

The Gospel of Matthew

Booklet 06 – Two Lessons

Lesson 15 - Matthew 5: 27-32

Lesson 16 - Matthew 5: 33-48

*The External Law
And
The New Authority
Matthew 27-48 Part 2*

**International ESL/Bible Lessons
Intermediate to Advanced Level**

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Much of the material in these lessons come from *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I*, by William Barclay. Daily Study Bible Series.

I also use Bible Commentaries, Dictionaries and on-line sources. All pictures are from Google Images.

The Gospel Of Matthew

Lesson 15 - Matthew 5: 27-32 Adultery and Divorce

²⁷ “You have heard / that it was said, / ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ / ²⁸ But I tell you / that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully / has already committed adultery / with her / in his heart. /

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, / gouge it out / and throw it away. / It is better for you / to lose one part of your body / than for your whole body / to be thrown into hell. / ³⁰ And if your right hand / causes you to stumble, / cut it off / and throw it away. / It is better / for you to lose one part of your body / than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ “It has been said, / ‘Anyone who divorces his wife / must give her a certificate of divorce.’ / ³² But I tell you / that anyone who divorces his wife, / except for sexual immorality, / makes her the victim of adultery, / and anyone who marries a divorced woman / commits adultery.

Vocabulary

1. Gouge: Carve out a hole. Injure someone’s eye. Overcharge somebody.
2. To stumble: To make a mistake, perhaps a bad misjudgment. To entrap oneself.

Questions

1. What is adultery? Why are the eyes guilty of leading one to sin?
2. How is adultery handled in your home country?
3. Why are women not equal to men?
4. What happens when a woman is treated as property?

Notes

1. Remember this is wisdom literature. Remember these words are not to be taken literally. It means that the thing you do which leads you to do wrong or sin should be cut out of your life.
2. This new standard that Jesus adds to *Thou shalt not commit adultery* is not hard to understand given the saying of the Jewish teachers during the time of Jesus.
3. “The Jewish Rabbis well knew the way in which the eyes can be used to stimulate the wrong desire. They had their sayings. *The eyes and the hand are the two brokers of sin. Eye and heart are the two handmaids of sin. Passions lodge only in him who sees. Woe to him who goes after his eyes for they are adulterous!* As someone has said, *there is an internal desire of which adultery is only the fruit.*” (Barclay, p. 147)
4. Wow! Here Jesus is using an exaggeration to say that anything that causes you to sin should be cut out of your life.

5. When something causes a person to stumble, it trips a person up, and it sends that person crashing to destruction. It is something which lures a person to personal ruin.
6. “Coming as it does immediately after the passage which deals with forbidden thoughts and desires, this passage compels us to ask: How shall we free ourselves from these unclean desires and defiling thoughts? It is the fact of experience that thoughts and pictures come unbidden into our minds, and it is the hardest thing on earth to shut the door to them.
7. Remember, the more you refuse to think about something, the more it intrudes into your thoughts. It is an inevitable law of human nature that the more a man says he will not think of something; the more that something will present itself to his thoughts.
8. Two ways to defeat these thoughts:
 - Do something—fill life full of good labor and good service that there is no time for these thoughts to enter in. Concentrate on others and we entirely forget ourselves. The real cure for evil thoughts is good action.
 - Fill your mind with good thoughts. Read good literature or the Bible, and think and sing of good things.

Marriage and Divorce During the Time of Jesus (Barclay, p. 150-157)

Christianity had a double background. It had the background of the Jewish world, and the world of the romans and the Greeks.

Marriage among the Jews

When Jesus laid down this law for marriage he laid it down against a very definite situation. There is no time in history when the marriage bond stood in greater peril of destruction than in the days when Christianity first came into the world. At that time the world was in danger of witnessing the almost total break-up of marriage and the collapse of the home.

Theoretically no nation ever had a higher ideal of marriage than the Jew had. Marriage was a sacred duty which a man was bound to undertake. If a man refused to marry and to have children, he was said to have broken the commandment to 'be fruitful and multiply.'

Ideally the Jew abhorred divorce. They had many sayings like, "The very altar sheds tears when a man divorces the wife of his youth."

However, the tragedy was that the practice fell far short of the ideal. In the eyes of the law, the woman was a thing. She was at the absolute disposal of her father or of her husband. She had virtually

no legal rights at all. To all intents and purposes a woman could not divorce her husband for any reason, and a man could divorce his wife for any cause at all.

The Jewish law of divorce was simple and debatable in its meaning. Deuteronomy 24:1 *When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of the house.*

The bill of divorcement simply ran: *Let this be from me your writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that you may marry whatsoever man you will.* Handed to her in the presence of two witnesses, she was divorced.

