

God's Law in the Heart

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Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] And the title this morning, I suppose, is God's Law in the Heart, or perhaps better, Heaven in Your Heart.

It's a few weeks now since we were in Matthew's Gospel because of Easter and holidays and so on, so let's just recap a little bit. After the first four chapters of Matthew's Gospel that introduces us to Jesus the King, we began to look at the Sermon on the Mount, the beginning of a revolutionary kingdom that this King brings in.

And we did an overview of the Beatitudes, the King's people. That's now what we're looking at in much more detail on Wednesdays at lunchtime. We're spending these ten weeks on the Beatitudes. And then we went on from the Beatitudes to look not just at who the King's people are, but what they're for, their purpose. We are ambassadors for his rule. That is, we're engaged in his mission. And then, from chapter 5, verse 21 onwards to the end of the chapter, we began to see the demands of this King that go really very deep. We saw that the power of kingdom mission lies in the radical lifestyle of the kingdom people.

[1 : 18] The world sees that radical counter-cultural, and that is power. And we looked at Jesus' own explanation of the heart of the law that enables us to see that counter-culture.

We saw Jesus himself both correcting, on the one hand, the legalism and the abuse of the scribes, the teachers of the law, their ethical casuistry, getting around the commands by domesticating them.

Jesus sweeps that away. But at the same time, he shows the climax, that what he is demanding is a true kingdom morality for a kingdom age.

He's redisplaying and rediscovering the real heart of all God's desire for his people, and showing that God's desire for his people shall be accomplished through the coming of his kingdom in Jesus Christ.

Remember the climax of chapter 5. Just look at it there in verse 45. It's all about being like your Father in heaven. Be sons of your Father, whose love is expansive to all.

[2 : 27] Verse 48 there. Be perfect as he is. Remember, not meaning be morally faultless, none of us can, but being complete, wholesome, expansive, all-embracing in your expression of righteousness.

Be as your heavenly Father is. That's kingdom righteousness. And you remember we said it's all about right relationships. It's evidence, living like that, of a right relationship with the Father, with God.

And it's expressed in right relationships with others in the world, the way we live. That's chapter 5, the heart of God's law.

But, you see, there's real danger, isn't there, in that teaching. Just as the scribes, the teachers of the law, manipulated and neutralized the true challenge of the morality of God's holy law.

Just as they, by doing that, enslaved it to religion, to bondage. So also, it is possible for us to pervert even the exposition of the heart of the law by Jesus himself.

[3 : 36] We can turn it into hypocrisy and sham, can't we? Don Carson says, the greater the demand for holiness, the greater the potential for hypocrisy and self-deception.

And we know that's right, don't we? The higher the demand upon us, the easier it is for it all to just become outward show. So, you see, immediately in chapter 6, Jesus goes straight on to show that not only must we get to the heart of God's law, his righteousness, not only must we get a grasp of true kingdom morality, we've also got to get a grasp of a true kingdom mentality.

We've got to get right through to the motivation that lies at the heart of it all. There's just no room for hypocrisy or sham, for outward show.

True kingdom righteousness, Jesus is saying here, must be lived out from the heart. And that's the mark of true kingdom people.

That was the promise, wasn't it, in Jeremiah 31 of the New Covenant. The law will be in your hearts, in flesh. It will be planted there as a seed by God's Spirit.

[4 : 54] So, we could sum it up this way and say that kingdom righteousness is all love from the heart and love for the Father. Love from the heart and love for the Father.

That's the key to all Christian living. As we live lives in the kingdom that has been begun by Jesus, but still awaits his final coming.

The world that we live in right now. It's all about seeing who we're living for and who we're not living for. Who we're not trying to please.

It's all about seeing what we're living for and what we're not living for. What we're not trying to gain as rewards. That's the key to life now, to today's life, to daily life for you and me.

For our work, for our labour. For our relationships with one another in the church and outside it. For the priorities that we have in our lives. For everything in the whole gamut of our existence.

[5 : 55] That's the key to it all. We've got to know who we're living for and what we're living for. And this chapter that we read begins to help us get it clear and plain.

