

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 5:21 - 5:30 (Part 2)



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this continuation of his studies on Matthew 5:21-30, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of following Jesus' teachings rather than relying solely on the belief in salvation by grace. Gregg argues that rejecting Christ and His teachings results in worse punishment than the rejection of Moses' law. He cautions against allowing the concept of grace to become an excuse for not obeying Jesus. Gregg stresses the significance of repenting and changing one's ways to live a new life under Jesus' Lordship.

### Transcript

We'll continue now in our studies in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew chapter 5, and of course the sermon continues in chapters 6 and 7 of Matthew. We are not there yet. We're taking a good long time getting through chapter 5 itself.

You know, some of the things that we're finding that Jesus teaches are a little stronger than what maybe you've been accustomed to hearing Christians say. Maybe you've been taught that you can get away with sin. When Jesus says if your eye causes you to sin or your hand causes you to sin, you cut it right off and throw it from you as an abhorrent thing, because that thing will keep you from being saved.

He said it's better for you to lose it and go to life than to keep it and go to hell. Now, I haven't heard as many preachers in churches tell their congregations these things as it seems to me they should be, because there's an awful lot of people in churches today who, if Jesus is telling the truth, they're going to be in hell, and their pastors know it and don't tell them. Or maybe worse, their pastors don't know it because they don't understand what Jesus said.

Why would anyone not understand what Jesus said, or why would anyone not apply it? Well, for one thing, it's hard. G.K. Chesterton said the teachings of Jesus have not been tried and found wanting. They've simply been found difficult and not tried.

Well, that's not entirely true, because there are people who are following Jesus and who do care about the teachings of Jesus, and they do find them difficult, but they try them anyway, they do them anyway. But to a large extent, he is right. It's not that somebody

has said, well, I tried following Jesus, and it just didn't make sense.

It just wasn't the right way to go. It's more often the case that people read it and say, well, this is a little rough. Is there some other way I can live than this? And you know what? There's always some preacher out there who's willing to say, yeah, there's some other way.

You don't have to do that. Now, how do they do that? Well, they say, well, we're saved by grace. We're saved by grace, not by works.

Fine, I agree with that. We're saved by grace, not by works. But the Bible makes it very clear you can go to hell by works.

You can only be saved by grace, but you can go to hell by works. The Bible indicates that Jesus will come, and he'll reward every man according to his works. The apostle Paul said in Titus 1, I think it's verse 16, he said, These people profess to know God, but with their works they deny him.

James said, You say you have faith, but you don't have works. Can your faith save you? The answer is no, it cannot. Jesus himself said, Many will say to me, Lord, Lord, we did these things in your name, but he says you did not do the will of my Father in heaven, therefore I never knew you.

Now, I don't care which author in the New Testament you want to go to, whether it's Paul or James, or you want to go to the teachings of Jesus, you'll find the same doctrine everywhere. You're saved by grace, but that grace, once it saves you, changes you. If you haven't been changed, you haven't been, well, the grace hasn't come.

This is very, very important, and before we go to the next portion of the Sermon on the Mount, I need to make this very clear, because some Christians seem to think that because we're saved by grace, we can do anything we want to and go to heaven too. That's just the opposite of what the Bible says. In Titus chapter 2, Paul, the great teacher of grace, said this, in Titus 2, 11 and 12, For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

Did you hear that? Grace, he said, has been manifested, it has appeared to us, and it, grace, teaches us. You better look this up if you're not looking at it, because you might miss it otherwise, and it's very important. Titus 2, 11 and 12, Paul said, The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us, that is, the grace of God that has appeared, the grace teaches us this.

What? What does grace teach us? That we can get away with stuff they couldn't get away with in the Old Testament? No, the opposite. He says, Grace has appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,

righteously, and godly in this present age. That's the grace of God, according to the Apostle Paul.

You say, I'm saved by grace. Fine. I hope you are.

I am, and I truly hope you are, too. But if you are, then the grace of God is teaching you what grace teaches you, namely, that you need to deny your worldliness and ungodly lusts, and you need to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Is that what grace is teaching you? Sometimes people say to me, well, you know, don't talk to me about the sin I'm committing.

