

**>>>>>>    Matthew – Lesson 10    <<<<<<<**

1) Reading again from Matthew 5:17-19 ....

**Matthew 5:17-19 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>17</sup> “Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished! <sup>19</sup> Therefore, whoever nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

2) Finishing out this passage, verse 20 says ...

**Matthew 5:20 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>20</sup> “For I say to you that unless your righteousness far surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

3) Of course, Jesus is saying simply that the Pharisees may appear to be “perfect”, but they are far from it.

**So, this is an easy one to answer... How can we make sure our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees?**

4) Now, we get to those sections of the sermon that Olmstead called the “antitheses”.

**Matthew 5:21-22 (NASB 2020)**

**Personal Relationships**

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be answerable to the court.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be answerable to the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.

5) Again, Jesus in using a very telling phrase here “you have heard it said”.

a) This means He is dealing with the oral statements. (not to be confused with all the extra stuff that the scribes and Pharisees added.)

6) To understand this, we need to look at the Jewish Rabbinical teaching of the time.

a) Through the years the Jewish rabbis built, what they call a fence around the Torah.

i) Here is an explanation from Barney Kasdan in his book “Matthew Presents Yeshua, King Messiah (a Messianic Commentary)”

Since the days of Mount Sinai, traditional Jews have largely been in agreement that the Torah Moses wrote down is the inspired Word of God. However, over the course of the centuries, another body of tradition developed that was the rabbinic commentary on this written Torah. Of course, it is not necessarily wrong and it may be even be a good thing to have scholars offering their understanding of the holy text. From the Jewish point of view, the written Torah is so holy that we should

protect it to the best of our ability. Subsequently, the classical rabbis developed a concept called the “fence around the Torah” (seyag la-Torah) that was to protect the perimeter of the commandments. “Moses received Torah from Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets handed it on to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise many disciples, and make a hedge around the Torah”

- 7) In Kasdan’s opinion Jesus is addressing these issues from the various rabbinic commentary views of the Torah.
  - a) He bases this on (and I think rightfully so) the fact that Jesus begins by saying “You have heard that the ancients were told ...” rather than “it is written” or something to that effect.
  - b) We will see this about 7 more times as we proceed.
    - i) And in some cases, we will see Jesus give a very practical application of the teaching.
  - c) Jesus is not tearing down the hedge, He is instead clarifying how the original Law and the hedge both (in many cases) should be moved into the heart and our actions.
- 8) So, getting back now to this particular scripture, the Torah says in both Deuteronomy 5:17 and in Exodus 20:13, **‘You shall not murder.’**
  - a) However, the oral portions is the rest that Jesus quotes here, **‘Whoever commits murder shall be answerable to the court.’**
  - b) This is clearly not from the Torah because in Exodus 21:12-14 we are told that **“Whoever strikes and kills a man must surely be put to death”**
- 9) He then expands on this saying:

<sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be answerable to the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.
- 10) In first-century Jewish law and practice, the courts (local or the Sanhedrin) generally did not try individuals solely for internal emotions like anger.
  - a) Courts judged actions such as murder, theft, or slander rather than internal attitudes.
  - b) The Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic traditions do reveal that anger and insults could result in community discipline. penance, exclusion, or public rebuke if they involved disrespecting or insulting others, especially leaders.
  - c) Again, this was not the same as a formal, legal trial before the Sanhedrin for mere anger.
- 11) Kasdan, however, does say if the term “Raca” is used in Talmudic literature as an insult meaning “vacant” or “empty-headed.”
  - a) Those who express their anger with such language might be brought before the Sanhedrin.
- 12) Jesus elevates it even further by saying that “whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”
- 13) Most scholars say that Jesus is not really saying that if you get angry with someone you could be taken to “court” or worse.

- a) In other words, this is not to be taken literally but is His figurative way of emphasizing the seriousness of our emotions.

14) Bruce Barton brings this out and adds a somewhat different perspective to this:

It's not the words that put us in jeopardy of hellfire. We could think of a lot worse names than "you fool" to call people. It's the attitude. By calling someone a fool, you write that person off as worthless, a zero, nothing, nobody.

And what is the problem with that? That worthless nobody (in your judgment) is someone made in the image of God. If God's image is a fool, doesn't that make God a fool too?

Next time you write someone off, think about whom you're really talking about.<sup>16</sup>

15) Before I ask this next question, there is one more scripture we need to look at ...

**Matthew 12:36–37 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>36</sup> But I tell you that *for* every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on *the* day of judgment. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

**So, what do you say? How serious do we take this word "fool" or, for that matter the idea behind what we are reading here?**

**Is Barton off base or he on to something here?**

16) One thing we must not overlook here is the phrase "But I say to you".

