

## Matthew 5 – Sermon on the Mount

### Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

***Mat 5:17-18 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.***

Remember that part of the Mosaic Law was the ceremonial law. Christ was the sacrifice for the sins of the world, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth. Christ came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law. He fulfilled it in that He kept it during His earthly life. And the standard which was set before man He was able to attain, and now He is able to make over to you and me (and every believer) His own righteousness. God's standards have not changed, but you and I cannot attain them in our own strength. We need help; we need a Savior. We do need mercy, and we obtain mercy when we come to Christ.

I hope you don't misinterpret what I am saying in this section which we call the Sermon on the Mount. I am not saying that we are free to break the Mosaic Law. The fact of the matter is that the Law is still a standard. It reveals to me that I cannot measure up to God's standard. This drives me to the Cross of Christ. The only way I can fulfill the Law is by accepting the only One who could fulfill it—Jesus Christ.- McGee

***Mat 5:19-20 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.***

You cannot break the commandments and get by with it. But you cannot keep them in your own strength. The only way you can keep them is to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, power, and strength. The commandments are not a *way* of salvation but a *means* to show you the way to salvation through the acceptance of the work of Jesus Christ. It is very important to see His point right here. The Pharisees had a high degree of righteousness according to the Law, but that was not acceptable. How can you and I surpass their righteousness? It is impossible in our own efforts. We need Christ to do it for us. - McGee

### Anger

***Mat 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.***

This is a tremendous statement! It means that if you are angry with your brother, you are a murderer! Do you claim to be keeping the Mosaic Law? You cannot break the Law and get by with it. You can't get by with mouthing the boast that the Sermon on the Mount is your religion and then break every part of it. My friend, both you and I need a Savior who has perfectly kept the Law and can impute to us His own righteousness. - McGee

***Mat 5:23-24 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.***

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If a person offends another, whether by anger or any other cause, there is no use in his bringing a gift to God. The Lord will not be pleased with it. The offender should first go and make the wrong right. Only then will the gift be acceptable.

Even though these words are written in a Jewish context, that does not mean there is no application today. Paul interprets this concept in relation to the Lord's Supper (see 1 Cor. 11). God receives no worship from a believer who is not on speaking terms with another. - McGee

***Mat 5:25-26 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.***

It is against a litigious spirit and a reluctance to admit guilt that Jesus warns here. It is better to promptly settle with an accuser rather than run the risk of a court trial. If that happens, we are bound to lose. While there is some disagreement among scholars about the identity of the people in this parable, the point is clear: if you are wrong, be quick to admit it and make things right. If you remain unrepentant, your sin will eventually catch up with you and you will not only have to make full restitution but suffer additional penalties as well. And don't be in a hurry to go to court. If you do, the law will find you out, and you will pay the last penny. – Believers Bible Commentary

Note that Jesus says, “Verily I say unto thee.” He is lifting His teaching above the teaching of Moses. He is lifting Himself to the position of the Lawgiver and also the Interpreter, by the way.- McGee

### Lust

***Mat 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.***

For many years I have publicly made the statement that nobody but the Lord Jesus has ever kept the Law. One Sunday morning I repeated it in my message, and afterward a big, burly, red-faced fellow came to me and said, “You always say that nobody keeps the Law. I want you to know that I keep the Law!” By the way, he belonged to a cult although he attended services at the church I pastored. Since he claimed to keep the Law, I said, “All right, let's look at it,” and I showed him verse Mat\_5:22 regarding hatred being the same as murder. He said that he kept that, although I don't believe that he did. So I gave him verse Mat\_5:28 and said, “It says here that if you so much as look upon a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery. Now look me straight in the eye and tell me that you have never done that.” He was red-faced to begin with, but you should have seen him then—he was really red-faced. He grunted some sort of epithet, turned on his heels, and walked out. Of course, he walked out! And I say to you, if you are honest, you will not claim to be keeping the Law. Remember that there were ten commandments. Although Matthew mentions only these two that Christ dealt with, I am of the opinion that He lifted all ten of them to the nth degree.

