

**The Sermon on the Mount**  
**Session III**  
**Christian Righteousness (part 2)**  
**Matthew 5:27-48**

We pick back up now with the balance of the six illustrations. Recall that we said last time that in these illustrations, Christ drills down on the topics of *anger, lust, divorce, the taking of oaths, personal retaliation, and loving your enemies*. The context is that the religious establishment has, over time, distorted the true intention of God in these areas. Jesus is driving home the point that it is the condition of one's heart which lies at the very center of the intent of the Law.

Let's pick up where we left off, the second statement concerning lust:

2. **Lust: Matthew 5:27-30**

*Let's get some initial impressions from the group, what is the basic message that Christ is laying out here?*

Again we see Jesus using one of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:14 simply states: *"You shall not commit adultery."* The teachers of the Law were in fact teaching the people not to commit adultery. Additionally, there were significant penalties in place, especially for women, when caught in adultery. *So, why is Jesus drilling down on this? Think about what the overall heart message of the SOM is and tell me how this fits into proper interpretation of this passage.*

Just as in the first statement, no one commits murder without first harboring anger in their heart. Here too, no one commits adultery without first entertaining feelings of lustful desire in their heart. Again, as we will see throughout the sermon, the condition of the heart is the key.

*So, is the message here that no man or woman should desire someone of the opposite sex?*

No. If this were the case then we would have no marriage, which is clearly a God-ordained institution!! In the proper context, single men and women meet one another; get to know one

another socially. Eventually this acquaintance turns into love and then to a permanent bond / commitment to one another. This is a completely different process than that of lustful desire of another person purely for the purpose of sexual gratification.

The message of Jesus here in this statement is one that stresses the serious gravity of how we are to deal with sin entering our lives. *Look at the examples he gives us on how to deal with this. What is his message here??*

There are few body parts that are more valuable to a human being than the eye or the hand. Yet Jesus uses these in this metaphor to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation. Allowing lustful, evil thoughts into one's heart is so serious that Jesus says we would be better off without the ability to see or touch!!

3. **Divorce: Matthew 5:31-32** (We are going to spend more time on this one than the others due to its tremendous importance in our society.)

Let me begin this next section by saying that the interpretation of this passage must be done in concert with Jesus' more comprehensive discussion of divorce in Matthew 19:3-9. As such, that is where we will spend most of our time.

We are going to deal with this topic here, however I would advise anyone truly interested in the biblical position on divorce should first take up the more comprehensive examination of what Scripture has to say about the institution of *marriage*. Any study of the subject of divorce (dissolving a God-ordained institution) ***MUST*** begin with first understanding the institution of marriage itself, and God's intent in establishing it. Time does not permit us to do a comprehensive study of the institution of marriage in this course. We will hit the basics here, and then move into a deeper examination of divorce:

1. **Definition of Marriage:** This is a definition used in the statement of beliefs of the Southern Baptist denomination. I feel it does an excellent job of presenting the biblical view:

*Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework*

*for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.<sup>1</sup>*

2. **Foundational Institution:** God demonstrated His extremely high view of marriage by ordaining the institution from the very beginning of creation, Genesis 2:18-25. Before the fall of man into sin, God knew that Adam needed a companion, someone to be **his partner and equal in life** to help him carry out the duties of living in the world. The formation of the family unit serves as the very foundational structure of all society. It is within the family unit that we all learn the basic structure of how to live within the larger society of the world.
3. **Life-time covenant relationship:** There are many verses of Scripture which deal with marriage. However, the one which most clearly presents God's intention is seen in the Genesis passage, particularly in v.22-24.

I realize that this is a very short examination of marriage. I wish we had time to dive into a full blown study of this God-ordained institution before studying the subject of divorce, but we do not. It is crucial that we understand that our Creator has an extremely high view of the marriage relationship:

1. First, He created this institution for us.
2. Secondly, without question, marriage forms the foundational unit of societal order. When any society fails to revere the basic family unit, history proves that society is doomed to crumble and fail within a few generations!
3. Finally, that God intended the marriage relationship to be a lifetime union, not a temporal one!!

