

Matthew 19-07-07b

Let's resume our study now in Matthew chapter five, wonderful rendition of the national anthem there to commemorate our Independence Day celebrations this week. And don't always stand at attention for our special music, but we did today. But as we continue here, the first two iterations that we looked at in the first session on murder and adultery, set the tone and give us the clue for understanding the remaining three.

So picking up now in verse 31, let's read this. 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 pōrnia translated here, sexual immorality, but we know from other studies that pōrnia is bigger than that.

And this is one of the passages we know it from because these things are standing in for something else. And the sexual immorality here is talking about pōrnia of the heart. And in the physical sense, pōrnia is breaking faith, breaking covenant.

This is why adultery was such a serious infraction of the law because there were vows exchanged. And God has a lot to say about vows as we're going to see in the next section. But here, you've heard it said, well, the law gives you an out.

If somebody wants to divorce his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorcement. We'll see that in the law here in a second. But Jesus says, whoever divorces his wife for any reason, except pōrnia causes her to commit adultery.

And whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Well, this is from Deuteronomy chapter 24. Deuteronomy chapter 24.

We were just in Deuteronomy 22 a couple of weeks ago. So turn back, keep your finger in Matthew five and turn back to Deuteronomy 24. What is he talking about here? Deuteronomy 24, verse one, when a man takes a wife and marries her and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her.

Now this would have been the right way to handle the Deuteronomy 22 situation instead of bad mouthing, slandering, dragging the reputation of her father and his family into the mud that we saw in Deuteronomy 22, the supposed tokens of virginity passage that has nothing to do with it. Here, if a man did take a wife and just really can't abide the situation, Moses' law permits divorce. He writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house.

When she is departed from his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, this must be a really unlivable woman because whoever marries her ends up having to write a divorce certificate, puts it in her hand, sends her out of his house. Or if the latter husband dies,

who took her as his wife, the former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled. That is an abomination before the Lord and you shall not bring sin on the land which your Lord, your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Now, without getting into a lot of further Deuteronomical discussion, almost didn't say that, Deuteronomy. Yeah, I should have left it alone the first time. Without getting into a big discussion of this section of Deuteronomy, there is the situation described where a man gives a bill of divorcement.

It is not prohibited, but it doesn't just grant it either. If a man's unhappy with his wife, let her write a bill of divorcement. This is sort of an aside for an unfortunate situation.

Jesus said, Moses permitted divorce, but from the beginning it was not so. It's not the ideal. But when the non-ideal happens, here is a specific case where a woman doesn't belong to a man, she's divorced, she marries a second man and is either divorced or widowed.

She is not allowed to remarry the first man. And this goes back to the laws of purity that we saw in Deuteronomy 22. The idea of not mixing two kinds of cloth in the same garment, not mixing two kinds of seed in the same field.

And the woman can potentially have children and to go back and forth across the fence, so to speak, is prohibited. This is a symbolic prohibition. It is designed to hold up standards of integrity and purity and commitment in Israel.

Well, that's basically what it says. We saw the verse five last time when a man has taken a new wife, he's not to do anything else for one year except make her happy. That's his function.

After the first year, he can do what he wants. But that first year, he's got to be a good husband. So that is the context here.

Deuteronomy 24, I say to you, whoever divorces his wife for any reason causes her to commit adultery. And divorce was seen to be kind of a casual thing. And it was a common practice, even amongst the scribes and Pharisees who prided themselves on keeping fine points of the law.

They had no difficulty divorcing and trading in their wife for a younger model and so on. It was a common practice. You can read this in Josephus and other contemporaneous documentation.

And Jesus says, you've missed the point of the spirit of the law. And you are creating an adulterous situation by proxy. And what does this mean? Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except pornography causes her to commit adultery.

Does this mean because she's going to subsequently get married? It doesn't say that. It says at the point that he divorces her, he has caused her to commit adultery. How does that work? That's what it says, right? Divorce her, you cause her to commit adultery.

