

Matthew 19-06-30a

This is the 30th of June 2019. We're in Matthew chapter 5 and we'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, dedicate our time and our fellowship and our study to the glory of God and then we'll begin. Father it is a wonderful comfort to us when we remember that it is not by our might or our power but by your Spirit that we live the life to which you have called us, that we experience your grace and avail ourselves of your faithfulness.

We thank you for the presence and power of your Holy Spirit in our lives. We thank you for the truth and the power of your Word and with those two divine presences in our lives we can live a supernatural life. We can redeem time that would otherwise be wasted and lost.

We can prepare ourselves for service and function both in this life and in the life to come. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus through whom all of these things have come to us by your grace as an expression of your love. We thank you for his example in demonstrating the effectiveness of that tremendous combination of your Word and your Spirit.

We thank you for his ongoing ministry of intercession and representation on our behalf at your right hand. We thank you for the imminent return of the Lord Jesus as our hope and our confidence and our motivation as we seek to make use of the time that we have in this life to maximize the potential we have for reflecting your glory now and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this portion of your Word together that the Holy Spirit will minister it to each one of us, help us to see why it is that you put it in your Word, why it is that it has come to our attention this morning.

May we find in it a regenerative and restorative cleansing power in our thinking and in our souls. Help us to not only act upon it but to be transformed by it so that we can understand your will and fulfill it to the maximum extent. We pray all of these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. It is always a good idea when coming to the Word of God to read it. It's the first step in our understanding is to observe.

And let me just say by way of you know how prone I am to talk at great length about politics and so on, which means hardly ever, but as the season is warming up now for candidates to speak and so on, it's really a great habit and practice anytime you are presented with information to observe it first. Look at exactly what it says and what it does not say. We hone this skill as much as we can when looking at the Word of God, but it's a useful skill in any discussion, in any debate, in any presentation, whether it is for a product, a service, or a political candidate.

And all I'm going to say is don't skip the observation step. I think one of the reasons that

there is so much variety in understanding of the issues of the day and the relative merit of solutions that are being proposed to the problems that are observed is that A, you have to understand a problem before you can identify a good solution. And a tagline or a hashtag or a superficial label on a problem is not the way to broach the problem and then start talking about solutions.

Find out exactly what is being discussed. And I'll just, for a quick example, mention immigration. The issue is immigration.

We need new immigration policy. We need new ways of dealing with people who want to come across our border. It is not immigration, in my humble opinion, that is really the matter at hand.

It is illegal aliens. Immigration, we have a perfectly functional system. I shouldn't say perfectly.

We have a working system in place that allows people to apply and enter this country. And that's not what people are talking about when they bring up immigration. What they're saying is we need to find a way to let everybody in.

And we are creating a problem by not allowing anybody that wants to come up from our southern border or anywhere else. We are somehow, we have a problem. There are reasons why we have to limit how many people come to this country because it becomes a burden on the infrastructure if they are not capable of sustaining themselves.

Why do we have immigration policy to begin with? Someone who comes to this country, ideally, can speak the language and interact with the rest of the culture. They can understand what people say so that they can vote intelligently and not be led by the nose by the first person that puts them on a bus and takes them to a polling place. They need to be able to support themselves and not only make enough money to meet their own needs, but also to pay their taxes and pay into the systems that are in place to support all of the infrastructure in the country, right? That's immigration, is allowing people in that will be, can sustain themselves and be fruitful and productive members of the American populace.

That's the goal. Well, a lot of people who want to come to this country don't meet that criteria. They're going to come in and they're going to work for cash.

They're not going to pay into Social Security. They're going to have health issues. There is an element of, although it's not a primary element, but there is an element of crime and criminals who want to also enter the country without benefit of papers and being able to be tracked and identified and so on.

But that's immigration. The problem that is being discussed is not immigration per se, although it gets addressed like why aren't we letting more people in or why can't we

speed up the system so they can come here more quickly. It's not an easy thing to determine if someone is able to come here and make a contribution.

It doesn't do our country any good to let people in who are going to be a drain. Look at the national debt. We can't cover our expenses now.

Go to the debt clock on the Internet and look at the trillions of dollars we owe. And in the same way that you don't let somebody sit in front of the shopping channel and keep on buying things when they are deeply in debt and their credit cards are all maxed out, you don't, as much as you might want to be all things to all people and open your borders and let everybody in and just feed them and clothe them and give them a guaranteed minimum wage, it is economically disastrous. It's catastrophic.

