

Matthew 22-01-09b

We're ready to continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 23. The Lord Jesus is addressing the crowds who are under the sway of the scribes and pharisees for their religious leadership. And Jesus says, they have sat down in Moses' seat, therefore whatever they say, do, and keep guarding.

But according to their works, stop doing, for they say and do not do. They preach the law, they do not follow the law. And not just the regulations, they're scrupulous about regulations.

This is not what Jesus is talking about. The, it would be a puzzlement if someone accused the Pharisees of not scrupulously keeping the law. Remember how they were tithing the spices in their cabinet and looking at the law for how their clothing should look and what kind of accouterments they should have in their clothing, on the doorframes of their houses and so on.

They're very scrupulous. What does Jesus mean when he says they say, but they do not? Is he saying they're not keeping all of these fastidious rules? Not at all. This is where the preceding context, context, context is so important.

The message of the law, the essence of the law is genuine love for God with everything you've got and loving one's neighbor. I would hasten to add just because of a recent developments in the Christian world and our recent study, he does not say love the Lord, your God and love your enemy as yourself. There is a big emphasis on enemy love these days.

And this is a misappropriation. It is a disregard of context. The essence of scripture, old Testament and new is unchanged.

Just as we recognize that the principles embodied in the 10 commandments are essentially timeless. They apply everywhere. It's never a good thing to murder.

It's never a good thing to put something in front of God instead of God. It's never a good idea to manufacture what you think is God and it's not an image. It's never a good idea to claim his name, speak in his name, use his name for empty purposes.

It is never a good idea to dishonor your parents. It is never a good idea to fail to set aside time, dedicated time for the worship of God. This is the Sabbath law.

Never, never write to murder, never write to commit adultery, never write to covet, et cetera. These things are timeless. The essence of the law is timeless.

It is always incumbent upon the people of God from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, love the Lord your God with everything you've got and love your neighbor, neighbor, someone

who is close at hand, someone with whom you have contact, some form of relationship or common experience and you have enough observation to deal with them intelligently. Jesus did not say if your brother has ought against you, go and be reconciled to him. And if he will not take a few more and see if that will work.

And if that doesn't work, then take it before the assembly. And if that doesn't work, well then go back and visit him again and then take some more people and just keep loving him and loving him and loving him until he eventually comes around. Jesus said, if he's got something against you, you try to be reconciled.

If he will not be reconciled, put distance between you. This is the heathen and tax collector policy. I don't associate, I don't socialize with active abusers of the law of Moses that said, do not charge usury against your brothers and the tax collectors were doing so.

There were tax collectors who stopped doing that when they met the Lord Jesus. Our author is one of them. Matthew, Levi, he's one of them.

Zacchaeus is another. Met the Lord and said, I see the error of my ways. You remember Zacchaeus, if I've defrauded anyone, I'll restore it fourfold.

I'm out of that game. I have met the Lord. Change of mind qualifies us for God's grace, for the full expression of God's love.

Rejection, negative attitude, doesn't change the fact that God loves, but his love now takes a different form. It's going to be expressed in judgment because God loves everyone else around us. And if we are the problem, God will have to do something about us on behalf of those who have responded to his love with love, who are reflecting God's love back to him.

And it is unloving to leave evil and sin, harm, cruelty, criminal behavior, unaddressed. A God who will not stop that on behalf of those he loves and those who love him is not truly a loving God. The part of love is to act on behalf of those you love and to render justice.

Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord. This is a comfort for all of those who have been on the wrong end of situations where sin and evil are being expressed by people.

Actually, there is no right end of that, whether you're the perpetrator or the perpetratee. But if God does not intervene to judge and remove sin and evil, he's not really a loving God any more than if you had a child who was getting bullied on the school bus every day and coming home with black eyes and bloody noses and chipped teeth. And you keep putting the child on that same bus because it's convenient for you to get to work and not have to drop off your child or pick them up after school and so on.

Do you really love your child when you do not act when they are abused, persecuted, and so on? But people who only want to emphasize God's love and refuse to acknowledge his judgment do not know him. And this is the problem with the scribes and the Pharisees. Remember, Jesus said, you err not knowing the scriptures or the power of God.

You don't really know the scriptures. These are people who pride themselves on the scriptures. And he says, you say them, but you don't know them.

Therefore, you don't do them. So, the doctrine of the Pharisees and the scribes, Jesus says, don't follow that. If you're doing it, stop doing it.

