

Sunday Morning Message

September 8, 2019

Amplifications of the Law – Oaths, Judgment, and Love

Text – Matthew 5:17 - 48

Congregational Reading – Matthew 5:43 - 48

Introduction

Read Matthew 5:17 – 20

This morning, we are continuing our examination of the famous message that Jesus preached called *The Sermon on the Mount*. This message contains quite a few of the very familiar teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sermon, Jesus speaks about the **Kingdom**, which Christ will set up some day here on the earth. Sometimes, we refer to the Kingdom as the Millennial reign of Christ, or the Millennium, because it will last for 1000 years. Christ will literally rule and reign on the earth during this period of time, and Jerusalem will be the Capitol of the World.

The principles found in the Sermon on the Mount and in other similar messages in the gospels will be the **rule of law** during the Millennium. However, these principles also should apply today to those of us who are the children of God; to those who have been saved. We who are saved have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling inside of us, and the Spirit of God within us is working, transforming us and re-creating us into the very image of Christ.

You will notice as we study this message that the **principles** contained in it **go far beyond** the Old Testament Law. Here in this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus **amplifies** the Law. He explains that His expectations are not that the Law be followed just according to specific external applications, but that Christians should seek to understand and exemplify the spirit of the Law. This section will cause us to look within ourselves at a much deeper level. We will be forced to peer into our own hearts in order to see where the conflict between God's standard and human behavior begins. It's a heart problem. What Jesus is teaching in this section of the Sermon on the Mount is that Christians should have an internal conformity to the spirit of the Law rather than just an external observance of the letter of the Law.

In the remaining portion of this fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus will deal with how the Old Testament Law relates to the Spirit-filled Christian. What are we supposed to do with the Law? Many Christians today are completely forsaking the moral aspects of the Law, claiming that they are free to do whatever they please because they are under grace. Thank God for God's mercy that forgives us and keeps us from receiving the judgement that we deserve. Thank God for His grace, which will eventually bring us into Heaven, which we certainly do not deserve. But God's grace is not a license to do whatever we please. Quite the contrary:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and

our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:11-14)

In these remaining verses of chapter five, there are six amplifications (or magnifications, or expansions) of Old Testament commandments given. Before we get started, I am warning you: you have probably already blown it many times in many of these areas, if not all of them. God is not trying to heap guilt upon for what was done yesterday. He is trying to cause us to see the depth (the root) of our sin problem, and help us, through His power, better live out His principles in front of a fallen world.

We have already covered the first two:

- I. Amplification # 1 Anger – Matthew 5:21 – 26
- II. Amplification #2 Adultery – Matthew 5:27 – 30
- III. Amplification #3 Divorce – Matthew 5:31 – 32
- IV. Amplification #4 Oaths – Matthew 5:33 – 37
- V. Amplification #5 Judgment – Matthew 5:38 – 42
- VI. Amplification #6 Love – Matthew 5:44 – 48

This morning, we are going to examine the last three.

Amplification # 4 – Oaths (vs. 33 - 37)

James emphasized this truth as well:

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

(James 5:12)

The word, "for swear," (ἐπιορκέω – *epiorkeō*) in verse 33, means to swear falsely or to commit perjury; to actually lie under oath. Committing perjury was strongly condemned in the Old Testament as it ought to be:

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

One way for a person to take God's name in vain was to use his name in an oath or in a binding promise. To say something like, "I swear to God."

"And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:12)

"If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you." (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)

"If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." (Numbers 30:2)

Jesus is not condemning universally the use of any kind of an oath at any time. He is not teaching here that it is wrong for us in a court of Law to swear to tell the truth. He Himself spoke under oath:

"And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:62-64)

Jesus is really condemning thee things here:

1. Do not ever break an oath. The Bible is very plain that if you promise to be truthful, or promise to do something, you should keep your word.
2. The Lord is also teaching here that we should not flippantly use phrases like, "I swear to God." In the Old Testament, it was common to use the phrase, "*as the Lord liveth,*" to give weight to the truthfulness or the seriousness of what was being said. In Jesus' day, and even today, people are quick to add such a phrase to give weight to the truthfulness of their statement, and by doing so, they are implying that if no such oath is made, they are not bound by what they say,
3. Jesus is telling us to be people of our word all of the time. If we say we are going to do something, let's do it, and let's not trivially add some oath to our plain words to convince people that we will be true our word. If you say "yes" to something, it had better be yes. Develop a reputation for being a person of your word.

Amplification # 5 – Judgment (vs. 38 – 42)

Under the Old Testament Law, there was something known as the Law of Retaliation, or *lex talionis*.