*Let's talk for just a moment on how our societies have changed or distorted God's true intention regarding marriage and what consequences we are seeing because of this.*

With these basics in mind, let's look into the subject of divorce and Jesus' larger discussion of the subject in Matthew 19:3-9. First, we are going to open this discussion by looking first at **v.3 & 7:**

Matthew lets us know at the opening (v.3) that the exchange which is about to follow was not an example of a sincere request of Jesus to help the religious leaders with a theological question. It was instead an attempt to draw him into a partisan debate. Jesus answers them with sincerity and gives them the very truth of the matter. However, he does this without falling into their partisan trap. Next, we can see from v.7 that the target of their question hinged upon their interpretation of Mosaic Law on the subject, specifically Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

As we study divorce, there are four key passages of Scripture - Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; and 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. We will focus upon the first three.

1. **Deuteronomy 24:1-4:**

The debate in Jesus' time centered upon the various rabbinic interpretations of Deuteronomy 24:1-4: In particular, the debate focused intently upon the meaning of the Hebrew terms דְּבָרָה עֲרֵוֹתָא (erwat dabar) "some indecency".

*We really need to examine the structure of these verses. On the surface they seem a little confusing. Give me your thoughts on what you see.*

Notice that v.1-3 is really just a series of "if" clauses; which if "all" are true then they lead to the conclusion in v.4.<sup>2</sup> *So, with this structure background, look at v.1-4 and tell me what Moses is really saying.*

This was not some broad sweeping law from Moses that was intended to cover the subject of divorce. It was instead a law that was meant to address a very specific circumstance. Particularly this law was meant to protect women from being abused and treated like property.<sup>3</sup> Recall that this is a very male dominated society. Women had few rights, outside of the home. It was very easy for men to exert their power over women and Moses is intervening in that regard.

In fact, the entire context of Dt. 23:15-24:7 is a series of laws that were intended to protect a disadvantaged party from abuse by an advantaged party.<sup>4</sup> Notice that when we really examine v.1-4 we find that if all the conditions of v.1-3 are met, what is being prohibited is the return of the wife to her original husband of v.1. In essence, Moses is protecting a woman from being treated like livestock and simply traded from husband to husband.

Regarding the meaning of עֲרֻת דְּבָרַיִר (erwat dabar) “some indecency”, some teachers have tried to relate this statement to adultery or some form of sexual sin and thereby forming the basis or grounds for divorce. This is particularly true when comparing to the NT passages in Matthew.

The actual Hebrew words here need to be looked at. The term דְּבָרַיִר (dabar) literally means “word, speech, or action”. In this context, “action” is more appropriate. Focus really falls upon the other term עֲרֻת (erwat). This word has a broad range of meanings. Very often it does refer to “nakedness”, hence the sexual connotations. However, nakedness in the OT is very often a reference to shame and is metaphorical for the revealing of a shaming sinfulness. Thus it is preferred to see this reference as Moses speaking to some intolerable / shameful act, not strictly a reference to sexual sin / adultery.

Two other points help us to confirm this interpretation:

1. **LXX:** The Greek version of the OT employs the terms ἀσχημον πρῶγμα (*aschemon pragma*) which conveys the concept of an act that is shameful, unattractive or indecent. It can carry sexual connotations. However, there are other Greek terms that are much more specific to illicit sexual conduct that the rabbis of the LXX could have chosen if they were intending to make specific and graphic expressions of sexual sin. Terms such as μοιχεύω (*moicheo*) “adultery” and πορνεία (*porneia*) “sexual immorality” are much more explicit in their sexual reference than is ἀσχημον (*aschemon*).
2. **Contradiction: IF** Moses was instructing a husband to divorce his wife for sexual sin, such as adultery, in 24:1-4, **then** he would actually be contradicting the law he had previously given the people in Dt. 22:22 where the explicit penalty for adultery is death by stoning.<sup>5</sup>

Based upon these points, it is the opinion of this writer that Moses is not speaking exclusively about sexual sin. The terms are intentionally broad and intend to demonstrate the revelation of some sort of truly despicable, undesirable sinful behavior, but not exclusively confined to sexual sin.

**When we look at v.1-3 do we see Moses endorsing divorce and establishing grounds for when it is permissible?? Explain your position.**

Really read v.1-3 and you will see that Moses is **NEITHER** endorsing divorce nor laying out the grounds for when it is permissible. Instead, these verses simply assume that divorce is already

being practiced!!! Never does Moses indicate an endorsement for divorce.<sup>6</sup> Like it or not, sin has tainted every good thing, including the great blessing of the covenant of marriage.

In these verses Moses is simply providing a framework for the proper treatment of the woman, who was clearly the disadvantaged party in the patriarchal society. If all of the conditions of v.1-3 are met, then v.4 simply states that the woman cannot return to her first husband. In essence, this is protecting her from being traded back and forth between men.

