

# Heavenly Relationships on Earth: Heaven's Radical Purity

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 April 2016

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] But we're going to turn to our Bible reading now, and you'll find that in our church Bibles on page 810 in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5.

And we're continuing our studies after a couple of weeks break in the Sermon on the Mount, looking very particular this morning at two of these six paragraphs in Matthew 5, 27 to 30 and 38 to 42.

But we're going to read most of the chapter, just missing out the middle section. So let me start at Matthew 5 and verse 20. Jesus says, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council. Whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. So, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

[ 1 : 16 ] First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court, lest your accuser stand over you, hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you've paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent, or better, who looks at a woman in order to covet her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

It's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. We pick up at verse 38. You've heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

[ 2 : 39 ] And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor. And hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies. And pray for those who persecute you. So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good. And sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles, the pagans, do the same?

You, therefore, must be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect. Amen.

[ 3 : 41 ] May God bless to us his word. Amen. Well, if you take up your Bible at Matthew chapter 5, page 810 in the Visitor's Bibles.

We come back today after a couple of weeks break to Jesus teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. Where he's teaching us the practice of true Christianity. The manners of Christ's people, so to speak.

Taught by Jesus himself. And as we've already seen, his teaching is very radical indeed. In both senses of that word, it's very clear and searching and challenging.

With that climax in verse 48, you, therefore, must be perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect. It's radical in the sense of being exceptional and provocative, even incendiary.

But it's also truly radical in the more original sense of that word. In terms of getting to the very root of the matter. The essential foundational reality of what real righteousness is all about.

[ 4 : 50 ] And looks like as far as God himself is concerned. And what we're seeing is that according to Jesus, the true righteousness of heaven has in fact very little to do with religious ceremony.

But it's got a very great deal to do with right relationships. In fact, according to Jesus, it's the reality of a right relationship with God in heaven.

A truly earthly relationship with heaven. That is the evidence that a person belongs to the kingdom that he has come to inaugurate. Living the life of kingdom righteousness that Jesus teaches us isn't at all about effort to gain acceptance with God.

No, it's evidence that you are right with God. That you know him. That you really are his. That it's he who owns you. And directs your heart and your mind and your soul.

That you really do have a living earthly relationship with heaven and with the Father in heaven. And that real membership of his heavenly kingdom is expressed on earth.

[ 6 : 00 ] As the true morality, the true ways of the kingdom of heaven. Are manifest through Christ's true kingdom people. In other words, where there are real earthly relationships with heaven.

There will be seen even now real heavenly relationships on earth. The reality of heaven itself will be visible. Will be tangible here on the earth.

In the right relationships that exist among God's kingdom people. And between his people and the people of this world. Real heavenly relationships manifest here on earth.

In the real world lives of our ordinary daily existence. That's what the practice of real Christianity is all about. At least according to Jesus.

And that's what the greater righteousness that Jesus speaks about here in verse 20 actually looks like. It's simply the great commandment of the law. But lived out and played out in the flesh of our lives.

[ 7 : 08 ] Loving the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. And our neighbor as ourselves. Not just in theory. But in the cold light of day. And the six paragraphs here.

The so-called antitheses that Jesus lays out. Just spell these things out in terms of a number of everyday examples. They're not exhaustive of course. They're not meant to be. But they're signposts.

To show us the right direction for all of our thinking. About how to live in heaven's true pattern. In all of our lives. So they're not exhaustive.

But actually when you start to think through what Jesus is saying. They are really pretty comprehensive. It's hard not to think of what's not encompassed by the things Jesus speaks of here.

Because he talks about relationships in all of life. That in every respect are radically loving. And radically pure. And radically faithful. Because they reflect the radical love and purity and faithfulness.

[ 8 : 13 ] Of heaven itself. And of our father in heaven. When you think about it. It's difficult to think what is not covered. By all of these characteristics. For healthy and wholesome and fruitful relationships in life.

