

Christ Explains the Law

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon explores Christ's teachings on the law, emphasizing the transformation of the heart over mere outward compliance.

Duration: 40:07

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26, Matthew 5:20-48, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 1:1-2

Topics: "Law"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by referencing Matthew chapter 5 and the importance of understanding Jesus' intentions at Calvary. The sermon focuses on the proper interpretation of the law as opposed to the twisted interpretation given by the Pharisees. The Beatitudes are discussed as a reflection of the redeemed heart, rather than a means to find God. The speaker emphasizes that Jesus did not come to destroy the Mosaic law, but to fulfill it.

Transcript

In the time to Chapter 5, Matthew Chapter 5, and we will see in what he proposed to do at Calvary and how effectively he intended to do it. We have been studying the words of Christ as a parenthesis in our study of the Book of Hebrews. In the Book of Hebrews, we read, We are to give the more earnest heed, because God, who spoke in times past by the prophet, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

And it seemed the Lord's mind and will, as we should discover again, something of that which the Son said. And so his words are engaging us for this period of time. We saw in Matthew 5 the Beatitudes, and remind our hearts again this morning that the Beatitudes are not a ladder by which we find God, but they constitute a photograph of the redeemed heart.

They do not tell us how, but they tell us what. You will not meet God savingly by trying to keep the Beatitudes. You can only keep the Beatitudes because you have met him in saving power.

The Beatitudes are the revelation of the outworking of the new life, the unveiling of what God does in the heart that he redeems. Verses 13 to 16 declare the function and the purpose of the Christian in life and the world. The first, the Beatitudes tell us the kind of a person the Christian is, and the second portion, verses 13 to 16, tell us the kind of a life he is in the kind of a world to which he's being sent, a world that's decaying and needs salt, a world that's in darkness that needs light.

Verses 17 to 20 describe the relationship of Christ and his people to the law. There would be those hearing him speak that would surmise that he was going to destroy the Mosaic law and substitute precepts of his own, but such is not the case. And early in his ministry he declares that he has not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

Not only its prophetic utterances concerning him, but its glorious personal intention is to be fulfilled by his work on the cross. And therefore we see the relationship of Christ and his people to the law. Beginning with verse 20, Christ is expounding the relationship of himself and his people to the law in two aspects, two different ways.

First, he declares that which the law means to him and how he intends it to be understood and obeyed. In a positive sense he gives the declaration of the true meaning of the law. He doesn't add to it, he simply expounds it.

And in the second aspect of this portion, verses 20 to 48, he contrasts his teaching with the perverted, twisted, false teaching of the Pharisees. Actually, I suppose we could well say that the balance of this sermon, that is from verse 21 through the last verse of chapter 7, is an exposition of verse 20. In this portion, from 21 on to the end of the sermon, the Lord Jesus is explaining what he said here in this verse, I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The balance of chapter 5 from 21 on, our Lord explains the true interpretation of the law against the Pharisees' false and twisted interpretation. In chapter 6, he shows the true nature of fellowship with God as over against the superficial, shallow, and meaningless relationship that the Pharisees had taught. In chapter 7, he shows the true righteousness that he imparts as over and against that which was taught and practiced by the Pharisees.

In all of this sermon, this marvelous sermon on the mount, that is evangelical in its character and its detail and purpose, our Lord is describing what he prophesied in Ezekiel. Do you remember what he said? He said, I will sprinkle clean water upon you and cleanse you from all your filthiness. This is pardon and justification.

Then he said, I will, previously said in Jeremiah, I will put a new heart within you and I will write my law upon your hearts. And then he said, I will put my spirit within you and cause you to keep my statutes. Thus, in the sermon on the mount, he is expounding this and explaining this and unfolding this so that we might understand what his new thing is.

Now there are six statements made by the Lord Jesus in this portion, and I want you to see them, not that we shall expound them in detail, for each such statement would merit an entire sermon and more, in fact. So you understand that all we can do is to try and gain some perspective and see this in the relationship to this one theme that he is in this portion explaining the proper interpretation of the law as against the twisted false interpretation given by the Pharisees. Here it is, I begin with the twenty-first verse, and each of these six statements has this formula, Ye have heard that it was said by them, but I say unto you.

And here the first, Ye have heard that it was said by them of old times, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. He has now carried the

meaning of this scripture, this statement, Thou shalt not kill, away from the act of slaying as it was interpreted by the Pharisees to the attitude which would make possible the slaying.

He has taken it away from the act, from the overt outward expression of hatred, down to the very existence of hatred in the heart. This is what our Lord is seeking to say when he declares, Except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. They didn't kill, but they found convenient and subtle ways to accomplish their purpose without staining their hands with blood.

