

Matthew 5:17-26

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. For 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. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 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: but whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee: leave thy gift before the altar, go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”

The Most Powerful Sermon In The World Part 1

Jesus' teaching was very unique, the things that he said, the way he expounded on the Law of God, unlike any other. And so we again go here into Matthew chapter 5 and we pick up where we left off last week, and it's the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is predominantly speaking to his disciples, up on the side of the mountain. But there's a multitude, and they're on the side of the mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Now gathered there before him in my mind's eye too, there's all sorts of different ethnic groups, and multitudes, there's the poor, there's the rich, the religious leaders, the spiritual elite. When these guys come on the scene you'd give them the proper respect, I

mean, they are “the dudes,” they are “the guys.” Everybody knows who they are. And they’re standing there. But when Jesus looks at these people, he doesn’t see the phylacteries and the prayer-shawls and all that, he doesn’t see the peasant in his lack of clothes or the religious leader in his supposedly spiritual appearance, what he sees is the heart, and he sees things very differently. He begins to lay out what a real spiritual person is as opposed to one who isn’t a spiritual person. We noted this in Luke chapter 6, he teaches the Beatitudes, what we call the Beatitudes, this blessed life. And then right after that he follows it up with *The Woes*. And we noted those before. And when he said these woes, found in Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6:24-26, I believe he was especially addressing the prideful hearts before him, especially these religious leaders. He loves them, of course, but he’s trying to get through their hard hearts and show them their great need for salvation and their need for him, they were missing the mark. He said this to them in Luke’s account, **‘Woe to you who are rich, woe to you who are full, woe to you who laugh now,’** meaning **‘for those of you who think you are at a such a place spiritually, apart from me, that you think you are on a good standing with God. Woe to you, and if something doesn’t drastically change soon, you’ve already received your consolation, and you shall hunger, and you shall mourn and weep. So woe to you,’** confronting this spiritual pride he saw in their hearts. And this pride is very blinding, pride is that way, it’s hard for us to see our own pride. And these folks that are listening to him, even these religious leaders and others in the crowd, they may think that he’s saying these things that he is, they’re thinking *‘This is intriguing, this is interesting.’* But of course they didn’t even realize that when he said **‘Woe to you,’** that Jesus was speaking to them. And when he spoke of this blessed wonderful godly life, I’m sure they were thinking *‘That’s me, I fulfill all those things.’* Yet Jesus looks and he sees this is not the way it is, it’s not the way it is at all. As he sees their blindness, as he sees their prideful religious egos, he now to me seems to go even deeper. He loves them, he wants to get through to them. He wants them to realize how much they need him, and how far they are from where they think they are as far as being with God. The prophet Jeremiah, speaking the Word of God, I think of this verse with what we’re studying here. God said through Jeremiah, **“Is not my word like a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.”** And God’s Word can be that way, breaking the rock in pieces, and there are rock hard hearts

that are there before him. It's as if he's beginning to, he's turning on that spiritual jack-hammer and he's putting it up against their hearts, and trying to get through to these guys and gals that are not realizing their true condition. He wants their eyes open, he wants to see that man, back to **"the poor in spirit,"** you need that there first, and that you don't have anything good to give to God, and you are spiritually in a desperate condition, you need to turn to God and cry out to him for his grace and mercy, i.e. **'you mourn, and then you hunger and thirst for his righteousness,'** and receive from him his righteousness and his life. Well, as we get started, maybe the Lord wants to do some work like that in our hearts too, maybe, you know, pride, it's so hard to see, so hard for us to see. We're like the last ones to guess that we have issues of pride in our heart. And maybe God wants to turn on that spiritual jack-hammer in a sense, **'I love you, I want you to realize things, I want to get through to you.'**