At every level. The personal level. The communal level. Even the global level. And as we saw last time. Matthew has very carefully arranged his material for us.

He's arranged it symmetrically. So as to highlight for us. That Jesus really does mean for us to think about this utterly comprehensively. He wants us to apply everything that he's saying.

To our thinking about both our nearest and most private. And most intensive relationships in life. But also to the widest and most public. And most extensive relationships that we have.

In other words. We're to take these principles. Which are the manners and the mores of heaven itself. And we're to apply them far and wide.

[ 9 : 15 ] High and low. To every aspect of our lives. To the nth degree. As far as we can possibly think. There to be no limits. To the length and the breadth.

And the depth and the height. Of our love and our purity. And our faithfulness. That's what he's saying. Now we are to be those who express here on earth. The limitless.

All embracing. Expansive character. Of our father in heaven. And we're to reflect his love. His purity.

His faithfulness. In this world. And in our lives. Verse 48. Be perfect. Even as your heavenly father. Is perfect. In all these ways. That's the practice of.

The true Christian disciple. That's the manners. Of Christ's true people. And so. Last time we saw that. Our relationships.

[10:09] Are to be radically loving. They're to reflect. Heaven's radical love. Not only radically loving. Within the Christian community. That's what verses 21 to 26. Describe. But also. Verses 43 to 48.

Radically loving. To those outside. Extending even. To those who are our sworn. Personal enemies. Just like our heavenly father. Who blesses this hostile world. This rebellious world. With sunshine and rain. And all the things to sustain life. And who sent his only son to us. That while we were still enemies. He might die for us.

In order to make us his friends. What a very great challenge there is there. Isn't there for all of us. And yet we're simply being told. That we are to live out on this earth. The manners of our true family in heaven.

And to show the name. Into which we've been called. The name of our own heavenly father. And so it is with this next pair of antitheses. That I want to look at this morning.

[11:09] In these two matching paragraphs. Verses 27 to 30. And verses 38 to 42. If you weren't here a couple of weeks ago. And got the handout. With the showing.

The way this chapter is set out. Then I think there should be some at the doors. You can pick one up afterwards. But these two paragraphs belong together. And they speak clearly.

Of how we are to also reflect. In all things. Heaven's radical purity. Jesus tells us. That if our relationships on earth. Are to truly reflect.

Heavenly relationships. Then they must be radically pure. Pure. Both in our personal private lives. They must be pure inwardly. And also.

In our public shared lives. They must be pure outwardly. So look first at verses 27 to 30. They're all about radically pure relationships inwardly.

[12:05] Jesus is saying that. That kingdom righteousness is expressed. By radical inward purity. In our personal and private lives. Even in the hidden world. Of our thoughts. And our desires.

And our imagination. Verse 27. You've heard that it was said. You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you. Everyone who looks at a woman. With lustful intent.

Has already committed adultery. With her in his heart. Now if we just take verse 27. I suppose most of us think. About that.

Rather like we do. About the sixth commandment. You shall not murder. That was mentioned in verse 21. Well here's the seventh commandment. You shall not commit adultery. Now some of us here this morning.

Probably will have committed adultery. Of course. I expect most of us think. Well I never have. And I'm sure I never will. So I'm not an adulterer. And maybe you feel a little bit.

[13:04] Superior about that. If I just said there a moment ago. Some here will have committed adultery. You thought oh well not me. And you feel a bit superior. That's what many of Jesus here has thought too.

Many of the scribes and the Pharisees. Certainly felt that their consciences. Were totally clear on this matter. But you see one of the things. That they had done. Was to so domesticate.

God's commandments. To so hedge them in. They had made divorce. So very easy. So that actually. There was no need for them. To officially commit adultery.

As such. No you could just get rid of the wife. That you didn't want anymore. The one who you felt. Didn't meet your sexual needs. Getting a bit boring. Or whatever it was. So you divorced them.

With all the very correct. And proper paperwork. Of course. Everything done. To the letter of the law. And then you got a different woman. The one that you wanted now. And the Henry VIII approach.