Their hearts were filled with hatred, with anger, with animosity, and they had been forbidden to kill, but they could malign, they could plot, they could unscrupulously slay by innuendo, they could deceive. All of this was held to be a keeping of the law because they hadn't taken a knife and plunged it into a back or a club and crushed a skull, and therefore they could say, Well, I've kept the law, the law says thou shalt not kill. And our Lord doesn't add to it at all, he simply expounds it, he simply opens it.

He said God doesn't look on the outward appearance, he looks on the heart. And when God sees hatred in the heart, he sees murder there, for hatred is the intention to harm. He uses three statements here, he said, If thou shalt be angry, there is hatred boiling as an emotion.

And when anger is present, this kind of which he speaks without a cause, because of personality difference or because of ambitions being thwarted or some other hindrance, without a cause, this anger that comes that had, would be as Cain's anger was toward Abel, when he says when the anger is there, even though it never even rises to the surface sufficiently to come out in a word or a look or a gesture, it's still seen by God, and God says that viewing the anger as it is, he can hold it to be murder. He says it's murder, and thus Christ has now taken the law down from where it had been placed as a ten-foot rule of outward action to an x-ray that peers right down into the innermost part of the heart and discovers the feelings and the motives and the attitudes. And then he enlarges upon it by using the word raka.

I don't know that anybody knows too much as to what this meant. It may have been a term of derision, there may be some who know exactly what it is, but I have never been satisfied about it. But whatever it was, it was a term of derision that expressed contempt and expressed desire to hurt.

We might use it for all slanderous terms, all terms which deride, all terms which belittle, all terms which twist and misrepresent. It's that that the Lord sees, it's that which he looks at. And then he said, whosoever shall call another thou fool.

And this, of course, he attaches with the extreme penalty of danger of hellfire. Now he's taken the one statement, thou shalt not kill, and he's added to it a dimension of depth. You see, what God proposed to do was not simply to keep people from slaying one another by forbidding it, but he proposed to give a climate of love by changing the heart.

And when he says these things, he's simply saying that the person that gets angry without a cause, that says raka, the person that says thou fool, the one whose heart sees and boils and rages with a purpose to hurt, never had to happen to him what has to happen if they're to see heaven, never had the new heart given. For when one's been given that new heart by the Lord, the motive becomes as grievous as the act would have been. The attitude becomes as heinous a sin in the individual's eyes as the act would have been.

And what he is actually saying is that those that have received his grace have not simply had an outward form of life imposed upon them because of an obedience to a law, but they have had a miracle take place within them so that they've partaken of the divine nature. This is what he's saying, except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Oh, one can go on without ever having blood on their hands and go straight to hell because all through their lifetime professing religion, professing Christianity, professing salvation, quoting scripture verses, even witnessing and working in religious service, they've had a heart filled with anger and malice and wrath, never been saved.

See, the plan of salvation doesn't save, and scripture verses don't save, and decision doesn't save. Salvation is a person, a person that invades the human personality, and in coming in gives a new life and a new nature, makes one a new creation. This is what he's saying.

We proceed to the next, verses 7, 27 to 30, and here he speaks of this problem that confronts every generation, I'm sure he is, and ours, the problem of morality. You've heard that it was said by them of old times, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart, and if thy right eye can thee pluck it out and cast it from thee. What is our Lord saying? He's saying that again, the crime of course has its social consequences in the act, but it has its spiritual consequences in the attitude, and that God who looks not on the outward appearance but looks upon the heart, sees deeply within the spirit of man, and when he sees the look with lust, with the intention or the purpose to secure illicit pleasure and gratification, he deals with that intention of the heart as though it were the deed consummated.

Obviously he is dealing with it on a spiritual basis, and obviously we recognize that the social consequences do not result from the attitude, but the spiritual consequences do, and what he is saying is that the Pharisees could have rigidly kept the Scriptures with commandment, thou shalt not commit adultery, but their hearts were filled with avarice, with covetousness, and with lust, with immorality, and they had failed to recognize that the heart was the measure of the man and not the outward action, and that therefore they were to judge themselves as being religious or irreligious, not on the basis of what they did, but on the basis of what they wanted to do. And my friend, today we must face this fact that you are not what you do, you are what you want to do, and when God regenerates a heart, he puts within that heart a want, a new want, a new desire, a new passion, a new desire, a new longing to glorify God and to please God and to obey God. And that one that's been born of God will deal with the attitude of the heart as though it were the act.