*"I Did Not Come To Destroy The Law Or The Prophets"---
What Does That Mean?*

Verses 17-20, "Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law, till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by means enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus has come with a radically different message than what man is used to hearing, used to hearing being taught by the various religious leaders (then and now). What he teaches is 100 percent consistent in every way with the Law of God that's been spoken of from the very beginning. And Jesus, Yeshua, his name a contraction of *Yahweh-shua*, *Yahweh-saves*, is the very One who originally spoke the 10 Commandments and gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. The trouble is, man has often chosen to reinterpret the Word of God, and isn't comfortable exactly, or doesn't understand, so he tries to mold and shape the Law of God to fit his own desires, fit his own system, fit his own experience, meet his own requirements, so often making it a religious system, a religious system that we're comfortable with,

that we can attain to, that we can achieve by our own merit. But it's pretty radical what Jesus is saying. This is maybe even contrary to what we've been hearing as the Law of God according to the traditions and things that have been taught to us. Now in Jesus' day there was no printing press, so not like today where we just have the written Word of God everywhere available to us. So, without a bunch of Bibles around, teachers of the Law were needed, and those teachers had a great responsibility, and that is that they had to insure and teach the Word of God so that the masses properly understood the Word of God and knew the will of God's heart. But the problem was, for various reasons, they weren't doing that. They were teaching something very different. They had grossly reinterpreted and repackaged the Word of God, setting up this codified and very complex legal system that rather than bring people into a vibrant walk with God, just a spiritual intimacy, they brought the people into a form of spiritual bondage. This happens all the time, and it has throughout history, certainly even in our modern day, where supposed religious leaders and teachers who say they're expounding wisdom or the Word of God, and saying that they have supposed authority from God, yet what they've done rather than speaking the heart of God, they've come up with some kind of system or tradition and teachings that are so far from the heart of God. And so as a result, people are being given a false understanding of God and what he requires of them. You know, that he requires more than just two Sundays a year attendance, or more than infant baptism, or more than a church certificate. What he requires really is your heart and your life. Jesus more and more discerning their hearts, that he begins to address right at that, addresses these concerns, these confusions, and he says ***'What I am saying is completely consistent with the Law of God. It has been from the beginning.'*** And so he says in *verse 17*, ***'I've not come to nullify or destroy the Law but rather I'm here to fulfil the Law.'*** And it is true, that the Word of God is fulfilled in Jesus in every way. I mean, Jesus is the living Word of God himself, so that all that he does, all that he says and all that he is, is completely entirely in harmony with the Word of God. And when he says here that he comes to fulfill the Law, he's saying that he literally came to achieve its final purpose, in fact, he's the very substance of the Law himself. ***And that so wonderfully and so powerfully then he has also brought something to my life, meaning by fulfilling the requirements of the Law, he's now made it possible for you and I to fulfill the requirements of the Law.*** [i.e. he's paid for all our sins, the penalties for our breaking of God's Law, and

also through Jesus dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14), he actually gives us the ability to more perfectly obey God's Law. See

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/galatians/Galatians5-1-26.htm>] ***He's made it possible for you and I to now live according to the Law, and without him, it is completely impossible to fulfill the Law.***

Before Christ Came, What Was The Purpose Of The Law? That Purpose Hasn't Changed---It's A Spiritual Mirror That Shows People They Need Christ

If there is one question in your mind, if Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law, and without him I could not fulfill the Law, then why was the Law here before? Why did it exist for centuries, millennia before? Paul makes that clear in his letter to the church in Rome. **Romans chapter 3, verse 19, "Whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight, FOR BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN."** The Law reveals to me that I'm a sinner and I fall short of the glory of God, and that I need some desperate intervention. The Law is a spiritual mirror. Also, Paul said to the church in Galatia, **Galatians chapter 3, verse 24, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."** Meaning, the law shows me my condition, and therefore, I'm in the place where it starts to drive me and force me to be looking for answers, and ultimately brings me to Jesus, saying, *'I'm in a predicament, and I need help.'* Now coming to Jesus and receiving him, it's then that I receive the Holy Spirit, and as the Word of God goes on to say, it's through the Spirit that I'm now able to fulfill the Law. [Be sure to see

