

1. Esteeming Ourselves is an Abomination to God
 - a. Pharisees were actively ridiculing Jesus for his claim that God wants us to invest in eternal things and not let money master us in the present age.
 - i. This active ridicule was an effort to justify themselves before others, they esteemed themselves and their wisdom greatly
 - ii. They did not esteem Jesus as superior, and therein lies the problem of humanity
 1. We tend to think that the
 - b. Self-exaltation is something that God not only hates, but is actively and adamantly opposes.
 - i. "The pride (high) in men" is the "abomination"
 1. We take pride in that which God detests, the exaltation of our own wisdom and authority within our own hearts
 2. When we stake the claim of goodness and worthiness on the hill of our own greatness or performance, it stinks to high heaven
 - ii. What does "abomination" mean in the Scriptures?
 1. Something that God detests and, particularly, something that is against His revealed will that His people should be holy, distinctly different than the world
 2. So, here we see that worldliness is detestable, particularly in self-justification, the desire to exalt or praise something in the eyes of man (mine or others) rather than in the eyes of God
 3. God's eyes are all that matters
 - iii. What is its import, power, strength, and connotation?
 1. **“Something** is *rotten* in the state of every human heart”
2. All of Scripture Reveals Our Utter Need of **God’s Grace for New Hearts**
 - a. God first revealed Himself through the Law and the Prophets and then revealed Himself through the preaching of the Kingdom of God by Jesus, who is its King
 - i. The fullness of the promise was seen in Jesus, but it was not a new promise nor did it reveal a deeper need.
 - ii. Rather, there has been a deepening and widening progression of how deep the rabbit **hole of our hearts’ egregious sinfulness really goes and what God is going to do about it** in order to show mercy and remain just.
 1. Heb 1:1-2
 - b. Each person tries to squeeze himself into the Kingdom of God by his own greatness, but it cannot be done because the Law hasn't passed away!
 - i. This squeezing is the heart of religiosity: focusing on moral superiority in comparison to others
 1. **Mistakes “being good” with “being graced”**
 2. It takes good things and uses them as the basis for our own good
 - a. Family:
 - i. addict and spouse – **the spouse “loves” the addict and takes care of him**, but studies show that if the addict recovers a high percentages of these marriages will then fail. Why? Who was it about?
 - ii. Divorce – people fall madly in love, utterly in love, and over the years one of you loses looks, gains weight, etc. Your love falls away, you start to look at other people. Why? That person met a **need, it wasn’t love.**
 - b. Friends: betrayal, foolishness, consistent sinfulness

3. Do not mistake being good for an inward change of character
 - ii. You cannot force your way past the perfect demands of the Laws of God as if there were a loophole to squeeze through or as if God graded on a curve.
 1. And ignoring God's commands concerning money as your god, which is idolatry and an abomination (Deut 7:25; 13:13-14; 25:15-16), is spiritual adultery.
 2. Interestingly, anger and lust are two of the primary categories which Jesus uses to show the depth of our idolatrous sin and guilt before God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:22,28)
 - a. The Pharisees were calling Jesus a fool (mocking him), thus leaving them guilty (Matt 5:22)
 - b. Their divorce and remarriage was for the lusts of their own hearts, making them adulterers (Matt 5:28)
 - c. The point is that the Law reveals the condition of the heart of which there is no loophole and we are all condemned by our own hearts in the light of it
 - iii. These attempts to force oneself into the kingdom is not possible because of adulterous spiritual hearts - you left your Creator, your Husband, and married another - there is nobody righteous enough for the kingdom of God as evidenced by your love of this world.
 1. It seems that adultery was a sin that the Pharisees understood to be condemnable, so Jesus uses that agreed upon condemnation and labels them as such. The mockery stopped there.
 2. Secondly, it is also true that we attempt to justify self-serving sins before God and before ourselves, rather than listen and heed the revelation of God
 - a. **“Sure, adultery is wrong, but I want that other woman more than my wife. Therefore, I will divorce my wife and marry that other woman because then it’s not adultery.”**
 - b. Rather than seeing love as committed self-denial for the glory of another, we justify a different love that is self-centered and self-serving in that it only acts if the object of its “love” meets a need.
 - i. **As soon as that need isn’t met, then love doesn’t apply any more.**
 3. The reason that divorce and remarriage like this is an abomination is that it is completely unlike God, who is committed to His people and never gives up on them: SEE JESUS!
 - a. Self-denial for Him in order to see us in glory?
 - b. **CROSS! SPIRIT! COMMITMENT WRITTEN IN BLOOD!**
3. Esteeming Ourselves Has Eternal Consequences
 - a. Parable of the Self-Exalting Man and Lazarus (from Lo-Ezer, meaning "no help")
 - b. If you live for the approval of this world, you will receive only this world can offer you and that is brief and transient
 - i. Rich man exalted himself
 1. Dressing himself in extravagant clothes daily
 2. **Enjoying himself “splendidly” throughout the day**
 - ii. Lazarus was humiliated
 1. **He was cast out (by whom?) into the vestibule of the rich man’s courtyard**
 2. He was cast out because he was covered with sores as indicated by the perfect passive participle
 3. He **“longed to be filled”** with what was dropped from the rich man’s table
 - a. He was starving

