

## Basic Training 9.2

### Godliness: Morality and Mercy

*Ex 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

- I. Review/Introduction
  1. We are winding down the study we began in February on Basic Training, which has covered a number of basic teaching of scripture, learning about God, how to know Him, and how to live for Him.
  2. Last week we introduced the topic, Godliness and Morality, where we studied the progress we make as we grow in spiritual maturity and knowledge of God's word.

3. Simply put, there are some things we need to turn loose of and some other things we get a hold of.
4. **[Slide]** We looked at **1 Timothy 6:11-12** that puts it this way, **“flee these things” and “lay hold” of other things.** It should be part of our walk with God to learn His moral standards and with the Spirit’s help, adopt them as our own standards to live by.
5. We looked at how Peter recognized how that when the Holy Ghost fell on the Gentiles for the first time, God began the process of “purifying their hearts” by faith.
6. And as much as it amazed Peter, even yet today, it is still an amazing thing to watch this happen in the lives of new believers as they begin to learn what it means to give their lives to Jesus.
7. We studied the words of Jesus, Peter, and Paul, as each told about iniquities that we need to get rid of if we want to see the Lord. And as the writer of Hebrews said,

- follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.
8. Those writers told us about all kinds of immoral behaviors we must avoid including all types of sexual sins, drunkenness, coveting, abusing people with words, witchcraft, and others.
  9. Paul said people who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
  10. So with those warnings, we looked at why it is important to adopt God's standards of morality.
  11. Tonight, we are going to look at what is behind God's moral standards, the strong characteristic of God's holiness, and put that alongside another strong characteristic of God—God's Mercy.
- II. Jesus went seeking
- A. Friend of sinners
    1. As we looked at last week, a high standard of morals mattered to Jesus. He said He

didn't come to eliminate the law, but to fulfil it. Parts that deal with sacrifice for sin, He fulfilled that so we do not follow the sacrificial rituals that were part of the law.

2. However, Jesus and His apostles placed a strong emphasis on the commandments, high morals, righteousness, godliness, integrity, and honorable conduct.
3. Knowing that, we might find it puzzling how that Jesus made it a priority to seek out people who lacked morals. He became a friend of sinners, swindlers, drunkards, and even the despised tax collectors:  
*Matt 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.*
4. But we need to understand correctly why Jesus made friends with those who were destitute and rejected by others.

5. You see, many of the religious people Jesus interacted with considered themselves the righteous ones, the sons of Abraham, and holier than everyone else.
6. They would not even associate with the kinds of people Jesus sought out because they felt they would be defiled by them.

B. Zacchaeus

1. But consider the vile tax collector, Zacchaeus, whom they all looked down upon, but Jesus looked up to him in a tree and invited Himself to dine with him:

*Luke 19:5-7*

*5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.*

*6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*

*7 And when they saw it, they all murmured,*

*saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

2. While others looked down on him, Jesus was actually looking out for him; even seeking him. Jesus explained why that was: *Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*
3. He explained to the people, “This day is Salvation come to this house.”
4. Did Jesus go hang out with Zacchaeus simply to make a sinner feel good in his sinful ways? No. Jesus came seeking him out to save him. And He did. He brought salvation to his house.
5. Jesus hung out with Zack because He intended to have a saving, life changing impact on this sinner. Instead of Jesus being defiled by Zack, Zack was saved by Jesus.
6. And as we mentioned earlier, giving your life to Jesus will change you. For Zack, there was proof of that change.

7. After being around Jesus, the unspeakable happened. Zacchaeus was different:  
*Luke 19:8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*
- c. Matthew
  1. And that was likewise the impact Jesus had on another sinner, the tax collector named Levi, or Matthew.
  2. Jesus wasn't worried about being defiled by Matthew. He boldly came up to him and said, "Follow me." And Matthew rose up from his tax collector's table and followed Jesus.
  3. And similar to the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus apparently invited Himself to Matthew's house. But this time, it was not only Jesus and Matthew alone. Other sinners like Matthew showed up.

*Mark 2:15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.*

4. Jesus sought out sinners not to affirm them in their lifestyle that lacked morals, and not to descend into an immoral lifestyle like them, but to heal their hearts and change their lives.
5. But as we might expect, Jesus' intentions were misunderstood by the religious folks:  
*Mark 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?*
6. Jesus recognized that the Pharisee's attitude toward ministry was to despise and reject sinners. And that is a method that will never reach sinners.



7. Simply condemning the sinner does not draw him out of his sin into truth.
- D. The sick need a physician
  1. On the other hand, Jesus saw them as the sick who need a physician:  
*Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.***
  2. In that statement we see that in this era, Jesus is interested in intersecting with the lives of the immoral so that by His association with them, He will create a hunger in their hearts for truth.
  3. The hope that a physician offers those who are sick is not that he would look at their sickness and tell them they are just fine as they are. No.
  4. The hope that a sick person has is that their physician will correctly diagnose the root