Oh, my friend, the Sermon on the Mount shows me that I have sinned and that I need to come to Him for mercy and help. To say that you are living by the Sermon on the Mount while all the time you are breaking it is to declare that the Law is not important. - McGee

***Mat 5:29-30 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.***

This is severe, very severe, and it reveals, friends, that if you cannot meet God's standards, you need a Savior. Don't kid yourself and fool around with pretending that you are keeping the Law. You are only being a hypocrite. In Christian circles

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we are intent upon patting each other on the back and complimenting one another and giving each other credit for what we do when all the time we all are a pack of low-down, dirty, rotten sinners, not even fit for heaven. The Sermon on the Mount ought to drive you to the Cross of Christ where you cry out for mercy. To do that is to honor the Law, my friend. Don't try to kid me into thinking that you are keeping it. I know you're not—because you are just like I am. - McGee

### Divorce

***Mat 5:31-32 "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.***

Here the Lord gives the grounds for divorce. If someone is divorced for a reason not given in Scripture, that person is an adulterer. This is something that is entirely ignored today in Christian circles. This, however, will be the Law during the Kingdom age because there will be men and women who will want to leave their mates during that period. We will deal with the divorce question in some detail when we get to chapter 19. – McGee

5:31 Under OT law, divorce was permitted according to Deu\_24:1-4. This passage was not concerned with the case of an adulterous wife (the penalty for adultery was death, see Deu\_22:22). Rather, it deals with divorce because of dislike or “incompatibility.”

5:32 However, in the kingdom of Christ, whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery. This does not mean that she automatically becomes an adulteress; it presupposes that, having no means of support, she is forced to live with another man. In so doing she becomes an adulteress. Not only is the former wife living in adultery, whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

The subject of divorce and remarriage is one of the most complicated topics in the Bible. It is virtually impossible to answer all the questions that arise, but it may be helpful to survey and summarize what we believe the Scriptures teach.

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### EXCURSUS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Divorce was never God's intention for man. His ideal is that one man and one woman remain married until their union is broken by death (Rom\_7:2-3). Jesus made this clear to the Pharisees by appealing to the divine order at creation (Mat\_19:4-6).

God hates divorce (Mal\_2:16), that is, unscriptural divorce. He does not hate all divorce because He speaks of Himself as having divorced Israel (Jer\_3:8). This was because the nation forsook Him to worship idols. Israel was unfaithful.

In Mat\_5:31-32 and Mat\_19:9, Jesus taught that divorce was forbidden except when one of the partners had been guilty of sexual immorality. In Mar\_10:11-12 and Luk\_16:18, the exception clause is omitted.

The discrepancy is probably best explained as that neither Mark nor Luke record the entire saying. Therefore, even though divorce is not the ideal, it is permitted in the case where one's partner has been unfaithful. Jesus allows divorce, but He does not command it.

Some scholars see 1Co\_7:12-16 as teaching that divorce is acceptable when a believer is deserted by an unbeliever. Paul says that the remaining person is “not under bondage in such cases,” i.e., he or she is free to obtain a divorce (for desertion). The present writer's opinion is that this case is the same exception granted in Matthew 5 and 19; namely, the

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unbeliever departs to live with someone else. Therefore, the believer can be granted a divorce on the scriptural grounds only if the other party commits adultery.

It is often contended that, although divorce is permitted in the NT, remarriage is never contemplated. However, this argument begs the question. Remarriage is not condemned for the innocent party in the NT only for the offending person. Also, one of the main purposes of a scriptural divorce is to permit remarriage; otherwise, separation would serve the purpose just as well.

In any discussion of this topic, the question inevitably arises, “What about people who were divorced before they were saved?” There should be no question that unlawful divorces and remarriages contracted before conversion are sins which have been fully forgiven (see, for example, 1Co\_6:11 where Paul includes adultery in the list of sins in which the Corinthian believers had formerly participated). Pre-conversion sins do not bar believers from full participation in the local church.

A more difficult question concerns Christians who have divorced for unscriptural reasons and then remarry. Can they be received back into the fellowship of the local church? The answer depends on whether adultery is the initial act of physical union or a continued state. If these people are living in a state of adultery, then they would not only have to confess their sin but also forsake their present partner. But God's solution for a problem is never one that creates worse problems. If, in order to untangle a marital snarl, men or women are driven into sin, or women and children are left homeless and penniless, the cure is worse than the disease.

In the writer's opinion, Christians who have been divorced unscripturally and then remarried can truly repent of their sin and be restored to the Lord and to the fellowship of the church. In the matter of divorce, it seems that almost every case is different. Therefore, the elders of a local church must investigate each case individually and judge it according to the Word of God. If at times, disciplinary action has to be taken, all concerned should submit to the decision of the elders. – Believers Bible Commentary

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### Oaths

***Mat 5:33-36 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.***

The Mosaic Law contained several prohibitions against swearing falsely by the name of God (Lev\_19:12; Num\_30:2; Deu\_23:21). To swear by God's Name meant that He was your witness that you were telling the truth. The Jews sought to avoid the impropriety of swearing falsely by God's Name by substituting heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or their head as that by which they swore.