4. The dogs would lick his wounds
 - a. He was with the dogs, unclean animals
 - b. He was treated like a dog by the rich man
- iii. If you do things in this world to get a sense of self, a sense of importance, something to boast about and compare oneself to another with favor, then you are acting like the rich man
- c. This world is not all that there is.
 - i. **Both men's lives had eternal consequences**
 1. If one seeks for pleasure in this world to the detriment of others, i.e. exalts himself before or over others, the abomination of God falls upon him
 2. The helpless one receives grace from God and not abomination or detest
 - a. When we recognize our helplessness and our desperate need for God we find that God rushes in to meet with sinners
 - b. **"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners"**
 - ii. Note that after death is no change available – no crossing of the great chasm
 1. What you spend this life upon has eternal consequence!
 2. There are no second chances, no purgatory payment, no transferring of grace after death
 - iii. What God is truly like, truly desires, demands, and promises is contained in His Word and nothing else is necessary to know Him.
 1. The Word of God reveals His holiness and our depravity; His mercy and our need for it; His grace in making sinners significant because of His great love for them
 - a. The Word of God is about the Greatness of God, not the greatness of Man
 2. If people will not heed the Word of God through the Law and the Prophets, then they will not hear the Kingdom of God preached or the resurrection of a dead man
 - a. In other words, **no signs will suffice if you don't believe His Word, even the greatest sign of death's defeat**
 3. Of course, Jesus is referring to Himself here, showing that hardened hearts set **against God's Word show a hardening that will not be broken by miracles or signs of any kind**
 - a. The soft heart entrusts itself not to its own wisdom, but to the revealed wisdom of God
 - iv. Jesus is lovingly warning these men of the imminent and eternal danger of living for the approval of anyone but God
 1. So, recognize your helplessness and cry out to the Lord for merciful rescue and he will answer you in the day of trouble
 - a. Not as if he owes you, or so that you can get the sinful desires of your heart, but so that you can know him and the glory that only he reveals in right relationship to him
 2. We are sinners, utter fools, with no wisdom and no goodness of our own, wicked to the core, self-reliant and self-centered, drunk with power and self-ascribed importance
 - a. Trying to compare ourselves with ourselves, to justify our goodness and our wisdom and our power to one another
 - b. Yet before God, these displays of the flags of our power and prestige and greatness are waving filthy stinking rags around on sticks.
 3. His approval is what we need, and our hearts are desperately wicked and lacking in anything that God would find fragrant with life, righteousness, and goodness