Two Jewish schools of thought:

1. Shammai: Divorce only for adultery. (Very conservative!)
2. Hillel: Divorce for any reason, large or small. Burned a meal, disrespectful, wasn't as pretty as another female. (Very liberal!)

So, human nature being what it was, the Hillel, or liberal school of thought ruled the times of Jesus. It had gotten so bad for women that by the time of Jesus, many women refused to marry because marriage was so insecure. The Jewish family was collapsing at the time of Jesus.

Marriage Amongst the Greeks

A.W. Verrall, the great classical scholar, said that one of the chief diseases from which ancient civilization died was a low view of woman. The first thing which wrecked the marriage situation among the Greeks was the fact that relationships outside marriage carried NO stigma whatsoever, and were in fact the accepted and expected thing. Such relationships brought not the slightest discredit; they were part of the ordinary routine of life.

Demosthenes laid it down as the accepted practice of life. *We have courtesans for the sake of pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation, we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs.*

What a paradox for the Greeks. The Greeks demanded that a respectable woman should live such a life of seclusion that she could never even appear on the street alone, and she did not even have meals with the men. She had no part even in social life. For the woman, absolute sexual purity, but for the man complete immoral license. So the Greek man married a wife for complete domestic security, but found his pleasure elsewhere.

In Greece, prostitutes were everywhere. The temple of Aphrodite

was built from the profits of the brothels. In Corinth the Temple has a thousand priestesses, who were sacred courtesans, who came into the streets at evening to work the crowds.

Since the Greeks had a social system based on relationships outside marriage, and that this was accepted as normal, these relationships became the dominant thing in the man's life.

The divorce required no legal process whatever. All a man had to do was dismiss his wife in the presence of two witnesses. The one saving clause was that the man must return her dowry intact.

So the idea of Jesus about marriage was an incredible novelty regarding chastity and fidelity in coming into the Greek world.

Marriage Amongst the Romans

The history of the development of the marriage situation amongst the romans is the history of tragedy. The whole of Roman religion and society was originally founded on the home. The basis of the Roman commonwealth was the *patria potestas*, the father's power. The father had literally the power of life and death over his family. A Roman son never came of age so long as his father was alive. He might be a consul; he might have reached the highest honor and

office the state could offer but so long as the father was alive he was still within his father's power.

To the Roman the home was everything. The Roman matron was not secluded like her Greek counterpart. She took her full part in life.

Marriage is a life-long fellowship of all divine and human rights, said Modestinus, the Latin jurist. Prostitutes were there but they were held in contempt and to associate with them was dishonorable.

In the first five hundred years of the Roman commonwealth, there was one recorded divorce in 234BC, and he divorced because his wife was childless and he desired a child.

Then came the Greeks. In the military and imperial sense, Rome conquered Greece. But in the moral and social sense, Greece conquered Rome. By the second century BC, Greek morals had begun to infiltrate into Rome. The moral descent was catastrophic. Divorce became as common as marriage.

There lay the Roman tragedy. Lecky called it: *that outburst of ungovernable and almost frantic depravity, which followed upon the contact with Greece*. Again it is easy to see with what a shock the ancient world must have heard the demands of Christian chastity.

The Gospel Of Matthew

Lesson 16 - Matthew 5:33-48 Oaths, Eye For Eye, and Love for Enemies

³³ “Again, / you have heard / that it was said to the people long ago,
/ ‘Do not break your oath, / but fulfill / to the Lord / the vows you
have made.’ / ³⁴ But I tell you, / do not swear an oath at all: / either
by heaven, / for it is God’s throne; / ³⁵ or by the earth, / for it is his
footstool; / or by Jerusalem, / for it is the city of the Great King. /
³⁶ And do not swear by your head, / for you cannot make even one
hair white or black. / ³⁷ All you need to say is simply / ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; /
anything beyond this / comes from the evil one.

³⁸ “You have heard / that it was said, / ‘Eye for eye, / and tooth for
tooth.’ / ³⁹ But I tell you, / do not resist an evil person. / If anyone
slaps you on the right cheek, / turn to them the other cheek also. /
⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you / and take your shirt, / hand over
your coat as well. / ⁴¹ If anyone forces you / to go one mile, / go with
them two miles. / ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, / and do not turn
away / from the one / who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard / that it was said, / ‘Love your neighbor / and
hate your enemy.’ / ⁴⁴ But I tell you, / love your enemies / and pray
for those who persecute you, / ⁴⁵ that you may be children / of your

Father in heaven. / He causes his sun / to rise on the evil and the good, / and sends rain / on the righteous / and the unrighteous. /
⁴⁶ If you love those / who love you, / what reward will you get? / Are not even the tax collectors doing that? / ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, / what are you doing more than others? / Do not even pagans do that? / ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, / as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Vocabulary

1. Vow: A religious pledge
2. Swear: Curse. Cuss. Blaspheme. Solemnly promise something. Affirm the truth of something. Use dirty or offensive words.
3. Footstool: Footrest. Furniture to support your feet.
4. Throne: Chair of monarch or bishop. Power of royal person.
5. Slap: Blow made with an open hand. Noise of slap.