Why did they not do? This is getting at the heart of the matter. What is the reason? How could you read the scriptures? How could you look at them? And these are the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus says, remember John 5:39, I think it is, Jesus says, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have life.

These scriptures, these Old Testament law, prophets and writings testify of me. They picture Jesus Christ. So, to say those scriptures, but not take them to heart, not apply them, not think through them, not come to the place of love for God.

Isn't it something Jesus says, if you understand the Old Testament scriptures, you will love God. If you do not understand them, if you do not do them, if you do not apply them, you're not going to love God. How do I know this? Because of what Jesus says in John 6, flip over to John 6. I, as I said in the first session, am scared to death of this kind of blindness, where I think I'm in the word of God.

I think I'm knowing it and practicing it and living it out in my life. I'm making long prayers. I'm claiming the name of the Lord and saying it and so on.

And I am blindly hypocritical. This should scare all of us to death. I want to find out where did these guys go wrong? How did this happen? What is the problem? For crying out loud, you know more about the law than anybody.

If the scriptures are alive and powerful, why have they not changed these men's hearts? And I can ask myself the same question. If I've been in the word of God so much for so long, have I derived so little that my heart is not really changed? And I'm oblivious. I tell myself all as well.

That's what these men did. It scares me, shakes me to my very core, and it should drive us to our knees asking and seeking and knocking. Psalm 51, search me, O God, know my heart.

Try me. See if there be any wicked way in me. Purge me with hyssop so that I shall be clean.

Wash me, make me whiter than snow. Because if I've got this kind of problem, my sin is fundamentally against God himself, against thee and thee only have I sinned. That's the root cause.

Everything flows out of that. How did this happen? John chapter six. Look at verse 29.

The work of God, if you're going to do what God wants you to do, the work of God is to believe in him whom he sent. Why did the scribes and Pharisees not do? Fundamentally, they do not believe the words they are saying. Their problem started with disbelief of the Old Testament scriptures.

Experts in the law don't actually believe the law. And because they don't believe the law, they don't believe in the fullest expression of the law, the outworking of the law, the son of God himself. So they want to sign in verse 30.

Without faith, without belief, there can be no love. Remember the triad of Christian virtues? We've seen it so many times. Faith, hope, and love.

The greatest of these is love. Why? First Corinthians 13. Why? Because if love is active, if love is being expressed, it presupposes the healthy function and existence of faith and hope.

Faith is the means. Hope is the motivation. Love is the result.

If either one of those is missing, it's like the definition of a triangle. Think about a triangle. It's got three sides and it's got three corners, right? If you take any corner away, if you take any side away, it is no longer a triangle.

And you do not have Christian virtue. You cannot have anything less than all three. We must have faith.

We must have hope. We must have love. You can't have love without faith and hope.

You can't have faith and not have it outwork itself in love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. So look back at John chapter five and verse 38.

Just flip back a page. You do not have his word abiding in you, Jesus says to the scribes and the Pharisees. You do not have his word abiding in you because whom he sent you do not believe.

They say and they do not do. The word does not abide in them. So when God appears, they don't recognize him.

They do the opposite. They attack him. They are his opponents.

They are his enemies. Why? The word does not abide. So I ask myself the question.

I'm regularly in my Bible. I'm looking at verses. I'm examining context.

I'm trying to stay in the Old Testament and in the New Testament and so on. The question is when I close the book, when I turn off my laptop and I go out to live life, have I looked into the law of liberty and I remember what it said? It's like a mirror. I see myself.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin. The gospel is here. The good news of deliverance from my nature, from the inward and outward influences that want to drag me down and away from God.

Do I remember who I am and why I'm here? After I say the word, do I stand up, enter into life with all of its majors and minors, its ups, its downs, its challenges, its blessings, its opportunities, its disabilities, things I want to do, I can't do, things I don't want to do, I end up doing. All of these permutations is the word still there. Is it reminding me? Does the truth live in my heart? Jesus is the truth.

If the truth lives in me and I believe it and by believing it I act on it, it factors into my decisions, the outworking of that is going to be love. Pharisees do not love. They are not doing, they are not fulfilling the two great summary expressions of the law because they do not believe.

So what is belief? Looking at the words on the page, listening to the expression of these Old Testament truths and taking them to heart. What is the fundamental message of the law? Now the summary of the law in terms of its exhortation is love the Lord your God, love one another, right? What do I learn from the law? If I am going to follow the law, I need to love God and love my neighbor. But what do I learn from the law? What does Paul say in Romans chapter 3 verse 20? By the law comes what? Knowledge of sin.

