

Are You Looking For A Loophole?

Matthew 5: 29-30

INTRODUCTION:

1. Probably all of us are amazed at the escalating dollar amounts being paid to our modern day athletes.
 - a. However, there is something about this money that amazes me even more than the amount.
 - b. What amazes me most is the way a 7 year contract can be signed this year, and a loophole be found next year which allows the player to refuse to work until he gets a bigger and better contract.
 - c. There are actually people who are paid to find these loopholes for players.
2. The Pharisees were much like this.
 - a. This group was incredible when it came to their knowledge of the Law.
 - b. In fact, contrary to what many say today, Jesus didn't rebuke the Pharisees for their knowledge of the Law, nor their insistence upon keeping the Law, He rebuked them for not living what they taught: they were hypocrites (Matt.23:2-3), ²Saying, *The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: ³All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*
 - c. You see, the Pharisees became very good at finding what they thought were loopholes.
 - d. That's the background to Jesus' delivery of the Sermon On The Mount.
3. Our text is in that infamous sermon: Matt.5: 29-30.
 - a. At this point Jesus has already hit extremely hard on the attitude of looking for loopholes.
 - b. He had taught them that it was not good enough to simply refrain from murder if they had so much anger in their heart that they wanted to kill (Matt.5:21-22), ²¹*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: ²²But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:*
 - c. He also said that simply refraining from the physical act of adultery wasn't good enough if you allowed your heart to dwell in lust anyway (Matt.5:27-28).

4. It is at this point that Jesus adds a connection to deal with the root of the problem. (Read Text - **Matt.5:29-30**, ²⁹And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.
- a. Their attitude of looking for loopholes expressed the fact that their hearts weren't right.
 - b. Jesus was challenging them to turn their lives and their thinking right-side up!
 - c. In this lesson I want us to see what Jesus reveals about the serious problem of sin.

DISCUSSION:

I. Man Today Seeks A Loophole For Sin.

A. Man has tried in various ways to desensitize himself of sin.

1. In fact, you'd be surprised at the number of people, even preachers who hesitate to even use the word "sin."
 - a) We make "mistakes" today, rather than committing "sins."
 - b) We simply "slip" a bit.
 - c) Calling sin what it is, "sin," is too negative.
 - d) We might hurt someone's self-esteem or it might offend them.
2. We think if we change the name, or the appearance, then we've found a loophole.
 - a) If it is "entertaining" then it isn't like we're just out-and-out turning against God.
 - b) It's just harmless entertainment.

B. Our society says that we should not accuse people of sin, and sadly even many Christians have jumped on the band-wagon.

1. If someone is not being faithful in worship attendance and we point it out, we are told we shouldn't be judgmental.
2. We are told that no-one has a right to tell anyone else they are wrong -- it's like that the pot calling the kettle black!
3. The "right of choice" advocates try to force us to keep our mouths shut while Satan runs wild.

C. But, we just can't do that, we cannot fall for Satan's loophole.

1. James said: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"
James 5: 19-20
2. And Paul wrote: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*" (**Gal.6: 1**).
3. We can't fall into the loophole of minimizing sin, it cost Jesus Christ His life.

-TRANSITION-

(For the balance of our time today I want do discuss four things that will help us prevent loopholes.)

I. We need to be keenly aware that sin is not only bad, it's deadly.

I read a story once about a jungle excavation in India.
While traveling through the jungle, one of the guides screamed.
He quickly he revealed a large knife and cut off his own hand.
When the others got to him, they saw a huge cobra crawling away.
Then, they saw the severed hand with the marks of the cobra's bite.
Had the guide been slow and not cut off his hand, he would have died in a matter of minutes.

1. This is what Jesus is telling us about sin in our text.
 - a) Obviously He's not telling you to literally cut off your hand if you sin.
 - b. Nut He is telling us to separate ourselves from sin.
 - c) He is saying that you had better control your hand.
 - d) It is sad to say, but there are many Christians who need to cut off more than their hands!
 - 1) This was the message Jesus was trying to give to his disciples in **Mt.5: 29-30**.
 - 2) *If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out - If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off - It is better that one member of your body perishes, than for your whole body to cast into hell.*

2. We will never overcome sin until we realize the battle that is being waged.

a) What began in the Garden of Eden **Gen 3** didn't end there.

b) All throughout the Old Testament we learn of the consequences of sin.

- From the universal flood of **Gen. 6-9**,
- to the wilderness wandering of the Israelites,
- to the captivity of God's people,
- all the way up to the death of Christ

we are being taught the seriousness of sin.

3. There is no question that sin is our greatest problem.

a) Every evil in the world is the direct result of sin being in this world.

b) Every sickness, tear, and every death is the direct result of sin in the world.

c) Sin is what crucified the Son of God.

4. And the ultimate consequence of sin is hell. Jesus said: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (**Matt. 10:28**).

II. The second thing that will help us with loopholes is we need to teach ourselves to hate sin.

1. The children of Israel were warned: "Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing" (**Deut. 7:26**).

2. The church at Ephesus was commended for the fact that they literally would not put up with sinfulness (**Rev.2:2**), ²I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3. And the psalmist presents the attitude that Jesus is teaching in our text: "I will set not wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person" (**Psa.101:3-4**).

4. Remember the context of loopholes here in **Matt. 5**?

a) It's not good enough simply to refrain things like stealing, lying, murder, adultery or other sins.

b) We must also have attitude about these sins.

c) This is what Jesus told the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (**Matt.23:27-28**).

5. In order to avoid this loophole we should learn to hate sin with a passion.

C. Third, We need to realize that Jesus is telling us the key to all of this is to clean our hearts.

1. We cannot see our spiritual status before God as simply the loophole that I never actually committed a certain sin.
2. Notice that Jesus began this great sermon with the beatitudes.
3. The whole foundation of our spiritual lives must be holiness, which begins on the inside.
4. We are blessed when we control our attitudes and our hearts.

D. Finally, notice in our text the drastic way that Jesus is teaching us that we must put sin to death in order to live.

1. This is not an optional matter, it is life or death.
 - a) Paul wrote: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (*Romans 8:13*).
 - b) And again, when speaking about his own life Paul wrote: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (*1 Cor. 9:27*).
4. If you were looking across your doctor's desk and heard him say, "You must have this surgery now or you won't live another three months," what would you do?
 - a) Would you get mad at the doctor for judging you?
 - b) Would you refuse because he was too negative?
 - c) Or would you schedule the surgery?
 - d) Jesus is telling us here that we need the surgery, and He is the Physician to do it.

CONCLUSION:

1. A lot of people make their living looking for loopholes.
 - a. Murderers go free just about every day because of loopholes.
 - b. But loopholes in our relationship with God doesn't bring freedom, it brings death.
2. I don't want to encourage you to harm yourself physically, but I do want to encourage you to meet the Great Physician.
 - a. You see, He has warned us here of the travesty of sin.
 - b. But the prognosis He has given isn't terminal.
 - c. He has also provided the cure.
 - d. I can promise you that the change required by the Great Physician can be dramatic, but it will be well worth it.
3. Why don't you allow Jesus to wash away your sins by His blood in the watery grave of baptism today?