

Matthew 5: 31-37

Jesus here in the sermon on the mount shows us the spirit of the law. He tells us how, “you have heard” referring to the old law, but then follows with, “I say to you” to both reaffirm the law and show the full extent of the law.

Verses 31-32 regarding divorce:

- We read about divorce in Deut 24:1-4
 - Deut tells us that if a husband takes someone to be his wife and then finds something indecent about her that he is allowed to write her a certificate of divorce and send her away. If this woman then becomes the wife of another man and he also writes her a certificate of divorce or dies then the first husband is not allowed to take this woman to be his wife anymore.
 - The emphasis here is on the “indecent” of the wife that led to the grounds for divorce
- So what went wrong?
 - The Pharisees did not look at “indecent” as marital unfaithfulness but instead took the approach of anything that the husband disliked
 - examples: burning food and plain looks
- What does Jesus tell us about the fuller meaning of this law?
 - Matthew 19:1-9
 - Firstly, Jesus appeals to creation and the order that God had intended for his creation from the beginning
 - That a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh
 - This is God's original intention
 - Secondly, Moses allowed them give a certificate of divorce to their wife because of the hardness in their hearts
 - Jesus makes it very clear that this was not what God had intended and that if anyone divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual immorality commits adultery
- Malachi 2:16
 - “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

Verses 33-37 regarding the taking of oaths:

- We read about oaths in Lev 19:12, Num 30:2, Deut 23:21
 - Lev tells us we are not to swear by the name of God falsely and so profane the name of the Lord
 - Num tells us if a man vows a vow to the Lord or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge then he must do according to all that proceeds out of this mouth
 - Deut tells us if we make a vow to God then we must not delay fulfilling it for God will ask us about it and we will be guilty of sin if it is not fulfilled
- So what went wrong again?
 - The Pharisees had made the law something easier for them to follow. They made swearing on oath to some items more important than others
- So what does Jesus tell us?
 - Matthew 23:16-22 gives an account of Jesus telling the crowds and his disciples that the Pharisees had made swearing to the temple or the altar unimportant, but swearing by the gold of the temple or the gift on the altar an unbreakable oath
 - Jesus rebukes them for this and that is why Matthew 5:37 tells us to simply let our yes be yes and our no be no

As a Christian, what do I do now that I know these facts?

- God has made it very clear that He hates divorce except for the grounds of sexual immorality
 - If you are married now or thinking about marriage then remember that in the account of God's creation He made them male and female to be united as one (Gen 1:27, 2:24)
 - Matthew 19:6 makes it very clear that “what God has joined together, let man not separate.”
- God has furthermore made it very clear to let our 'yes' be 'yes' and our 'no' be 'no'
 - “But surely to tell a lie is as bad as perjury, for, as Christians, we should always speak as in the presence of God” – Martyn Lloyd-Jones

And if you do not call yourself a Christians, what can I do from this point forward?

- Divorce and oaths are among many other laws that Jesus talks about here on the sermon on the mount
- The important fact is that all of these standards that Jesus tells us are not achievable by ourselves
- The standard God demands is perfection, but because of our sinfulness (Romans 3:23) we can never reach that standard
- Romans 6:23 tells us that because of our sins, we deserve only death
- This is where we cannot rely on our own strength to get us through but instead rely on another person who has paid the price
- Romans 5:8 tell us that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”
 - He died so that we can live
 - This gift comes free from God by faith alone. There is nothing we can do to earn God's merit
- Eph 2:8-9
 - “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”