

## Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: Jesus explains the Higher Standards of the New Covenant in the Sermon on the Mount, Part 1" from Matthew 5:13-20; and Luke 16:17.

January 6, 2019

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Did Andy Stanley really say that? See notes.

Main point: The transformed lives of believers beneficially impact the world around them with a law written on their hearts of flesh.

Context

Exegesis

1. Genuine, transformed believers impact the world around them for good. *You are the salt of the earth and light of the world.*
  - Salt has been used in ancient times (and not so ancient times) as a preservative. It slows the process of decay.
    - If humanity, over time, can be compared to a piece of meat that is rotting, Christians permeating that society slow down the rapid rate of decay that Satan and sin accelerate.
    - If the line of Seth had increased in numbers greater and fast than the line of Cain it would not have been necessary for God to use a flood to wipe out the entire human race.
    - If Sodom and Gomorrah had had more citizens the likes of Lot then God would not have had to make a surgical incision to eradicate the evil of those two cities.
    - If Israel, both north and southern had more devoted followers of God in 723 B.C. and 586 B.C. they would not have had to have been exiled in order to remove the curse of idolatry from their cultural life.
    - If more Christians had been as brave and vocal about their faith as Friedrich Bonhoeffer then maybe Hitler would never have come to power.
    - In our own culture here in America, we have seen these transformative influences on our society by the fact that we once were and still partially remain a nation influenced by Puritan values and work ethics and morals so that the norm in business relationships is honesty, the norm among neighbors

is neighborliness (no stealing, help when needed), the norm in our government is freedom not totalitarianism. Can we say the same for countries like Mexico or Haiti?

- This salty effect should be seen at the ballot box as we vote for righteous candidates compared to unrighteous ones (what happened to MN in the last election?)
- But more importantly it ought to be happening via the process of evangelism as more and more people come to Christ and are disciplined (which also affects the ballot box). And,
- It needs to be happening in deeds as well as words. Helping neighbors when they are in need or strangers when God brings them across your path is another way to bring salt and light into a community.
- Let's talk about words. . .foul mouths in the workplace tell non-believers – don't witness to me you are no different. Or, how we talk about our spouses reveals if we treasure our mates or treat them like trash the way the world does.
- Are we seeing a gradual decline in the moral fabric of Alexandria? Just look at the police blotter.
  - Wouldn't it be great if a community was so saturated with believers that there was no need to worry about child abuse or abduction from a neighbor? No need to worry about crime of any sort? No need to hire so many police officers since there would be so few calls for their help?
- Transformed believers are also appealing since their walk with Christ is a happy one, just like salt enhances all foods so does the believer make people thirsty for this amazing life.
- We are also the light of the world. We do not just carry the light like a candle to the world, we are the candle.
  - Light has always been used in Scripture as a metaphor of purity and righteousness.
  - The light of the gospel message brings truth into the world that is so upside down with the lies of Satan it cannot find its own way out.
  - For example, the latest craze of gender fluidity, don't use gender pronouns because someone may be in transition. The Bible says, God created man, male and female he created them.
  - For example, the world is all about saving the trees and the whales but the taking of unborn children out of the womb is perfectly O.K. By the way, Roe v Wade was passed by a Supreme Court stocked with Freemasons. Just so you know. The more Freemasons are in control of our governments and schools the more evil our society will experience such as this one.

2. False believers (aka professing believers) will do more harm than good because they are not true salt not true light. *But if the salt has lost its saltiness, what shall make it salt again? It is no longer fit for anything but to be tossed out and trampled on by men. A city situated on a mountain cannot be hid; neither do men light a lamp and put it under a grain measure,*
- There was a popular proverb spoken in Jesus' day that said "Can salt lose its flavor and can a mule sire offspring?"
  - It is possible Jesus was referring to this famous proverb quoted by a famous rabbi to say that it is not possible for salt to lose its saltiness. Indeed it is not. Sodium chloride cannot become un-sodium chloride. True Christians cannot become un-Christians, but professing Christians can act like the hypocrites they are and they deserve nothing better from the world than to be despised or as Jesus said, be trampled on.

Main point again: The transformed lives of believers beneficially impact the world around them with a law written on their hearts of flesh.

3. The difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is this: The Old Covenant was an external law that was impossible to keep, while the New Covenant is an internal law which is impossible not to keep (over time).
- *"Think not that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I came not to annul but to fulfill. For verily, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not one smallest letter or part of a letter shall by any means be removed from the law, until all shall be fulfilled. 3 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one particle of the law to fail!"*
  - There is lots of confusion regarding these verses. Does this mean that the OT law is still in effect? If so, what about the lifting of circumcision, the cancellation of dietary laws by Jesus himself and Peter when he went to visit Cornelius, or what about the end of the sacrificial system? What about worshiping on Saturday as the Sabbath?
  - The answer seems to be in the word Jesus used: "fulfill". It is *plaraō* in Greek. The word means to complete. To fill in what was lacking. To render perfect. To bring to realization. He is the epitome of the law. He is the final interpreter of the law. He is what the law was supposed to be. So is the OT law obsolete? YES. Is the New Covenant law of the Spirit working and has taken the place of the OT law? YES! Is the OT irrelevant and no longer necessary for 21 Century Christians? NO!
    - The Old Testament law was not defective. Paul told us so. In fact it was very effective and still is. We use the 10 Commandments all the time to show to people they are lawbreakers. But it was like the first step on the

ladder of grace.

- As Galatians says, it worked as a school teacher or guardian to bring people to Christ. *Galatians 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. (ESV) Galatians 3:23–25 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (ESV)*
- Think of the Old Covenant and New Covenant like a recipe. The initial ingredients for a cake do not taste all that great individually, the flour by itself, the uncooked eggs, the milk, etc. When you taste the batter it's not bad but it is not what the cook intended for the final product. Not until it is baked, and the frosting is put on is the cake fully done. The Old Covenant simply made people hungry for the finished product, which is Jesus.
  - So, what about circumcision – why no longer? Circumcision was a covenant sign between God and Israel, not Jesus and the Church.
  - What about Sabbath worship? Again a sign of the covenant between God and Israel and Israel alone.
  - What about the dietary laws? They were necessary to keep Israel healthy and isolated from the world like an incubator keeps an infant warm and safe. Now the church is to permeate the world not be isolated from it. So dietary laws go out the window.
  - What about the sacrifices – all fulfilled in Christ.

## Application

1. So is Andy Stanley right about the OT? Can we be unhitched from it? Are the strange commands found in it keeping people away from accepting Christ as Lord and Savior? Commands such as killing a rebellious son in Deuteronomy 21:18-21? Or don't boil a kid in its mother's milk? Exodus 23:19? If so, we should avoid at all costs allowing any non-believer to read the Old Testament. I disagree wholeheartedly. These commands make perfect sense if understood in their context and if the Holy Spirit is working on a person to bring them to Christ He will make that person humble enough to hear an explanation. The law regarding stoning a rebellious son is actually a protection from a father who wants to kill his son for being violent and dangerous to others a real threat to society. No, he is required to give the son a trial at the city gate and if found guilty of such serious crimes as being a threat to society he will be stoned for the sake of the whole, his death being a deterrent to others who are like minded.

2. Is the OT unnecessary for our salvation as Andy Stanley seems to imply? It is the foundation for our salvation. How can you trust the New Testament promises unless you trust the Old? How will you know about sin's entry into the world unless you read it in Genesis? How will you worship without the Psalms? Or know the future without the prophets?