[14:03] To marriage and divorce. You find a nice legal way. To annul your marriage. And hey presto. You get your new sexual partner. And what do you know. God and the church. Is still on

your side.

In Henry's case. He made himself the head of the church. So he could interpret. Exactly how it was decided. But in the Pharisees case. What they had done. Was just to make a complex web.

Of interpretations. And loopholes. Essentially in God's law. But for exactly the same purpose. To get what they wanted. To satisfy their desires. And of course.

That's what many. Many professing Christians. Still do today. Rationalizing God's word. To justify their desires. To get what they want. And at the same time.

To convince themselves. Of course. That actually God. Still fully approves. Of what they're doing. And of course. In our culture today. That is very particularly so. Isn't it? In this whole realm. Of sexual relationships.

[14:58] But Jesus says. If you think like that. You expose yourself. As a fool. You've totally. Missed the point.

Of God's command. For purity. It's not just the final. Outward act. That he's concerned with. God's command. Is a signpost. That points. All the way in.

To the very depth. Of your private. And personal world. Where nobody else can see. But God. Can see everything. The thinking. And ruminating.

About gaining. An illicit. Sexual fulfillment. With another. The fantasies. About what you like to do. In trying to take. What's not yours to have.

And. Is not right. To do. And all these things. You see. Expose. The idolatry. Of a deeply divided heart.

[15:54] A heart. That professes. To love. And worship God. But actually. Deep down. Worships. Well not just sex. But worships. Self. And it's that.

Deep rooted. Heart idolatry. That leads. To all coveting. To all stealing. To all idolatry. Of all kinds. It's what comes from. The heart. That defiles us.

As Jesus. Later on. In Matthew 15. For out of the heart. Comes evil thoughts. Murder. Adultery. Sexual immorality. Theft. False witness. Slander. All those.

Final acts. That the ten commandments. Condemn. And so anyone. Who has ever. In the privacy. Of their own hearts.

Nurtured sinful thoughts. Like that. Has says Jesus. Already. Done the deed. In your heart. In adultery. He's saying. Like every other sinful act.

[16:48] Is at root. A matter of the heart. The heart. I think it's important. To say something here. About what Jesus. Is saying. And isn't saying.

Jesus is not saying. As people often think. That sinfully. Lustful thoughts. Are just exactly. The same. As the act of adultery. Itself. As though one is no worse.

Than the other. So that you could say. Well. We've all thought like that. And we're all guilty. Of adultery. So. We might as well. Do the thing as well. And get the full bang. For the buck.

That's as foolish. Isn't it. As saying. Oh well. We've all been angry. So. We might as well. All just go the full whack. And murder the person. We don't like. It's all the same. We're all still guilty. No.

That's just stupid. That's. That's not taking Jesus seriously.

At all here. Jesus is talking. About something quite different. And he's not either. Talking about.

[17:46] Just looking. At a woman lustfully. That's how the. The NIV. Translates it. As if. He's not saying. As if any feeling of attraction. Or any feeling of sexual arousal. Towards.

A woman is evil. In and of itself. That can't be so. The Bible's clear. That. That sexual attraction. And sexual appetite. Is part of our makeup. It's the way. God has made us. To be attracted.

To the opposite sex. It's not the manner of looking. That he's talking about. As if there was a. Sexual way of looking. And an utterly platonic way of looking. He's assuming.

In what he says. That a man will be sexually attracted. To a woman. No. What he is homing in on. Is the purpose. Of that look. The intent. As the ESV says here.

Literally. It would be better to read. Whoever looks at a woman. In order. To lust for her. Or even better. In order. To covet her. Is already committing adultery.

[18:44] In his heart. The word lust here. Means desire. It means to long for. It means to set your heart on. To covet. It's not necessarily. A negative desire. Or else. Jesus himself lusts.

Lusts. In Luke 22. Verse 15. He says himself. I have earnestly desired. Same word. To eat this Passover. With you. In Matthew 13. Verse 17.