He will slay himself in the presence of God, on his face before the Lord, not because of an act, but because of an attitude. It will be whether it's in anger or hatred or animosity toward a brother, he will slay himself, die inside himself as the murderer God holds him to be, not because it's come to any outward action or word, but because of the heart. And so it will be here in this.

What's Jesus Christ saying? He says, he goes and he regenerates, receives from him a new nature, and in that new nature they have a new purpose, and in that new purpose they have a sensitivity to the thought of sin as though it were the deep completed and they will deal thus with the thought. This is what he's saying. He's saying that everyone to whom he gives his life, he gives his attitude toward sin, all sin.

The third thing that he speaks of here is in reference to the marital relationship. It has been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her the writing of divorcement. But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, cause of her to commit adultery,

and whosoever marry her that is divorced, commiteth adultery.

This is his word, and he is saying now that the writ of divorcement that Moses prescribed fulfilled the outward purpose of the law, but it left uncovered the deep need of the human heart and the human spirit, and he said it's not enough, for the one that has been born of God discovers that the church is pictured by the whole. And he's taken a divine illustration of what the whole is to be when, of what the church is to be when he said Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. And he said now you, anyone that's been born of him can't be content with the writ of divorcement because they realize there's a heavenly significance, gloriously glorious heavenly significance, that it has to be respected.

And he said they, you've heard, but I say unto you, saying now that there comes into the heart a deep passionate desire to secure the glory of God, not one's own whim or fancy or pleasure. Verse thirty-three brings us to the fourth. Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath.

Yes, that's what it was in the old time, but he says it's not that way now. He said God doesn't ask for an oath, he doesn't ask for this swearing by all that is good and all that is holy. He said you're not to swear by earth, it's his footstool, by Jerusalem, it's the city of the king.

You can't even swear by your own head because you can't turn one hair black or white. He said the Christian that has a new heart and a new nature doesn't have to reinforce his statements by appealing to heaven or to kings or cities or hair or head, because his only desire in speech is to speak that which is true, and he only needs say yes or no, for anything beyond this comes from a desire to reinforce, and as Shakespeare would imply, that one did protest too much. And so he is saying that that person that's been born of him, that person that has the righteousness from above, does not need to protect his truthfulness by appealing to those that could bring reprisals upon him for failure, but because he has a heart that is committed to truth and loves truth, he simply says yes or no and this is the end of it.

And it is thus that he is saying the truth is in the inward parts, and the one that's been born of him has had this rectifying of the inner man so that he doesn't need to be protected by oaths, but because he fears God and stands in the presence of God, his word is enough. He's describing the regenerate heart, the one whose word is yea, yea, and nay, nay. And then the fifth one, verse thirty-eight, ye have heard that it's been said an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

This was the great improvement. When Moses declared this, he changed the social conditions of Israel and of the world around about him, for it soon was adopted by others. You see, it was in days past that if a man lost an eye, he slew the one who caused it.

If he lost a tooth, he took the life of the person that had injured him. And it wasn't an eye for an eye, it was a life for an eye, and a life for a tooth. And life was cheap.

But now, he said, something's happened. It isn't just this improvement over that by establishing an eye for an eye, but now it is something entirely different. Resist not evil.

And whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him plain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow thee, turn not thou away. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that about all that most people see in this is the first phrase of the forty-second verse, and they use it to justify giving to the people on the street. Now I would urge you and plead with you not to so misapply the scripture.

And I would urge you and plead with you not to give to the people that on Sunday morning come and stand outside the church door expecting a handout. I believe that there is no greater damage done to human personality than this. It wasn't until the prodigal was in pain of eating of husks, and no man would give to him that he came to himself.

And it is a known fact that a panhandler in the Times Square area, if he'll work a full eight hour a day, can collect eight, three hundred and fifty dollars on the average week. Of course snowstorms and natural things would stand in the way. Now don't any of you go out and say it's better than I'm making.

This isn't what I'm suggesting it for. I'm simply saying that there's absolutely no justification for interpreting this scripture on that basis. Now if you happen to know some family or some need or some individual where you understand that in Israel the begging such as we would know here for the purpose of continuing an indulgence in licentiousness didn't exist as such.

And if there would be such a case where you would have someone come, I believe that it is very wrong for a Christian seeing someone in need, where there is need and where there's an opportunity to help and to establish a home and to establish something that could protect from great grief. You know it's the loss of the nail that caused the loss of the shoe that caused the loss of the horse that caused the loss of the soldier that caused the loss of the battle. And there are times when help is needed.

But I suggest to you that when that's done it do not be considered alone. It says give to him that asketh thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou way. Yes but let's move back again and see the significance of it.