We have a natural disaffection for criticism. We don't like to hear that we said something wrong, did something wrong, didn't do right, didn't do the best. We just recoil against criticism.

We recoil against fault in us being pointed out. It's instinctively we want to get away from that. It's uncomfortable.

Romans chapter 3 verse 20. By the law comes the knowledge of sin. Why would someone want to dismiss the Old Testament scriptures? I ask myself.

I don't want to hear about my sinfulness. What does Romans 3 23 say? Three verses after Romans 3 20. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, right? All have sinned.

By the law comes that knowledge. What kind of attitude do we have when we are convicted of sin? What is the first and foremost message the Holy Spirit brings into the

world when Jesus sends him? He will convince the world of what? Love. The Holy Spirit is going to come and convince the world of love and brotherhood and kindness and wooing everyone into the peaceable kingdom.

Sorry, no. When the Holy Spirit comes, he is another comforter. Oddly enough, the message of the comforter is sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Why does the Holy Spirit convict the world of sin? What did Jesus say? We better turn over there and you're already in John 6. Just turn over to John 14 15. John 14 15. If you love me, keep my commandments.

I will pray the father and he will give you another helper that he may abide with you forever. The spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans.

I will come to you in the person of the Holy Spirit. Verse 23. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.

My father will love him. We will come to him and make our home with him. Believing the word, what's the indictment? Scribes and Pharisees, they say and do not do the expression of love, the fulfillment of the old Testament mandate.

Love me. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My father will love him.

We will come to him, make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words. The word which you hear is not mine, but the father's who sent me.

I've spoken these things while I'm present. Verse 26, the helper, the Holy spirit, whom the father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance. All the things that I said to you look at chapter 15, verse 26, when the helper comes whom I shall send to you from the father, the spirit of truth who proceeds from the father, he will testify of me.

And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. You're not going to have an easy time. I've spoken these things to you that you should not be made to stumble.

Chapter 16, verse one, they're going to put you out of the synagogues, out of the assemblies of alleged believers. The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God a service. Whoever kills you, remember what Jesus said about, you have heard it said, you shall not murder.

But I say to you, you can murder your brother with words, with criticism, thou fool. Remember that whoever says to his brother, will be in danger of hellfire. These things

they will do to you because they have not known the father or me.

There are those who argue today that all you need to know is Jesus. He and the father are one. Why does Jesus distinguish the two? They've not known the father or me.

These things I've told you that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning because I was with you, but now I go away to him who sent me. And none of you asks me, where are you going? This is a really great passage.

You may remember when we did the gospel of John, Jesus has been asked twice, where are you going? And there is an allegation. I think Bart Ehrman makes this allegation and others that this must be some kind of pastiche because in one place, Thomas asks Jesus, where are you going? Remember John 14, five, I think it is where Thomas said, Lord, we do not know where you are going and how can we know the way? And he's been, he's been asked twice, where are you going? How can you go somewhere where we cannot follow? And so on now, Jesus says, none of you asks me, where are you going? This, this is such a wonderful gentle remark by the Lord Jesus, because when he's talking about, I go to prepare a place for you, it's going to be wonderful. It's in the heavenly realms.

Well, where are you going? How, how can we get there? What is the way Jesus says? I'm the way when he's saying wonderful things, they want to know, well, where are you going? And that we can, we can come and be there. But when he says there's going to be persecution and hardship, and they're going to put you out of the synagogues and whoever kills you will think he's doing God's service. I've, I've told you these things now.

I didn't tell you at the beginning. And he says, how come nobody's asking me now, where, where am I going? You're now you're all, you're no longer concerned about me and where I'm going. You're concerned about yourself and where you're going.

When the, when the issue of hardship comes up, we get very subjective and we're no longer thinking, but Lord, you're going to go away. We're thinking, wow, do I need to sell my coat and get a sword or what? But, uh, look at verse 13 of chapter 16, when he, the spirit of truth has come the emphasis on God, the Holy spirit, the night before the Lord Jesus is crucified, he is emphasizing to his disciples, the essential presence and power of the Holy spirit for them. They cannot do without it.

This is how you produce the fruit of the spirit, which is love. This only happens when sin has been dealt with. There is no love in the presence of sin.

Sin must be judged. Sin must be eliminated so that love can blossom so that love can produce its work. Verse 13, he, the Holy spirit of truth has come.

He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own. Whatever he hears, he will speak.

He will tell you things to come. He will glorify me. He will take of the things of mine and declare them to you.