Jesus says. Many righteous people. And prophets. Have longed. Lusted. Coveted. To see. What you see. And didn't see. It's not necessarily negative. But very often.

It is translated. As a covetous desire. And it's precisely the word. That in the Greek Old Testament. Is used. In the 10th commandment. You shall not. Covet. You shall not.

Desire. You shall not. Set your heart. Upon your neighbor's wife. Or servant. Or. Anything else. Paul uses. The same word. In Romans 7. 7.

[19:37] And in Romans 39. When he's quoting. From the Decalogue. I wouldn't have known. What it was. To covet. To lust. Unless the law. Had said. You shall not. Desire. In that way. And that's exactly.

The context here. That Jesus is using. This word in. Isn't it? In fact. I don't think. He's saying anything. New at all. He's rather. Reminding his hearers. That the 7th commandment.

About adultery. Just like every other. Commandment. Is intimately linked. With the 10th commandment. Not to covet. Because it's in the heart. It's in the covetous. Heart.

The self-worshipping. Heart. That every other. Evil is conceived. And nurtured. And fed. Until it lasts.

Out of the heart. Comes the end results. Of the reactions. Of wickedness. The things that are just. Simply bringing to light. In the end. The evil. And the darkness. That's long been present.

[20:33] Just been. Hidden away. In the heart. And it's that. Nurturing of evil. In the heart. As already.

A very real. Challenge. To God's commandment. For purity. It's that. That Jesus has in view here. He's getting to the root. Of what motivates. Our actions.

Even our looking. We're not to look. In order. To covet. Something that is clearly wrong. Something that's clearly. Forbidden. For us to have. In fact.

It's just exactly like. In chapter 6. Verse 1. Where Jesus says. We're to be aware. Of even.

Practicing our righteous. Good deeds. Before other people. In order. To be seen by them. He's talking about.

Corrupt. And sinful. Motivations. And purposes. In our hearts. And these things. Can corrupt a person. And corrupt.

[21:28] Even things. That might be good. In themselves. Like doing righteous deeds. Or like. Looking at. And appreciating. A beautiful woman's.

Qualities. And here you see. That corrupt. Motivation. Is harboring. A desire. For an illicit. Sexual union. A relationship. That God has forbidden.

Just as the 10th commandment. Says. We mustn't covet. The wife of another. Or need any such. Union. That God's word. Firmly forbids. We must not. Harbor that desire. Or think about.

How we can satisfy. That desire. It may actually be. In verse 28. That this phrase. Should be translated. As looking at a woman.

In order to make. Her covet. Or desire you. I'm not sure. But Don Carson. Says that that might. Very well be. A better translation. In which case. What's in view. As a.

[22:23] An illicit seduction. In which both parties. Then become part. Of that sin. And that might make sense. Of the specific. Reference. In verse 28. To committing adultery.

With her. In his heart. As though both are involved. But either way. What's in view. Is not. Simply seeing. An attractive member. Of the opposite sex.

And feeling a rush. Of attraction. Or even feeling a rush. Of arousal. Goodness. It's only an anesthetized man. Who will never feel that. At sometimes. The Lord's not being. Ridiculously.

Unrealistic here. No. What he is speaking about. Is letting a natural desire. And appetite. Which can be strong. And passionate.

And not necessarily. Sinful in itself. But letting that desire. Become corrupted. Corrupted. By selfish. And sinful hearts.

[23:16] So that you nurture. Thoughts. About how indeed. You might indulge. That desire. For forbidden fruit. Even though. You know.

God has said. No. From that tree. You must not eat. And you see. When I put it. In those words. You can see. How basic this is.

Now it takes us. Right to the very root. Of every single. Sinful act. And behavior. Right back to the very beginning. Genesis 3. 6. Eve saw. That the tree. Was good for fruit.

And that it was a delight. To the eyes. And to be desired. To make one wise. And so she took. And ate. Began where? In the heart.