It's a passage with a lovely balance and a kind of symmetry to it. The foundational principle is in the middle, verses 19 to 24. Did you notice that? That sums up, really, and is the key to everything that goes before and everything that comes afterwards.

Because verses 19 to 24 give us true kingdom perspective. True kingdom perspective in all of life.

And you see, that then governs all of our thinking, verses 1 to 18, about true kingdom piety.

About our devotional life. And also what comes from chapter 6, verse 25, through 7, verse 12. True kingdom priorities in our daily life.

Or if you like, we have to have a true kingdom perspective to govern our daily worship of God. And our daily walk with God in the world. So let's begin there in the middle.

[7 : 00] Look at verses 19 to 24. A true kingdom perspective. And you could sum it up like this. The title, Heaven is in your heart. A heart and a mind and a will, molded and shaped by heaven, not by earth.

That's a kingdom perspective. That's a true kingdom mentality. That's the difference between religion and real relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ.

Religion is dead obedience. The obedience of works. Makes God's commands into a killing burden because we're trying to keep them for merit's sake. But relationship is totally different.

It's a joyful obedience of faith. God's commands then are sweet as honey, as the psalmist says. A true kingdom perspective means that God's wonderful kingdom has penetrated right to the very heart of our being.

That it's taking control of our whole personality. It's possessing our control center. Our inclinations, our decision making, what Jonathan Edwards calls our affections.

[8 : 14] That's what the Bible means by our heart. It's not just about our emotions. It's about the inner center of gravity of our whole being. And because we've seen where our true treasure is, that is true for us.

You see, verse 21 makes it very clear. Our treasure possesses us. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is. The world, you see, in verse 19, the world is all about treasure now.

That's what the general election is all about, isn't it? That's why the politicians are going up and down all over the country in buses and helicopters offering us treasure. Might be the treasure of less council tax, or even no council tax.

Or better health services, or better schools, or a hundred other things. Offering us treasure now.

Depending on which side of the political spectrum you happen to be on, it's either about keeping and protecting treasure you've already got, or it's about getting hold of treasure you don't presently think you have and you want to have.

But all the way it's about treasure, treasures now, things, material. But the reality, Jesus says, you see, in verse 20, is that all of that simply decays if it's not first stolen.

[9 : 32] Well, I've learned a little bit of late, as you know, of the experience of theft. But it's true, isn't it? Even if it's only the last thief of death, everything we have will ultimately be taken away from us.

Maybe that you're not a materialist. You think, well, I'm not interested in things. But perhaps you're bent as health in the body. Perhaps you're one of these people who goes to the gym every day and exercises.

Maybe you're one of those people who buys organic soya bran. I had it once to cure, I won't tell you what it was to try and cure, to help my digestion. But I don't recommend it at all. But maybe you do all of that, you're into body toning and all of those sorts of things.

But the fact is, that still, ultimately, it may not be the moths that will get you, but the worms will get you. Won't they? That body will go back to dust.

And you see, the true kingdom perspective sees that. It sees the reality, Jesus says, of earthly transience and heavenly permanence.

[10:41] Only the kingdom of heaven is real and permanent. That's Jesus' point in 19 and 20. And moreover, he's saying, that's where our home really is. Because that's where our Father is.

Back at verse 9, our Father in heaven. I was spending some time earlier this week with Roy Murray and praying with him just before he went back to Vietnam.

And he said to me an interesting thing. He said, often as I travel and spend my life in different countries, people say to me, where do you consider home to be, Roy? He said, it's always been an easy answer.

I always said, well, home is where my parents are. But he said, as I was reading and praying this morning, the thought struck me now that both of my parents are now in heaven. But then he said, I realized, but that is where my home is.

It's where my parents are. It's where my heavenly Father is. That is our true home. And God is our true treasure and where he is, is our true home.

[11:44] And a kingdom perspective, you see, has grasped that. It's seen where the solid joys, where the lasting treasures are. And it lives all of life in every aspect in that glorious light.

Because once you've seen that, it's impossible to live any other way. In fact, that is the test, really, of whether you have understood and grasped what the gospel is all about at all.

And all the way through this chapter, Jesus is contrasting for us two ways. Life lived according to earthly perspective, or life lived according to a heavenly perspective.