How is that? You saw in Deuteronomy 24, it said write a bill of divorce, a divorce decree, and he writes it himself. He doesn't say, go to the elders and get one. He formally documents and says, I divorce this woman and sends her from his house, right? Why did he divorce her? Because he wants her out from under his roof.

At the point that he does that, he has caused her to commit adultery. Why? What did we say about adultery in the first section here? What is it actually? It is a breaking of vows. There is a contract.

There is a covenant in marriage. And we persist to this day. People write their own vows, one thing and another.

You know, there's nothing magical about the old traditional, do you, Sam, take this woman to be your lawful sickness and health, rich or poor? No, that's in the Bible. That's just traditional, right? But it constitutes a covenant. I will stick with you till death do us part.

If you get sick and it becomes inconvenient for me, I'm not going to bug out. I contract, I covenant with you. I will be with you no matter what.

Good times, bad times, you stay beautiful. You prune up and look terrible. You're extremely healthy.

You're sickly. It doesn't matter. Good, bad, rich, poor, it's a covenant.

Now, why is divorcing the woman for anything other than the one legitimate reason, which is she has already committed pornography, i.e. she broke the covenant first. But if you send her out of the house, you've caused her to commit adultery, why? Because you have forcibly prevented her from keeping her side of the covenant. As soon as you write her a bill of divorcement and send her out of the house, you make her a covenant breaker.

She can't keep her side. And it's all the same as if she willfully didn't keep it. You have made her an adulteress.

It doesn't matter if she remains, goes back to her father's house, never marries again, never is never with another man. You've made her an adulteress because the concept of adultery is covenant breaking. The concept of pornography is covenant breaking.

And you can break that covenant in advance. You don't have to be married yet to sin against your future marriage. Just because we're time bound doesn't mean God's time

bound.

And people say, well, I'm gonna play around, mess around. I'm gonna be promiscuous, gonna do this, that, and the other. And then when I get married, I'll straighten up and be monogamous and dedicated and the and the only and all of that.

If you're a believer and you know that God built you to be married to someone, you should be faithful to them before you meet them. You can pray for them before you meet them. You can ask God's blessing on them and to help you become worthy of them and to prepare you to be a wonderful spouse and partner for them.

If you're gonna marry anybody near your own age, you know that they're already out there and they're already breathing air. And it's one single individual. You don't happen to know their name or their location, but you know they're out there.

You can pray for them and you can be faithful to them and you can remain pure. And be the best that you can be and do preparation to try to be everything that is gonna fulfill that person's hopes and dreams just as you hope they're doing the same for you. Wouldn't it be great if your future spouse that you haven't met yet is already out there praying for you and preparing themselves with an eye to meeting you and being your husband or wife and preparing to spend life with you and being a person of Christian integrity and faith and hope and love.

So to take a woman who has entered into marriage with you and shove her out of the house, you make her an adulteress in the sense that you have forced her to break her vow. So that's the idea. It is not the specifics of marriage.

It is, are you putting someone in an impossible position where they cannot in good faith keep their commitments? And it could be anything. It doesn't have to just be divorce. Now, the third one in verses 33 through 37.

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. Now, this is not one of the 10 commandments, but this is mentioned several times in the law and we'll see the passages in just a moment. You've heard it said, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.

I say to you, do not swear at all. Neither, and when it says don't swear, it doesn't mean don't make any promises. It means don't guarantee your commitment with an oath.

I swear by heaven or I swear by God's throne or by God, I will do thus and so. As soon as you say, as soon as you invoke something, you're piling on, you're adding something to your commitment. And Jesus says, don't add anything to your commitments.

Don't swear by heaven, that's God's throne. It's not your throne. You're invoking some sort of divine authorization, power, guarantee.

You're kind of implicating God to co-sign your note, as it were. Don't make God a co-signer on your promise. The commitment that you make, don't say, and God's with me on this also.

