

The Gospel According to
Matthew

Lesson #6 – Ch.5:17-30

Jesus Came to Fulfill the Law – Ch.5:17-19

Jesus Teaches on Murder – Ch.5:20-26

Jesus Teaches on Adultery – Ch.5:27-30

Come before the Lord and praise Him for the abundance He brings to your life as a child of God. Praise Him for the cross, Jesus' sacrifice that makes you righteous before Him. Praise Him that you are covered and favored with His grace every day, and then praise Him even more that you have His Words at easy access in your Bible to instruct you and show you the mind of Christ!

Tell Him how much you appreciate all His daily benefits: food, water, a bed, a sound mind, purpose for living. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of His Word as you begin to read today. He wants to point out a truth to you through these verses that you may have never understood or applied. Read your Bible as though it is a treasure worth seeking. Pay attention! Be inquisitive! Look for something the Holy Spirit wants to reveal to you.

➡ **Read Matthew 5:17-30**

In last week's lesson we sifted through the Beatitudes (Matt.5:1-12). Jesus began His ministry with this teaching about inner spiritual character. The Lord has always been more concerned with the moral heart of man than anything else. Up to this point, the only thing the Jews had to measure their spirituality by was Moses' law. They had a list of laws to obey to become righteous before God, and this was their ruler as to how their spiritual life was perceived.

We need to understand that Jews grew up being taught the laws of Moses and the prophets as God's standard for holy living. They equated being right with God with living under this ethical code. When a sin was committed, a blood sacrifice was performed (the slaughter of a bull, rams etc.) to atone for those sins.

We will see that Jesus said He didn't come to destroy or dissolve the law, but to fulfill it (v.17). Jesus was going to teach them what it meant to be *inwardly and outwardly* obedient! The Pharisees, their religious teachers at that time, were only concerned with outward obedience, or what they *looked like* to others. This was a concern to Jesus, who taught to do charitable deeds in secret, and then their heavenly Father would reward them.

True religion can never be reduced to outward show or legalism. True religion at its very center is man loving and having a personal relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and surrendering his/her life over to Him in full obedience. It's not by our good deeds that we have a relationship with Christ; it's about recognizing we have a sin problem, and Jesus is the only one who can help with that. Our outward signs of righteousness don't impress God. He is more concerned with what flows from within than what is perceived by others by our outward actions.

Jesus progresses from a sermon on how inward spiritual character can make the life of a believer “blessed” (Matt. 5:1-11) to the important truth that He came to fulfill the law in our lives. He came not to overthrow the laws of the prophets, but to enrich them by making them honorable with *hearts* that obey His Word.

1. Jesus entering His ministry states right up front what He came to do. What was His mission? You’ll find it in Matthew 5:17.

2. Read Matthew 5:17 in another version of the Bible. Write it out in your own words to give it more meaning. What did He mean by “fulfill the law?” How would Jesus do that?

One of the versions I found said it like this (GW Version): “Do not think that I came to set aside the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to set them aside, but to make them come true.”

Let’s look at the word destroy:

“Kataluo”

Definition = to dissolve, to halt, to overthrow, to make law non effective

Jesus didn’t come to make the laws of Moses and the prophets non-effective. He was not coming to release us from the instruction and the accountability of the law. He was adding a measure of completeness to it. It was not enough to keep the law outwardly, even if you could do it completely. Our inward hearts are wicked. Jesus’ standard of righteousness included not just holding yourself back from the action of the sin, but true righteousness that would require not even a “wish” to do the sin!

He was setting up a standard of righteousness that He knew was impossible to achieve. You see, the Pharisees believed in their own righteousness. They believed they had adequately kept every law and were therefore right before God. They were very pious in their superior thinking. Jesus’ standard is so high that no man can keep it completely. Who could say they were never angry and never *wished* to be angry? One might be able to say I never hit anyone out of anger, but to say I never *wished* to hit anyone out of anger – really? That, my friend would be impossible! He wanted them to see their inability for perfection so that they could recognize their need for a Redeemer and Savior.

3. What does the Bible say that the Lord focuses more on, our outward or inward parts?
1 Samuel 16:7 What instructions did god give Samuel as He looked for a King for Israel?

4. What does the prophet Jeremiah say about our hearts (Jeremiah 17:9)?

According to this verse, our hearts are the most deceitful thing on this planet!

