

"The Sermon on the Mount"

Matthew 5:17-20

Part 1

Introduction: Tonight in our study of the Sermon on the Mount we come to a new section which will set the stage for the rest of Matthew chapter 5. The passage before us tonight is one of great importance and is a passage that has so much spiritual Truth that we can never begin to exhaust it.

Lately in our nation there has been a great attack upon the Word of God and there is also a growing hatred for those who stand for and proclaim the Truth of God's Word. We spoke last Sunday morning about the danger of a nation rebelling against God and His Word. The danger is that God will bring judgment upon that nation.

Isaiah 5:24

²⁴ Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

But there is still another danger of rejecting the Word of God from a nation that many people do not think about.

Our laws today are based upon the moral principles of the Word of God and that is very important to understand. When the Word of God is rejected and the moral Law of God is cast aside then the foundation of the laws of our country has been removed and people then begin to

interpret the laws in a way that fits their lifestyle or their belief. Therefore, we end up with a society that has no absolutes but instead we have a mass of people that are living by their own opinions and their opinions are formulated out of their sinful minds.

This is exactly what we see unfolding in our nation today.

Let me give to you some of the arguments that you will hear from people that are opposed to the Word of God today:

1. *"That's your interpretation of the Bible. To someone else it means something different."*
2. *"The Bible may have worked 2000 years ago but today things have changed and we are a different people. The Bible is out of date."*
3. *"The Bible cannot be trusted. It is full of contradictions."*

Now let me tell you where every one of these statements are coming from. People will do all they can to discredit the Bible today because the Bible gets in their lives and it exposes the sin they are so attached to. They say there are many ways to interpret the Bible because they are convicted by it. They say the Bible is not relevant today because we are a different people but what they fail to admit is the problem is not with the Bible but it is with the people. The Word of God never changes but people do. The Bible is not out of date but the people are out of date. For those who claim the Bible is full of contradictions ask them some time to point out some of the contradictions. There are none and they are using that statement in an attempt to discredit the very Book that is causing them to be uncomfortable in their sin.

In the text that is before us Jesus is going to point us to the absolute Truth in which all laws must be built upon, it is the Word of God.

Now before we get into this portion of Scripture we must first of all understand some of what was happening in the background during the time this sermon was preached.

I. The Background.

Jesus had come on the scene very suddenly. He had lived in the area for 30 years but it was not until His baptism that He stepped out into the public light. He was far different than the scribes and the Pharisees who were the religious leaders of that day. Jesus teaching was so much different than the scribes and the Pharisees that many wondered what His mission really was. You see Jesus' teaching focused upon an inward morality where as the scribes and the Pharisees focus was on the external. Their teaching was all about legalism and focused upon rules and traditions. When Jesus came He overthrew all of their legalistic teachings and their traditions. He continued to place all emphasis upon inward morality. Their emphasis was on outward traditions.

Because of this Jesus seemed to be a Man that had come to lead a revolution. You see, He kept company with the "lowlife" of that society who were sinners and publicans. His message was about grace and mercy. The religious leaders were busy placing people under the Law and binding them with their teaching while Jesus was busy extending forgiveness and freedom. He was nothing like the religious leaders and for that reason many wondered about His view of the Old Testament Law and the prophets. His teaching was like nothing they had ever heard.

Therefore, the teaching of Jesus was a teaching that would overthrow the teaching of the religious leaders and at the same time point people to the Truth. If we read through the book of Matthew you can see Jesus rebuking the religious leaders many times.

Matthew 23:13-15

¹³ But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

¹⁴ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

¹⁵ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

There are other verses where Jesus rebuked the religious leaders but from these you get the point. Now the reason why Jesus rebuked these men so often was because of what they were teaching the people. They had substituted the traditions of man for the Law of God. Let me show you what they had done so that you can better understand. Allow me to explain what the religious leaders were doing;

The most common use of law among the Jews of Jesus' time was that it referred to these thousands of smaller principles, external rules that had replaced the internal law of God. Here's the reason. Let's say you believe you're only going to be in Heaven because you keep the law. But the law is inward, and the law demands righteousness, and the law demands a certain kind of character, and you're a rotten person and really don't want to give it up. Then, what you do is invent a whole bunch of laws that you can keep and just invent a bunch of little rules and say, "If I just keep all these little rules, then I'll be alright." So you would get the rabbis to make up a bunch of rules that you could keep and then just keep those rules and then you could convince yourself that you are good enough for heaven. This is how the religious leaders were thinking. They said, "We'll just make up a lot of rules.