And with the eyes. She could have looked at the tree. And praised its beauty. And its delights. And said. What a beautiful. Wonderful. Desirable tree. But of course.

[ 24 : 12 ] It can't be for me. To indulge my appetites. Because God has forbidden that. For me. But no. She didn't. Just as I think.

A normal. Red-blooded male. Doesn't need to beat himself up. Because he has a sex drive. And because he finds. Certain women. Particularly dressed. In certain ways.

Make him feel rather hot. Under the collar. No. That's not what Jesus. Is hitting at here. But he is warning us. And he is warning us. Very clearly. That sin. Will corrupt.

Every single desire. We find in our hearts. And he is warning us. That adultery. Just like murder. Begins. And is fundamentally.

Something rooted. In the heart. In our minds. In our thoughts. In our will. In the. In the nerve center. Of our being. That's what the heart. Means in the Bible. For out of the heart.

[ 25 : 08 ] Come evil thoughts. Murder. Adultery. Sexual immorality. All the things that defile us. All the things that make us. Impure. In the sight of God.

And so we must guard our hearts. Says Jesus. Because according to him. The sin that is. That is. Conceived there. The sin that is nurtured there. Deep and hidden within.

That can lead us. To hell itself. And so it's radical hearts. Surgery that we need. To save us. If we are to be those. Who can enter his heavenly kingdom.

Don't think that just keeping. Your hands clean. Is enough. Avoiding the full monty. Not doing the final thing. What does the psalmist say? Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Who shall enter his presence?

The one who has clean hands. And a pure. Heart. It's the heart. That harbors sin. And Jesus says. [ 26 : 06 ] That can take you to hell. Christ's apostles speak as one on this friends. We must be real. James 1 verse 14. Each is tempted.

When he is lured by his own desire. Covetous lust. Same word. The desire. When it is conceived. Gives birth to sin. And sin. When it is fully grown. Brings forth.

Death. Paul likewise warns the Corinthian church. Doesn't he? Not to have desires. Covet evil. Especially in sexual immorality.

As the people of Israel did. And were judged by God. What does he say to the Colossians? Put to death. Whatever is earthly in you.

Sexual immorality. Impurity. Passion. Evil desire. And covetousness. Which is idolatry. Anti-worship of God. Worship of self. All these heart desires.

[ 27 : 03 ] Are idolatry. Worship not of God. But of ourselves. Of our own egos. And covetous desires. And Jesus says. Just as Paul says.

On account of these. The wrath of God is coming. Is Paul an extremist? That's what we hear all around today. Isn't it? Especially in the debates about sexuality. Ignore Paul.

Let's get back to Jesus. Friends. Jesus. Gave it to Paul. Look how serious Jesus is here. In verses 29 and 30. About these private matters of our heart.

These can be deadly. He says. If you don't act radically. Look where it's going to end. Look at the last word of each verse here. Verse 29. It ends in. Hell.

Verse 30. It ends in. Hell. That's where. Impurity in the heart. Will always end up. According to Jesus.

[ 28 : 00 ] If there is not real. And radical repentance. In other words. Radical and vicious. Destruction. Of this impurity.

This idolatry. This is a critical issue. For us in our day. Isn't it? Not just for most of us.

Certainly speaking for men. I think for all of us. Because we live in a sex mad society. There's temptation everywhere. Around every corner. Not as it was. When those of an older generation. Were growing up. Not just films. And TV. It's everywhere. On our computers. On our phones. And this secular world of ours. Is just starting to recognize the problems.

Isn't it? If you've been listening to the news this week. There's been so much. Hasn't there? About problems of sexual violence. Among children. Even primary school children. Sexual violence. In the primary school.

[ 28 : 53 ] But if you listen to the so-called experts. On the today program this week. You'll find that the answers. They had to this problem. Are the very things. That have caused the problem. In the first place.

More of that. For even younger and younger children. No. We need to listen to the Lord Jesus Christ. And also.

Before we in the church. Stand up and lecture the world. Jesus wants us to wise up. And be real. About ourselves. Because we are not immune.

