



One Step Further

Class 5 - One Step Further in Your Heart

SLIDE

- By calling us to go **ONE STEP FURTHER**, Christ calls us to understand that **NOT SINNING** is not necessarily the opposite of **SINNING**

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- By calling us to go **ONE STEP FURTHER**, Christ calls us to realize that **DOING GOOD** is the opposite of **SINNING**
- Obviously, by definition, it is not a sin to **NOT SIN**
- No one will ever be condemned because they didn't sin...
- But, you won't necessarily be **commended** either!
- ***A Christian's life spent concentrating on avoiding sin is a life misspent***
- Bu, the man that we are here to remember today spoke to us about a different way of looking at life
- Jesus wanted to shift our focus
- To make us look at life in a different way
- To stir things up a bit...
- To shake us free from our normal, natural way of looking at things, and to set us a goal of something much higher
- By nature, humans gravitate to the course of least resistance
- We automatically tend to sink to the lowest common denominator

- Combine this together with an innate propensity to Legalism, and what do you end up with? Someone who says,
- ***“Where is the line? Okay, I will do the barest minimum to pass that line.”***
- The Jews had invested thousands of years into that type of thinking, and it had taken them to the point where they could actually twist and convolute the law to the point of not obeying it altogether
- A good example is in Matthew 5, starting at verse 33

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- Matthew 5:33

33) “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.’

- The Jews had twisted God’s law that said that they were not supposed to break the oaths taken in His name into meaning that any oath **NOT** taken in the name of the Lord is not regarded as binding
- So... In their corrupted view of the world, if you didn’t make your oath in the name of the Lord, then you wouldn’t have to fulfill it...
- So, the Jews had developed many other means of swearing
- Ways that seemed to show that they were serious and really meant it, but still didn’t **ACTUALLY** involve Swearing by God’s Name...
- They swore by Heaven, as it is Throne of God...
- ***“I swear by Heaven above...”***
- They turned in solemnity towards Jerusalem (for it is the City of God) to imply that they will perform their promise (no matter how small and unimportant) as surely as God will bless the Holy City
- They stamped on the ground to assert that their oath was as immovable as the Earth that God had created while they committed themselves glibly to silly little things
- They even would say, ***“I assure you, as truly as there is a head on my shoulders”***

- But, as long as they didn't say the Magic Words, they always knew that they had an escape clause if anything ever went pear-shaped
- In one fell swoop Jesus does away with all of that ridiculous behavior!

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- Matthew 5:34-37

- 34) But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,
- 35) or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
- 36) And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.
- 37) Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

- If you are going to pervert and twist the Law of God that badly...
- Then don't even do it, Jesus says
- If you are only going to follow the "**Letter of the Law**", then don't even bother...
- If your sole concern is to do the minimum required so that your actions are not technically classified as sin...
- Then you are missing the point!
- Sure, you may not have as much to condemn you on the last day, but do you really think that you can successfully avoid all sin?
- Seeing how you are going to need to have your sins forgiven anyway, wouldn't it be more prudent to concentrate on things that commend you?
- Don't ask, "**Where is the line?**"
- Live a life outside of the lines!
- Live a life that strives for the very best that you can do

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- Not the **MINIMUM** required to **AVOID PUNISHMENT**

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- But, the **MAXIMUM** available to **ACHIEVE GLORY**
- Jesus taught outside the box
- Jesus spread radical and revolutionary ideas
- He was trying to shake us up
- He was trying to make us uncomfortable with our traditional, natural, normal way of looking at things
- Christ wants us to change our way of thinking
- To transform ourselves from the Old Man to the New Man

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- Christ doesn't want us to simply be happy to accept the "**Norms**"

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- Christ wants us to challenge **everything!**
- God's Truth can handle the challenge
- God is a passionate God, and He doesn't mind us getting passionate with Him
- Take a close look at the Psalms... David was challenging God in almost every point of his life... And God considered him His friend
- Take a look at the life you've been living, and root out the compromises, the things you've settled for, the "**good enough**" and strive for excellence
- Sure, it may not be a sin to do what your doing
- But, is it the best that you can do?