That you resist not evil but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also. Most of the trouble that people get into is in trying to protect themselves and avenge themselves and defend themselves. And someone says something against you and so you can't wait for an opportunity to get even.

And someone does something and the person just can hardly wait for an opportunity to give in kind. And the Lord Jesus Christ has said this is all finished with my people. My people haven't a desire to avenge themselves and vindicate themselves and prove themselves right and defend themselves because they've seen themselves worthy of death.

And they've stood at the door of the cross. And they've viewed a man hanging there for them. And they've said that I deserve the death he dies.

How can anyone that's taken that attitude toward himself vindicate himself and justify himself? No no they smite you on the right turn the left and leave it with the Lord. This is the, not so much, it has to do of course with social relationships but what he is saying is that in his work of grace he does something in the heart. It's deep within the heart that the Lord does the work.

And that's where he's letting it come. There's something happened in their heart. By nature none of us are of this order.

Every one of us are right there to defend ourselves. But God in grace gives new hearts. And you're prepared to leave the case in his hands and allow him to take care of it.

Truth crushed to earth will rise again. It won't fall. It won't disappear.

It may be stomped upon but it will, it will come back. And so he said anyone that's mine that's had this work I've come to do has a new law within them. Not the law of retaliation.

Not the law of self vindication. Not the law of self defense. But the law that nothing can touch me but what my Father permits it.

Nothing can happen to me but what my Father allows it. He's given me a new act. This is what he's saying.

He's describing what he does. And then the last is found in verses 43 to 48. He have heard that it has been said thou shall love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.

Oh yes. This was even an improvement because Israel didn't always love his neighbor. But he said when it was given it was considerable improvement because it involved the necessity of dealing with one's neighbor on the same basis that one would be dealt with.

It's the root of the golden rule. Do unto others as thou wouldst have others do unto you. But now our Lord is saying that what they had heard love your neighbor and hate your enemy wasn't what Moses said.

It was the Pharisees interpretation of what Moses said. For you see after the captivity in Babylon most of the Jewish people in our Lord's time could not read Hebrew. They spoke Aramaic or Arabic and they couldn't read the scripture and they had to depend upon the rabbis to tell them what God said.

And so what the rabbis said was thou shall love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. It was their interpretation of it. The Lord said no no.

He said I say unto you I say unto you love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you.

Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. That you may be yes in that sense that it may be revealed and manifest and disclosed that you are the children of your Father which is in heaven. That's what he say.

Everyone that he redeems he gives this kind of a heart to. You say well I I I haven't I haven't lived this way all the time. The question isn't as much have you lived this way all the time but have you dealt with everything contrary to this as the sin that it is.

If you've been born of God he's given you this kind of a heart. This kind of a desire. This kind of a purpose.

This kind of a longing. And you cannot tolerate the contrary to this in your life as being justifiable and defensible. And so when you find hatred springing up self vindication springing up then you're going to have to deal with it as the sin it is.

That's what the Lord is saying. He's saying that when he makes a person over again and he saves them he makes them a new creature. Oh we've lost so much of the sense of the supernaturalness of the grace

of God.

We've reduced it down to a formula and a tipping of the hat and a nodding of the head. When it's something infinitely more than that it's encounter with God when the whole personality undergoes that glorious transforming work that only the living Christ can perform. This is what he's saying.

You see what we've done we've tried we've had salvation made so easy and then we've tried to get done in sanctification what God put in salvation and fill the churches with unconverted people. Oh that the Spirit of God can bring us back to see all that the Holy Ghost put into salvation. And there's still abundance left to be done in his sanctifying grace and work.

But this is what he does to a regenerate heart. This is what he does to one that's born again. This is the kind of a person a Christian is.

That's what he's saying. This is what he does. He's putting this dimension.

He's saying this is the kind of righteousness that I give that exceeds and surpasses that of the Pharisees. And by possessing this and this alone can one go into heaven. The salvation that he's talking about.

Now I want you to see him closing five things. First he's shown us here that the matter of the utmost importance is the spirit of the law and not just the letter. The intention and not just the word.

The motive and not just the detail. And then the second thing that he's shown us is that conformity of the law is not in action only but also in motive. And God is judging not so much what one does, that of course is clear, but why one does it.

Oh what a pity it is that we have usurped to ourselves the prerogative of judging motives. No one can ever save another person. The reason they did that was this.

No one knows why. We only have to deal with what. There are times when people do things and persist in doing things that must be judged on the basis of the thing itself.

But only God knows the motive and God always judge according to the motive. Second thing is, third thing is that we must understand that Christ is saying that the law must be thought of positively not just negatively. Not just what it forbids but what it intends.