It is world-ending for this country. So you have to limit who comes in. That's what the immigration system is for.

But you don't hear people talking about what are they talking about. They show you pictures of people trying to illegally cross the border and saying isn't that awful. And it is awful.

It's terrible to see people who die swimming the Rio Grande or in other ways trying to come to this country, dying in the desert, being taken advantage of by coyotes, dying of heat prostration inside shipping containers in mass or inside vans and things. It's awful. But observation is the key.

Observe and reflect on what is the issue. That's what Jesus is doing in Matthew chapter 5 is he is taking people's eyes off of outcomes and symptoms and manifestations and getting back to the source. And it is a matter of observation.

What is the real issue? Don't let someone else define the issues for you. Do your own thinking. Stop and spend time thinking carefully.

Get some facts. Listen to all sides. Listen to people responsible for maintaining our borders and trying to ensure the integrity of our immigration system.

Get all of the facts. Don't let some person who is the mayor of a town or the governor of a state up north or something else define the issue and then tell you their solution without some investigation. It's observation.

The same thing is true in the Word of God. And by honing these skills, God helps us navigate the world at large. Well, we want to observe.

And so we saw last time, just as an example, we went to Deuteronomy chapter 22 and we saw the context, the wider context. We saw the immediate context. And then we saw this issue of what has been called, you know, tokens of virginity and this sort of thing.

And the importance of making sure you understand what is being said, I cannot overestimate or overstate enough what that is. If you just flip back, keep your finger in Matthew 5, I just want to make a few final observations about our study last week. You have this section in verses 13 through 21.

And we saw that while it is widely understood and even translated as tokens of virginity and understood to be evidence of virginity, and this is implied to be some sort of a bloody bedsheet and so on. The word there for the thing that is spread before the elders, the physical item that is her virginity, her betulai or betulim. It's a masculine plural, but when you put something in the plural, it makes it something large and often something intangible.

And this is something that is represented by a physical item, but it is not in the item. It is what the item communicates. And that was the virginal garment, the young maiden's garment that was worn by young ladies who live in their father's house.

Their father provides them this garment. And it says cloth, I think, in your New King James. And in verse 17, when it says they shall spread the cloth, the new American standard gets this right.

They say spread the garment. And they're one of the few that actually do this justice. But just so that you know that I'm not stretching a point of vocabulary, look up above in the context in Deuteronomy chapter 22, because this word has already been used twice in this chapter.

Deuteronomy chapter 22, the word we're talking about here is shimla, S-H-I-M apostrophe L-A-H, shimla. And it is Strong's number 8071, as I mentioned last time. But if you look in the preceding context in Deuteronomy, remember at the top where it said, if you find your neighbor's ox or his sheep going astray and hide yourself from them, you shall certainly bring them back to your brother.

Verse three, you shall do the same with his donkey and so shall you do with his garment. That word garment in 22.3 is shimla. Just circle it.

It's the very same word as that which is spread before the elders by the mother and father of the slandered girl. Shimla, garment, verse three. You shall not see your brother's donkey, in verse four, or his ox fall down along the road and hide yourself from them.

You shall surely help him lift them up again. Verse five, a woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's shimla. Verse five, same word, put on a woman's shimla.

What the mother and father present to the elders is this identical word shimla. It is her garment, garment. And I encourage you to look up some of the other uses of this word

because observation is everything.

And people who have taken this as some sort of piece of cloth or a bedsheet or something that has some sort of evidence of virginity have failed to observe. Just look at what the Bible itself says. In Genesis 37.34, shimla is used.

Genesis 37.34, this is Jacob tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth in their place and mourning for his son many days. Genesis 37, story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers. When Jacob hears about it, he tears his shimla, same word.

He didn't run into his tent and tear his bedsheets. He tore his clothes and he replaced them with sackcloth, shimla. And time would fail me to give you all of the other examples, but that's Genesis 37.34. In chapter 41, verse 14 of Genesis, talking about Joseph shaved and changed his clothes, washed and shaved and changed his clothes, that's 41.14. When his brothers go back and find the silver cup in the sack and so on, you remember that episode where Joseph tells his servants, hide a silver cup and so on, or the payment is found back in the bag that they were supposed to give for the grain.