The question is, what's in your heart? The answer is, well, look and see where your treasure is.

That'll tell you where your heart really is. I used to watch a program on television that was about people building unusual houses.

I remember once watching it, and there was a couple who were building this huge and magnificent new house. And to do so, they'd have to knock down their old one. And they were living temporarily in a building site, in a caravan.

[12:50] And you were watching the progress of the house. Meanwhile, this family of six, I think it was, living in this tiny caravan. And it was a shambles. It was a mess. And the interviewer said, you know, why don't you do something to this caravan?

But the builder rightly said, well, why would I do that? This is just temporary. Why would I sink my resources, my time, my money into this caravan? I want it all to go into that house.

They were living for the day when they entered their true home. Home is where their heart is, you see. And if the kingdom of heaven is our home, from the very heart of our being, then surely the desires, the needs, the priorities of that kingdom are going to control our whole thinking, our whole outlook on life, the way we see everything, and control our wills, our whole act of determination, and what we do, how we live.

That's why Jesus goes on in verse 22 to talk about seeing clearly. Do you see that? Kingdom eyes, you see, are healthy eyes. Healthy eyes light up a whole outlook of life for us.

We begin to think straight. We make right decisions. We make right judgments about the world. Not like verse 23, with blurred vision or double vision, confused completely about what are the really important things in life.

[14:17] No. We see in the light of eternity. We see in the light of the glory dawning from Emmanuel's land, as we were singing on Wednesday.

And when we see with that clear sight, we see two things. We realize that the only thing that matters is that we live in God's sight now. That he is our treasure.

He is our rewarder. That all that matters is being seen by him. And that's what verses 1 to 18 is all about. The Father who sees in secret will reward you.

We're living for God's eyes only. That's what life's all about. Not to impress the world, but to impress him. We live in God's sight.

But secondly, we realize we also live with God's sight. Our eyes have been open to the invisible, to the reality of heaven. And that fact gives us clarity and perspective on all things in the earth.

[15:14] All our temporal existence. It transforms the way that we think about and view earthly relationships. In terms of material things. Anxieties.

In terms of judgments about people. In terms about the resources that we need to live like this and where they come from. That's what 6.25 right through to 7.12 is all about.

It's all about seeing with the perspective of God's sight. Our whole attitude to daily living is illuminated. Eyes opened by God himself. And you see verse 24 tells us that when we see clearly, we can also serve clearly.

We see that we just can't serve God and material things. We can't serve earth and heaven. Not just you mustn't. We see that it's impossible.

We can't sink all of our funds, all of our energy, all of our labor, into our dream home and at the same time into the caravan that we're just temporarily occupying.

[16:17] The trouble is that so often we as Christians do actually suffer from blurred vision, don't we? We think we can. I've got contact lenses.

I never wear them in the pulpit. And the reason for that is that they get swiveled and turn around when I shut my eyes and I open my eyes after praying and my vision's all blurred and I can't see anything. I can't see my notes.

I'd ramble even more than I do normally if I wore them. But too often as Christians we're looking at life like I do through my blurred contact lenses.

Here's one example quite close to home for many of us. Children. Many of us have education as a very great priority for our children and there's nothing wrong with that.

It is very important. Don't get me wrong. But often, you know, it's true, isn't it, that underlying that concern for education is something deeper, isn't it? We're concerned for our children's career, for their security, for their future, for their success.

[17:18] We want them to be Christian. Of course we do. But isn't it true that sometimes what we're really saying is we want an insurance policy for them after a long and successful life?

Make sure that they're in heaven. Rather than placing our children's spiritual development and growth and prosperity and future above absolutely everything that this world can offer.

I plead guilty to that. And many of us do. But you see, that's blurred vision. That's seeing the earth, not heaven. And Jesus says, you can't serve both. He says it. It's very plain.

It's absolutely plain. Heaven or earth. Faith or unbelief. That's what he means. So you see, we must have a clear sight.

And a clear sighted perspective sees that our treasure is our master. That we're either serving earth or heaven. But never both. If we're serving earth, we are in fact enslaved to the things of earth.

[18:19] No matter how spiritual we think we are, or others think we are, we'll be possessed. We will be seeking treasure. We'll be filled with worry and anxiety.