Swearing by heaven is God's throne, by earth, that's God's footstool, nor by Jerusalem, it is the city of the great king. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you don't have any control over your head to turn one hair white or black. Let your yea be yea, it says in the King James.

Let your yes be yes, and your no, no. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. Your word should be good.

Now, what is he harking back to here when he says, it has been, again, you have heard that it was said. And by the way, the reason this is number three, the adultery in the heart and the divorce, 27 through 32 is all one thing. And you notice he says in verse 31, furthermore, it has been said, but I say to you, that is of a piece with adultery because it's furthermore.

And it's all talking about adultery. You've heard it said, don't commit adultery. And it concludes in verse 32, you're causing her to commit adultery.

It's all under the adultery rubric here. So that's why 27 through 32 is one unit. Because he says, you've heard these things said about marriage and adultery.

There is no adultery without marriage. If there's promiscuity going on without marriage, that's fornication, it's a different category. Adultery is always covenant breaking.

You've made a commitment. So our third one here is swearing falsely. Keep your finger here and turn back to Leviticus chapter 19, verse 12.

Leviticus 19. This is in a section that really begins in verse 11. This is Leviticus 19, 12.

In verse 11, you shall not steal nor deal falsely nor lie to one another. The immediate context here is don't defraud. Don't cost your brother, your neighbor something.

Don't cheat, don't lie, don't deceive. Don't beat your neighbor, your brother out of something. And you shall not swear by my name falsely nor shall you profane the name of your God.

I am the Lord. And Jesus is basically saying it's the second half of that that counts. Not only should you not swear by my name falsely, you shouldn't profane God's name by swearing with it at all.

And this doesn't mean, this is not talking about using God's name or the name of Jesus as a swear word. That does profane God's name, but it's in a different way. This is costing your brother something.

And you guarantee your fraud or your deceit by invoking God's name. He says, don't profane the name of the Lord your God at all. You shall not cheat your neighbor nor rob him.

The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. If you contract with a guy, remember Jesus tells a story about the laborers in the vineyard. He hires some in the morning and contracts with them for a denarius, a day's wage.

Others he hires at midday and others at the end. And some of them only worked the last hour of the day. And then when they come to settle up, each of them gets a denarius.

And the guys that worked all day say, hey, wait a minute, that's not fair. Well, the wages in that parable are paid at the end of the workday. It's not do the work and I'll pay you later.

And the idea is kind of like we saw in the first section here, you owe something, but you haven't paid it. And if the guy says, hey, I've finished my work. Where's my pay? And you say, I'll give it to you tomorrow.

You're defrauding him. God says, if he's finished the work, pay him right then. Cash on the barrel head.

Don't owe him wages even overnight. Oh, I'll gladly repay you on Tuesday. Wimpy used to say, no, he's finished the work, pay him now.

And if he comes and asks for it, don't get angry with him. That was our first example. So the idea here, notice that this is not just any old swearing.

This is swearing that costs your brother. You've made an oath and you've invoked God to guarantee it. And it was false, deceitful.

It's a cheat. It leaves your brother short in some way. And he says, don't leave your brother short.

Don't owe anything. Don't maintain a debt to your brother that you can pay. That's the idea.

And again, you remember when in the first example, Jesus said, if you're angry with your brother, instead of settling with your brother and being square and fair with your brother, that's the crime. And that's going to interfere. Don't bring a gift to God when you're not fair and square with your brother.

Same thing here. If you're making oaths to your brother, your God is involved here. Your relationship with God is on the line.

If you're swearing, you're implicating God's throne. You're implicating God's footstool.

You're implicating God's city.

These things belong to God. And you need to be looking at your dealings with each other from the perspective of God's oversight and God's awareness and who God is to you and who you are before God. Don't say, well, my spiritual life is over here and my getting along in the world is over here.

And everybody cheats, everybody lies. They used to say in Russia, lying was such a way of life that people just expected it. You weren't expected to tell the truth.