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/galatians/Galatians5-1-26.htm> for more elaboration on this subject of the sanctification of the Spirit, and how it works.] **Romans chapter 8, verse 4, "That the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us that do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."** You might be trying to make this right in your life, and make that right, and trying to get all this in order, and man, you're not going to get there by yourself. It's by the Spirit of God in me, that now I'm able to fulfill (i.e. keep) the Law of God. Jesus is coming out now and saying ***'You're a sinner. Let me tell you about why I'm here,***

and what you need to do in your life. Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and not to destroy it. And that is to fulfill it even for us, so that we can then fulfill the Law. When Jesus came to fulfill it he also provided the means for you and I to be delivered from the curse of the Law, the penalty for breaking it. Paul again said to the church in Galatia **“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written ‘Cursed be every man that hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14)** [Comment: he’s not saying the Law itself was a curse, like some preachers mistakenly preach. The curse of the Law is the death-penalty attached to it for the breaking of it. Christ has paid the penalty for us. Then through the indwelling Holy Spirit he places within believers, this Holy Spirit grants us with the ever-increasing ability to obey the Law of God. This is called the Sanctification of the Spirit.]

The Commandments Of God Are Going To Be Fulfilled

Well, as he continues, ***‘I didn’t come to destroy the law, I came to fulfill it’*** he now reveals that it is imperative that we understand that every commandment of God is going to be fulfilled, and there’s no exceptions. **Verse 18, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”** What God has said, every piece of it, little or small in a human’s eyes, every piece of it, is going to be fulfilled. There is nothing that is just going to pass away. In fact, as he describes it there in verse 18, not even the smallest of what we would say ‘portion,’ I mean, every little thing, he says the **“jot”** or in the Greek ***iota***, that is the smallest Greek vowel, can also be referring to the smallest Hebrew letter, the ***Yod***, or the “tittle,” which is Latin for the *tilius*, which came to mean the “stroke” above an abbreviated word. And so any little tiny mark, he says, ***‘None of that is going to fade away without accomplishing it’s purpose.’*** [Comment: The requirements of copying the Torah were so strict, that if a copy was found with one mistake in copying, one *iota* missing, that copy would be burned.] And so Jesus says ***‘Till heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest portion of the Law is going to pass away, till it is all fulfilled.’*** [Comment: And when would that be? Turn to Revelation 20:14-15. That describes Gehenna fire. The Gehenna fire that the Bible calls hell, is really where

God sets the whole world and universe on fire, and melts them down. Then in the very next verse, found in Revelation 21:1, Jesus told John that he has now made the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus is saying here in verse 18, that not until that event, when there will be no more physical humans on earth, that's the time Jesus is referring to in Matthew 5:17-18. Some misguided preachers have made the huge doctrinal error of saying that the Law of God has been '*nailed to the cross, or that it has been done away with.*' I don't see Jesus saying that here, nor does this pastor giving this sermon which these notes are extracted from.] As God said through **Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 8, "...the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."** Now if that is true then what should your attitude, what should be my attitude towards the Word of God? If it is that completely trustworthy, are we being foolish not seeking to understand it, and to live by it? And if I can only fulfill it through Jesus Christ [dwelling within me by the Holy Spirit], then shouldn't I be seeking him and his power to do that? But every little piece of it is going to be fulfilled, none of it just flies by. Jesus is coming and saying, '**Every jot, every tittle, every little piece of the Word will be fulfilled.**' And therefore what are you going to do about it, how are you going to view it? What's your attitude about it? I mean, we need to really consider it and seek to live by it [i.e. God's Law].

The Importance Of Obeying God's Word And Teaching It Correctly

Verse 19, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Right in verse 19, there is a danger, I mean, if somebody (i.e. a believer) breaks the law, and then teaches others to do that, there's a grave danger in that. As opposed to that, then, I mean it's powerful, if you obey and teach others to obey, there's a great blessing that goes with that. That's what he says. To the former who disobeys and breaks the law (God's Law), even the least of the law, he will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, and to those who obey and teach others to obey, they'll be called great in the kingdom of heaven. So, the importance, this is the law, it's always going to stand, it's never going to fade away, all of it will be accomplished, so therefore it's so important that you seek to obey and also understand, and if you're teaching it, that you teach is accurately. Some