5. Who searches our hearts and minds and who knows what we are thinking (Jeremiah 17:10)?

What does the Lord test? _____

I know what my own heart is capable of. The Pharisees wanted to believe that they were highly spiritual because they did all the right things. Even if that were true, their hearts were just like yours and mine. What is in the heart of man/woman according to these Scriptures? Make specific notes when Scripture mentions motive and intent.

a. Genesis 6:5

b. Proverbs 6:14

c. Ecclesiastes 9:3

Nothing much sacred living in our hearts apart from Christ; don't you agree?

There was one point in the history of Israel where the nations were to be judged by God because the people were so rebellious and ungodly. God's judgment came as Israel was overtaken by their enemies and taken off in to 70 years of captivity. The Pharisees should have been well aware of the history of Israel; they knew the Scriptures. They knew the story of Israel's years of captivity.

Jesus came to fulfill the law by living it out as a perfect man.

I know my heart needs some "hallowing!" How about you? Many times I can muster up enough self-control so that I *do* all the right things, but I don't always *wish* the right things!

7. What was the last attitude you saw in your heart that needs to be "hallowed" (You can write it in a mini "2" font if you wish, so no onlooker can see!)?

The Lord has a plan for wicked hearts like yours and mine!!! He doesn't leave us unredeemed, sister! He cleans us up and makes us smell good and squeaky clean again!

8. What is His plan of redemption for our wicked hearts (Ezekiel 11:19)?

Let's get back to Matthew.

We better get going - we have only covered v.17!

Matthew 5:18 (Jesus Himself speaking) in the GW Version says: "I can guarantee this truth, until the earth and the heavens disappear, neither a period or comma will disappear from Moses' teaching before everything has come true."

The whole law was going to be fulfilled, and it was to be fulfilled in Christ's life, which He lived perfectly. The Lord has a whole design for this world and the people in it. Not one period will be erased from His Word until it has all been completed!

Scripture says ALL the law will be fulfilled. That means every prophecy and every precept and every penalty paid... EVERYTHING that God has ordained to be, will be!

9. In Matthew 5:19 we find a description of those who will be considered the least and the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Who is called the least?

_____ and _____

Who is called the greatest?

_____ and _____

10. Do you consider yourself a teacher? Why or why not?

11. Think about those you influence. Who is following you?

The best definition of "leadership" that I have ever heard is this: Leadership is influence.

Leadership is obtaining followers. If you are a mom, a grandmother, a boss - you are a leader and teacher. Everyone influences someone. We never know who or how much we influence.

I came across this poem in a book by John Maxwell.

The Little Chap Who Follows Me

A careful man I want to be,
A little fellow follows me;
I do not dare to go astray
For fear he'll go the self-same way.

I cannot once escape his eyes.
Whatever he sees me do he tries.
Like ME he says he's going to be-
That little chap who follows me.

I must remember as I go
Through summer suns and winter snows,
I am building for the years to be-
That little chap who follows me.

What are we building for years to be? What are we teaching those with whom we have influence? Children, friends, neighbors, co-workers...we influence so many. What is our footprint in their lives?

May I suggest that our lives invite others to be:

More obedient

Or

Less obedient
to the Lord

Everything we do either points others to Jesus or away from Him. People do what people see. **We weaken God's Word as we bear His name and then choose to ignore or disregard His standards, precepts and commands!**

-Please read that bold type one more time-

Oh, if we could get that thought into our heads! There is a consequence when we choose to disregard God's Word!

12. Now, I am going to ask you a pointed, personal question... Do you model disregard for God's Word? _____

What I mean by that is: do you fudge on doing what you know to be right? Do you disregard the Lord's standard for holiness in your life because it is inconvenient or something you have deemed no big deal, or it's costly or just because of personal desire or resistance to what it will cost you to change or to obey?

Don't answer that too quickly; take a few minutes and allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart, and then ask the Holy Spirit to help you model integrity for the Word of God to all you influence.

13. 2 John v.8 encourages us not to lose our rewards. Write out the Scripture below.

Leaders must live by higher standards than their followers.

15. What will be the end result to having these standards? 1 Timothy 4:15

Jesus moves on in Matthew Ch.5:21-26 and continues to show the Pharisees that their inner righteousness was so far from God's holy standard.

Here we come to an area of Scripture where Jesus is going to deal with 6 important Old Testament Laws. He will deal with the motive (intent) of the heart, not only the outward action spoken of in the Old Testament Law.

We will look at the first two to finish out this lesson, and we will finish the other four next week.