Not just what it prohibits but what it promotes. And you can see from his unfolding of the law that it wasn't just to restrict certain outward actions, but it was to have a new kind of person, a new genus, a new species of which he was the first and all of his own were to be followers. What he actually did you see when he came was to create an entirely new species.

All the others of men had natural life. But now he is coming down and taking men who possess natural life and by a supernatural act is imparting divine life. And the Christian therefore is to be thought of if he's rightly viewed as a new kind of being for he possesses not just human life but divine life.

And he is to act according to the nature, according to the species of which he is now a part. And then the fourth thing we need to see is that the purpose of the law is not just to keep us in a state of obedience by means of oppressive rules, but it is to aid and to develop character, spiritual character. And the law is just and holy and good in this intention.

When it is used by the Holy Ghost, when the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He quickens our mortal bodies and He quickens our human spirits and the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. This is what we are to understand. The purpose of the law is character, spiritual character.

And then of course the fifth thing that you anticipate is this, that the end of the law is not in itself an obedience to it, but the end of the law is to make it possible for us to know God. And therefore we are to understand when Christ explains the law that what He is doing is explaining that God is first going to do something in a man to make him a new kind of a man, do something in a woman to make her a new kind of a woman, so that in the doing of this, this new kind of a woman can know God. And God is the end of all religion, all Christianity.

God Himself, not heaven, not blessings, not good, not healing, not health, not money, not prosperity. The end of all religion is to know God. And the end of the law is to make it possible for us to know God.

And so what He has done is given to us this explanation of the meaning of the law and saying the only kind of people that can know God are the people that have had this kind of a supernatural operation performed upon them. I'm sure that I speak to many, and as I do, you say, oh how I praise God for what He's done. Yes, this is what He's done.

He's given me this purpose. I haven't perfectly fulfilled it. I have failed, I have lapsed, but as I know my heart before the living God, this is what I want to do and be.

How marvelous it is. You know every preaching of truth should have three results. It should make people glad or sad or mad.

And if I've spoken to you and this has borne witness to your heart and you've said yes, this is what God did when He saved me, then I trust you're glad with heavenly joy. But if perhaps the preaching of this has said, well it didn't happen to me on this wise, I heard the plan of salvation and agreed with it and all these years I've presumed I've been saved, but these things didn't happen, then, oh friend, let it make you sad. Sad to the point where you're willing to meet Him and let Him do this, for this is what He does in His own.

And perhaps there will be some that will say, we've never heard it on this wise, and it will make you mad. The only thing that we can't tolerate is to have you go the way you came. When you hear the word of the Son of God, something must happen.

But oh, I'm so glad to tell you today that the Lord Jesus Christ stands at the door of grace and bids all who will come. And should it be that you find that your heart is not of this sort, do not go from here filled with despair. For Jesus Christ stands ready to make everything that He died to produce real in your life.

And His nail-pierced hands extended to you and His loving voice beckoning you. Come unto Me and I will give you rest. Ought to be sufficient invitation for you to come with your need and ask Him to do all that needs must be done.

Christ explains the law not as something that we do to be, but something that we do because we are. Shall we bow in prayer? Living as we are in these days, our God, when men have systematically sought to rob the words of the Lord Jesus Christ of their meaning and their import and their cutting edge, we stand before Thee to thank Thee that the book is entire and we hold it as ours. We thank Thee that this is Thy word.

Our God, our hearts cry out to Thee this morning that there should those here that can say from the word of the Lord Jesus applied to their consciences, this is what He's done. To His, by His grace and to His glory, this is what He's done. He's given me this kind of a heart.

Oh, might there be joy in rejoicing. But for such our Father who may have professed to be saved, but have not found the delivering, releasing, ransoming power of the cross of Christ in their lives, might it be that just now they'd be willing to face their heart need and bow before Thee and meet Thee, lest they should be satisfied with other than that righteousness which He imparts. Grant, Lord, the word shall lay upon our hearts.

It's a loving word. Thou hast never used the word to wound, only in the wounding to heal. And might it be that the word this morning is come, even where it must deeply cut, with love, knowing that every wound that Thou didst inflict or Thy word did bring is but the promise of that healing and health that Thou wilt give.

So seal Thy word to us. And for those needy hearts that have heard it, oh, bind it close upon them and draw them to Thyself. Yea, Lord, might it be that today, this hour, that they make known their need, come to Thee.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Let us stand for the benediction.

Now may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be the glory now and forever. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2880.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/paris-reidhead/christ-explains-the-law/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net