today are saying this lifestyle or that lifestyle is acceptable, this lifestyle is ordained by God, and yet the Word of God says that's an abomination. And that's a grave danger, not only for the person teaching it, but also for the person hearing it. They're being misled. There are those that are saying, *'Well Jesus, he's important, he's a prophet, he's a good guy, but he's not divine.'* And someone may be saying these things, false teachers saying like, *'There's room, other ways to get to God, other ways to get to heaven, this isn't the only deal, it's not what the Bible means.'* But as we go on, and we study the Word of God, we find it teaches otherwise. Jesus says, ***'I am the only way, and I'm it, and I'm the Son of God, that's because I died on the cross for your sin.'*** Or, sometimes too, we as Christians can think that *'Well, you know, least of his commandments, some of it I can let slide, there are more important things, and there are less important things when it comes to the Word of God, and so if I'm right on the big ones, I'll be ok, I can let some things slide on the little ones.'* And you look at what he says here, important things, **"Whoever breaks the least of these commandments"**, the least. There's many examples. I think of our world, this is a challenge for people today a lot, my heart goes out to them, but folks will come to Christ, and in our culture the family is coming apart, we have different messages in our society about purity, so folks will be told, *'Hey, live together, try it out, man, don't get married, live together for awhile.'* They're now believers, and then they realize, they're reading the big commands, *'No, wait a minute, sexual purity, I don't want to break that one, that's a big one.'* And so these young believers start to work on that situation, and then God says, *'Well, wait a minute, you're still living together, yeah purity is important, but what about your witness?'* [By the way statistics have just come out showing that living together just about dooms a marital relationship that may come after it. See this **Live Science** article on foxnews.com at: http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,532600,00.html] But Jesus says whoever breaks the least of these, I mean, all of it, it's so vital to the Lord and so important. In fact, just follow, look where he's heading, go to the end of the chapter, to verse 48. **Verse 48 of chapter 5, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."** [Or as the King James says, **"Therefore become ye perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."**] That's the standard, perfect, in every way, that's where it's heading. So he's hammering away, he's trying to get through to hard hearts, get through to people who are trying to reason it another way.

The Standard For Believers Is Set By This Verse

And then he says something in verse 20 that's shocking. **Verse 20, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."** And I look at these religious leaders, and they're **shocked** that he would say this about them. I mean, he says **'If you're not in a better place than them, you're going to go to hell,'** is what he said. You know, a popular Jewish saying at that time was *'If only two men make it into heaven, one will be a scribe and the other will be a Pharisee.'* That was the saying, *'If anybody gets there, these guys are getting there, two people, one a scribe, one a Pharisee.'* I mean, come on. But he says, **'No, no, no guys, you've been misled, and that's not the way it is.'** **And so, where's he brining them, 'Is that, the Word of God is powerful, and it has to be known correctly, it has to be understood, and it has to be obeyed.'** Without the truth, there's no eternal life, is what he's saying. The Word of God, without it, in truth there is no eternal life. The religious leaders, they were teaching one thing about the Word, and they were misrepresenting God, they were deceiving the people, and leading them off with a different message. They came across that way. And so Jesus is warning the people, he's shocking them about their error and their deception. And there's no doubt what he says here, man, it rings through the halls of the centuries. I mean, there are many churches where this should go out and just bounce off the hearts and minds of their people. Without the Word, without truth, there is no eternal life. You can look to a man, you can look to philosophy, you can look to psychobabble, religious gurus, you can look to all this stuff, but it doesn't get you into the kingdom of heaven, it's the Word of God that gets you there. These religious leaders, I mean, if you want to talk about religious zealots and looking good on the outside, I mean, these guys were out of control, I mean, they were sooo holier than thou. Well, to go further then with that hammer of the Word, going at the heart, to get through those rock-hard hearts, he now lays out in verses 21 to 48, he lays out six examples of how these religious leaders were misinterpreting the Word of God. And through that he's demonstrating that the Word of God is about the heart. It's much more than your outward appearance. It's about the very heart, what's inside. [there is a saying, "You are what you do in private."] The Word of God is about the matters of the heart.