We'll be driven people. By contrast, if our treasure is truly in heaven, we've really seen that the God we serve is the God of grace who serves us.

He gives us all that we need for heaven and for earth. And we're freed. We're liberated from worry, from anxiety, from earthly cares. We're freed from earthly and unjust attitudes to others.

You see, the contrast is very stark, isn't it? It's absolute. Heaven or earth. God or mammon. Faith or unbelief. But how do I know?

How do I know where my heart really is? Well, the truth is that the invisible is in fact visible. It can be seen. That's what Jesus says. It can be seen in these two contrasting approaches to Christian piety and to Christian priorities.

[19:30] Or if you like, the character of our devotional life, our daily worship, and the character of our daily life, our daily walk. And Jesus, in this chapter, is both instructing us how to live with a kingdom perspective and exposing the truth about our hearts.

What really is the case? who and what really does have my heart and your heart? Whose slave are you really this morning?

Let's look at verse 1 to 18. First of all, it's all about true kingdom piety. It's about our devotional life, our daily worship. And let's see clearly what a difference that this kingdom perspective really

makes.

Whether you're seeing with a single eye and serving God or whether you're seeing with a blind eye and serving the material. The key message is that this is a life of personal devotion to the Father and for the Father.

It's a life lived in the sight of God, not man. And therefore, seeing clearly, did you see it? is a theme all the way through. It's there in verses 4 and 6 and 18.

[20 : 39] It's all about seeing. Seeing that the God who sees in secret is what matters. A heavenly perspective, you see, has an eye to the future.

That what counts is that God sees us, not that man and the world sees us. We are seeking treasure, we are seeking reward, nothing wrong with that, but not as the world does. We're not concerned with worldly recognition now.

Rather, we're content to trust that life now is really all about the future and that it's about God's enrichment and his reward in his heavenly kingdom.

Verse 1 gives us the principle, doesn't it? That our devotional life, our piety, our spiritual duty, the righteousness that we do is not to be seen by men seeking their reward, seeking earthly reward, but it's rather to be seen by God seeking his reward alone, treasures in heaven, not earth.

Then verses 2 to 18 give us three examples, three illustrations from the three pillars of devotional life in Israel. And these, it's interesting to notice, Jesus assumes as part of the life of the Christian.

[21 : 52] We shouldn't be surprised at that, this continuity. It's one faith, one church, one Lord, has been right from the beginning. We can only give a cursory glance at these just now, but if you want to read more about them, you'll be looking at them in house groups on Wednesday.

I recommend, again, John Stott's book on the Sermon on the Mount or Sinclair Ferguson's little book. But let's just catch the theme and outline of what he's saying here. Look first at giving, verses 2 to 4.

Here he's talking about a spiritual duty with an outward focus, isn't he, to others. Notice he assumes giving. He's not talking here about giving to the government or even giving to the church.

We benefit from those things. No, he's talking here about something we don't benefit from, from charity, from giving to the needy. Giving out of sheer love and compassion. When you give. That's the mark of a true Christian according to the New Testament.

Love from the heart. What is it that James says in James 1.27? Religion that is true and undefiled before God is this. Cares for widows and orphans and the afflicted.

[22 : 58] 1 John 3 and 17. If we have the world's goods and see our brother in need and yet close our hearts, well how can God's love be in us? A kingdom perspective, you see, gives from the heart.

Not, not in an undiscerning way. I'm told that the most supported charity in the United Kingdom is the National Trust. I don't think, well I have nothing against the National Trust.

I don't think that's what Jesus got in view here. Yet equally, he's not saying that Christians should only be concerned to giving for evangelism, for preaching and teaching and propagation of the gospel.

He's saying here that there are those who have needs, bodily needs and we should give from the heart. Think about persecuted believers. If we, the wealthy believers in the safety of this country are not willing to give to our persecuted brethren in other countries, who is going to?

The world won't give to them. That's why it was such a joy, wasn't it, that we could give through the Barnabas Fund to help those Christian believers persecuted in many parts of the Muslim world, especially after the disaster of the tsunami.

[24 : 09] The point is that at heart, giving is not just an outward thing, but it's also an upward thing. It's giving for the Father. And that's why verse 2 says we don't need to trumpet it.