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- Strive to **TRANSFORM YOURSELF**

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- Because, in the end, the most important transformation for us to consider is going **ONE STEP FURTHER** in your **Heart**
- Moses' Law was based on **ACTIONS**...
- Outward, Visible, External Actions...
- Christ's Law is based on **THOUGHTS**...
- Inward, Invisible, Internal Thoughts...
- We are counted as Righteous, and blessed with Salvation, not based on what we have **DONE**, but on what we have **THOUGHT**
- Of course, what we **DO** matters...
- You can **DO GOOD** things, even if you have the **WRONG THOUGHTS**
- But, if you have the **RIGHT THOUGHTS**, you can't help but **DO GOOD**

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- Christ then rightly moves the focus from our **ACTIONS** to our **THOUGHTS**
- All of the things we've talked about start in our hearts...
- ***“Out of the abundance of a man's heart, the mouth speaketh”***
- All of our sins start in our heart
- Every bad thing that we do originates within
- But, not everything comes out, does it?
- Christ realized that we sin more often in our hearts than in our actions
- Christ wanted to get to the root of the problem

- A root is a good analogy, actually...
- How do you tell if a tree has healthy roots?
- Digging it up to expose the roots will kill it
- You look at the fruit that it bears
- Healthy, plump, juicy fruit **HAS** to come from a healthy, strong root
- Weak, anemic, ugly, sickly fruit is evidence that something is corrupt on the inside
- A heart focused on the good, the honest, the pure and just, will bring forth good fruit
- A heart focused simply on avoiding sin, will not...
- Examine the fruit, is the Master's advice
- What kinds of Works are being produced?

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- Matthew 7:16-18

- 16) You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?
- 17) So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.
- 18) A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

- Our **ACTIONS** stand as a reflection of our **FAITH**

- A healthy and robust **FAITH** cannot help but do good works

- But, what is in the Heart?

- You never really can tell...

- Today, we'd just like to talk about two very personal, "internal" things...

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- One of the most personal, and private areas of our day is our **Prayer Life**
- It's also one of the most important
- Jesus brings this home to us...

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- Matthew 6:5-6

- 5) “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.
- 6) But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- It is intended to be a personal and private thing...
- Notice how the verse doesn't simply say that you should pray at home?
- I love how the King James says,
- *“When thou prayest, enter into thy **closet**, and when thou hast **shut thy door**, pray to thy Father”*
- Going into the closet to pray isn't enough... You actually have to shut the door!
- Thankfully, I now have a large walk-in closet at home, but five years ago, this would have been impossible in our old house
- He's not speaking literally, but he wants you to understand that strength of his position
- Guard, honor and cherish that special relationship that you have with God
- It's a precious commodity that you want to protect
- Develop and appreciate the uniqueness of this type of connection with the Creator of the Universe

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- God actually **WANTS** you to be in constant communication with Him
- The benefits to you of a healthy and robust Prayer Life are enormous
- You don't need to do it to impress others, or show off to them
- Keep it private
- But, keep it **ALIVE!**
- Don't let "**Out of Sight**" become "**Out of Mind**"

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- Just because you are asked to be discreet about your prayers to God, doesn't mean that you can let them slip and don't do them
- Jesus continues to talk about how we should pray...

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- Matthew 6:7-8
 - 7) "And when you pray, **do not heap up empty phrases** as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.
 - 8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
- God is pleased when our prayers are thoughtful
- The commandment to "Love the Lord your God with all your Heart" includes loving Him with all our Mind also
- God is not pleased with perfunctory praying of clichés, thoughtless repetitions of traditional sayings and careless exclamations of His glory

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- If your Prayers are **MINDLESS** than they are **MEANINGLESS**
- To pray to your Father you have to engage your mind

- What are “Empty Phrases” or “Vain Repetitions”?

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- **ANYTHING** can become Vain Repetitions
- What is a repetition for you, may not be for someone else, so don't judge them
- Even Biblical terms can become tired clichés if you overuse them and stop thinking about the meaning
- This is one of the reasons I enjoy reading the Scriptures in so many versions, as it helps me in my efforts to pray to God with fresh words

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- If you want to avoid Vain Repetitions, you should always try to be SPECIFIC
- Wouldn't **YOU** rather have a specific compliment rather than 10 vague generalities?