Jesus condemns such circumvention of the law as sheer hypocrisy and forbids any form of swearing or oaths in ordinary conversation. Not only was it hypocritical, it was useless to try to avoid swearing by God's Name by merely substituting another noun for His Name. To swear by heaven is to swear by God's throne. To swear by the earth is to swear by His footstool. To swear by Jerusalem is to swear by the royal capital. Even to swear by one's own head involves God because He is the Creator of all. – Believers' Bible Commentary

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**Mat 5:37** *But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

For the Christian, an oath is unnecessary. His Yes should mean Yes, and his No should mean No. To use stronger language is to admit that Satan—the evil one—rules our lives. There are no circumstances under which it is proper for a Christian to lie.

This passage also forbids any shading of the truth or deception. It does not, however, forbid taking an oath in a court of law. Jesus Himself testified under oath before the High Priest (Mat\_26:63 ff). Paul also used an oath to call God as his witness that what he was writing was true (2Co\_1:23; Gal\_1:20). – Believers Bible Commentary

The Lord Jesus is saying that we are to be the kind of persons who don't have to take an oath. As a boy, I can remember that my dad could go into the bank and borrow money, then come back a couple of days later to sign the note. Or he could call the bank by phone and have a certain amount of money credited to his account. Well, believe me, it is different in our day. Why? Because there are a lot more folk today who cannot be trusted. The Lord says that the child of God, under all circumstances, should be trustworthy. - McGee

### Retaliation

**Mat 5:38-39** *"You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*

All of that will be changed when Christ is reigning in His Kingdom.

Do you live like this, or do you resist evil? There is a principle for us here, but we are living in a day when a wise man armed keepeth his house. And Paul could say, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works" (2Ti 4:14). In the Kingdom you will be able to turn the other cheek. It reminds me of the Irishman whom someone hit on the cheek and knocked down. The Irishman got up and turned his other cheek. The fellow knocked him down again. This time the Irishman got up and beat the stuffin' out of that fellow. An observer asked, "Why did you do that?" "Well," replied the Irishman, "the Lord said to turn the other cheek and I did, but He never told me what to do after that." - McGee

**Mat 5:40-42** *If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*

The Lord Jesus is saying that we are to be the kind of persons who don't have to take an oath. As a boy, I can remember that my dad could go into the bank and borrow money, then come back a couple of days later to sign the note. Or he could call the bank by phone and have a certain amount of money credited to his account. Well, believe me, it is different in our day. Why? Because there are a lot more folk today who cannot be trusted. The Lord says that the child of God, under all circumstances, should be trustworthy. – McGee

Humanly speaking, such behavior as the Lord calls for here is impossible. Only as a person is controlled by the Holy Spirit can he live a self-sacrificing life. Only as the Savior is allowed to live His life in the believer can insult (v. 39), injustice (v. 40), and inconvenience (v. 41) be repaid with love. This is "the gospel of the second mile." – Believers Bible Commentary

### Love Your Enemies

**Mat 5:43-45** *"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully*

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***use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father 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.***

This rule, I insist, is for the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus lifts the Mosaic Law to the nth degree. He says that in the Kingdom the enemy is to be loved instead of hated.

The believer today operates on a different principle. We are commanded to love all believers, and we express our love to our enemies by getting the gospel to them, giving them the message of God's saving grace that is able to bring them to heaven. - McGee

***Mat 5:46-48 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.***

But now Jesus announces that we are to love our enemies and to pray for those who ... persecute us. The fact that love is commanded shows that it is a matter of the will and not primarily of the emotions. It is not the same as natural affection because it is not natural to love those who hate and harm you. It is a supernatural grace and can be manifested only by those who have divine life.

There is no reward if we love those who love us; Jesus says that even unconverted tax collectors do that! That type of love requires no divine power. Neither is there any virtue in greeting our brethren only, i.e., our relatives and friends. The unsaved can do that; there is nothing distinctively Christian about it. If our standards are no higher than the world's, it is certain that we will never make an impact on the world.

Jesus said that His followers should return good for evil so that they might be sons of their Father in heaven. He was not saying that this was the way to become sons of God; rather, it is how we show that we are God's children. Since God shows no partiality to either the evil or the good (in that both benefit from sun and rain), so we should deal graciously and fairly with all.

5:48 Jesus closes this section with the admonition: Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. The word perfect must be understood in the light of the context. It does not mean sinless or flawless. The previous verses explain that to be perfect means to love those who hate us, to pray for those who persecute us, and to show kindness to both friend and foe. Perfection here is that spiritual maturity which enables a Christian to imitate God in dispensing blessing to everybody without partiality. – Believers Bible Commentary