In fact, we mustn't trumpet it because he sees, even if nobody else does. It's not for other people's eyes, it's not for them to be impressed, it's for our Father. Giving to impress others isn't giving, it's sponsorship.

You get something in return. I mean, let's say you might have a good business in Glasgow and you've got a bit of a soft spot for a local football team. You might decide that, well, maybe you want to sponsor them, perhaps.

You might be a very nice person, you might be a very kind and giving person. But that's not why you're doing it, is it? You're doing it because you're a hard-headed business person. You want a

return.

You get a return. That's all and well and good, that's good business, nothing wrong with that, especially if your friends get to go to Ibrox and get a good lunch. But Christian giving isn't that, is it? [25 : 14] It's not giving for a return. It's not got an ulterior motive, it's giving freely in verse 3, forgetfully. The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing, you've forgotten as soon as you've given.

That's important, isn't it? Because it's very easy for hypocrisy to creep in there, isn't there? Some people, you know, make a great fuss about anonymous giving, they'll only give anonymously. But actually, in their heart, very often, they're just nurturing pride.

I'm giving in secret, I'm obeying Jesus to the letter. It's not about obeying Jesus to the letter, it's about what's in the heart. A kingdom mentality has a personal detachment from giving.

It's grace that gives without strings, without fuss, and without memory. The right hand doesn't remember what the left hand has done. Because it's a perspective that sees it's all about a secret relationship with our Father who loves us and who we love.

It's because we've got heaven in our heart and therefore heaven possesses our heart. Look at prayer, verses 5 to 15. Here it's a special duty directly upwards to God.

[26 : 25] Again, it's assumed when you pray. There's no contradiction in verse 6 against public prayer just because he says we must go into a room. In fact, it assumes corporate prayer.

It speaks about you plurally in verse 5 and verse 9 and it speaks about praying our Father. It assumes that there'll be many times when we pray together. But again, the issue here is motive. There's vast differences between the prayer of the true believer and the empty prayer of both the religious person, the hypocrite, the moralist, and the pagan, the amoral materialist.

This is important. Look at verse 5, the hypocrite, the man of religion. He prays in order to manipulate man's attitudes, in order to be seen and praised.

And he is. Oh, what a holy and prayerful person that is. But the pagan materialist in verse 7, the Gentiles, they pray to manipulate God's attitudes with lots of empty words and prattles and mantras. All about getting things from God and getting them for myself. In contrast to both of those things is the true believer who has a real relationship with God. Neither of these other two do, but he does and his prayer, therefore, is totally different.

[27 : 41] It's to submit to the desires of God for his kingdom, for the world, for our personal lives. It's all about being personal. It's not about power seeking.

Verse 6, it's to your Father. You need him, you want him. That's all that matters. That's why it can be in a secret place, in a locked room.

In fact, sometimes it has to be to preserve our very sincerity. It's not for man. It's for God. It's about petition, as the Lord's Prayer shows us.

Verse 8 says, he knows our needs, but that doesn't mean we have no need to pray. Rather, it means we pray with trust and with faith, recognizing that. In other words, we acknowledge a prayerful dependency within that relationship.

Just like being parents. We know what our children need. We'll give them what they need, but we love it when they ask. Daddy, would you help me to tie my shoelaces? Mommy, will you help me put my clothes on?

[28 : 42] We know their need, but we love them to ask. That's relationship. No endless words, no mantras, no chanting. That's religion. Simply asking our Heavenly Father.

Of course, it's an asking with priorities, isn't it? Verse 10, the kingdom comes first. Same as verse 33, seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Because we pray from the heart and heaven is in our heart, heaven's needs, heaven's priorities control us.

It's the same with fasting in verse 16. Here the duty is more selfward and inward. Again, it's assumed fasting, although it's nowhere commanded in the New Testament.

Although many of us could do with a bit more of it than we do. My belt's very tight after my holiday. I've had to invite the good Dr. Atkins back into my life to help me get back into my trousers. But anyway, that's not what this is about.

Fasting in the Bible is all about prayer. And it's illustrative, isn't it, of a wider principle. Giving up the material for the sake of our Heavenly Father. It's an outward, a tangible expression of our love and our concern for Him.