After all, the law covers every part of man's life, so we should be able to formulate from the law a rule for every possible person in every possible situation. So the scribes dug around in the Old Testament, and they picked out every possible point and made thousands and thousands of detailed little laws. So the Pharisees spent their time trying to keep them and then patting themselves on the back as if they were godly because they endeavored to keep all these little rules.

For example, the Old Testament law had said that you couldn't work on the Sabbath. But they said, "Alright, if we can't work on the Sabbath, what is work?" They had to determine what work is, so they decided to have a study on what work is. They decided, first of all, that work was to carry a burden. So, you couldn't carry a burden on the Sabbath day. Then they said, "What is a burden? Let's decide what a burden is." The scribes decided, "A burden is food equal to the weight of a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one swallow, honey enough to put on a wound, oil enough to anoint a small member, water enough to moisten an eye salve, paper enough to write a customs-house notice, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, reed enough to make the pen," and so on and so on and so on. Those were the limits; anything beyond that was a burden and was considered work.

This is exactly why Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day. Let us remember that many were wondering about His view of the Law because of His teaching. With that in mind now we come to the first verse of our text tonight.

II. The Standard for the Believer. (5:17-18)

Notice 5:17-18

Now let us remember that the religious leaders were teaching that the standard by which a life is to be measured was their traditions and their teachings.

But here in our passage Jesus is telling His disciples that the standard by which the believer's life is to be measured is the Word of God. Let me explain how these verses fit the text. Jesus had given the Beatitudes that tell the character of the believer controlled by the Spirit. Then in verses 13-16 we are told how we are to live as believers controlled by the Spirit. Then here in our text tonight we see the standard by which our conduct is to be measured. In the weeks to come we will see the details of the standards of God's Word.

Jesus was telling His listeners here that He had not done away with any of the Old Testament laws or teachings. He made it clear that the Word would be fulfilled to the very letter. He had not come with some teaching contrary to the Old Testament but He was teaching the Truth of the Word of God. The problem was the religious leaders had poisoned the minds of the people who listened to them and now when Jesus spoke the Truth it seemed as something that was strange and foreign.

The opening words of this verse tell us that His listeners were entertaining questions about Jesus position on the Law.

Application:

I believe it is important from this background for us to be reminded of the dangers of placing ourselves under the writings or the teachings of false teachers. Here in this text that we are looking at tonight we see that the false teachings of the Pharisees had poisoned the minds of the people so much that when they did hear the Truth they did not even recognize it as the Truth. Today in the churches right around us the very same thing is happening. I have had several people over the

years that have come here to church and made the comment they heard things here they had never heard in their church. You see in many churches the Truth of God's Word is not taught. The sermons consist of stories or opinions mixed with several verses here and there and so many have sat in places where the Truth has been distorted and when they hear the Truth it sounds foreign to them.

Now in this verse Jesus tells His listeners that He had not come to destroy the law or the prophets but He had come to fulfill. We need to understand what He meant when He referred to the law. Some say that He was speaking of the 10 commandments others say He was speaking of the Law of Moses. I believe the verse makes it very clear that He was speaking of the entire Old Testament. He tells us He had not come to destroy the law or the prophets. That statement itself covers the entire Old Testament. Let us consider the words of Luke.

Luke 24:27

²⁷ And beginning at Moses [the Law] and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

In Luke's writing we can clearly see the term "law and the prophets" refers to the entire Old Testament.

But how was Jesus the "fulfillment" of the Old Testament?

He really fulfilled the Law and the prophets in 3 ways:

- 1. He lived in complete obedience to the moral law/ the Ten Commandments.**

²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

2. He was the fulfillment of the ceremonial Law. Every one of the sacrifices and the feasts and every ceremony of the Law prefigured Jesus Christ. When He died He fulfilled all of the ceremonial Law.