So Genesis 44.13, they tore their clothes. Genesis 45.22, the gifts that Joseph gives his reconciled brothers. He gives his brothers changes of garments, changes of shimla in 45.22. Five changes of garments he gives to Benjamin in 45.22. On and on.

There's just no end of these. Look up the Strong's number if you want to pursue this further, 8071. You never find this meaning anything but garments.

So it is a garment. But I want to tell you how damaging it can be for people to make assumptions in the observation stage. The observation stage of this, let me read you what the New Living Translation says here for the consequence phase.

Remember that if the mother and father in some weird hypothetical case would not bring that virgin's clothes and present before the elders, how crazy would you have to be to bring the case knowing you were going to lose it because you could not produce these maiden garments. But if you read this in the New Living Translation for the consequences, and this is down in verse 20. 22.20 says, if the thing is true and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, you can't believe the way some versions translate this.

Now what it literally says from the Hebrew, and I'll give it to you in the raw Hebrew form, verse 20, what it literally says is, but if true, Emmet. We've seen this in Psalm 119. But if true is the dabar, the word, the matter.

If the matter is true, this matter. If this matter is true, not found, betulim. And we've seen that betulim is the shimla.

If the shimla is not found, if the virginal, I'm a young maiden in my father's house

garment, is not found, it's a nifal, a passive. And that's all it says. If the betulim is not, if the thing is true and the betulim is not found, i.e. not shown to the elders.

That's all that verse says. Now I want you to listen to how it is translated because people do not observe. They're skipping the observation step.

New Living Translation. But suppose the man's accusations are true and he can show that she was not a virgin. What? New Living Translation.

This is why, this is one of the few that I do not keep a copy of in my study. The New Living Translation is actually, they call it translation. It is a paraphrase and it's a bad paraphrase.

What did the Hebrews say? But if this matter is true and betulim is not found. That's all it says. The matter is true and the shimla is not presented.

That's what it means, right? Listen to this again. Suppose the man's accusations are true. The man's accusations, there's no word for man's in there and there's no word for suppose.

It says if the thing is true. And then New Living Translation says and he can show that she was not a virgin. There is no word for show.

There is no word for virgin. There is no word for him doing any of those things. Even the English Standard Version.

But if the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman. The contemporary English version says if the man was right. If the man was right? It doesn't say if anything about the man.

It says if the matter, if the word is true. And there is no proof that his bride was a virgin. And this is how you end up on the slippery slope of a toilet bowl that flushes your understanding right down the drain.

You have to observe first. What is a shimla? That dictates all the rest of the understanding of this passage. And everybody that didn't go do their homework on that word, including translators, including Talmudic scholars, including 3,500 years of interpretation in some case, didn't do the observation.

So I cannot emphasize enough, whatever you're thinking about, gather the actual facts. Look at those first, then interpret, then come to your conclusion and make your application. Do not give short shrift to the observation phase.

It is key. You have to know exactly what is being talked about. And don't let somebody flimflam you into thinking that it's something else.

In any given debate, somebody is going to have a premise. And from that premise, they are then going to present conclusions and applications. Examine the premise carefully.

If you are in a discussion or a debate or you're at odds opinion-wise with somebody over something, don't let them establish a premise that you've not looked at carefully. Because a faulty premise invalidates the whole process. It doesn't matter what principles of logic or deduction or reason or additional experience or wisdom or anything else has to do.

If the premise is false, the conclusion cannot help but be erroneous. The application cannot help but be invalid. Premise has to be true.

Examine the premise. Look at the premise. God is a mean, cruel, unscientific figment of somebody's imagination because look at these stupid Israelites thinking that a bloody sheet is an evidence of virginity and if it's not found, it's the death penalty.

Look at this flawed system of justice. Look at how heinous and obviously man-made and primitive it is. It's a faulty premise because it's not talking about bedsheets and it's not talking about anything unscientific.

It is establishing an ideal and saying the ideal is going to prevail in Israel. In Israel, everybody is going to wear tassels on their garments. In Israel, nobody is going to pick up sticks on the Sabbath.

In Israel, you are going to be a symbol of purity and you are going to represent purity. And young women living in their father's house are going to wear a shimla that identifies them as a pure maiden and you Israelites need to strive to live up to that ideal. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

Of course there were cases where the girl was impure and engaged in fornication of all different sorts before marriage. That would happen but that's not God's ideal. God's law says this is the way it should be.