[29 : 55] And very often that's necessary in a relationship, isn't it? Giving things up. Giving up time. Sacrificing other things for the sake of our relationship with our husband or our wife or somebody else.

It's when we're not prepared to do that that relationships suffer. So it is with God. But again, it's so easy for it to be sham and hypocrisy. Verse 16, doing it to impress others with a glum face. The New Testament is very, very clear. We are to mortify, to put to death the deeds of the flesh. To put to death and suppress all worldly appetites for the sake of our spiritual health. And we know that, don't we? If our appetite gets out of balance, it's bad for our health. It leads either to obesity or to anorexia or to something else, some kind of disorder. And it's the same in our spiritual life.

We mustn't let our appetites be out of balance. We mustn't let earthly appetites dictate the heavenly. It must be the other way round. And that means that there are many things, many good things that at times we have to do without, consciously, so that we may live fruitful lives for God.

[31 : 10] That's sacrificial living. That's the principle of fasting. Giving up some of our time, our talents, our money, that's what we vow when we join the church, in order that we may serve.

But again, there must be no hypocrisy. It's so easy in that, isn't it, to be showy, to show off to others. Oh well, when you're asked to help and do something in the church, oh well, if no one else will do it, okay, it's my duty, I know I'll help or I'll give more or I'll do this or do that.

No, you see, when we say that, it's to be seen by other people or to impress ourselves. No, says Jesus, be joyful, be happy, wash your face, smile. Even if nobody notices.

That's not to say we should make a point of not noticing others' sacrifices and services. We should. We should acknowledge them much more than we do. But that's not what should be motivating us. God sees. He knows. Even if nobody else does. And that's why we know our labour is not in vain. Because we're living for home. For heaven.

[32 : 21] You see, in all of these areas, the attitude in giving and in prayer and in sacrifice, it's just the same, isn't it? It's all about a mentality, an attitude, a clear sight. The worldly attitude seeks man's praise and gets it.

But ultimately, it gets nothing. They've received their reward, says Jesus. True faith, true kingdom mentality wants the Father and gets the Father, gets his attention and will receive his reward. Even though now, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, even though now we may only get slander and scorn and persecution. And that's why only with a true kingdom perspective can you live like that.

Only if you see with a single eye that God sees in secret can you have a single heart. And you can only do that if your true treasure truly is in heaven and that treasure possesses your heart, your affections, your control center.

Exactly the same thing as seen in the second half of the passage. Verses 25, onwards, true kingdom priorities in our daily life, in our daily walk. Again, if the devotional life of piety was all about devotion to the Father and for the Father, so the practical daily life that we live in a whole host of ways is a life marked out by practical discernment that comes from the Father.

[33 : 55] It's all about clear vision. Life lived with God's sight, not just man's. Seeing the God of grace and trusting in his grace and his provision for all aspects of our earthly life.

That's to see your daily walk with a perspective of heaven and not earth. So it gives us first in verse 25 to 34 a right perspective on providence.

Again, the emphasis is self-worth on our own needs. A kingdom perspective says this, therefore do not be anxious about life now, about clothes, about food, about the future.

Why? Because a sound eye sees the Master and it knows that we're slaves in his house and therefore we depend on him for everything.

We can trust him. The slavery illustration here is not that of an exploited and abused slave. Rather, it's the slave in the ancient house who was a prized member of the family, almost in some cases like a son and therefore valued and knowing that we have value to our Master and he will care for us.

[35 : 02] Notice that the first half of the chapter that we looked at was all about rewards, not seeking earthly rewards else those corrupt us and cause us to be idolaters. But here's another aspect.

You see, it acknowledges that we do have needs. We do need clothes and food. There is a future. There is a tomorrow to face. And the point is that worry and anxiety about these sort of things, the material, can lead to a loss of trust in our Father.

That's what marks pagans, you see, verse 32. They seek after things. That's the mark of an earthly perspective. Things are the things that drive unbelieving prayer.

It's the same in verse 7, the prattles and the endless words, getting things. But God himself, you see, and his kingdom is the focus of believing prayer, verse 33. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

We're not to be taken up with things, even in prayer. We're to be free from the bondage to things, to the material. And then we will be free from the anxieties, the worries of tomorrow.