We are going to move next to an examination of the Matthew passages on this subject. It is imperative that we keep in mind what we have just learned in the Dt. 24:1-4 passage because it is the focal point of the Pharisees' questions to Jesus in **Matthew 19:3-9**:

*Before we begin, tell me what you think about this passage.*

2. **Pharisaic Argument:**

The question in Matthew 19:3 is two-fold. First of all the religious leaders were constantly trying to trip Jesus up theologically or to get him to articulate a position that was consistent with their own interpretation. Secondly, we know from the writings of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian Josephus that during this time there was a controversy among the Pharisees on the subject of divorce:

- a. Those who adhered to the teachings of Rabbi Shammai held a rigorous line that interpreted Deuteronomy to present only the gravest matrimonial offense as sufficient grounds for divorce. Effectively they often linked "*erwat dabar*" to sexual sin.
- b. Those who followed the teachings of Rabbi Hillel held a much more liberal view. He taught that a husband could issue a divorce certificate to his wife for virtually any offence. For example: If she was a bad cook, or if she was no longer attractive to him, etc etc.

In Mt.19 the Pharisees were attempting to draw Jesus into this discussion. As you might expect, he did not "*take their bait*"!!!

3. **Jesus' Reply:** There are three components to Christ's reply to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:<sup>7</sup>

- a) **Marriage Focus vs. Divorce Focus:**

*Look at 19:4-6. Does Jesus answer their question? What was Christ focused on and what were the Pharisees focused on?*

They came to Jesus with a question on “divorce”. Yet he responded to them by talking about marriage and reminding them that God was the One who instituted this institution.

*Do v.5-6 sound familiar to you?*

Jesus is directing them to Gen.1&2 where God originally set up the institution of marriage:

- 1) Male & Female: Genesis 1:27; 2:4-7; 21-23
- 2) A man leaves his parents and *cleaves to* his wife. Thus establishing permanence to the union: Genesis 2:24
- 3) The *two become one!* Thus establishing an *exclusive and permanent* relationship: Genesis 2:23-24.

b) **Concession, not Command:**

*The Pharisees ask a follow-up question in v.7 which indicates that they still are not seeing Moses' passage in Dt. 24 in light of God's original intention of marriage. What are they missing??*

First of all, as we studied above, Dt. 24:1-4 is not a law establishing the proper grounds for divorce. Secondly, the entire subject of divorce is not a "command" from God. Jesus makes this abundantly clear in his response in v.8. Moses did not command divorce. Instead God (through Moses) provided a "concession" allowing divorce because He knew that mankind's sinful nature would inevitably result in broken vows and relationships. We really should not be surprised here. Sin is so powerfully destructive that it broke the relationship between God and man. It should come as no surprise that it would have similar destructive properties on the closest and most intimate of human to human relationships, the institution of marriage.

c) **God's "high-view" of marriage:**

***Jesus concludes his response with a very powerful statement that demonstrates just how serious this subject is. Tell me what you see in v.9.***

The Pharisees were focused on divorce. Jesus was focused on an extremely high view of marriage such that he considered all remarriage after divorce to be adultery, with the single exception of the divorce cases involving adultery.

This leads us to the last point on this subject, adultery, and ***the exception clause*** in both Matthew 5 and 19. As you might imagine, these clauses have been scrutinized by teachers across the span of the Church Age. The basic questions that have considered:

1. Are they the original words of Jesus?
2. What do they mean to the concept of divorce?
3. How do we interpret these in relation to the concept of remarriage after divorce?

Let me again stress to you that this is a very important, and very deep subject. It is most certainly worthy of a much more thorough examination than we can provide in this study. I would encourage you to study this subject on your own within an overall deeper study of biblical marriage. However, I will leave you with my position on these points:

***1. Are these the original words of Jesus, or were they later added by Matthew?***

Whether these were the original words of Christ or an addition Matthew added is something that the textual scholars could debate for years. I personally think that they were the words of Jesus or at the very least, they were Matthew's way of communicating the precise context of Jesus' thoughts at the time he uttered the passages in question.

I am content to rely upon the fact that the clauses are a part of the canon of Scripture. As such, they are fully "God-breathed" and as such must be considered authoritative.

***2. What do the exception clauses mean to the subject of divorce?***

Again, there are numerous positions here even within the Protestant churches. I fall into the camp that interprets that the sexual immorality of exception clauses is the only acceptable reason where God ***allowed*** (not commanded) the possibility of divorce.