- a) Jesus speaks with an authority here that is unheard of.
- b) The rabbinic traditions and even the Torah say one thing, But I say...
- c) That must have been astounding – that this backwoods Nazarene would claim with such audacity to add comments to these sacred sayings.

17) Now, Jesus gives us a little different application of what he has said than we might have expected.

- a) We know it is an pertains to that because of the "therefore" that precedes the example.

**Matthew 5:23-26 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>23</sup> Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. <sup>25</sup> Come to good terms with your accuser quickly, while you are with him on the way *to court*, so that your accuser will not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will not be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last quadrans.

**The first thing we must answer is – Who is angry?**

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce B. Barton, Matthew, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 92

- b) Most likely the brother who has something against you.
- c) The person who is the accuser.

**The second thing we must answer is – Who is responsible for at least the start of the reconciliation?**

- d) Us – the person who remembers that someone is angry with us or has something against them.
  - e) Us – the person being accused.
- 18) Obviously, what has happened here is Jesus has first told His listeners that they should not be angry with one another.
- 19) Then, he drops the other shoe, so to speak, if you know someone is angry with (has something against) you then go immediately and attempt to make it right.
- a) Then, He deals with consequences.
    - i) In Jesus' time, if you owed money and could not pay, it was a given that you could be thrown in prison.
      - (1) In that case, what you owed would have to be repaid by others or the sale of your possessions.
    - ii) It was not uncommon for one who had large debt and could not pay to be put in prison and die there because they could not pay.
      - (1) No bankruptcy, no get out of jail free cards in those times.
    - iii) Given that situation, it was to the persons' advantage to settle up before reaching the court.
      - (1) This could be done by reducing the debt by agreement or even becoming a slave to the person to which you owed money in order to work off the debt.
  - b) All of what Jesus is saying here in these verses deals with relationships.
  - c) We must do all in our power to ensure that our relationships are without anger and malice between us and others be they of the faith or not.
  - d) That is obviously hard in so many ways.

**So, taking this one step further, are we allowed to get angry?**

20) James told us as you probably recall:

**James 1:19–20 (NASB 2020)**

19 You know this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Now everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; 20 for a man's anger does not bring about the righteousness of God

- 21) I think I want to add one comment here that might give something in the way of a different way of thinking (maybe?).
- a) Jesus clearly states that anger at a person is the problem. The example He gave was also really related to anger at a person – in this case the one who remembers.
  - b) So, here is a thought, are we dealing with personal anger that is really at the person and headed toward hate?

- c) Or are we dealing with anger at what that person did – the situation.
- d) Anger of any type, as James points out is not going to “bring about the righteousness of God”.
- e) But is there a difference in being angry at a situation and being angry at a person? FOOD FOR THOUGHT!!

22) Next, Jesus deals with another of the ten commandments #7 – Thou shalt not commit adultery.

- a) In truth, not so much the act but the mindset behind the act.

**Matthew 5:27-32 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; <sup>28</sup> but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> Now if your right eye is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your *body*, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand is causing you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your *body*, than for your whole body to go into hell.

23) Lust is one of those words that we really want to define but no matter how we try it comes to the same conclusion.

- a) Desire is at the heart of it.
- b) It is that the lusting person wants what is before his or her eyes.
  - i) Be it another person, a car, a new toy, a new house, ... and on and on we can go.
- c) However, in this case, it is very clear what the desire is – sex – adultery.
- d) Adultery is clearly defined.
  - i) In this case, Oxford and Webster both say the same thing, in fact, almost verbatim.

**Oxford** – voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not his or her spouse.

**Webster** – voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than that person's current spouse or partner.

- e) However, when we look at the word lust, we get a little bit of difference.

**Oxford** – very strong sexual desire.

**Webster** – usually intense or unbridled sexual desire | lasciviousness

: an intense longing | craving

: enthusiasm, eagerness

**BDAG** – for lust (ἐπιθυμέω) it gives, “to have sexual interest in someone, desire.”

24) Now that we have all these definitions together let's look at the heart of the matter (PUN INTENDED!)

25) The line we have here in truth is not something that I can define for you, nor can you define it for me.

- a) It truly is a matter of what we are feeling in our hearts – only each of us and God knows the intent when we see an attractive person no matter the circumstances.
- b) Keeping it in the personal, Jesus brings it into focus in the heart:

**but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

- 26) Then He begins these famous or infamous metaphorical statements about cutting off the hand or gouging out the eye that offends us.
- 27) What he really says is we are to be getting rid of the thoughts from the heart that envision us doing the thing.

**First, do you think it would do any good to move from the metaphorical to the real and remove the offending part?**

**If not, then how do we accomplish what He is suggesting?**

- 28) One of my favorite scriptures that really applies to this answer is

**Philippians 4:8 (NASB 2020)**

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers *and sisters*, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

- 29) In other words, control the mind by putting good things in in place of the bad!