[36 : 12] If we have God's perspective, you see, we see, we see the Father in heaven and we trust in his provision. He's not saying, he's not saying, oh, you don't have to work, you don't have to save or be prudent, you mustn't have life insurance or pay into a pension.

That's not what it's about. The New Testament's very clear. Paul says in Thessalonians 3, you mustn't be idle, you must work and support yourself. He writes in 1 Timothy 5, you must, you have a duty to support your family.

But what he is saying here is we mustn't be preoccupied with these things. Otherwise, soon we will be possessed by them. We'll become an enslaving earthly master.

You used to see so often walking across London Bridge the furrowed brows of the people going back and forward to work in the city of London, the home of Mammon. A kingdom perspective trusts, verse 32, our Father knows what we need and he'll give us all that we need.

Maybe not all that we want, but all that we need. Isn't that the opposite of the world? The world gives no thought for future spiritual reward.

[37 : 27] All it wants is praise and adulation now from man. But it's totally taken up with worrying for the future materially. Isn't that right? But the believer sees with God's sight and God's sight can have a present detachment, a contentment.

Paul says, godliness with contentment is great gain and my goodness, it is great gain. But you can only have that, you can only know that if heaven possesses your heart.

It gives us a right perspective, chapter 7, verse 1, on penitence. Here the attitude is to others. It's outward again. These verses are much misunderstood in today's world.

Judge not, you will not be judged. People take it to mean, well, I'll do what I like, get off my case, don't judge me. That's not what it's about here at all. It's actually about true penitence against pride and prejudice.

A true kingdom perspective, you see, sees yourself and others with the perspective of heaven. And that is the perspective of the light of God's grace. And that marks out our judgments.

[38 : 35] In verses 1 to 4 he speaks about wrong judgments, earthly judgments, religious judgments. The hypocrite, verse 3, the self-justifying person, he suffers from distorted vision.

He's got a bad eye, verse 4 says. Why? Because he's got a log in it. It's the distorted vision of self-righteousness. Very quick to see other people's faults and condemn them, but utterly blind to our own faults.

Manifold and huge. That's the sight of earth. That's the sight of the world. That's the sight of religion, of morality and moralism. That's the Daily Mail mentality.

Mentality of the offended moralist. Condemns. On the other side of the political spectrum it's the morality of the Guardian newspaper. Sanctimonious, self-righteous leftism.

Both of those are religion. Both of those attitudes too often are in our hearts. Notice verse 3, it says, brother. There's three times. What he's talking about here is judging one another within the church.

[39 : 38] And we do tend to judge like that, don't we? We must be honest. But it's wrong, says Jesus. It's earthly. Verse 4 tells us, verse 5 rather, that there is a right judgment.

Both within the church and then in verse 6, outside the church. He's saying that we're not to be soft and sentimental. There is a right way to make judgments and to be discerning.

But you can only do that if you've got a right perspective on penitence. You can only judge truly if it comes from a penitent heart that has grasped the truth about grace.

Because grace knows what Jesus says here. That the same master judges us all. That with the judgment we use, we too will be judged.

Grace recognizes that God has been gracious to us and forgiven us a mountain of sin, the log in our own eye. And when we've recognized that, well only then can we help others who are caught in a sin remove the speck from their eye.

[40 : 41] You see, Paul says in Galatians 6.1, it's the spiritual person who helps to restore others and he does it gently, not condemning them. Verse 6, is talking about judgments clearly made outside the church.

They're harsh words, aren't they? But they're real. Jesus is saying that there are those who are persistent and even vicious refusers of the treasure of the gospel. Pigs who trample the great pearl of great price underfoot.

Dogs who devour holy things and then seek to attack and devour us. And what he's saying is that in these extreme circumstances we are to withdraw, not to squander the gift of God in vain.

Jesus, remember in Matthew 10, says, if they reject you, shake the dust of your feet. Paul does that exactly the same in Acts chapter 13. It's very hard, isn't it?

But it's put here to show that there's no room for sentimentalism here. There must be right judgments. Spurgeon says we're to be saints, not simpletons. But, we can only make such judgments, such decisions, such discernments if, first of all, we've got a right perspective on penitence.