***3. What are the subsequent implications of this to the idea of remarriage after divorce?***



Once again, numerous interpretations here, however I would contend that Scripture is clear that death dissolves the marriage bond. We see numerous examples in Scripture that demonstrates, even endorses, the remarriage of a person after the death of a spouse.

***If*** God considers remarriage acceptable after the marriage bond is dissolved in the case of death of one spouse, ***then*** remarriage would also be acceptable in the only other case where God allowed man to dissolve the bond. As such I concur with the interpretation that in the case of a divorce that results from the sexual immorality of one spouse, the other party is released to marry again.

It is time for us to move on. I do need to say that while I have tried to take more time with this illustration than the others, this should not be considered an all-encompassing examination of biblical marriage and divorce. Many other Scriptures need to be examined. There are also other circumstances to be considered, such as the state of the spouses in their relationship to God, ie: believers vs. unbelievers, the question of abandonment and abuse, etc. ect.

As is the case in so many theological questions; there are often two elements that we have to address: First, is the ***academic element***. The Bible is God speaking to us formally. As believers, it is expected of us to know what God has to say on a subject. In other words, we need to be well grounded in our understanding of the biblical theology of a particular subject. We cannot apply God's word in a certain situation, if we do not understand what God has to say about that situation.

Second, there is the ***pastoral element***. As we live our lives with those around us, we are often called upon to apply God's word to real-world situations. Few things stir the emotions of people more than serious illness, death, and divorce. Often times, by the time a Christian or pastoral counselor is brought into a discussion, too much has already transpired and the breaks in relationships are torn beyond practical repair. While we may well know the correct theological points to communicate, we must ***ALWAYS*** be mindful of the manner and method by which we make these communications.

My Dad used to tell me; "Steve, it's not *what* you say. It's *how* you say, *what* you say." When Jesus confronted the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11, he could have been just as harsh as the scribes and Pharisees who brought her to him. The adultery could not be "undone".

However, Christ's focus was upon forgiveness and returning the woman back into proper fellowship with God. He never excused her actions, just as we are not to water-down what God has to say. Instead as Paul says in Ephesians 4:15, we are to speak the truth in love!! The focus of applying God's theological precepts should always directed toward restoration, not retribution.

In the case of divorce, I am reminded of how Dr. John Stott addressed this with couples. Being both a scholar and a pastor, Dr. Stott clearly knew how to take his theological training and use it in a way to uplift and help people in need. In his book used for this course, he notes that over his many years of ministry he was often asked by couples to talk with them about divorce. His responses were always that he would only sit down with them and *discuss marriage and God's view of this institution*. Only after a thorough review of this, would he ever entertain a discussion of the subject of divorce.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Oaths: Matthew 5:33-37

As we noted in the outset, we were going to spend more time on the third illustration due to its far-reaching effects. It is likely that we will not cover the last three illustrations in class. However, I am writing to you on these passages so you will have a reference guide to study them on your own.

*Before we begin, how would you describe the basic meaning of this text??*

A discussion of this passage needs to include an examination of three things:<sup>9</sup>

- A. The Mosaic Law
- B. The Pharisaic distortion
- C. The true implication of the law

As in all the illustrations, Jesus points out the misinterpretation of the religious leaders in the opening verse.

A. The Mosaic Law: Below are four examples of the law.

1. Ex.20:7: *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.*
2. Lv.19:12: *You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

3. **Nu.30:2:** *If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.*
4. **Dt.23:21:** *If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin.*

***What is the crux of the message contained in these examples?***

Quite simply the message is for us to be honest in our speech. Not a "**portion**" of our speech, but "**all**" that we say!!!!

**B. The Pharisaic Distortion:**

***What do you see in v.33 that might give you a hint to the distortion the Pharisees made??***

*"but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn."*

Admittedly, the shift is subtle. But Stott brings in the context of the Pharisaic tradition of the time. They had focused on the concept that what was absolutely crucial was any vow or oath that was given "**to the Lord**". They concluded that what was in view was "**profanity**" (*false swearing*) **not** "**perjury**" (*the dishonest pledging of one's word*).

In fact, by the time of Christ, the Pharisees had developed an elaborate formula of rules for taking vows. Only those formulae which included the divine name of God were to be considered "binding". In essence, "if it didn't include God, it didn't matter".