What The Scribes And Pharisees Where Doing With The Simple Ten Commandments

Verses 21-26, “You have heard that it was said of old ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown in prison. Assuredly I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.” So he focuses on their misinterpretation and their false teaching of the Law. They interpreted it in a letter-of-the-Law kind of way, a legalistic kind of way, according to their tradition, and therefore missed the spirit, the heart of what God meant, the intent of the Law. They had taken the simple, straight forward Law of God, you know, you’ve got the Big Ten, the Ten Commandments, they had taken that, and added all these extra do’s and don’ts into the Big Ten, and also into the original 613 commandments found in the Torah which were based on the Ten Commandments. What Jesus is showing is the basic spiritual intent of all those laws, the 613, which were based on the Ten Commandments, and he’s showing the spiritual intent of the Ten Commandment Law of God itself. That’s what Jesus is presenting in the Sermon on the Mount, being recorded by Matthew here in Matthew 5:17-48. For example, they had taken the Sabbath Commandment, the 4th Commandment, and broken it down into a whole legalistic letter-of-the-Law kind of deal. i.e. They would say, ‘Here’s code number 1, if you’re going to obey the Sabbath, you’ve gotta do this, and this, and this, and you can’t do this, or that, or that.’ They actually had codes that said you needed to remove your false teeth, and if you had a wooden leg, you had to remove that during the Sabbath. If you didn’t you were actually going to be guilty of breaking the Sabbath law because you’re carrying wood, carrying a burden. Now imagine, you’re an elderly gal and, you have false teeth, once a week you’ve got

to take those out, and here you are, you can't eat without your teeth. I mean, that's like a burden, but they're telling you you've got to obey the law of God (according to their messed up interpretation of it). You will find all these extra-biblical law burdens added to the Sabbath Command, listed in the extra-biblical books the Jews wrote, their commentaries, like the Mishna and the Talmud. There were a lot of extra-biblical commands added to the Sabbath Commandment by the Jewish religious leaders in the time of Christ. So say you're a guy whose lost your leg in a battle, and so you've got this wooden leg, and once a week you've got to take it off and hop around, once a week, in order to be spiritual? It was a severe burden these scribes and Pharisees were placing on the people. So they were hypocritical about it. I mean, they also said *'Obey the Sabbath, honor the Sabbath, so listen, that means you can only walk or travel so far, a certain number of cubits from your house (wonder how they got to the synagogue?). If you go any further, you're breaking the Sabbath.'* And then they'd think of all kinds of ways for them, themselves to get around their arbitrary Sabbath code, and some of them were hilarious, from building lean-to's a certain distance from your house during the week, and attaching it to your house with a string, and so forth, even building a series of lean-to's all connected together with that string, attaching it to your house. Total hypocrisy. **'Honor the Sabbath, God said,'** God had given the Sabbath to the nation of Israel [and even the early New Testament Church in Judea, Jerusalem and Asia Minor kept it, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/earlychurch1.htm>]. It was ultimately to point them to and remind them of God and his love, and ultimately to Jesus Christ, **that in Jesus I find true rest.** [And there is a HUGE dichotomy (divided interpretation of beliefs) about the Sabbath Command, the 4th Commandment, and whether it is still relevant for believers today. This dichotomy of beliefs exists between the Sabbath-keeping Christians and the Sunday-keeping Christians. How do we enter into the Sabbath-rest Paul spoke of in Hebrews 4? Two articles discuss this, and this "dichotomy." See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/hebrews/Hebrews4-1-16.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Has%20the%20Sabbath%20Been%20Abrogated.htm>. My spiritual journey has forced me to examine this dichotomy more closely than most believers (see, <http://www.unityinchrist.com/author.htm>). Due to the seriousness of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-19, I believe Church leaders within the Body of Christ, as well as

individual believers need to look at this issue more closely, enough said.]