All things that the father has are mine. Therefore, I said that he will take of mine and declare it to you. He's going to take the things of the father, which are the things of the son, and he is going to declare them to you.

So the, the condemnation, the convincing sin has to be acknowledged. Why do the Pharisees not believe? Remember what Jesus said in John chapter nine, uh, are we blind also when he heals the blind man, Jesus said, if you were blind, you would have no sin. If you acknowledged your blindness, your sin could be removed.

But because you say, we see your sin remains unacknowledged sin and unrepentant heart cannot express faith toward God. Remember in Hebrews, not laying again, the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith change of mind away from works pertaining to death, sinful works, human ideas of what is good, repent, change of mind away from those things and trusting God, no faith in the presence of sin. So this is back to my question now in Matthew 23, where did these scribes and Pharisees go wrong? They're way down the road now, but what was the pebble that diverted the stream down the other side of the mountain? So that what ought to be a verdant vineyard producing fruit to God is a barren wasteland desert, bearing only thorns and briars fit for burning near to a curse.

How did that happen? They did not take to heart the old Testament scriptures. I cannot emphasize this enough. There is a huge movement.

It's been going on for some decades now in the church to diminish the old Testament. We don't need it. We're new Testament people.

All we need is Jesus. All we need is love. This harsh picture in the old Testament, these drastic measures and massive judgments that you see, whether it's the flood or the Canaanites or the other heinous instances where it seems that women and children are being killed and so on.

This is not God. This is not love. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

Why these harsh judgments? Play chess by thinking apply or two further ahead instead of saying, well, if I move here, I can take a piece. I can move my pawn up here and I'll capture his queen. And you don't look at the fact that you can lose the game by an incautious move that way because you're not thinking further into the situation.

Oh, women and children dying bad, not God, not scripture. Goodbye. Old Testament.

I like Jesus child on his lap. Never oppressed a woman. Never started a war.

The gentle Jesus love. He says, love one another. Love sums up the old Testament.

So I'm going to skip the old Testament and just go straight to love. You can't do that. You cannot get to love without acknowledging sin and coming to faith.

Change of mind away from dead works and faith. This is the step the scribes and Pharisees skipped. I will tell you even weeping that those today who are enemies of the cross, who attack the atonement, who attack the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the fullest expression of God's love.

As Abraham expressed his love for God by putting his son Isaac on the altar and his faith in God that because God had promised that in Isaac, his seed would be called. Isaac cannot die. He cannot stay dead.

If he dies, he's going to have to be resurrected because God has promised the faith of Abraham was credited to him for righteousness. What a powerful faith. So this is the, this is the, this is the problem.

This is where the scribes and Pharisees went astray. It isn't an exhortation from Jesus. You need to love more scribes and Pharisees.

It's you sit in Moses seat and you're reading the law, but you're not taking it to heart. You do not believe it. Turn to John chapter five.

If you're still in John six, you can just go back a page. John chapter five, John five 38. God's word does not abide in you because whom he sent.

You do not believe. Look at verse 42. I know you, you do not have the love of God in you.

I've come in my father's name and you do not receive me. Verse 44. How can you believe when you're receiving honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God.

Do not think that I shall accuse you. Verse 45 to the father. There is an accuser of you, Moses, in whom you trust.

What is the accusation for Moses? Sin in the camp. You cannot progress if there is unacknowledged sin. Moses accuses you by the law comes the knowledge of sin, recognizing sin, seeking forgiveness, cleansing, having a change of mind away from those works of death.

This is what moves us in the direction of eternal life. Verse 46, John five 46. Put a star next to it.

If you believed Moses, you would believe me for. He wrote about me. You want to know Jesus.

You want to follow Jesus. You want to enter into the love of Jesus. Learn Moses.

Jesus says, but if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? And this is the slippery slope that we've seen in recent weeks. If you throw out the old Testament, if you disbelieve Moses, how can you believe Jesus sooner or later? You're going to see the reflections of God's righteousness and God's judgment, God's abhorrence of sin and the need for it to be removed and judged in the words of Jesus. And if you do not believe.

That conviction of sin and righteousness and judgment is necessary coming from the Holy Spirit that Jesus is going to send in his place so that we can have his word so that we can love him so that he and the father can come and abide with us. This necessary conviction of sin must happen to diminish the importance of sin, the effect of sin, the pervasive yeast like nature, the leavening, metastasizing, corrupting presence of sin to minimize that and try to go straight to the love. If you do not believe Moses, how can you believe Jesus? You're going to have to start getting the scissors out and tripping, trimming more and more of scripture away.