And nobody assumed that when you told them something, you were telling the truth. And there's elements of the Arab culture where you will say a thing, but everybody knows it's just a formality. They're not actually expecting you to keep your word.

And this is an ancient Middle Eastern thought, just like hospitality and some other things, patriarchal society, daughters being transferred from fathers to husbands. There's a lot of these forms and societal norms and expectations that are a part of that culture. Well, there was a culture of, well, dealing with my brother, I don't really have to tell him the truth.

He knows that I'm just negotiating here and I'm saying something I may not necessarily mean. I only mean it if I invoke the name of God or I can fool him into thinking I mean it if I put some big oath on it. And, oh no, no, I really mean it.

But you're still defrauding him and you're still cheating and you're still not planning to pay him. And Jesus says, you've got to look at your dealings with each other before God. And what you say implicates God because you belong to God.

Don't be implicating his throne or his footstool or his city. Your yes ought to be good enough because you're a child of God. And when you say a thing, that is all the same as if the throne and the footstool and the city and God himself were all involved because you represent God.

You're his child. You're in his family. You are part of the body of Christ in our case.

And your word ought to be as good as the most manifestly serious oath you could take. Let your yes be yes and your no, no. Whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

Why are you having to say more than I will do it or I will not do it? Because of evil. Well, now we come to number four here, which is 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.

Now you think, gracious sakes, what if somebody comes up and says, hey, Sam, I like that F-250 truck you've got. Let me have it. And well, Jesus said, give to him who asks you.

So I'm supposed to just hand him the keys and say, have fun. Some guy says, I really like your house. There's a whole neighborhoods of houses that have gone upside down and people have had to move out because they couldn't afford the thing and let it go back to the bank.

And then other people just move in and they're just living in a house that doesn't belong to them. And we're just supposed to let them. Somebody moves into your house while you're away on vacation and you, oh, well, if you want my house, fine.

Give to him who asks you. What is the context here? When he says, do not resist an evil person. Does this mean if you're held up, don't resist? If you're coerced or blackmailed or forced into something, just be submissive, pacifist, do no harm, give anything to anybody when they ask.

Is that what he's talking about? What is the context here? What is the seriousness of the request and what is the seriousness of the evil? The evil here is someone slapping you on the cheek, right? He didn't say if someone comes and chops your right hand off, offer him the left also. This is a slap on the cheek. How costly is it to you that somebody, and again, these are all metaphorical.

So what does it mean to be slapped on the cheek? This was an insult in the ancient world, right? Now they say, use your words, but somebody isn't using words. They want to demean you. They want to humiliate you in public.

They want to teach you a lesson. So they slap you on the cheek. This is absorbing a personal insult.

This is not letting your wife be dragged behind the bushes to be raped and your children kidnapped and pressed into slavery in another country, right? This is a slap on the face. This is the level of back and forth that we're talking about. This is not giving away your car or your house.

This is not doing something at the expense of your obligations to your family or to your creditors or anybody else. This evil person is slapping. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic.

Now, if anyone wants to sue you and they're suing you for your tunic, they haven't just come up to the door and say, hey, have you got a good coat? You say, oh yeah, I've got two. Here, take them both. And you're freezing in the winter.

If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, why a suit? Why a lawsuit? Why taking it before the council? Because you are in fact in the wrong. If they try to bring a frivolous suit in Israel, it's not gonna be considered, right? Hey, Sam's got three coats hanging in his closet and I want them. I'm gonna sue him for those coats.

What would any court say? You got no grounds. If anyone is suing you, they have grounds, right? We're back to the first case that Jesus talked about. You're angry with your brother because he's got a case against you and you don't wanna settle it.

You wanna be mad at him for asking when you are at fault. Well here, why would somebody wanna sue you for a tunic? Because you owe him. You are at fault.