*The Heart And Soul Of The Sixth Commandment Stated
By Jesus*

Now, as he goes on, he makes some folks really squirm. They think they have it all down, they're there in all their phylacteries and priestly garb, they think they're in a good place, and now Jesus says something that's so---**BLAM!**---right to the heart. He says, **'You've heard that you shall not murder [the Sixth Commandment, stated by Jesus], you've heard that said of old, the command, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of judgment.'** Of course that's one of the Ten Commandment laws. They took that legalistically, they took that to mean that, and therefore if you actually killed somebody physically, and you went to prison, then you broke this law. But of course if you haven't done that, you're OK. So the religious leader thinks to himself, *'I haven't killed anybody, I haven't shed any blood physically, I've not gone to jail, so I've made it with that one, I've got that one in order.'* So you're standing there, but he says, **'Listen, you've missed the whole point. But I say to you whoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of judgment, whoever is angry with his brother.'** Now when he says "anger" there, he refers to a settled anger, a malice that is nursed inwardly, so there is this poison of anger in your heart. You can have that kind of hatred. And he says, **'Whoever has done that, is guilty of judgment.'** You've understood in your own mind, *'I haven't killed anybody,'* but he's saying, **'No, no, the issue is much deeper, it's a matter of the heart.'** The attitude, the attitude is as important as the actions, so if there's the attitude of murder, even if you didn't do it physically, you've done it in your heart, you're guilty of violating the Law. He goes further, he says, **"And whoever says to his brother 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council, and whoever says 'You fool!' shall be in danger of the fires of hell."** Raca was probably an Aramaic word, and it meant "empty, or stupid," it could also be translated "empty-head" or "bone-head." [Dennis Leary in one of his movies called his partner in crime "a useless waste of life." This would describe the meaning of "Raca." One of the worst curses one German can give to another is to take the index finger and touch his forehead with it, signifying the other person is "an air-head." Germans have been known to kill due to this insult being leveled at one of them. This also would also

fit the meaning of the Aramaic word “Raca,” it’s a deep-cutting insult to another person.] Second, the word “fool” is a Greek word meaning “dull or stupid,” it’s a fair equivalent, it’s essentially saying somebody’s a scoundrel. In one way you’re killing a person by killing their reputation, and in another way you’re killing a person by destroying their character. We call that character-assassination. That’s essentially what Jesus is saying, you’re committing murder in another way. And when Jesus says you do this, you are in danger of the fires of hell. Imagine the wrestling that starts to go on within the scribes and Pharisees at that point when he said this, **‘You’re in danger of hell.’** And he says, **‘If that is in your heart, you have broken the Law.’** What Jesus is doing, he’s taking the Law, and God meant it a certain way, he wants the heart pure. And he realizes we’re all sinners. And the Law has a purpose, it should bring me to **verse 3 of Matthew chapter 5**, where we realize **‘Oh, I’m so far from where I need to be, I’ve got this stuff in my heart.’** That’s being **“poor in spirit.”** And then you mourn, verse 4, so then I fall on my knees and I cry out to God asking God *‘Forgive me, cleanse me, help me.’* And then I see the cross, I see Jesus, and then I hunger and thirst for his righteousness (verse 6), and as a result, I’m now filled with the righteousness of God in the Spirit. That’s the purpose of the Law, it’s a spiritual mirror, shows us where the dirt is, it doesn’t clean the dirt. [See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/galatians/Galatians3-1-29.htm> and scroll to the paragraph titled **Purpose of the Law**] He’s bringing it out, **‘This is what is meant, it’s a very high standard.’** Have you ever been guilty of these emotions and thoughts toward someone else, toward your children, your spouse today? Pretty deep stuff.