**C. The True Implication:**

***What do you see as the "true implication" of the illustration?***

*"Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."*

**The "formula" does NOT matter!!** The Pharisees insisted that only an oath taken by using the name of God was binding. But Jesus illustrates in v.34-36 that **everything** is within the realm of God, **nothing** is outside of His realm. Therefore **all** speech is **binding and must be truthful**.

**Application:**

Finally we come to the key point of this passage, application:

***What is the central truth of this passage, how do we apply this message to our daily lives?***

Honesty!! There is no time when it is acceptable for us to lie or intentionally mislead others. We are to deal uprightly with our fellow man, and we should expect the same from them! I often hear phrases like “,, back when a man’s word meant something,,,” or “It used to be that a man’s word was binding,,,” . These are truly evaluations of the state of our society. However, God’s word is clear: We have always been, and always shall be, expected to be people of honesty; people whose word is our bond.

***Is Jesus telling us that we should refuse to take oaths?***

No. What Jesus is emphasizing is that '*honest men do not need to resort to oaths*'. However, if compelled to take an oath, by some external source, we may do so. As followers of Christ we know that God binds us to an expectation of honesty with or without an oath.<sup>10</sup>

#### 5. **Retaliation: Matthew 5:38-42**

***So, give me your opening thoughts on this passage. What is Jesus instructing us to do? How does this apply to our lives today as believers?***

As with each of the preceding illustrations, it is important that we understand the background or context of the teaching. The religious leaders were teaching “X” regarding an aspect of Mosaic Law; but Jesus is saying that the true meaning is “Y”. So, it is important that we look to the OT passage in question to better grasp the context of Jesus’ message.

#### A. **Context:**

The OT law being focused on in this passage is found in **Dt.19:16-21:**

***In this passage there are two things I want us to grasp: 1) Who is responsible for reviewing the potential injustice and rendering a decision? 2) What is the standard for the justice to be meted out?***

First of all, we must keep in mind that Mosaic Law contained both *moral* and *civil* components. The Ten Commandments and many others make up the *moral* laws. However, this is a case where Moses is laying out instructions regarding a dispute between parties, a *civil* matter. Thus we must discern that there is a difference between the responsibilities of the individual and those of the governing officials. Notice that the dispute is to be taken before “*„the priests and the judges who are in office in those days”*”.

Secondly, the standard of judgment which is listed here is commonly referred to as the *lex talionis* and it refers to the principle of *exact retribution*. It is a principle commonly held to by Judaism and Islam with very similar remnants present in Western laws. By the time of Christ, literal retaliation for damages had been replaced in Jewish legal practice by money or “*damages*”, much as it is in our society.

Therefore, as we move through Jesus’ words, we must keep in mind that the Mosaic Law in question did establish for justice to be adjudicated by impartial governing officials who were appointed to fulfill such roles for the society. Individuals were not to “*take the law into their own hands*” when they have been wronged. Secondly, the standard of the justice to be administered is one where the punishment is commensurate with the act of wrong done to the victim.

#### B. **The Distortion:**

As is typical for humans, we always seek to push the envelope and see how far we can go without “breaking a rule”. In this case, most teachers feel that the religious leaders were focusing on the standard – *lex talionis*; without paying proper attention to the distinction between individuals and governing officials. In other words, allowing people to exact of measured form of personal vengeance toward someone who offended them.

*Why was this wrong??*

Because God had already commanded that *"You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Lev.19:18)

C. **Jesus' Rebuttal:**

*Does Jesus deny the concept of lex talionis (exact retribution)?*

No. This is a true and just concept. What Christ is affirming is that this principle is not applicable to our personal relationships. It is a matter for the courts and the judgment of God.<sup>11</sup> Our personal relationships are to be based on *love, not justice.*

**Application:**

*What is the meaning of Jesus' call to non-resistance? Are Christians not allowed to participate in police actions? Are Christians not allowed to protect themselves? What are the implications of this to war between nations and Christian participation?*

These are absolutely HUGE questions. They arise from the four cameos that Jesus embeds into v.39(b)-42. Time does not allow us the opportunity to flesh them out thoroughly; however let's hit each briefly. We must take care to not be too wooden or unimaginative in our interpretation of these cameos because they were not given to us as detailed regulations, but were simply illustrations of a principle from Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

First of all, regarding police actions, Scripture is very clear about the fact that God has ordained human governments with the responsibility to establish and maintain proper order within a society. Romans 13:1-7 is just one example of this, but we see these same elements throughout the entirety of Scripture.