That's why this is in the Bible. And in our culture. And in our day. We are more vulnerable. Perhaps than any other generation. Certainly in living memory. Sinclair Ferguson says.

In one of his books. Sexual relations. Have become the door. Through which many professing Christians. Have walked to their destruction. And that's sadly very true.

[ 29 : 54 ] I've seen it too many times. And so have many of you. And friends. Jesus says to us. Shut that door. Walk away from that door.

Do whatever you must do. To stay away from that door. Better. Far better. To take action. That seems unbelievably painful. That feels like mutilating your own body.

Like pulling out an eye. Or chopping off a hand. Far better that. Than endure far far worse. And endure it for all eternity. In the darkness. And the despair of hell itself.

Better to endure the searing pain. Of severing. A sinful relationship now. Of losing part of your life. That seems so vital now. Than losing everything. Forever and ever and ever. Of course Jesus isn't suggesting.

[ 30 : 55 ] We physically mutilate ourselves. Some people have misunderstood him to mean that. That misses his whole point. His whole message is the problem lies. Not in the limbs. But in the heart. And in the imagination.

Deep, deep within us. And what he's saying. Is that all such idols in our hearts and minds. Must be radically ripped away. Radically dismembered.

Destroyed. If our allegiance to the kingdom of heaven. Is to be real. Kingdom people.

Express the true values of heaven. In radically. Pure relationships. Inwardly. Inwardly. Not in the divided hearts.

That covet. Forbidden. Sexual gratification. But of course. Selfish. Sexual desires. Are not the only sinful desires.

[ 31 : 49 ] That corrupt us. And make us idolatrous. Nor is it only inward purity. That Jesus is concerned with. No. Kingdom people. Must also have radically pure relationships.

Outwardly. And that is the heart of verses 38 to 42. We've only got time very briefly. To scan them. But you'll see that this paragraph. Isn't so much about setting your heart on. And desiring.

Covetously. Things you don't have. Things that aren't yours. Things that should not be yours. In terms of sexual gratification. But they're about. Worshipping. And covetously.

Grabbing hold of. And idolizing. What you do have already. In terms of material gratification. It's all about how we react. In public relationships. When we find that our. Our reputation.

Or our rights. Or our riches. Are at stake. Look at verse 38. The law that's expressed there. The lex talionis. The eye for an eye.

[ 32 : 45 ] Is called that. Law has. Has its whole purpose. Purity. In justice. It enforced. Restraint.

As well as. Retribution. It limited. All. Private. Revenge. And retaliation. In a world. Where vengeance. Could be huge. And. And extensive. And excessive. No.

There must be. No. More. Than exact. Justice. No. More. Than an eye. For an eye. Or a tooth. For a tooth. Because there's a responsibility. Even.

To the wrongdoer. Even. To a criminal. A responsibility. To them. For justice. Now. That is not how you feel. When you've just been the victim. Of a crime.

Is it? But God says. No. You must be pure. Fear. Even. When you have been wronged. The command.

[ 33 : 38 ] Of course. Was for the judiciary. You can read it. In Deuteronomy 19. And it. Demanded. Pure justice. Not. Personal vengeance. So.

Jesus is not at all saying. Oh. There's to be no justice. Jesus is not saying. There's to be anarchy. There's to be no police. No courts. No judges. That was the mistake. Leo Tolstoy made.

In thinking. That is what Jesus. Was saying. That's the mistake. Gandhi. Really made as well. Following that. As if in a. A sinful. And fallen world.

Evil. Should never be punished. And somehow. Things will all be dandy. That is. Just. Utter naivety. And that is not. What the Bible teaches. It's certainly not. What Jesus is saying here.

If you want to read later on. I recommend you read. In Romans 12. And 13. And you'll see. That the apostle Paul. In exactly the same breath. Quotes Jesus here. Don't repay evil with evil.