The laws are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Anger – Ch.5:21-26 | Ex. 20:13 |
| 2. Adultery – Ch.5:27-30 | Ex. 20:14 |
| 3. Divorce (adultery) – Ch.5:31-32 | Matt. 9:1-12 |
| 4. Swearing – Ch.5:33-37 | Lev. 19:12; Deut. 23:23 |
| 5. Retaliation – Ch.5:38-42 | Lev. 24:19-22 |
| 6. Love your enemies – ch.5:43-48 | Lev. 19:17-18 |

Jesus' new standard included the law PLUS a godly attitude and a heart of integrity!

Let's look at the first law concerning "anger."

16. According to the Old Testament, what was the command about murder (Exodus 20:13)?

17. What did Jesus add to that Old Testament standard? Matthew 5:22

Jesus' standard didn't just include the *action* of taking someone's life; it included the *desire* to take someone's life through anger!

*Please remember this is applied to personal insults, not war between nations. War is sometimes necessary as we can see all through biblical history and American history today.

Definition of angry here:

Angry – origizo

Definition = to provoke, or to enrage, to become exasperated, brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured and not allowed to die. Holding a grudge which includes a root of bitterness.

Psychologists say that violence is born of weakness. The strong man can love and suffer hurt. The weak man only thinks of himself and hurts others to protect himself. Hatred brings a person closer to murder than any other emotion. We can see that in statistics as one spouse murders another out of pure hate.

Jesus says that the one that is angry with another human being without a cause shall be in danger of judgment (v.22) or guilty before a court.

We see a progression here in v.22 as the anger grows until the angry person is in danger of hellfire. They eventually become consumed with that bitter spirit!

18. What does David say that holding a grudge will do (Psalm 37:8)?

19. King Nebuchadnezzar was a good example of what happens to a soul that is allowed to fume and simmer with anger. What did he do in his fury against God's people (Daniel 3:8-19)?

20. What is the encouragement of Paul in Ephesians 4:26-27? Why?

Jesus does not prohibit all anger.

When was the last time you blew your lid? Do you believe the anger was a righteous anger or a selfish anger? _____

21. When do you believe anger is o.k.?

Explore the next few questions and scriptures and then return to answer.

22. Jesus Himself had righteous anger at times. See John 2:14-17 and Matthew 21:12-13. What made Jesus so upset?

It is possible to have righteous anger. Faithfulness to Christ will sometimes demand it!

23. In Matthew 5:23-24, when are we called to leave our time of worship, and what are we to be aware of? What comes before worship?

Jesus would rather you leave your time of worship with Him and go and be reconciled with the one that has a grievance with you than for you to sit in church with huge dividing walls built between the believers in the Body of Christ. Unresolved conflict has a priority over giving your offering to the Lord! Wow, have you ever really thought of that? Unity has priority. How many times do we sit with our hands raised when we know our neighbor has a problem with us?

Regardless of who is responsible for the break, we need to do everything in our power to be reconciled. True worship is enhanced by better relationships by those who come to worship.

I understand it isn't always possible to make others at peace with us, but in my experience, if we give it a good try and bathe it in prayer, more often than not God reconciles the relationship. The problem arises when we become stubborn and offer up excuses to God like, "This isn't my problem, I mean, I'm fine with them. They are the one offended!"

Jesus is laying out His remedy for broken relationships. Here in Matthew 5:23-26 is the ***solution for healing a relationship when someone is upset with you***. Later on in Matthew (Matt. 18:15-20), we will discuss what you should do if you have been the one offended.

24. What does God value more than sacrifice and worship? 1 Samuel 15:22

Stubbornness only brings us added pain. I know this Scripture works! I have had to go, led by the Spirit, and eat crow many times. And, you know what? Almost every time the Lord melts away the ice covering a hardened heart. It is so worth a little humility and loss of pride. Men and women are rejoined in appreciation for one another, and love from that point on is driven even deeper! Just do it! Agree with your adversary quickly (v.25)!

Let's stop a minute right now and pray. Ask God to help you genuinely make a list of all those you know have an issue with you right now. Put their names below.

Ask God, “Have I truly tried with all that I have to be reconciled with this person?” Have I been genuinely prayerful about asking the Lord to reconcile the relationship?

*If your answer is no, or I don’t know, continue to pray about making a move to reconcile with them.

Let’s look at the second law concerning adultery.

25. “You shall not commit adultery” was a familiar Old Testament commandment (Ex. 20:14). Having sexual relations with a person other than your spouse is adultery. This was a pretty clear sin. Jesus included it in His standard. What was added? See Matthew 5:27-28. Write it here.

