

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:17 -19** – Jesus said **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”** What does this mean to you?

**Barbara Brown Taylor**(1951 - ) said “God expects us to step up. Knowing God’s word is no substitute for doing it.” What is she saying?

**Jen Wilkin** (1969 - ) “Celebratory Failurism” says believers cannot obey the Law and will fail at every attempt. What does this mean? “He (Jesus) called for obedience in motive as well as in deed.” How does this change the Law?

**Addison Hodges Hart** ( 1956 - ) said “He (Jesus) is reinforcing the most pure objective of the Law...” What are some examples?

**Jurgen Moltmann** (1926 - ) said “God is the creator and lover of life, and he gives no commandments that cannot be fulfilled.” He is saying it is possible to live by God’s Law through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit give us this power?

**Matthew 5:20** - Jesus says: **“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”** What does this mean to you?

**Leo Tolstoy** (1828-1919) was a Russian novelist, pacifist, and reformer. He wrote “War and Peace” as well as other novels.

Tolstoy says “there are two ways for moral guidance in the case of a man who is seeking the truth.”

1. “The way of external definitions, of rules: man is given definite tokens of acts which he must perform and which not.” “Observe the Sabbath, be circumcised, do not steal, drink no intoxicating drink, kill no living being, give the tithe to the poor, make your ablutions, and pray five times a day,” and so forth – such are the injunctions of external religious teachings – of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, Muslim, Hebrew, and the ecclesiastic falsely call Christian.” What is Tolstoy telling us? What is it like to live in this manner of rule following and good deed doing? How does it make one feel?
2. The way of acceptance of “unattainable perfection”: “Love God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.” “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” Such is the teaching of Jesus.” In the mind of Jesus, what is perfect? How are we do go about striving for a perfect and fulfilled life?

“A man who professes an external law is a man who is standing in the light of a lamp which is attached to a post.” What is Tolstoy saying here? How does this differ from what we know about the teachings of Jesus and light?

“In this consists the difference between the teaching of Christ and all other religious teachings, a difference consisting not in the difference of demands, but in the difference of the way of guiding people.”

What is Tolstoy saying is the difference between religion and the teachings of Christ? What does Jesus want us to do?

“The ideal of perfection which Christ has given us is not a dream or a subject for rhetorical sermons, but a most necessary, most accessible guide of moral life for man, just as the compass is a necessary and accessible implement guiding the navigator;” Tolstoy tells us that Christ’s ideal for our lives is not just a dream, but is attainable. How should we treat the teachings of Christ?

“The Christian doctrine of the ideal is the only one which can guide humanity. We must not, we should not substitute external rules for the ideal of Christ, but this ideal must be kept firmly before us in all its purity, and, above everything else, we must believe in it.” How can we change our mentality away from the religious rule doctrine of being godly to the Christ doctrine which changes our mindset and motivations? What is the difference between the two?

**Oswald Chambers** (1847 – 1917) was a Scottish evangelist and devotional writer. He was an early-twentieth-century Scottish Baptist evangelist and teacher who was aligned with the Holiness Movement. He is best known for the daily devotional “My Utmost for His Highest”.

“Is it too strong to call this a spiritual torpedo?” What is Chambers asking here? Why would **Matt. 5:20** be a “spiritual torpedo”?

“These statements of Jesus are the most revolutionary statements human ears ever listened to,” Why are they revolutionary?

“and it needs the Holy Spirit to interpret them to us; the shallow admiration for Jesus Christ as a teacher that is taught today is of no use.” Why is the thought of Jesus as just another good teacher of how to live of “no use”?

“Jesus says our disposition must be right to its depths, not only our conscious motives but our unconscious motives.” What does this mean?

“Can God make me pure in heart? Blessed be the name of God, he can! Can he alter my disposition so that when circumstances reveal me to myself, I am amazed? He can. Can he impart his nature to me until it is identically the same as his own? He can. That, and nothing less, is the meaning of his cross and resurrection.”

Mic drop.