Hebrews 10:11-14

¹¹ And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

¹² But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

¹³ From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

3. He was and is the fulfillment of every prophecy that pointed to Him in the books of the prophets. Some are yet to be fulfilled but He will one day complete the fulfillment.

I want you to know that Jesus is the central theme of the Bible both Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament every sacrifice and every ceremony pointed to Him. Notice this list I found concerning Jesus in the Old Testament;

In Genesis, He is the Seed of the woman.

In Exodus, He is the Passover lamb.

In Leviticus, He is the High Priest.

In Numbers, He is the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

In Deuteronomy, He is the Prophet like unto Moses.

In Joshua, He is the Captain of our salvation.

In Judges, He is the Judge and Lawgiver.

In Ruth, He is the Kinsman Redeemer.

In 1st and 2nd Samuel, He is the Trusted Prophet.
In Kings and Chronicles, He is the Reigning King.
In Ezra, He is the Faithful Scribe.
In Nehemiah, He is the Rebuilder of the broken wall.
In Esther, He is the Mordecai.
In Job, He is the ever-living Redeemer.
In Psalms, He is the Lord our Shepherd.
In Proverbs & Ecclesiastes, He is True Wisdom.
In Song of Solomon, He is the True Lover and Bridegroom.
In Isaiah, He is the Prince of Peace.
In Jeremiah and Lamentations, He is the weeping Prophet.
In Ezekiel, He is the wonderful four-faced Man.
In Daniel, He is the fourth Man in the fiery furnace.
In Hosea, He is the eternal Husband, forever married to the
backslider.
In Joel, He is the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit.
In Amos, He is the Burden-Bearer.
In Obadiah, He is the Savior.
In Jonah, He is the great foreign Missionary.
In Micah, He is the Messenger with beautiful feet.
In Nahum, He is the Avenger.
In Habakkuk, He is God's Evangelist pleading for revival.
In Zephaniah, He is the Lord mighty to save.
In Haggai, He is the Restorer of the lost heritage.
In Zechariah, He is the Fountain opened in the house of David for sin
and for cleansing.
In Malachi, He is the Son of righteousness arising with healing in His
wings.
He is the theme of the Old Testament; every bit of it is His story.

Conclusion:

Now let me tell you what all of this means for you and me. God requires perfection from you and me in order for us to go to heaven. God cannot and will not let one sin go unpunished and we are all sinners therefore our situation was rather dark. So God sent His Son from heaven to come here and die for our sins because every sin **MUST** be paid for. When we repent of our sin and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior we are placed **IN** Him.

Romans 6:3

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

The word "baptized" means "to be placed into". Therefore we are now in Christ. Now with that thought let me show you a verse.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Because I am **IN** Christ I am now accepted by God not because of my goodness but because of Christ's perfection in keeping the Law.

Notice the poem by an unknown author:

"I find my Lord in the Book, wherever I chance to look.
He's the theme of the Bible, the center and heart of the Book.
He's the Rose of Sharon, the Lily fair.
Wherever I open my Bible, the Lord of the Book is there.
He, at the Book's beginning, gave to the earth its form.
He is the ark of shelter bearing the brunt of the storm.
He is the burning bush of the desert, the budding of Aaron's rod.
Wherever I look in the Bible, I see the Son of God.
The ram upon Mount Moriah, the ladder from earth to sky, the scarlet
cord in the window and the serpent lifted high.

The smitten rock in the desert, the shepherd with staff and crook, the
face of my Lord I discover wherever I open the Book.
He is the seed of the woman, the Savior virgin-born.
He is the Son of David whom men rejected with scorn.
His garments of grace and of beauty, the stately Aaron deck, yet He is
a priest forever, for He is Melchizedek.
Lord of eternal glory whom John the apostle saw, light of the golden
city, lamb without spot or flaw.
Bridegroom coming at midnight for whom the virgins look; wherever I
open my Bible, I find my Lord in the Book.