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- ***God is pleased when you engage your mind, and not just your mouth***
- Don't fear not sounding like a “Christadelphian”
- Just because you've never heard anyone use that term in a prayer before doesn't mean that it's wrong
- It might even be better!
- Consider whether or not what you are going to say best expresses the emotions that you have towards God
- God wants your prayers to be genuine and sound like they came from you
- Not like you pieced together several nice sayings that you've heard said over the past 25 years
- As a matter of fact, be a little concerned when your prayers start to sound too much like a “Christadelphian”
- God didn't call you so that He could hear you mimic the petitions of others

- God chose you for your unique personality

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- He wants to hear from you...
- Not all the Brethren that have come before you
- Speak to God in terms and references that you are familiar with, He understands them all
- A Gardener is going to pray differently than a Mathematician
- One is not right, and one wrong
- Each one of us is different, and we explain and describe things differently
- **THAT** is why God wants to hear **YOUR** prayer
- YOUR THOUGHTS!

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- *It might not rhyme, and it won't sound as nice...*

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- ***But it will be real!***
- We tend to think that Prayer is what good people do when they are doing their best
- **It is not**
- We tend to think that there must be some kind of “insider” language that we have to learn before God will take us seriously in our prayers
- **There is not**
- Prayer is elemental, basic language
- Prayer is the means by which our language becomes honest, true, and personal in our response to God

- Prayer is the means by which we get everything in our lives out in the open before God
- Prayer is fundamental...

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- Let's look at another of the major issues that we face within our own Hearts:
- **Love**
- This is probably the most important thing for us to learn
- Remember, what Paul told the Galatians:

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- Galatians 5:14

14) For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall **love your neighbor as yourself.**"

- That's it!
- That's everything

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- **Life is all about Learning to Love**
- And, because life is all about learning how to love, God wants you to learn to value relationships

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- Philippians 2:1-4

- 1) So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,
- 2) complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- 3) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility **count others more significant than yourselves.**

4) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

- Some people find it hard to Love their Neighbor

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- Jesus expects us to Love our Neighbor as a **MINIMUM**

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- Jesus wants us to go **ONE STEP FURTHER** and Love our Enemies!
- If you simply are nice to the people that are nice to you, how is that better than anyone else?

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- Matthew 5:43-46

43) “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
45) 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.

46) For **if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?** Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

- Learning to Love is all about going **ONE STEP FURTHER**

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- Sometimes we fool ourselves into thinking that the Christian thing to do is to simply not be rude to rude people
- Your Mom told you when the bully was picking on you in the playground, to
- **“Just ignore him, and he’ll get tired of picking on you, and go away...”**
- That may have been good advice for a child, but we are called to something better!

- Bless them that curse you
- Don't just ignore them...
- Bless them so that God will heal their hard heart!
- Do good to them that hate you
- Don't just ignore them...
- Do good to them so that they may see God through your actions!
- Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you
- Don't just ignore them...
- Pray for them that they may change their ways!
- Don't pray **ABOUT** them...
- Pray **FOR** them...

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- This is Christian Love...
- This is **Agape**
- This is the kind of love we are called to

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- You shouldn't confuse **Liking** with **Loving**
- Don't think that you are actually going to enjoy treating your "enemies" this way
- It won't come easy, and it won't be fun
- But, you **CAN** do it, because that's what **Agape** is all about!

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- There is an excellent definition of **Agape** in “*Philosophy of a Good Life*”, by Charles Gore:

*“The Greek word for Love in the New Testament (**agape**) does not signify any sort of emotion whatsoever, but a deliberate disposition of the will, something which is within everyone’s control if he chooses to have it so. We CAN put God first, and we can **care impartially for the interests of those we like and those we don’t like.**”*

- We are called to be children of God...
- Perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is Perfect!
- If we love those that love us, we have our reward
- It is natural and easy to respond kindly to those who are kind to us
- Our calling is to be kind and show God’s love to those who are not nice to us...
- Do good...
- Hoping for nothing in return
- You **CAN** care impartially for the interests of those you like, and those you don’t like
- God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good
- Who are you to just be nice to the nice people?
- You **CAN** open your heart up to care for **ALL** of your Brothers and Sisters
- You **CAN** show love to **EVERY** member of your Ecclesia
- I’d like to look one more time at this verse that has really convicted me lately...