- cause of their disease and help them correct it so they can become whole.
5. And in the same way, the hope of the sinner is not that Jesus would tell them they are just fine in doing their sin, but offer them a diagnosis of the root cause of their sin, and then offer them forgiveness and cleansing of their broken heart.
  6. Matthew was one of those sick with the disease of a sinful heart. Jesus gave him the hope of mercy, forgiveness, and a new life.
  7. And we all know how Matthew's story turned. He ended up writing the Gospel of Matthew that told not only told his own redemption story, but also told of many other untouchables Jesus healed like the leper (Matthew 8), or like the woman with the issue of blood.
  8. They were untouchables whom Jesus touched and made whole.
- E. Woman caught in the act of adultery

1. And then there was the condemned woman who we are introduced in this way:

*John 8:3-5*

*3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,*

*4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

*5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?*

2. We saw last week how that adultery is prohibited by the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment, and is also found on many of the lists of sins in the New Testament that state, if you are guilty of these, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.
3. But to Jesus, identifying someone's sin is just the first step of redemption.
4. And it is true, before someone is set free, they must acknowledge they are a prisoner

to something from which they must be set free.

5. Seeing that was the case with this woman, Jesus then moved on to the important second part of intervention: offering forgiveness, a new heart and a new life!
6. The scribes and pharisees knew the law and wanted judgment. But Jesus also knew the law, yet He also knew of the craving in the soul of a sinner for forgiveness and a new life.
7. So why not offer the repentant sinner mercy and forgiveness instead of immediate judgment?
8. Jesus then took advantage of their confrontation to use the law to condemn those who condemned her, for the law applies to one just as it does another.
9. After remaining silent for a while, Jesus responded:

*John 8:7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto*

*them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

10. When Jesus brought attention to their sin as they had done for the woman, they walked away from the Savior, condemned.

*John 8:9-10*

*9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

*10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*

11. We need to be careful about how we accuse and condemn others.

F. Loving God means obeying His commandments

1. Yes, God's morality standards are undeniable. God is holy and He does require

that believers follow the commandments.  
That is a reflection of our love for Him:  
*John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my  
commandments.*

2. When you truly love someone, you want to please the one you love, even if it means you must change your behavior.

3. Why? Because making sacrifices based on love will actually draw that relationship even closer:

*John 14:21 He that hath my  
commandments, and keepeth them, he it is  
that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall  
be loved of my Father, and **I will love him,  
and will manifest myself to him.***

4. And when you love someone, you don't see it as a burden to do what pleases them:

*1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that  
we keep his commandments: and his  
commandments are not grievous  
[burdensome, weighing down].*

5. So in the encounter between Jesus and the woman, the commandment had already done its job. She felt condemned by it and did not need further condemnation. What a repentant sinner needs is mercy.
6. Let me clarify something. God's holiness and His law go hand in hand. He is a holy God and He said we must be holy because He is holy. His law is important because it reveals God's high and holy standards of morality.
7. And as we mentioned a moment ago, the holiness of Jesus and the law even condemned her accusers. But rather than repenting like she did, they walked away condemned.

*John 8:10-11*

*10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*

8. Yes, like many of us, she was guilty, but she just needed to know how to connect with God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and a new life.
9. Jesus further instructed her:  
*11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: **go, and sin no more.***
10. The law condemns. Mercy forgives. Both are essential to lead someone who has been violating God's morals into a new life.
11. God has high standards and we've all broken them. Yet God still calls sinners to repentance for He is not willing that any perish in sin.  
*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

### III. Conclusion



1. Let us close by looking at two very important characteristics of God that seem to be contradictions one to one another that are the point of tonight's lesson: God is holy, and God is merciful.
2. You can see how that tension lives side by side by studying the Ark of the Covenant, also called the Ark of the Testimony.
3. It was a wooden box overlaid with gold that contained the covenant between God and Israel. The two tables of stone that God had etched His moral code onto, His 10 commandments, were contained inside that box.
4. That was an important box and it came to represent God's presence with Israel.
5. The commandments, God's moral law, were shut inside the Ark underneath a special lid. That lid was so special it had a name: the Mercy Seat.
6. Two angels made of hammered gold were fixed onto the top of the Mercy Seat. The

Mercy Seat was placed on top of the Ark of the Covenant containing the 10 Commandments.

7. So from the early days, there was a close connection between God's holiness, represented by His commandments, and His mercy, represented by the Mercy Seat.
8. You could not get to the commandments of God without first touching the mercy of God. They were interlinked.
9. But mankind tends to see only one or the other. Some are so strict with God's moral standards they leave no room for mercy.
10. Some people are so focused on God's mercy they don't see it wrong to ignore God's commandments.
11. But you must have both in order to meet God:

*Ex 25:22 And **there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the***

***testimony*** [the commandments ], *of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

12. Notice the place where God meets a person. [slide] **When we humble ourselves to God and stand on His Word, we will find ourselves in the midst of God's mercy.**
13. The presence of God was symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament. But the presence of God for New Testament believers is no longer just a symbol. Believers can be filled with God's presence by being filled with the Holy Ghost.
14. The new covenant with Jesus did not do away with God's law. As we saw, you don't get God's mercy apart from God's law. They are inseparable.
15. But God revealed to the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah how the new covenant would work—He would put his Spirit and His law inside us:

***Ezek 36:27 And I will put my spirit within***

***you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.***

16. *Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will **put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;** and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*
17. Did Jesus do away with God's standards of morality and obedience to the commandments?
18. No. Jesus used the morality of the law to bring people to understand they needed mercy.