That’s a pretty lofty, lifelong standard! Who can say they never committed adultery when put that way? No one! Jesus is our only link to righteousness before God. Our flesh is incapable of keeping this moral standard.

Warren Wiersbe says this about sexual impurity: “Sexual impurity begins in the desires of the heart. Jesus is not saying that lustful desires are identical to lustful deeds, and therefore a person might just as well go ahead and commit adultery. The desire and the deed are not identical, but spiritually speaking, they are equivalent. The “look” that Jesus mentioned was not a casual glance, but a constant stare with the purpose of lusting. It is possible for a man to glance at a beautiful woman and know that she is beautiful, but not lust after her.”

26. How do we get victory (Matthew 5:29-30)?

We get victory by purifying the desires and disciplining the actions of the body. For example, if a man is having lustful thoughts about a woman at work, he should do everything in his power to avoid her. This woman would be “off-limits” to him, even though she may be a totally lovely woman and completely safe to another man as a friend.

Likewise, a woman may admire some character traits in a man at church that she seems to feel are lacking in her husband. While it’s perfectly ok to acknowledge good character in a person, she may be careful if she catches herself daydreaming about him and how it might be to have a husband like that of her own.

Jesus' point was to be careful at all times, and when the Holy Spirit tries to warn you trouble is up ahead, LISTEN to that small voice of warning. Don't allow Satan to convince you that you are strong enough to handle your secret lustful thoughts. Most of us can easily fall when put into the right situation with no one watching and fulfillment lacking. Jesus puts it bluntly, like He often does. He says, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it aside" (v.30)! Now, did Jesus know how important a hand was to the everyday chores of life? He sure did, and He still said, "Get rid of it." He would rather us lose something of value than hold onto it and lose our whole life's testimony!

Obviously Jesus isn't talking about physical surgery here; His point is to deal immediately with the sin. Don't allow it to grow or gain momentum. Cut it off! Take radical steps to rid it out of your life, before it destroys everything you love.

Adultery is a painful, long-reaching sin with tragic consequences that destroys trust, family relationships, personal integrity and spiritual influence. Adultery is not the "unpardonable sin", but its consequences are like a burning fire. It emotionally, spiritually and sometimes even physically destroys all it touches.

Adultery is not one impulsive decision, it's a sequence of compromises and crossings of lines one thought they would never cross, until they find themselves compromising in ways they would have never dreamed. Adultery is moving towards the flame inch by inch. If the line is crossed and integrity is lost, all who love the adulterer are burned by that flaming fire. Each one carries their painful personal scars according to their depth of relationship to the adulterer. This sin is predicatively painful and takes years to recover from.

With all that sober talk about sins ability to destroy, let me be sure to say, "God's power trumps sin and does have the power to heal and redeem." Of course! That is the story of the cross! He triumphed over sin on that cross and we too can triumph over sin – even the sin of adultery through the power afforded us by the cross.

***Nothing is too broken that God cannot fix.
He's in the miracle working business and He's good at it!***

With that thought – believers, let's be wise and protect our marriages by living a life of purity by the Spirit. Let's set healthy boundaries by closely gauging who we allow in our inner circles and in our private, emotional conversations. Remember – Satan wanders earth seeking whom he may devour.

Wrapping it up and making it personal!

Charles H. Spurgeon, one of my favorite teachers that is now with the Lord, wrote this about sin:

The Power of Sin

"It would be an awful experience to set a house on fire, intending to let it burn just so much and no more. Can you say to the fire, "This far you shall come and no farther?" If you could say it to fire among standing corn, blown by the wind, yet you would sat it in vain to sin. Sin swiftly

grows from a pygmy to a giant, and ever increasing in its awful power, it crushes down the man who is in its grip and holds him under its dreadful sway.”

Are you feeling crushed by the increasing power of sin today? Was this lesson particularly written for you? Has the Holy Spirit given you this study for such a time as this? If you have recognized the weight sin can bear upon your shoulders, relief is just a heartfelt prayer away!

Was it you that the Holy Spirit moved upon when the lesson talked about someone who is bummed with you?

The Lord is waiting, open-armed, for the child that will come burdened by sin with a heart of repentance. What about the mess I have created, you say? God can repair what we have shattered. He has the unique ability to take our broken pieces and mold them into a vessel that is more solid and useful than before! He is the best at that! He creates and then re-creates.

The important thing is that you come repentant today. Don't allow the devil to convince you to wait one more minute and rob you of all the fullness of joy and peace that your Father has for you. He's never backed up one step. Meet Him there.

May God's peace rule in your hearts this day! Amen