[41 : 59] We've grasped the wonder of God's grace with a log in our own eye. Only if heaven has penetrated our hearts. And finally, in verses 7 to 12, we get a right perspective on persistence.

Here the focus again is upward on relationship to God. The question arises, doesn't it, in our minds, how on earth are we to show such balance and judgment? How on earth are we to show such trust in God's provision against the anxieties and worries that we all face?

How are we to have such right attitudes all through our life of our daily worship, our daily walk, our priorities? How are we to do it? Jesus says the answer is you ask God and you keep on asking.

You need a right perspective on persistence that understands the relationship we have with the God of grace. And a right perspective on that knows three things about grace.

First, verse 7, we know grace is needed and we know it's needed again and again. Not only to enter the kingdom, but every step of the way. Only by grace can we enter, but only by grace can we stand and walk.

[43 : 15] We come into the kingdom, Jesus says, poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness and he will fill us. But what he's saying here is that's the way it goes on and on and on.

The hymn says we need thee every hour and that's what Jesus says here. We need to ask, we need to seek, we need to knock, we need to go on. You see, a true disciple understands himself and his need for daily grace and so he pursues it.

He's persistent. He asks and he asks again. He knows grace is needed. But verse 8, he knows grace is provided. The true kingdom perspective, you see, sees and knows the master as father. Not as a tyrant. Not as the God who wants to beat us and flog us and squash us in the dust. Not even, not even as a flawed earthly parent.

My goodness, we're all flawed as parents, aren't we? Who love our children yet fail them so often. No, how much more will your heavenly father be a lavish, extravagant father of mercies.

[44 : 22] He loves to give grace to all who ask. He gives more grace, says the hymn, as the burdens grow greater. He gives and gives and gives again. And a true disciple knows that.

And so he asks and he goes on asking. In other words, he's persistent and persevering in pursuing God. That's just another way of saying what Jesus says in Matthew 22, verse 37, that the great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. That just simply means go on seeking him and asking. And that's why, finally, verse 12 follows directly on here with this section.

Even though in my Bible it begins a new one. That's wrong. It brackets chapter 5, verse 17. This is the sum of the sermon, the law and the prophets. It follows on here because such an attitude that pursues God with wholehearted perseverance naturally flows out persistently in right relationships with men and women.

It understands that grace overflows. A wholehearted love of God that perseveres always leads to a wholehearted persevering love of neighbour.

[45 : 40] It's just the other half of the two great commandments. It's expressed here as this is the law and the prophets. Because this is the overflow from hearts that are full of heaven.

Hearts that are possessed by heaven. Because heaven is the place where God's perfect and holy and righteous law is embodied forever. That's what heaven is.

It's where God's will is done. And you see it's supremely positive. It's not just don't do what you don't want to happen to you. It's do.

And that makes it limitless. It's expansive. It's persistent. It's the attitude of heart that comes only from our Father in heaven. Friends, brothers and sisters of our Heavenly Father, that's living with God and His law in your heart.

That's living with heaven in your heart. I said that Jesus instructs us this is the way for us as His people. But it also does expose us doesn't it?

[46 : 52] Maybe very painfully this morning. Let me ask you the question. Is your heart really in heaven? Is heaven really in your heart possessing the heart of your being?

Maybe you're more conscious than ever before this morning of the need for His grace because it all seems so impossible for you.

Well, listen to Jesus. He says, ask. He says, seek. He says, knock. Because everyone who asks like this will receive grace.

Everyone who seeks will find the Father's house. Everyone who knocks will have the door of heaven opened. And heaven will flood into your heart and out from your heart.

So ask, seek, and knock. Keep asking. Keep seeking. And keep knocking. If then you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

[48 : 10] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are truly a Father who loves to bless his children.

So come to us, we pray. By your grace enable us to ask, to seek, to knock. And in your lavish grace answer us that we might know the joy of the Father's house and that joy may spill out all around us as a fellowship, as families, as individual believers in this city.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We sing to end number 809. Jesus, your all-victorious love shed in my heart abroad.

No more shall my foundation move. Rooted in the world.