It should be that you always look out for your brother's interests. It should be that you always leave the mother to have another clutch of eggs and hatch another brood of young. It should be that you always have a safety rail and you prevent accidents that harm or kill your brother.

This is what should be and it should be that when a man comes and pays the dowry and receives the opportunity to care for a young lady, this is what the ideal should be. And anybody that undercuts and undermines that is in trouble. By the way while you are in Deuteronomy 22 just flip over one page.

We are going to see this again here in a minute. But look at chapter 24 of Deuteronomy. When a man takes a wife and marries her, same situation right? What is the positive side

of this? He shouldn't hate her, he shouldn't slander her, he shouldn't besmirch her reputation and that of her whole family.

What should he do? In verse 5, look down at verse 5. We will talk about this other because we are going to be getting into divorce. But look at verse 5 of Deuteronomy 24. When a man has taken a new wife, instead of hating her and slandering her, what should he do? He shall not go out to war or be charged with any business.

He shall be free at home one year. Why? Bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken. His first year of marriage in Israel, the ideal was this man doesn't go to war, he doesn't get busy at work, he stays home and lines the nest, he builds pens for animals, he ensures that there is furniture and that there is climate control and that there is everything that that new wife needs to ensure her happiness.

His first year of marriage is dedicated to nothing other than he is committed, he is using all of his time for the happiness of his wife. Now what did the guy in Deuteronomy 22 do? Just the opposite. He hates her and does everything he can to bring her low and to ruin her reputation and that of her entire family through the father.

This is what is supposed to happen. He shall be free at home one year and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken. I can tell you that part of this is going to be digging holes for plants, part of this is going to be fixing up window boxes for her petunias, helping her with her herb garden, doing whatever is necessary to establish a domicile for her that is everything she hoped for.

Ensuring she's got the clothing she wants and needs, that she's got the ability to weave and spin and sew and all of the other things to be able to cook. He's going to make provision, he's going to arrange the house, he's going to do everything he can to make her life as happy and as easy and as productive as possible for one full year, nothing else. That's the ideal.

Did this always happen in Israel? Is there a horrible penalty if he fails? This is presented as the ideal. But just by not going to war and not engaging in business for a year, has the man fulfilled that part of the law? What is the notion behind those physical requirements? Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself as pure and as perfect and as wonderful as he can possibly be. That's what Christ did.

Christ fulfilled that part of the law, didn't he? In the principle sense, in the grander sense of the heart that looks to the benefit of the church, which is God's gift to the Lord Jesus, his special unique possession. The church is his body. Husbands, love your wives as you love your own body.

No man yet hated his own body and did it harm. So that's the idea. Again, the reason we

read, the reason we spend time looking at vocabulary and ensuring that we understand what is being said as the observation step cannot be overemphasized.

It is critically important. Don't let yourself be sold or fed a false premise. And that's what Jesus is now going to talk about in this section.

So let's do our observation carefully and read it. We've talked about all the way down through verse 20, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. People would say, well, but the scribes and Pharisees, I mean, they're taking the cinnamon in the cabinet and getting one-tenth and taking that out and giving it to the Lord and they're putting big bags of money into the treasury and they're making long prayers on the street corner and they're wildly observant of Sabbath regulations and they're so holy.

I don't even know all of the things that they know. How could I ever hope to keep all of the things that they keep? And Jesus said, your righteousness has got to be better than theirs or you're not even going to enter the kingdom, much less be least or great within it. Now he begins in verse 21 because he is now going to say, here is how your righteousness can and should exceed theirs.

These are going to be examples the whole rest of this chapter. 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.

Same consequence. And without a cause, you'll see there's a text note there and you can cross that out. That was added in the majority text as somebody's little marginal note.

I would hate for somebody to take my Bible and incorporate all of my marginal notes. Have you thought about all the stuff you've written in the margins? Just note to myself and somebody would come along and that's the only copy they've got and they're going to make a copy of the Bible and in those days everything was handwritten. So is this a correction or is this a note? Well I better put it in because it might be something that someone left out and they didn't want to rewrite the whole page and they just inserted it.

And so people's marginal notes and thoughts and ideas and even questions would get put into the text. And that's what happened here. The earliest and best and oldest manuscripts do not have without a cause.

Angry with your brother, period. I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca, Raca basically means empty head.