Secondly, with respect to Christians protecting themselves; this one is tougher. Recall that the context here is regarding the proper way to handle a civil dispute. Additionally, the illustration Jesus is using regarding slapping on the right cheek in the Middle East is considered an act of extreme insult. So the depiction is more of someone truly insulting a believer and how we should behave. Does this explanation release us to go out and get into brawls for most any offense,,, I think we all know that is not the case. Yet I do think that we need to be careful interpreting this

passage to mean that Christians must be doormats without the ability to protect themselves and their families. I think that such an interpretation is missing the context of this passage.

Finally, how do Jesus' words here impact Christians and war? This is truly just too large of a topic to address in this series. If this is a topic you wish to pursue, I would encourage you to study the concepts of Just War Theory and how our great church father Augustine defined the principles of just war and its scriptural tenets. As for my own position, war is a hateful reality that arises from the pits of hell because of the sin in humanity. All war is hateful and should be despised by Christians. However, there are times when nations or groups of people must rise up against great inhumanity and injustice. There are times when the governments of men must police other governments. We've seen this in the case of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, the genocides of Rwanda, and many other examples. I personally think that Augustine was sound in his assessment of Scripture and the development of just war theory and that there are times when Christians must join the battle to right the great wrongs of their time.

#### 6. **Loving Your Enemies: Matthew 5:43-48**

*Do you see a "common theme" between this final illustration?*

Within the six illustrations there are two sets in which the second illustration actually expands the one just before it. Notice that the third illustration (Divorce) expands or builds upon the second illustration (Avoiding Lust). In this case, the sixth illustration (Love Your Enemies) is an expansion of the previous one (Non-Retaliatio).

#### A. **Context:**

Just like the other illustrations, we must first look to the OT passage that is in focus. In this case Jesus is referring to teaching on Lev.19:17-18:

*<sup>17</sup> 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.*

## B. Pharisaic Distortion:

*What does it mean when someone has "blatantly" distorted or changed something? Compare v.43 to Lev.19:18(c). What is the key difference??*

The Pharisees taught that there was an "*implied*" command in this passage. There are three references in here to "*fellow countrymen*", "*sons of your people*", and "*your neighbor*". From these points, the religious leaders had concluded that these references were only to include fellow Jews, thus they could hate others, particularly those who were your enemy. This is a *blatant perversion* of the law!!<sup>13</sup>

The Pharisees had taken Lev.19:17-18 and interpreted that this command applied only to fellow Jews who held to the religion of Judaism. As such, their contention was that the law contained nothing in regards to strangers or enemies.

But look at how they ignored Lev.19:9-10, just a few verses before!:

*<sup>9</sup> 'Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.*

## C. Jesus' Rebuttal:

*What are your thoughts when you read the contrasting statement of Jesus in v.44-47?? When you compare this illustration to the previous five, how does it "stack up" in your mind??*

I find this illustration to be the most straight-forward of the messages to comprehend. The message is more intuitive and the examples clearly bring to light the message of Jesus. We can also look to Luke 10:25-37 where Jesus addresses a very similar concept when questioned by a lawyer about "*who is my neighbor*". Christ responded with what we refer to as the Parable of the Good Samaritan.



**Summary:**

In closing our discussion on the six illustrations, I want to share with you the words of the late Dr. John Stott as he summed up this section of the sermon:

*"Looking back over all six antitheses, it has become clear what 'the greater' righteousness is to which Christians are summoned: It is the deep inward righteousness of the heart where the Holy Spirit has written God's law. It is 'new fruit' exhibiting,,,,, the new nature..... And this righteousness, whether expressed in purity, honesty, or charity, will show to whom we belong."<sup>14</sup>*

## Literature Cited

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- <sup>3</sup> Feinberg and Feinberg. 598.
- <sup>4</sup> Feinberg and Feinberg. 599.
- <sup>5</sup> Feinberg and Feinberg. 600.
- <sup>6</sup> Feinberg and Feinberg. 599.
- <sup>7</sup> John R. W. Stott. *The message of the Sermon on the Mount: Christian counter-culture*. Inter-Varsity Press, 1992, 94.
- <sup>8</sup> Stott. 98.
- <sup>9</sup> Stott. 99.
- <sup>10</sup> Stott. 102.
- <sup>11</sup> Stott. 104.
- <sup>12</sup> Stott. 107.
- <sup>13</sup> Stott. 115.
- <sup>14</sup> Stott. 123.