You are in debt. Now, Israelites in the law were not allowed to charge each other interest that were in that near context that we were reading over there in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy, that says you will not charge your brother interest if you make him alone. So if you borrowed his tunic or his wife made you a tunic and you haven't paid for it, then he's wanting to sue you for that tunic.

Jesus says he's not allowed to charge you interest on a loan because you are fellow Israelites. This, by the way, was the big gripe against tax collectors because they were charging you serious interest and it was against the law of Moses. But because they were routing it through the Romans, they were skirting the spirit of the law with the letter.

Well, this is a Roman debt and Romans are allowed to charge. I'm just an agent on behalf of the Romans. So I can charge interest.

But Israelite to Israelite, there was to be no interest. But Jesus says, if you owe the guy the tunic and he's been inconvenienced enough that he's ready to take you to court, which means you've been deleterious and slow and have been delaying and paying back, you have inconvenienced your neighbor with this debt. And he says, well, I'm gonna have to take you to court to get this tunic.

Give him not only the tunic, but give him something else and say, here's what I owe you and here's something for your trouble. I should have never been this long. I should have never been this late.

I should never put you to this trouble. Here is it and here's something on top of it. You see the point here? It's not any old evil person.

It's not any old turning the cheek. Why would somebody be slapping your cheek? Does somebody just walk up to somebody else and just slap their cheek? Why would somebody be slapping you in the first place? You probably mouthed off. You probably said something that deserved a slap.

And Jesus says in the same way that if you owe a debt, you should pay the debt back. And then some, if you have inconvenienced this person to the point of taking you to court, well, if you have aggravated somebody to the point that they slap your face, let them have a little more recompense. I deserve that and I probably deserve a little more.

So if they're gonna verbally slap you in the face, let them finish. Let them go ahead and say their piece. Give them their satisfaction when you've wronged them.

What is the law for? By the law comes the knowledge of sin. This is not improper use of the law. This is the proper use of the law to demonstrate that you're in the wrong.

And you have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Jesus says, I'm saying overcompensate. You're the one that has taken the eye and you owe an eye in return.

You're the one that has broken a tooth and you deserve to have a tooth taken from you, right? This, you are convicted by the law. Jesus says the simple tit for tat and eye for an eye thing, if you understand the spirit of the law and you recognize that you're in the wrong, you will overcompensate. If you deserve a slap in the face, let them have two.

Let them slap the other side. If you owe them a tunic, let them have a tunic and a cloak. Don't think that you satisfied the requirement of the law just by the simple payment.

You need to have the attitude of confession, acknowledgement and change of mind that is at the heart of recognizing sin. If I recognize sin, I don't get angry and say it's somebody else's fault. I acknowledge it and then I make good.

And then some. Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him too. And they keep talking about, you know, Romans that had the right to make a Israelite carry their pack for one mile, go with them too.

Why are the Israelites under Roman law? Why are there Roman soldiers that can compel them to carry a pack one mile? Why? Why isn't there a Davidic king on the throne of Israel? Why are they oppressed? Why are they under the fifth cycle of discipline as it has been called, where God has expended all previous measures trying to get his people to turn and they didn't. And so they finally lost their land and lost their sovereignty and lost their king. That's why there are Romans.

So do they owe the Romans servitude? Yes, they do. At God's judgment, it is God's sentence upon them that they be under Roman rule. That's God's decree.

So acknowledge that your nation is rightfully under Roman government, instead of trying to throw off the Roman government and rebel against it and be the Sicari and the Zealots and all the rest of these guys. Acknowledge we nationally, remember Daniel, spending a whole chapter in his book, confessing national sin. We have sinned.

You should have the attitude that I am an Israelite and corporately we have sinned against God and we are rightfully under the thumb of the Romans. And if a part of that is carrying a Roman guy's pack, I will acknowledge my part in that guilt and my need for atonement, but I'll carry the thing two miles. You're right.

We are rightfully under judgment and it is looking to God. Give to him who asks you and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away. And this is within limits.

