

Title: THE SKELETON OF A HOLY LIFE, MATTHEW 5:38 – 48
(Chatham, NJ; 02/23/14, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: Righteous behavior requires the inner stability that allows us to behave in a godly way and not conform to the ways of the world.

Purpose: To help us develop the spiritual backbone to behave according to God's ways and not react or conform to the ways of society.

Introduction:

1. Our bodies are supported by a skeleton: flesh and muscles attached to bones.
2. Some creatures don't have skeletons: worms, slugs, jellyfish, etc.
3. Some have their support on the outside: crabs, lobsters, bugs, etc.
4. Today I want to talk about the spiritual skeleton.
5. Our conduct is not dictated by others but by an inner stability and strength from God.
6. We have inner skeleton supporting in our souls.
7. Romans 12:21 says "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by doing good."
8. This positive approach demands inner strength not dependent on others but must come from within.

I. A Foundation of Holiness

- A. Israel was to be holy as God was holy
 1. Leviticus 19:2 expressed the demand to imitate God's holiness
 2. Peter repeats the demand for the church, 1 Peter 1:14-16
 3. This is nothing short of an expectation that we will conform to God's commandments
- B. Beyond external behavior only, Lev. 19:17-18
 1. "Do not hate in your heart," 17
 2. "Do not take vengeance or bear a grudge," 18
 3. These are founded upon the second commandment: love your neighbor, 18
 4. In addressing hatred and nursing grudges, the Law indicates that the problem begins within our sinful hearts
 5. In Mt. 5 Jesus has located the problem in similar ways: anger and lust must be controlled in order to keep from committing sin.

II. Christ Is the Foundation, 1 Corinthians 3:11 (Our spiritual skeleton is like a foundation.)

- A. Our skeleton and non-retaliation, Mt. 5:38-42
 1. The law of retribution (38) was abused
 2. Originally meant as a limit on exacting revenge, it was more of a law for just recompense, not revenge
 3. Jesus demands more: cheek, tunic and cloak, more than a mile
 4. Jesus gave us the perfect example, 1 Peter 2:23
 5. He could do that because he trusted God
 6. Trust: the foremost ingredient in our skeleton
- B. Our skeleton and loving our enemies
 1. Hate enemies not found in the Law
 2. Love them and pray for them
 3. What good is it to love only those who love you: everyone does that
 4. Don't just greet only your friends
 5. These behaviors are based on what others do for us
 6. Be like God: the next great ingredient of our spiritual skeleton

C. False Righteousness in chapter 6

1. To be seen by others in giving, praying, and fasting
2. Our focus is God, not other people
3. Our inner strength and stability come from God
4. It doesn't matter what others do to us, how they behave, or what they say about us; we act as we see God act
5. This is our skeleton

III. Growing Bones

A. God: the stability factor

1. Be holy as he is holy
2. Christ is the foundation, 1 Cor. 3:11
3. We are his temple, 1 Cor. 3:16, and his Spirit lives in us
4. Be perfect as God is perfect

B. Behavior is intentional

1. Love comes from God not from our human impulses and desires
2. Positive acts of love don't depend on what others do
3. We act; we don't react
4. We overcome evil with good rather than being overcome by it
5. We are not victims; we are agents of righteous behavior

Conclusions:

1. We behave as God would have us behave because we have his Spirit within us.
2. We rise above petty and fleshly behaviors because we imitate Jesus.
3. We have the inner strength to do this because we trust God.
4. Believe, repent, and be baptized – these things must be accomplished in order to grow your spiritual skeleton.