Whenever I see Raca, I think of Cabeza de Vaca, the Spanish explorer, and it sounds like a, oh, Senor Cabeza de Vaca, and you think, wow, he must be a Spanish noble of some kind. And then if you know any Spanish at all, you know Cabeza is head and Vaca is cow and so he's Sir Cowhead. He's bullface or something like that.

So anyway, Raca is like Cabeza de Vaca. It's empty, empty head. Whoever says to his brother, empty head, shall be in danger of the council.

But whoever says, you fool, shall be in danger of hellfire. 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 offer your gift.

Agree with your adversary quickly. Boy, here's a tough one. Agree with your adversary quickly while you're 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. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

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, it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 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. 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. Not quite as true today as it was then.

But let your yes be yes and your no, no. Whatever is more than these is from the evil one. 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. Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 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 too. Give to him who asks you and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away. 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 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 he sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even 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." Now, the reason we belabored our study in Deuteronomy 22 and drew out that little representative section of the law was to see that the regulations of the law, the specifics in terms of what you do in a particular situation, is something symbolic, representative.

I used the example of a pictogram or a cuneiform figure. And the morality, the righteousness is not in the figure, it is in what that figure represents or communicates, right? We're clear on that. So it isn't picking up sticks for six days and not picking up sticks on one day that constitutes righteousness.

It is your dedication to God that you manifest by taking one part in seven and focusing and concentrating to the exclusion of other things on Him. In Israel, it was one day in seven. But it is a significant fraction of the time that is formally and exclusively dedicated to concentration on God and what He has done.

That's what the Sabbath was for, rest and do no work. That's why the Sabbath day commandment comes after, thou shalt have no other gods before me. You won't make any graven image and start thinking about that as a talisman or a lucky charm or a token or something that is going to bring you prosperity.

No graven images in the ancient world, they didn't make them for decorations, they made them for worship, they made them for idolatry. And those people were mystical and thought that there was something in the rock or the cast gold or silver item or the thing carved of wood, they thought that there was some spirit of a god that imbued it and that it was a conduit to this Baal or Ashtar or whoever it might be. Don't even have something that could be construed as a symbol of interest or prayer or dedication or worship to some other deity.

No other gods before me, no graven images, this is avoiding even the appearance of evil. The Jews, of course, took this to an extreme and wouldn't put any faces on coins and no Baal relief in Israel, they just thought, well, the righteousness is in the command to not make any representations. Look, they put, God told them to put cherubim in the curtains of the tabernacle.

Is that not an image? But graven images were the type that were used for worship and he says avoid that. He doesn't mean no paintings, he doesn't mean no, wow, Clint Eastwood just appeared in my pocket and I don't know why. When I'm talking about graven images and demonic influences that operate through them, you know, there's, maybe I've got one too many pictures on my phone.

But you see the problem that we are trying to identify and clarify. Righteousness was not in refraining from making graven images. Righteousness was in pure and entire dedication to God and avoiding even the appearance of interest or dedication to anything else.

No graven images. Don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Don't drag his reputation down to earth.

Don't talk about him as though he's just an old man with a beard in the sky. Don't make vacuous and empty God's person, his reputation, his character. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Why? Because in six days God made the heaven and the earth and everything you observe around you is the product of his work and then he rested on the seventh and what did he, what does the Bible say he did on the seventh day? God saw everything that it was good and taking time formally and purposefully to reflect on God's good work, God's goodness and grace, God's provision, God's watch care enables you to fulfill those first four commands in terms of loving the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind and that is the foundation upon which the last half of the Decalogue is based which is all about loving your neighbor as yourself. So that distinction is critical to understanding the last half of Matthew chapter 5 because is Jesus really talking about chopping off hands and plucking out eyes? Why does he use these exaggerated examples? If you call your brother a bad name you insult him, you're in danger of the council and if you call him a fool you're in danger of hell fire according to this text. What is Jesus doing? He's doing exactly in this section what we did last week which is saying do you see that the righteousness or the unrighteousness, the obedience or the lack of obedience is not in the physical expression? Is there actually immorality in calling someone a fool? Is there actually danger of judgment, danger of going before the council because you say hey witless, hey mindless mind? That's what raka actually means.

