

Series: Sermon on the Mount

Lesson: #16

Title: Leave Your Gift, First Be Reconciled

Scripture: Matthew 5: 21-26

Date: 8-27-2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, NJ

In the context of the passage the Lord Jesus Christ is declaring that he did not come to destroy the law as the Pharisees' charged him. He is declaring the necessity that he come and fulfill the law for his people.

Matthew 5: 20: 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.

In verse 21 the Lord begins to compare and contrast the righteousness the Pharisees boasted of and the righteousness which God demands.

Matthew 5: 21: 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:

The Pharisees taught by the tradition received from their fathers--that "thou shalt not kill" meant only the letter of the law, that is, murder only.

Matthew 5: 22: 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 to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The Lord says it is not merely outward obedience that is required but there can not be any unjustified anger in your heart or any unjustified speech. Not only were they only concerned with the letter of the law but the main object of the Pharisee was to make men fearful of their judgments and of their councils. The Lord says that you shall be in danger, not of merely the councils of men, but of the judgment of God, of hell fire. The Lord is giving the true spiritual meaning of the moral law.

The context does not change as we enter verse 23.

Matthew 5: 23: Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

In this verse the Lord is using ceremonial, law-language. Partly, because at this time the bringing of gifts to a physical altar in the temple was the means of worship, but mainly because the scribes, the Pharisees and their followers were like the carnally religious have always been throughout every age. Their acts of religion--their obedience, their gifts, their offerings, their self-denial their self-sacrifice--was where they put their confidence.

The Lord says, leave off bringing your gifts, your sacrifices, until first things first be taken care of.

Who is the brother who has ought against thee? If you think you can come to God by your obedience then you are a murderer of Christ Jesus in your heart. You have called Christ a fool--a godless moron, a devil--and have called yourself wise. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who has "ought" against all who think so lightly of God's law as to look to their own obedience to it for acceptance or reward with God.

The Brother we have offended above all others is God our Savior, Christ Jesus. He is truly the only Brother who has no cause in him for which any should be angry. But coming to God in our own obedience, rather than through faith in Christ is unbelief, and unbelief is despising him, saying to him “*Raca*,” “*thou fool*”.

1 Corinthians 1:18: For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1 John 5:10: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”

Listen to the "ought" which Christ had against the Pharisees? Remember we are dealing with the law of murder, with anger in the heart and with evil speech.

John 8: 37: I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. 38: I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? *even* because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not. 46 ¶ Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God. 48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? 49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. 50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

There is no coming to God until we are reconciled to him in and by Christ, reconciled to Christ as our only God and Savior, our only wisdom, our only atonement for sin, our only righteousness, and our only redemption.

During the days of the Old Testament the deceitful hearts pointed men to their deeds of law obedience in the name of being *justified* before God. In this gospel age the same wicked hearts point men to their deeds of law obedience in the name of being *sanctified* before God. Both lies are exactly the same self-exalting will-worship but in different dispensations.

We need to leave off offering our gifts, leave off sacrificing, our acts of disciplining, of casting out devils, of doing many wonderful works, and first, be reconciled to Christ Jesus the Lord and then come and offer thy gift.

But if we have been reconciled by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit then we will cease looking at the flesh of ourselves and of our brethren for the believer no longer knows any man after the flesh but after the Spirit. Find out what that means O, Pharisees!

Matthew 5: 25: 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. 26: Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

If I am your brother in Christ then I am your friend not your adversary; if you are my brother in Christ then you are my friend not my adversary, not matter what you have done to me or I to you.

Romans 12: 18: If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

But if a sinner in this world is your adversary such as is described here by our Lord--if someone has a strong enough case against you so that if you go before the judge you will go to prison and pay the uttermost farthing--will your agreeing with them keep your adversary from delivering you from the judge and the judge delivering you from prison? Not under the law of this land!

But if your adversary is the thrice holy God, agreement will get you only mercy and grace!

When the commandment comes by the Spirit of God into your heart sin revives and you stand like Israel in the day when the commandment was given and they beheld the mountain on fire, quaking and fearful to behold. Then you behold:

Lamentations 2: 4: He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.

That is the day when you will find that God has a law suit against you. You have broken his every law. Agree with your adversary! Your heart, your imaginations, your words, your deeds are all against him. Agree with your adversary! All your very best works of religion, your casting out of men who did not measure up, your self-denial, your acts of benevolence are one more way you are seeking acceptance with God apart from Christ. Agree with your Adversary! Your doing and striving to be holy, your works of so-called sanctification are nothing but self-striving to receive some part of the glory belonging to Christ alone, it is spiritual fornication and adultery, it is idolatry, it is murder, it is sin! Agree with your Adversary! The salvation which you long for is merely your desire to fulfill the lust of your flesh, instead of a desire to kiss the feet of Christ! Agree with your Adversary!

The word "*fool*" which used here means "godless moron, or reprobate moron." It is what the carnal heart thinks of Christ. But listen to the same word used in:

I Corinthians 3:18. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

Agree with your adversary! You have been calling yourself wise and Christ you have regarded in your heart as a fool. If we would be spiritually wise, we must take our place before God as fools, godless sinners, in danger of hell fire without Christ.

All God requires is that you agree with him, casting yourself on his mercy.

Whiles thou art in the way with him;

Be reconciled to God quickly by faith in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus is himself the Way! Christ is the only way of reconciliation between you and your Adversary! The Lord says time is of the essence:

Matthew 5: 25: Agree with thine adversary quickly, while 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. 26: Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

But what about when you have agreed, when you have been reconciled to God by faith in Christ Jesus? Now then after you are reconciled what altar do you come to?

Hebrews 4:16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 13:10: We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

The only access sinners have to God, and the only acceptance we have with God, the one in whom all our spiritual gifts are sanctified is Christ Jesus our Altar. We are not looking to our gifts or the gifts of our brethren, to their service or self-denial nor to our own, but Christ our Altar.

Matthew 23: 19: *Ye* fools and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

As the Pharisees attested by their conduct, those who claim to live by the law commonly manifest the judgmental hatred our Lord has just condemned. Those who give up all hopes of law righteousness and trust Christ alone for righteousness are taught by the grace they experience to love one another.

Galatians 5: 22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23: Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Those who are born of his Spirit, love the brethren, desire reconciliation with brethren, because we know, in this unity with have with Christ as our Head and we as his body, it is impossible to be angry with a brother, without being angry with Christ and it is impossible to be angry with Christ without being angry with all his brethren.

Psalms 26: 6: I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD: 7: That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.