[ 34 : 35 ] Don't avenge yourselves. Leave it to the wrath of God. And in the very next breath. He says. But the civil magistrate. The law courts. And the police. And the judiciary. They're there. They're to punish wrong.

They're God's servants. And they administer God's wrath. So Jesus is not being an anarchist. And neither is any of the New Testament. He's speaking to individual people here.

And Jesus knows the human heart. And he is saying to us. His people. Not so with you. He knows that religion plays to the natural sinful heart.

He knows that we want to tick the box of the command. And say. Oh we've kept that command. But actually in our hearts. We're saying. Well how much evil can I get away with repaying.

And still be righteous. How can I get the maximum revenge. And nothing bad happened to me. Well that's how I think anyway. And I suspect some of you are like that.

[ 35 : 34 ] But Jesus says. No. Don't you see that even that law. Is there to drive you in the opposite direction. It tells you the absolute limit of justice.

But you should see. That you shouldn't even need to press for that at all. In fact. You're to be a people. Who sees the needs of others. Before your rights. Always. That is a constant principle by the way.

All through the law of Moses. Needs trump rights. Always. So for example. In Exodus chapter 21. In the very verse. After. A verse that quotes this eye for an eye principle.

It speaks about the duty of a slave owner. If he has hit a slave and injured him. To let that slave go free. To forfeit his right. To that man's labor. Because the need.

Even of his slave. Trumps his right for labor. Same in Deuteronomy 23. When an escaped slave. Must be helped and welcomed. You shall not wrong him. Says the Lord.

[ 36 : 32 ] His needs. Trump your rights. And you see. If you're a kingdom person. Says Jesus. You will see that.

That your responsibilities to others. Always overrule your prize. And coveted rights. Whatever the cost to you. And if that's not so. Well you're exposed.

As not in fact. Sharing. The radical purity of heaven. In your life. In fact. You're still. An idolater.

You say you belong to Christ's kingdom. But in your heart. You're just still lusting. After all the same gratification. Of the things of this earthly world. And so here you see.

Jesus points up three. Areas. That so easily. Show up our lust. And what really. Are the things that we covet. And protect. And idolize. In our lives. And he warns us. Not to do that.

[ 37 : 29 ] But to instead. To exhibit. Heaven's radical purity. So verse 39. Don't idolize your reputation. He says. A slap on the cheek.

In that culture. Was a way of giving a huge insult. And so you would go to law. Or you would sue. To defend your honor. And your reputation. Just as today. People. Sue for libel. And slander. And so on.

My goodness. Don't we live in a day now. When we're encouraged. To feel offense. At virtually everything. You can hardly say a thing. To anybody these days. Without somebody being offended. And demanding an apology. Even what apologies.

For people. Things. Things people said. Hundreds of years ago. And we can be infected. By that mentality. Don't we? You've offended me. How dare you? And Jesus says.

No. Don't idolize your reputation. Take the slap in the face. Which for us. Will be more likely. A verbal one. Than a physical one. But Jesus says.

[ 38 : 23 ] Take it. And take another one too. What matters. Is not our honor. And reputation. But Christ's. And his kingdom. We need to show the world. That we don't.

Idolize our reputation. But that we do rejoice. And honor Jesus. Who calls us. To the way of shame. Might well be. Jesus is. Is referring. Particularly here.

To the insults. And the reviling. That back in verse 11. He says. Will come to all true believers. On his account. Well. If that's so. What does Peter say to us. In his letter. To this we are called.

To follow Christ. Who when he was reviled. Did not revile. But continued entrusting himself. To him. Who judges justly. Pure in heart.

Don't idolize. Their own personal reputation. And don't idolize. And covet. Your rights. Verse 40 and 41. An Israelite's cloak.

[ 39 : 20 ] Was rather sacrosanct. In the law. In Exodus 22. Or in. In Deuteronomy 24. It said. You must return it. By evening. If it's taken as a pledge. So that someone can sleep in it. It would be a.

A humiliation. To be without your cloak. It would demean your dignity. For people to know that. It would be rather like. Us having our house repossessed. And being tipped outside.