When I was a little kid some cartoon character was Dr. Mindless Mind and I thought wow he sounds really, it's kind of like Candy Kid and Brainless Wonder but until you think about it it sounds like wow, he's really something. But that's what raka means is hey mindless mind. Well is saying that word immoral? Is telling somebody you idiot, I tell myself this more than anybody else, have you ever walked around looking for your glasses and they're right here? Have you ever been looking for your keys and you look

down and they're in your hand? And I say you idiot.

Well is calling myself or anybody else immoral? Where is the immorality? Just like we saw at pains last week in the first half of this morning, it's not in the physical expression. That is a token, that is a communication figure for a reality. Why would you be angry with your brother? You should be so concerned about not having that anger that it is the same as though you would be convicted for the anger, not for any expression of it.

So Jesus says look, let me take those Old Testament figures and give you some new ones that hopefully by their exaggeration and their hyperbole will get you to see that we're not talking about the figures, we're talking about what is behind them, which is the matter of the heart. And this is why by the law comes the knowledge of sin, not because you can't keep every regulation, but because looking at those regulations you realize the poverty and the corruption and the insufficiency of the human heart. We are conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

And the struggle we have to obey and to strive tells us about our fallenness and our inadequacy. We can't solve our own problem. We can't purify ourselves.

We can't cleanse ourselves. And by the way, you cannot forgive yourself. This whole modern notion of oh, you need to forgive yourself.

You don't have the power to forgive yourself and you don't have any business forgiving yourself. There's only one source of forgiveness and it's not you. Do you want to elbow God out of the way and say, you know this whole forgiveness thing? I'm going to forgive myself and then I'll go around forgiving others.

Your forgiveness doesn't mean squat. God is the judge. God is the arbiter.

It is God's standard of righteousness against thee and thee only have I sinned. Therefore, thee and thee only can forgive, can cleanse, can renew, can overcome, can accomplish redemption and reconciliation and propitiation and justification and vindication and glorification. Only God can do those things.

And it is a concept from the pit of Satan's lair to say, well, you need to forgive yourself. You can't forgive yourself. You've got no authority to forgive yourself.

You want some drug dealer out here to forgive himself for dealing drugs or some murderer to forgive himself or some drunk driver to forgive himself for mowing down a family in a car? It's worthless. It's worthless. What if I forgive Idi Amin or what if I forgive Pol Pot or what if I forgive Mussolini or any other one of the heinous mass murderers of history? Well, I forgive him.

Who cares? It's meaningless and forgiving ourselves is meaningless. You're not going to get any therapeutic value out of forgiving yourself. It is a lie and a deception and if you

want to live your life based on, well, I'm good to go because I forgave myself.

You're not observing. Jesus is using plucking out eyes, chopping off hands, the slightest insult given to another to point back to the source in the heart. This is what needs fixing.

This is where the law needs fulfilling is in the heart. And if you detect anger, it doesn't matter the specific actions that come out of that anger. You've got to get at the anger and fix that.

You've got to address and pour water on that flame of anger inside. The outside manifestations will take care of themselves and so he's using these in the same way that the Old Testament law. This is hyperbolic Old Testament law that Jesus is giving.

You've heard it said? Well, let me tell you from heaven as the Son of God that here's what we're really talking about. You get unhappy with your wife, write her a bill of divorcement. Listen, you need to get back to that unhappiness because you're breaking one of the big ten with this casual exchange of wives.

Get rid of this one, get another one and it's all okay because it's in the law. I'm looking for my righteousness in the letter of the law and not in its spirit, not in its heart, looking to please God sacrificially to self for the glory of God, sacrificially to self for the benefit of others. And that is where the fulfillment takes place for the Lord Jesus and that is where the fulfillment takes place for us.

Well, we're going to look at these specifics when we come back from the break, but this is why we have to observe. Righteousness is not in the letter of the law. Does that bring to mind any scripture you might have run across in the past? From the Apostle Paul's pen, the letter of the law kills, but the spirit of the law is life.

Remember that? The letter of the law kills and even trying to keep the letter of the law perfectly, that's not righteousness. Righteousness is in the heart. It is in that humility, that commitment to obedience and faith that is an expression of love for God.

Love him more than anything. My first and foremost priority is to be pleasing in his sight. That will take care of expressions because what you do out of that genuine dedication is going to be the right thing.

You're going to be asking for guidance. You're going to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. You're going to be soaking your soul in the word of God.

I've got a figure I'll give you at the beginning of the next section to help us remember this and focus on it, but I'm going to save it until after the break.