10-13 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. KJV
- p. Jesus came not to modify the law of God but to fulfill it. Moreover, the standard that He set was a more exacting one than any of the Jews of His day had conceived. It was **perfect obedience** from the heart.

IV. Implications For Us

- a. Not only did Jesus set the standard of keeping the law perfectly, but He also provides true believers with the **ability** to follow in His footsteps to accomplish that lofty goal. Rom 8:3-4 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.KJV
- b. For us, the challenge is to **discern** when we are walking according to the flesh or according to the Spirit and then to put the natural sinful impulses to death as we submit to the righteous demands of the Law perfectly. Gal 5:25-26 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.KJV
- c. Indeed, the Gospel of Christ does demand more than the law, but alas, it **supplies the power to do it.**

V. Application

Identify situations in which you have had opportunities to “fulfill” the righteousness of the law recently. Compare and contrast your experience of success and failure.

- a. What was different in those times that you succeeded vs when you do not succeed?
- b. What gets in the way of your succeeding?
- c. What will you do about it?

*To run and work the law commands,
But gives me neither feet nor hands;
But better news the Gospel brings:
It bids me fly and gives me wings.*

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II. Why This Is Hard

- This is thought to be a hard saying by some because the words of Jesus are presumed to be _____ the clear teaching of Paul that Christ is the "end of the law for righteousness" IE the law has no more effect for Christians.
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- Rudolph Bultmann, suggests that these words reflect the attitudes of conservative Jews of Jesus' day who were at odds with the permissive cultural ideas of _____.

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- There is _____ to doubt that Jesus actually spoke these words when weighed in the balance of who Christ was and what His mission was during His lifetime.
- This is so because the law was the _____ of God in the Old Testament and the mission of Jesus was to do the will of the Father. Hence, He came to fulfill the law.
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- The _____ wording used by Jesus makes His intention clear to His hearers. For example:
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- k. Jesus emphasized that the law was kept _____ before it can be truly kept ceremonially. Matt 9:13; Hos 6:6
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