It doesn't matter about, you know, I'm living in sin, it may be, but I'm under grace. Well, if you're under grace, then grace will teach you differently than what you're suggesting. Grace does not teach you that you can sin and get away from it.

It teaches, actually, the opposite. Actually, the Scriptures indicate that, well, let me show you what they indicate. Let's look at Hebrews 10.

It says in Hebrews 10.28, anyone who has rejected Moses' law, meaning under the old covenant, dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? Now, did you catch that? Many Christians think, well, living under the law means, you know, God is strict and requires you to be obedient. Under grace, it means you can get away with stuff they couldn't get away with under the law.

That's not what the New Testament teaches. I don't know what Bible you're reading. Here's what the New Testament teaches.

People who rejected Moses' law died on the testimony of two witnesses. Then he says, worse punishment is due to those who reject Christ and trample underfoot the Spirit of grace. That is to say, if you have received the Spirit of grace from God and you trample that underfoot and count the blood of the covenant by which you were sanctified a common thing, in other words, you don't let grace teach you what grace is to teach you.

If grace is not active in your life, it isn't there. You may say you're under grace, but if grace isn't teaching you, then it isn't there because that's what grace does when it comes. When grace is revealed, it teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

Some people say, well, true, we have to be obedient and all, but the dispensation has changed, that Jesus was speaking to one dispensation, but we're living in a different dispensation according to Paul. Now, this of course is not true. Jesus taught his disciples.

We are his disciples, and therefore we're not living in some different dispensation than that which Jesus was addressing. Jesus spoke to his disciples. These were the apostles who began the church.

We're in the church. Jesus told his disciples to teach all nations to observe all things that he, Jesus, had commanded, so that's what we're supposed to be teaching people to do is to observe all things that Jesus commanded. There is no change in dispensation here.

There is, indeed, one dispensation that began with Jesus Christ and was carried out and supported and amplified by the apostles. In case you wonder about that, if you think we're now living in an age where we don't have to do what Jesus said to be saved, you better be careful about that. Maybe you have a pastor who teaches that.

Maybe if you talk to your pastor and say, that guy on the radio, he says that we have to do those things Jesus said, and your pastor says, ah, don't listen to that, well, let me tell you something. In 1 Timothy chapter 6, the apostle Paul made this statement, 1 Timothy 6.3, if anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, that man is proud knowing nothing, but is obsessed. Now notice, if anyone teaches otherwise, if anyone does not consent to the wholesome words, even the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, that man is proud and wrong.

Now some pastors actually tell their congregations, we don't have to obey the words of Jesus. That was for a different dispensation. Paul didn't seem to think so.

He said, anyone who doesn't consent to the words of Jesus is wrong and proud, and don't listen to that guy. Do you like John, maybe, John's writings? Well, John said the same thing in 2 John, the 2nd epistle of John, and he says in verse 9, whoever transgresses and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

The teachings of Christ. Whoever doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ doesn't have God. Whoever does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, that man is proud and knows nothing.

Jesus told his disciples, and he certainly was giving them instructions for the church age, he said, go and teach all nations, or make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and he said, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Jesus gave commands, he expects us to keep them. The Apostle Paul, John, James, you name the biblical writer, they all agree with Jesus.

You've got to do what Jesus said. Not to be saved, but if you are saved, you will do them. Not necessarily perfectly, Paul makes that very clear, and so does Jesus.

The disciples were saved, but they didn't perfectly obey Jesus, but it was their intention to. Let me clarify that, too, because we're reading a part of the Sermon on the Mount that gets a lot of people worried. Jesus talked about plucking out your eye and cutting off your hand and doing that instead of going to hell and so forth, and we're going to talk about some of the other harder things that Jesus said that a lot of Christians really get uncomfortable with, and if I say, well, you know, we're supposed to obey Jesus, and we show that we're saved by obeying him, someone's going to say, well, then none of us are really saved because none of us obey him perfectly.

That's true. I didn't say you have to obey him perfectly. Jesus told his disciples to stay awake and to pray with him for one hour.

They didn't. They fell asleep. They disobeyed him.

But when he discovered their disobedience, do you remember what he said? He said, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. That's the difference between a saved person and an unsaved person. An unsaved person disobeys Christ because he doesn't want to obey Christ.