Leave Your Gift At The Altar, Go Be Reconciled With Your Brother First, Then Come Back And Worship God

Jesus goes even deeper though, as we come here towards the end of our time, he says, **‘Now you come to church, you come to the altar, and there you’ve got your worship, you’ve got your sacrifice, and you remember there, as you’re there, now your heart is softened and you remember there’s a brother, you haven’t talked to him in the longest time, or there’s an aunt or sister, and you’ve been at odds for ever, or there’s your neighbour, you know you’ve erected the security fence next to him, and you’ve got lights and barbed wire, because, you know, they have an inch of your**

grass, whatever, and so now you're at odds with them, or something else. And you come to church, and you're going to worship me,' and God says, 'Dude, it's good to worship me, but leave your gift there, and that's important, but I am a God of love, God of love.' and that is the heart of this, *'and you're offensive to me, you go make that right.'* You know, it's the broken, contrite heart, it isn't this religious sacrifice. He goes even deeper, **"You first be reconciled to your brother, and then you come to the altar."** Now, when he speaks of that, reconciliation, he's speaking of where there's that hostility, and going to settle matters so that the hostility is no longer there. You know we can't always resolve those things, sometimes, you know as it says in *Romans, 'as much as it depends on you.'* So you write the letter or you go and make peace, and sometimes it's not there, it's not reciprocated by the other person, but you do it in your heart, you do what you can do. The rule here is *'First peace with man, and then you'll have acceptance with God.'*

Law-Suit Situations Where You're In The Wrong

Verse 25, "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny." 'You go get 'em, make it right' in the Greek, 'with your adversary quickly while you're on the way.' And the way it worked in that time, in the legal system of Jesus' day, it required the plaintive to personally track down the defendant, so if somebody had done something wrong to me, and I wanted to go to court, I had to go get them myself and bring them to the judge. And he says, you go, you're talking, they've got you and they're going to bring you to the judge, you want to make it right, you know, work it out, man, make peace, do it quickly along the way, lest, as you see, they deliver you to the judge, and the judge looks down and says, **'You are guilty, and because you're guilty, you're given to the officer, and he takes you away to jail. And when you're in jail you don't have a lot of income, and you're going to stay there until you pay the last penny, and that could be a long time in jail.'** He says, the wisdom is there. He's saying this, the point is, your heart, the sinful anger, you've got to face it honestly, you've got to confess it to God. You've got to settle the matter with your brother quickly and not waste time, don't wait, if you

wait it's going to become bondage, man, you're going to be in spiritual prison. Go get reconciled. Somebody said, "*The person who refuses to forgive his brother, destroys the very bridge over which he himself must walk.*" The point that Jesus will now make in the weeks ahead, he starts with that, and then five or six of the Ten Commandments, bringing the Ten Commandment code of Law to its high and lofty spiritual intent. He's speaking to the issue of the heart, and he's given just a picture of what it means to be at odds with your brother, and the wisdom of making it right with your brother, the great need to do that before God. [Comment: Matthew 5:17-19 is talking about the whole Law of God contained in the Torah. Many of those laws, 613 of them, were written for and apply to the agrarian society of Israel, which was a theocratic government of God on earth ruling over Israel alone at that time. The Old Testament Law of God was Israel's Constitution, the national '*Law of the land.*' All of those 613 laws are solidly based on the Ten Commandment core of God's Law. The early Church, first based in Jerusalem from Acts 2, and then onward into Judea, and then throughout Asia Minor, Rome, Corinth, etc., as shown in the Book of Acts and the Epistles, observed this Ten Commandment code of law (not necessarily the 613 laws for an agrarian society, except in Israel, but not as the Church expanded out into Gentile lands, which had their own civil laws). Hebrews 10 shows the ceremonial laws, part of those 613 laws in the Torah, were no longer applicable after the sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There is a huge debate about the Sabbath Command amongst Christians, but as seen in early New Testament Church history, the early Church was observing both the Sabbath Command, the 4th Commandment, as well as the Holy Days of Leviticus 23. This sermon extracted from a transcript by permission from a Calvary Chapel in New England.]

related links:

For the spirit of God's Law, see,

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/galatians/Galatians5-1-26.htm>

and

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/galatians/Galatians3-1-29.htm>

and

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/whatisgrace/whatisgraceintro.htm>

Early Church history, see,

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>

Has the Sabbath been abrogated? And what is God's '*rest*' we're told to enter into? Two study papers. See,

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/wwcofg/Has%20the%20Sabbath%20Been%20Abrogated.htm>

and

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/hebrews/Hebrews4-1-16.htm>