Look at the end of revelation for what happens to those who start chopping up the word. Anyone takes away from the words of this prophecy, God will take away his portion from those blessings that are promised. You can't get to the blessings if you disregard the necessary judgment on sin.

There just is no way. First Corinthians 15:34, Paul makes this very same point, awake to righteousness and do not sin for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame, awake to righteousness and stop sinning.

Some do not have the knowledge of God. The knowledge of God teaches us to have a change of mind about sin. Sin is the issue.

You cannot awake to righteousness so long as you continue in sin. I speak this to your shame, Paul says. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 26.

We'll close with this. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 26. If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

What is the only true sacrifice for sins? Does the blood of goats and bulls take away sins? Does the law of Moses with its ritual sacrifices, the lamb in the morning, the lamb in the evening, the whole burnt offering, the wave offerings, the heave offerings, the trespass offerings, the offerings on the feast days, and so on. Did any of these sacrifices take away sin? They did not. They were symbolic.

They were expressions. What is the sacrifice that takes away sin? The Lord Jesus Christ. You may remember first John 1:9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we walk in the light as He, God is in the light, we have fellowship with Him and He with us, community, presence, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His son keeps on cleansing us from all sin. If we walk in the light, if we don't walk in the light, the author of Hebrews says, verse 26 of chapter 10, if we sin willfully after we've received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin. If we sin willfully, the blood of Christ no longer cleanses.

Jesus' sacrifice doesn't have an effect in our lives if we sin willfully, knowing better. Knowledge of the truth. This is the Pharisees problem.

They have a knowledge of the truth, but they sin willfully. A certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation. I like this translation.

I'm not sure which one it is. If we deliberately go on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins remains, only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume all adversaries. Anyone who rejected Moses' law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified? This is believers who no longer have access to Christ's sacrifice for cleansing and forgiveness because of willful sin. Sin is the problem. You can't get to love until sin is addressed.

If you count the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and insult the spirit of grace, this is a church age problem. The spirit is here. He is convicting of sin and you insult him by saying he's not right.

His words don't matter. We know him who says vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

And again, the Lord will judge his people. This is believers. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And so on. This is where the scribes and Pharisees went wrong. We need to be actively seeking God's cleansing grace, God's transforming power.

We need our minds renewed. We need our hearts cleansed and purged. We need the power of God within us, and it requires humility, teachability to let ourselves be examined, to look at ourselves and see if we are in the faith.

Let the word of God cut to the quick, cut to the heart, expose the thoughts and intents that we have. Are we excusing ourselves? Are we rationalizing? Are we being hypocritical? Are we saying one thing and doing another? This is the problem. If you see anyone walking the broad road, heading for the wide gate to destruction, this is the

problem.

You cannot walk the narrow road. You can't even see the straight gate, blinded by sin, blinded by self-interest, self-gratification, hypocrisy, going with traditions instead of the truth of God, self-congratulation, mutual admiration, society congratulating one another. This is the road to destruction.

This is those who will stand outside the door and say, Lord, Lord, in your name, dot, dot, dot. And Jesus is going to say, depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Why are they workers of iniquity? It's unforgiven sin.

It still clings to them. It's the dirty robes that the priest Joshua was wearing in Zechariah. And they've never been exchanged.

They've never been washed and made white in the blood of the lamb. And they're believers. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

I never knew you and you never knew me because you didn't know my father, because you didn't pay attention to the Old Testament scriptures that speak of Christ. Tragic. Tragic.

We can't make this mistake. Pray for those who are being deceived. Pray for fellow believers.

As Paul says, I tell you, even weeping, they're enemies of the cross. They're cut off from Christ. They've fallen from grace.

We're saved by grace, not through love, through faith. Change of mind about sin, faith toward God. The triad of Christian virtues kicks in in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the presence and power of the Word of God.

That's the sequence and you cannot skip any part. Take one side away. You haven't got the triangle.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful provision you have made for us through Christ. We think about the wonderful expressions of your provision that we saw in Ephesians chapter 1, that menorah of wonderful blessing that we have in Christ, in him we have redemption, in him we have opportunity, in him we are foreknown, and in him we are destined for so many wonderful things.

We thank you for the perfection of your plan and your ability to weave us into it despite our imperfection. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, your Holy Spirit will help us to see their pertinence, that having our souls exposed to the light of your word, we will find and extract and eliminate those things that hinder us, that trip us up and keep us from fulfilling all of the potential the Lord Jesus died to give us. We pray these things in

his name.

Amen.