A saved person, his spirit is willing. He wants to obey Christ. That's his commitment.

He desires to obey Christ, but because the flesh is weak, he sometimes falls short. A Christian is not a perfect person. Christians do sometimes fall short, but a Christian is one whose spirit is willing.

That means that you have decided that you desire to obey Jesus Christ. You might say, well, what's the difference? If I fail and a non-Christian fails, then what role does obedience play at all? Obviously, if you don't make any decision ever to follow Christ or to obey him, you won't. But if you decide to follow him, you will most of the time.

If you fall, you will repent and get back on the path. You see, I'm not teaching here, and certainly the Bible doesn't teach, that Christians are people who've reached some kind of state of perfect obedience. Not at all.

But Christians are people who desire to live perfectly before God because their heart has been changed. They've been regenerated. God has taken away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh and put his spirit in them to make them walk in his ways, according to Ezekiel 36, verses 25 through 27.

And there are other places. Jeremiah 31 says that when a person is saved, that God has written his laws on their hearts. You see, if you don't have in your heart the desire to obey God, to obey Jesus Christ, and that commitment isn't there, then not only is your flesh weak, but your spirit is not willing.

But a true disciple of Jesus, it can be said of him that his spirit is indeed willing, though

his flesh is weak. I do not obey Jesus perfectly, and I don't mean to pretend that I do. But I will tell you one thing.

I am committed to obeying him. When I fail, I repent. And that's all it takes.

I'm not boasting. That's just what all Christians do, who are real Christians. What I'm trying to clarify to you is that a lot of people are not real Christians, and they are sad to say they think they are, because they have had Christian misdefined for them.

That is, they have the wrong definition of Christian. And before we go any further with the Sermon on the Mount, I think it's very important that we get the right definition of Christian, the one that is found in the Bible. And the reason for that is that when you stand before God and he says, Are you a Christian? If he says that, he won't have to ask, because he'll already know.

But when the issue comes up, if you are a Christian or not, when you stand before God, it won't help you to be a Christian by somebody else's definition than God's. If the church has changed the definition, or if tradition has changed it, or if you've got your own personal definition of what a Christian is, that won't help you on the day when God judges you for being a Christian or not. His definition, and only his, will matter.

So let me let you know, because I'd be a very unfaithful steward if I did not let you know, what a real Christian is according to God's Word. The word Christian appears only three times in the Bible. Its first occurrence is also the one occurrence that defines it.

That is in Acts chapter 11 and verse 26. It says in the end of that verse, And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Now, that is where the word Christian is defined.

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. This makes it clear that the word Christian was a new word at this time. It appeared in the city of Antioch.

And it was a word that was used to describe a defined group of people. Who were they? Well, they were the people who were called disciples. The disciples were called Christians.

The word disciple and the word Christian are thus synonyms. They are just different words for the same thing. Are you a Christian? Well, you can answer that by answering another question.

Are you a disciple? The only persons in the Bible who were ever called Christians were disciples. Well, what is a disciple? Well, Jesus defined it for us. And who could define it better than Jesus himself? In John chapter 8 and verse 31, Jesus said, If you continue in my words, then you are my disciples indeed.

Now, that word indeed, of course, is for emphasis. What he's saying is there are people

who seem to be disciples but really aren't. But if you are a disciple indeed, it means you're genuine.

You're a real one. You're a real disciple as opposed to a phony. I'd like to ask you, the listener, to this broadcast right now.

Are you a real disciple or a phony? Are you a real Christian or a phony? On the day of judgment, it will matter a great deal to you. At this point in your life, maybe you just want to have fun. Well, there are fools.

And the person who does not care about eternity, when he has the opportunity to do something about it, is the chiefest type of fool there is. If you do not care whether on the day of judgment, God will declare you one of his or not, then you don't have the good sense to care about anything important. So you might as well change stations and find another radio broadcast to listen to.

I'm speaking to people who at least have enough wisdom to say, Hey, nothing matters more than eternity. And on the day of judgment, when God wants to know if I'm a Christian or not, I want to know that I'm a real one too. Because Jesus said, many will say, Lord, Lord, and he'll say, I didn't know you.