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- Matthew 25:37-40

37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’

- 38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?
- 39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'
- 40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the **least** of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

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- It doesn't matter to Christ how you treated your **FAVORITE** member in the Ecclesia

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- It doesn't even really matter how you treated all of the members on **AVERAGE**

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- What matters to Christ is how you treated the **LEAST** of your Brothers and Sisters
- What matters to Christ is how you treated "*that Brother*"
- You know the one...
- The one who is a little "*off*"
- The one who is a little lacking in the social skills
- The one who's awkward to be around, and it seems like they try everything they can to make it even worse
- Christ wants to know how you treated him!
- How hospitable you were to him
- How often you dropped off a casserole at his house when he was sick
- How many times you invited him over to your house, when you were having a bunch of friends over for the evening
- This isn't just some kind of quiz
- Christ doesn't present you with these kinds of situations just to see how you will react
- Christ wants you to grow through this experience

- Christ really, honestly wants you to learn how to love
- The real challenge of going **ONE STEP FURTHER** isn't to just pass some kind of test
- The real challenge of going **ONE STEP FURTHER** is to develop ourselves into people like Christ
- To actually begin to think like Christ
- We are not doing all of this just to somehow prove that we are righteous
- Your goal is not to somehow earn your salvation, but to actually help the other party see the Love of Christ and be saved themselves
- To heal the broken-hearted and uplift the down-trodden

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- L. G. Sargent, *The Teachings of the Master*:

“The object which the Lord has in view in all of these injunctions is to develop the character of the disciple into that of a citizen of the Kingdom. But this presents a peculiar difficulty. If the disciple fulfils the commandment with the object simply being his own self-development – then the motive become self-regarding and defeats its own end. The man who receives a blow in silence in order that he may be the more a saint is in grave danger of becoming self-righteous, and self-righteous people certainly do not belong to the class that the Lord calls ‘blessed’. The Christ-like man suffers the blow so that perchance he may win the giver of the blow, and it may ‘save a soul from death’.”

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- You go **ONE STEP FURTHER** not because you want to **EARN** Salvation

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- You go **ONE STEP FURTHER** because you have been **GIVEN** Salvation, and you want to show our appreciation by sharing that hope of salvation with others
- We don't turn the other cheek or walk the extra mile, to prove how good we are, we do so in hopes that it will help others to see how Christ's sacrifice has positively affected us

- That is what God wanted from the Jews also
- They were to be a witness to the nations around them
- The Pharisees were supposed to be an example to the people around them by their righteous behavior

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- Your righteousness needs to **EXCEED** that of the Pharisees!
- You have to go **ONE STEP FURTHER** than the Pharisees!
- Christ's Fundamental Principle of Salvation by Grace is **NOT** a license to laziness!
- Christ isn't offering us a restriction of morals so that we can live a life free from the stresses of laws and regulations
- Christ is calling us to go **ONE STEP FURTHER**
- We are called to live lives of righteousness that are driven by the thanks and gratitude that comes from having our sins forgiven!
- Not driven by the fear of punishment for not fulfilling the law
- In **THAT** sense, Christ has fulfilled the Law
- We also will easily fulfill the Law if we follow him in Faith
- Our class ends by looking in your Heart...
- But, in reality the battle **begins** in your Heart
- Because, it's your **Heart** that Jesus really wants
- Anyone in authority can command action from others...
- The Centurion tells his soldiers to come, and they come
- I can tell an Employee to do something, and they do it
- Better yet, I can tell one of my sons to go somewhere, and they go

- But, do they **LOVE** me?
- That's a whole different thing, isn't it?
- The Jews had 2,000 years of history serving a God that they saw simply as an Authority figure
- Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely... **THOU SHALT NOT!**
- The GOOD ones actually followed the rules that He gave them
- Most of them only did so when it was convenient
- Some of them didn't even try at all...
- But, He wasn't really looking for children who knew how to follow rules
- And He still isn't today
- He wants His children to **LOVE** Him!
- He wants His children to appreciate the great gift that it is to be called Children
- He wants us to appreciate the incredibly wonderful position that He has put us in, simply because He loves us
- Deeply, richly, truly come to understand and appreciate that amazing Grace...
- And your waking hours won't be able to contain the Good that will pour forth from your thankful heart
- Your righteousness will surpass that of the Pharisees
- And you will look forward to going **ONE STEP FURTHER**