

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: Matthew 5:31-48

A Christian's Righteousness (continued)

I. Review: Christ and the Law

- A. Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament ("*Do not think I've come to abolish...*", Matt 5:17) and consummates all that the OT foreshadows ("*...not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law...*", Matt 5:18)
- B. Because Jesus upholds the OT, His disciples should apply the OT to our lives better than the Pharisees ("*...unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees...*", Matt 5:20)!
- C. Jesus contrasts His explanation of the OT Law with the distortions and misapplications of the Pharisees.

II. 'Till Death Do Us Part...or Bad Cooking?

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." (Matt 5:31-32)

- A. What is the logic behind 'sexual immorality', including adultery, being the condition for lawful divorce (See Matt 19:1-9)?
- B. What is the logic behind the former spouses' committing adultery after an unbiblical divorce?

III. "I Triple Dog Dare You" and Other Meaningless Talk

"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.'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." (Matt 5:33-37)

- A. Read Lev 19:12, Num 30:2, Deut 23:21. How were the Pharisees distorting these verses to enable them to break their word?
- B. What is someone logically saying when they swear "on the grave of my Aunt Suzy" or "by the hair on my chinny-chin chin"? Was Jesus prohibiting all oaths (see below)? If not, what?

"You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear." (Deut 10:20)

"But I call God to witness against me--it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth." (2 Cor 1:23; also Rom 1:9, 1 Thess 2:5)

- C. BONUS QUESTION: What does Heb 6:17 tell us, then, about the final authority of God's Word?

IV. The Sweetest Revenge

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." (Matt 5:38-41)

OT Reference = "Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (Deut 19:21)

- A. What was the original meaning of this OT law in context? What was the Pharisaical distortion of the law?
- B. Describe the scenarios of Jesus' four examples. In broad strokes, what is He illustrating for us to do (or not do) as members of His Kingdom?

"And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." (Mark 15:21)

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Phil 3:20)

V. An "Extra-Ordinary" Perfection

"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?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt 5:43-48)

- A. Once again, explain the Pharisaical distortion of the OT law found in Lev 19: 18. How is it similar to the distortion dealing with oaths? What is Jesus' correction?
- B. What is ought to be our rationale for loving our enemies? How does Jesus drive his point home with force (vv. 46-47)?

"The mark of 'perfection' in the Christian is just this: his love is not determined by the loveliness or the attractiveness he finds in its object. His love is not conditional upon his being loved first. His love is not directed only toward those whose love he can rely on in return. No, his love is controlled by the knowledge that when he was God's enemy and a sinner the Father first loved him "

- Sinclair

- C. How does the call to "Be perfect" remind you of the importance of the greatest commandment (*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*, Matt 22:37)?

"There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Müller and his opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God." -19th cent. Preacher George Müller