So who's real? Well, Jesus said, if you continue in my words, then you are my disciples indeed. Real ones, real Christians, real disciples are those who continue in Jesus' words. That's John 8, 31.

When Jesus told the disciples to go out and make disciples, he said, you do this by teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. So what I'm telling you is that the teachings of Jesus and the commitment to obey them and to let him be the Lord, and you're his servant, he owns you. He gives you orders and you say, yes, sir, gladly, sir.

That is what a Christian is. Now, I didn't say that's how you get saved. I said, that's what a Christian is.

A Christian is someone who has gotten saved. And getting saved means that you repent of your life of self-rule. You repent of your life of sin.

You repent of your life of rebellion against God's laws, which will send you, that rebellion will send you right to hell if you don't ever repent of it. You do repent of it means you change your mind. You decide that that is not for you ever again.

You've done heinous crimes against God and you don't want to do that anymore. So what do you do? You repent and you say, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. And you put your faith in Jesus Christ, that what he has done in dying for your sins and rising again and sitting at the right hand of God, where he advocates for you.

That is, he speaks up for you because you have put your faith in him and you put your total trust in him as the one who saves you, but also as the one who is your Lord. This is how you become a Christian. You repent of your sins and put this faith in Jesus.

You cry out for mercy through Jesus' blood and for his sake. And upon doing so, you make the transition from death into life. But once you're there, you now are in a new life.

It's not like the old life. It's a new life where you have a new Lord, and that is Jesus himself. And a Lord is somebody who owns you.

He's somebody who tells you what to do and you gladly obey. Jesus said in Luke chapter 6, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do what I say? You know what? If you call him Lord, Lord, and you don't do what he says, he's not your Lord and you're not his. Now, a disciple is one who has been converted and for whom Jesus is his Lord.

He continues in Jesus' words. Now, this is very important, as you might be able to ascertain from just the verses that we've looked at. And that is why I take the time out right now in our study through the Sermon on the Mount, which is, of course, three chapters of the teachings of Jesus to his disciples about what God requires, what God insists upon.

And we've just passed a few verses that talk about cutting off your hand and plucking out your eye, which when we did, I made it very clear that the evidence of Scripture is that Jesus is not talking about literally cutting off your hand or literally cutting out your eye. But he's saying that anything that is precious to you, like an eye or a hand, if it is the reason that you do not follow God, if it causes you to sin, you are better off without it. Now, the Bible teaches, actually, that it's not your eye or your hand that causes you to sin, it's your mind.

And you can't cut your mind out, but you can do this. You can see those things in your lives that are idols, that are stumbling blocks to you that provide temptation. Maybe you're in an occupation where you're continually faced with temptation that makes you fall.

Change jobs. I don't care if you lose out your retirement, your benefits. What matters more, going to hell with your retirement intact and your benefits or going into eternity with God? I mean, get rid of the idolatry.

If you've got to change your job, if you've got to change all your hobbies, if you've got to change all your associations, all your friends, all your habits, if you have to change your goals in life, if you have to change anything, Jesus said, cast it from you if it's keeping you from being obedient to God. Because on the day of judgment, that thing that's so all-fired important to you right now is going to seem pretty small. And you're going to be kicking yourself all over hell if you choose your idol instead of God.



If you choose not to be a follower of Jesus. In fact, the way Jesus put it in Luke chapter 14, you ought to read it. He says, unless a man forsakes all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.

That's a hard saying, but Jesus said it. And Jesus never lies. You want to be a disciple of Jesus? You've got to take it seriously.

Why should he take you seriously if you don't take it seriously yourself? Any faith you profess to have that doesn't matter to you and makes no difference to you makes no difference to God either. Why should it? God is talking about reality here. He's talking about a real relationship with you.

You've got to really repent of your rebellion. You've got to really come back to God. You've got to really put your faith in Jesus Christ.

And you've got to really follow him. All of this is taught in scripture. If you've heard some gospel that's less than this, get back to the Bible and see which one's the real gospel.

And then follow Jesus for all you've got. Because you've got very little time left this side of eternity. A lot of time on the other side.

Join us again tomorrow. We'll continue.