A hugely. Embarrassing. And humiliating thing. Well. Jesus says. Be ready to even give away this. And be humiliated. Rather than to worship.

And stand on your rights. Just as in verse 41. Be willing to demean yourself. By going. Not the one mile. That a Roman soul. Had a right to demand of you. But twice.

What he could ask of you. And what he had no right. To ask. And what you had every right to refuse. Don't stand on your rights. Not to go one yard more.

[ 40 : 15 ] Than you have to. Not to work one hour more. Than you must. Forgo even your rights. Don't jealously guard. What is yours. Be like your heavenly father.

Who gave. And who gives. Even when nothing is deserved. And nothing is received with thanks. And so verse 42. Same. Don't idolize.

Your riches either. Be open handed. And give. To those who are in need. Because needs. Always matter. More than your rights. In God's kingdom. It's always been so. Read the law of Moses.

Deuteronomy 23. And 24. Deuteronomy 15. Your corn. And your grapes. And so on. In your field. They're yours. Of course. They are. But your neighbor. If he needs them. If he's starving. He can eat them.

Because a hungry neighbor. And his needs. Is more important. Than your right. To maximum profit. From your field. Says Moses. You are never.

[ 41 : 13 ] To look grudgingly. On your poor brother. So Jesus says. Give to him who begs. Don't refuse. The one who needs a loan.

From you. That's the way of heaven. The only limit. To your giving. Is to be the limit of love. That's important.

Of course. Jesus isn't being foolish. He's not saying. Give constantly. To every beggar. Who begs from you. When you know. Fine well. The first thing. They're going to do. Is go straight off. And damage themselves more.

By taking more drugs. Or whatever it is. He's not saying that. Saying that. Any more than he's saying. Don't resist an evil person. That means that. If you see somebody. Being mugged in the street. You say.

Oh Jesus says. Don't resist an evil person. I'll walk by on the other side. Of course not. But what he is saying. And it is a real challenge. To all of us. He is saying.

[ 42 : 05 ] Don't idolize. Don't jealously guard. Your riches. Or your rights. Or your reputation. Out of love for yourself. But give.

Generously. Out of love for others. A love that reflects. The love of heaven. And the love of your own heavenly father. Who showed the extent of his love. Even to an enemy world.

By giving. Giving. Giving. Giving. His own son. Real kingdom righteousness. Expresses the righteousness of the God.

Who though rich. Yet for our sake. Became poor. Not grasping his reputation. Not grasping hold of his rights. Not grasping hold. Of the riches of heaven itself.

But giving up all things. For our sake. And Jesus is simply saying.

[ 43 : 07 ] So also must be the attitude of heart. Of every true child. Of this heavenly father. It's in the DNA. See how these paragraphs are so closely related.

Because the idolatrous and covetous desire. Of an impure and divided heart. Is always expressed. In seeking gratification. Not in the things of heaven. But in the things of this passing world.

Whether it's covetous. Sinful desires of the flesh. In terms of sexual gratification. Or whether it's the same. Selfish lusts.

For material gratification. Jealously desiring our rights. Our reputation. Our riches. All that we have. No says Jesus. That can't be so for you.

If you're really mine. My kingdom must be radically pure. With the purity of heaven itself. Not a hint. Of idolatry. Not inwardly.

[ 44 : 08 ] Not outwardly. Who shall stand in his holy place. He who has clean hands. And. A pure heart.

Who doesn't lift up his soul. His heart. To what is false. All the idols of this world. Blessed are the pure.

In heart. That they. Shall see God. Let's pray. Oh Lord.

Our God. Our Father. Almighty God. Unto whom. All hearts are open. All. Desires known. And from whom.

No secrets are hid. Cleanse. The thoughts. Of our hearts. By the inspiration. Of thy Holy Spirit. That we may.

[ 45 : 06 ] Perfectly love thee. And worthily. Magnify. Thy holy name. Through Christ Jesus.

Our Lord. We pray. Amen.