4. What, Then, Shall We Do?

- a. In the post-modern world, we typically root all our social evils in low self-esteem
 - i. The basis of education, social work, etc. is that people misbehave for the lack of self-esteem. Wife-beaters, murderers, crime is all because of a lack of self-esteem.
 1. There is no evidence that low self-esteem is a big problem in society.
 - a. **The gunmen of these shootings don't think too little of themselves, but too highly of themselves and too little of the lives around them**
 - b. Raising self-esteem has never been the issue, the issue is that the self **isn't very estimable, so we've given our children wind to grasp**
 2. It will be years and years for modern Americans to accept this because it is rooted so deeply into our culture.
 - ii. **With the "low self-esteem" view you don't have to make any moral judgments upon anyone.** All you have to do is educate them, lift them up, give them someone to talk to.
 - iii. The Gospel: the answer to all of our problems is not higher self-esteem, but it is Christ esteem, which both emboldens with hope and humbles us in the weakness of our souls.
- b. Only Jesus Christ can approve you before God and graciously give you significance
 - i. Entrust yourself to Jesus Christ as your only hope, who was sent to redeem you from **your heart's wickedness and the just wrath of God!**
 - ii. His death and His resurrected life **will answer God's** requirements for you
 1. God, being rich in mercy, sent His Son to be the substitutionary bearer of your sins so that you might receive the newness of life by faith in Him (see Eph 2:4-7)
 2. The only way that you come to Him is in helplessness and humility, as a Lazarus, with nothing to offer Him but your desperate need for salvation
 - iii. **The "Good News" (Gospel) is** that God loves sinful humanity so greatly that He did send His Son to be the sacrifice for us, so that He would remain just in His wrath against evil and merciful in His salvation of its perpetrators, i.e. US!
- c. If you are a disciple of Jesus already: when you start to see the signs of religiosity, i.e. comparison with others and the desire to be seen as good and right and beautiful by other people, remember the Cross
 - i. Irritable, impatient, rude, critical of others?
 1. The Cross was necessary FOR YOU because your wickedness goes deep down!
 2. How can I be proud and arrogant and look down on others when it took the death of the infinitely valuable Son of God for me?
 - ii. Depressed, envying others, feeling worthless in comparison to others?
 1. The Cross was carried by Jesus FOR YOU because He loves you and delights in you that much!
 2. How can I be bereft of joy when Jesus loves me enough to pay for every single one of my sins, knowing that I would struggle tomorrow?

Laws are useful for moral restraint and for measuring good citizenship, but they cannot change the heart. But Jesus Christ can radically renew and change our hearts through the gift and power of His Holy Spirit. The transformation of the heart is His work of supernatural grace. It is here that we are all on the same page, in the same place, in complete and utter dependence upon Jesus, not merely as a Teacher, but as a sacrificial Redeemer. If you come to God saying, "You owe me a good life because I'm not a very bad person," then Jesus has nothing to offer you. But, if you come to Jesus saying, "You don't owe me anything! All I deserve is wrath! Please save me by your mercy!" then Jesus rushes in to eat with you, to dine with you, a sinner. This is Christianity, the Gospel. It is simple, yet deep and profoundly transformative.

The bigger and deeper that we perceive our sin to be today, the bigger a Savior that I need to redeem me, change me, renew me. The greater we see our own sin to be today, the greater Jesus is treasured in our lives. The more treasured the Savior is, the greater my love for Him. The greater my love for Him, the greater my desire to honor him from my heart and through my actions.

Let us learn to shed our self-esteem, and yearn for the true freedom of a renewed nature, given by mercy and performed by Jesus, growing in greater Christ-esteem. You see, we have a heart-changing, life-giving, spirit-renewing, foundation-smashing, adventure-taking Redeemer. It is His own kindness, with His very own presence within us, He is making us to be like Him to a world that needs to hear of His greatness for our hope, joy, and freedom. He is worthy of all esteem, for by His blood He has ransomed those from every tribe, nation, and people, and has made them a kingdom of priests to our God. Jesus, you are beautiful.