"And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (Exodus 21:23-25)

"And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again." (Leviticus 24:19-20)

Though this law was never intended to be a means for personal vengeance, it was a rule of law within the government as a means of providing justice to the person who was injured.

Spurgeon said, "Our loving King would have private dealings ruled by the spirit of love, and not by the rule of law."¹

Jesus is teaching His followers here to live on another level, a higher level.

Illustrate – Parents will sometimes tell their children that if they are hit by another child, they have permission to hit back. That is in direct opposition to what is being taught by the Lord here.

He is our example. He was bruised and beaten, and brutally crucified, but He did not retaliate.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots." (Luke 23:34)

Personally, I think it is Ok to defend yourself and especially others, but it is not OK to exact vengeance. There is a difference between defending yourself and getting even.

Paul dealt with this whole idea of judgment or retribution in his letter to the Corinthians:

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Corinthians 6:1-7)

This is certainly not the way things are done today, but this will be the rule of Law for the kingdom.

"We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive."² (Swindoll)

Amplification # 6 – Love (vs. 44 – 48)

Loving God and loving all others is what the Christian life is all about.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 13

*"And above all these things put on **charity**, which is the bond of perfectness."* (Colossians 3:14)

What is charity?

Charity is love, but it is a far deeper love than just a kindness or affection. It is an unconditional love; a self-sacrificing love. It is the type of love that a mother has for the child when the child is sick and she stays up all night taking care of him. It is a love that is never selfish but always looking to serve another.

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Commentary on the Book of Matthew* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893), 29.

² Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1501 Other Stories* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 216.

Peter said that with “all diligence” we are to add to our faith “charity,” or love.

We are commanded to diligently add this love (charity) to our faith:

1 We are to love God:

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37 & 38)

2 We are to love our neighbours:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Galatians 5:14)

3 We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ:

“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” (1 John 4:21)

Illustration - No Burden

An American missionary who was walking down the streets of a Chinese city was greatly interested in the children, many of whom were carrying smaller children upon their backs and managing at the same time to play their games. "It is too bad," the American sympathetically said to one little fellow, "that you have to carry such a heavy burden!" "He is no burden," came the quick reply; "He is my brother." "Well, you are chivalrous to say so!" said the man, and he gave the boy some money. When the missionary returned home he said to his family, "A little Chinese boy has taught me the fullest meaning of the words, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.' " He recounted his interview and added, "If a little Chinese boy can carry and care for his brother and refuse to consider him a burden, surely we ought not to think it a burden to carry our brother, the weak and the needy ones, who look to us for help. Let us rejoice as we carry one, and say, by our actions, 'He is no burden; he is my brother.' "

4 We are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43 – 48)

According to verse 48, we are perfected through this last ingredient of love.

Illustration - Love Your Enemies

In World War I, an Armenian nurse had been held captive along with her brother by the Turks. Her brother was slain by a Turkish soldier before her eyes. Somehow, she escaped and later became a nurse in a military hospital.

One day she was stunned to find that the same man who had killed her brother had been captured and brought wounded to the hospital where she worked. Something within her cried out "Vengeance." But a stronger voice called for her to love. She nursed the man back to health.

Finally, the recuperating soldier asked her, "Why didn't you let me die?" Her answer was, "I am a follower of Him who said, 'Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you'" (Luke 6:27).

Impressed with her answer, the young soldier replied, "I never heard such words before. Tell me more. I want this kind of religion.

The Lord is our example:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

To think that Jesus left Paradise to come down to this miserable earth; to be born in a stable; to be on the run from Herod; to live as a poor carpenter's son; then to minister and preach to a bunch of self-righteous people who didn't know who they had with them; to eventually be spit upon, beaten, mocked, flogged with a "cat and nine tails", and finally crucified. He did that for you. That is charity. That is love.

Illustration

Once president Lincoln was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious Southerners when they had finally been defeated and returned to the Union of the United States. The questioner expected that Lincoln would take a dire vengeance, but he answered, "I will treat them as if they had never been away."—William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*³

Conclusion

All of what we have studied here so far in the Sermon on the Mount is completely impossible for the unbeliever. It is only after you have received Christ as your Saviour, and after you have received the Gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit that any of this is possible.

This is not the way of the world. This is the way of the Kingdom. If you are saved, Christ's Kingdom lives within you. With the help of God, you and I can live on a higher plane. We can love people who are unlovable; we can forgive what is unforgiveable; and we can be people who have integrity, who keep their word.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

It's natural to lie; it's supernatural (spiritual) to always tell the truth.

It's natural to be bitter, to get even; it's supernatural to forgive.

It's natural to love your good friends and hate your enemies; but it is Christlike to love people who don't deserve to be loved.

³ Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1501 Other Stories* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 216–217.