This is not every guy with a cardboard side hand him a 20 out the window. This is not everybody, but what is the spirit involved here? If you can, without failing your other obligations to your own family, to your own people that you owe things to, if you have some that you can give, give it. If you have something that you can lend, lend it.

Don't be stingy. Don't be self centered. Don't be selfish.

Finally, the last one, 43 through 48. This is number five. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

And notice if you've got your Bible laid out like mine, quotes from the old Testament are in italics and stuff that's not in the old Testament is not in italics. Well, you shall love your neighbor. That's a quote from the law.

But hate your enemy is an addition. It doesn't say love your neighbor and hate your enemy in scripture. And that's not in italics in mine.

This is the Lord's response. 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 son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Tax collectors can do that. And one of our former pastors and teachers in earlier days summed this up very succinctly by saying anything an unbeliever can do is not the Christian way of life. Man had a gift for distilling truth.

Anything an unbeliever can do is not the Christian way of life. If you only love your friends and despise your enemies, where's the spiritual dynamic in that? Where's the glory of God and the power of God in your life when you're doing exactly what any rank atheist could do? If you greet your brethren only or your friends, not a lot of difference there, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do so. And the original there I think is the Gentiles.

He's already addressed tax collectors in 46. Therefore you shall be perfect just as your father in heaven is perfect. And this is perfect in the sense of mature, complete.

Fully righteous. Doesn't mean sinless perfection. It means operational maturity.

You don't need a system of rules. Your heart and your spirit are oriented in such a way that you are gonna do what is right. Let me ask you this.

He says, be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect. What written guidelines does God follow when he is expressing his righteousness? Is there a heavenly Torah? Is there a heavenly 10 commandment table hanging on God's throne room wall? Why is God always righteous? Is he reading it somewhere and following a guideline? Why is God perfect? He's not reading it in a book and following a set of instructions, guidelines, procedures, regulations, precepts, statutes. Why does he do righteousness all the time? Because he is inherently and intrinsically righteous.

Be inherently and intrinsically righteous. Be characteristically loving. As a part of your integrity, look out for the interests of others because that's what God does.

God acts out of a perfect nature and we should be acting out of a perfected nature. When we partake of God's thinking and God's attitudes, we will act as God acts. We will be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect.

And it is recognizing and fulfilling the spirit behind these specific regulations and expressions that inevitably fall short and they have to be used as metaphors and as symbols and as conveyances of a deeper truth. Get the truth. That's what your father in heaven acts out of.

That's what you should act out of. The letter of the law kills. The spirit gives life.

That's Jesus' idea. So this is not a replacement of the law. It's not even a reinterpretation of the law.

It is an explanation of the law. It is a teaching of the purpose of the law and how to fulfill that purpose. It isn't taking away the law.

It isn't. Jesus said, if anybody takes anything away from this law, he's gonna be in big trouble. Well, he's certainly not gonna do that right after condemning somebody else doing it.

He says, you should do with the law what I'm showing you in these examples. Once you recognize the spirit of it, you can exceed it. You don't just pay with a tunic, it's a tunic and a cloak.

You don't pay with one mile, you pay with two. Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, because it's coming from the heart and it recognizes the principle and the truth behind it. If your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's not even a matter of being leased. You won't even be there. Well, it's a wonderful passage for reflection and taking to heart and seeing how we can be perfect as our father in heaven is perfect.

Act out of a perfected nature, act out of love for God and love for one another, reconciling with one another before we attempt to approach God himself with unresolved conflict that is our fault. That's the essence of this section. Well, we'll pick up in chapter six next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the beautiful clarity and simplicity and power of the truths that are presented here in this portion of your word. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister them to our hearts, help us to remain aware of them as we re-engage in the conversations and the circumstances and the details of our lives that we can be objective about ourselves and be true sons reflecting your glory as we live out the days that have been allotted to us in this life.

We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified. We ask these things in his name. Amen.