Idioms with slap

- A slap in the face: an insult, rebuke or rebuff
- A slap on the back: Congratulations!
- A slap on the wrist: A mild rebuke or punishment. He was driving drunk, and the judge just gave him a slap on the wrist this time. If he does it again, the judge should throw the book at him (really punish him with all the law allows).

Questions

1. Why do people have to say bad or dirty words to one another?
2. How can a person break this bad habit?
3. In your country, do you have to take an oath before speaking in a trial? How does that happen?
4. What does the passage say about what God controls?
5. Psychologically, why should you not fight back when you are ordered to do something, or are insulted?

Notes

1. In my father's home, he taught us that *our word was our bond*. He expected truth and a promise to be kept unconditionally.
2. The Jewish teachers taught that the world stands on three things: justice, truth, and peace. Four persons that are shut out of the presence of God include the scoffer, the hypocrite, the liar, and the retailer of slander.
3. The commandment is: *you shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)*.
4. Far too often people use the most sacred language in the most meaningless way. They put the sacred name of God or Jesus in the most thoughtless and irreverent way.

5. In history, two groups of people have refused to take an oath about anything; Ancient Essenes and our modern day Quakers. A man can simply make his YES or his NO his bond. This is respected in the USA.
6. The fact that it is necessary to put men on oath on certain occasions arises from the fact that this is an evil world. In a perfect world, in a world which was the Kingdom of God, no taking of oaths would ever be necessary.
7. Jesus begins by citing the oldest law in the world—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It appears in the oldest known code of laws, the Code of Hammurabi, who reigned in Babylon from 2285-2242 BC.
8. That law became part of the ethic of our Old Testament, Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-20, etc. It was put into place as an act of mercy, as the limit of vengeance. Remember the days of the blood feud.
9. It also takes vengeance away from the individual and puts it into the hands of a judge. Soon after, the injury done began to be associated with a money law. If a man has injured another, he is liable on five accounts: for injury, for pain, for healing, for loss of time, and for indignity suffered. Some of this is still true today.

10. Jesus goes on to say that if anyone tries to take away our tunic (shirt) in a law suit, we must not only let him have that, but must offer him our cloak (coat) also. Here is more than meets the eye.
11. The tunic was the long, sack-like inner garment made of cotton or of linen. Even the poorest man would have a change of tunics. The cloak was the long blanket like outer garment, which a man wore as a robe by day, and used as a blanket by night. It was Jewish law that a man's tunic may be taken, but not the cloak. "If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge (cloak), you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering. In what else shall he sleep?"
12. Jesus goes on to speak of being compelled to go one mile; and says that in such a case, the Christian must be willing to go two miles.
13. There is a picture here of which we know little, for it is a picture of an occupied country. The word used for *to compel* is the verb *aggareuein*, and *aggareuein* is a word with a history. It comes from the noun *aggareus*, which is a Persian word meaning a *courier*. The Persians had an amazing postal system. Each road was divided into stages lasting one day. At each stage there was food for the courier and water and fodder for the horses, and fresh horses for the road. But, if by any chance, there was anything lacking, any private person could be *impressed*,

compelled into giving food, lodging, horses, assistance, and even carrying the message himself for a stage. The word for such compulsion was *aggareuein*.

14. In the end, the word came to signify any kind of forced impressment into the service of an occupying power. In an occupied country citizens, citizens could be compelled to supply food, to provide billets, to carry baggage. Sometimes the occupying power exercised this right of compulsion in the most tyrannical and unsympathetic way. Always this threat of compulsion hung over the citizens. Palestine was an occupied country. At any moment a Jew might feel the touch of the flat of a roman spear on his shoulder, and know that he was compelled to serve the Romans, and it might be in the most menial way. That, if fact, is what happened to Simon of Cyrene, when he was compelled *aggareuein*) to bear the Cross of Jesus.
15. So then, what Jesus is saying is: “Suppose your masters come to you and compel you to be a guide or a porter for a mile. Don’t do a mile with bitter obvious resentment; go two miles with cheerfulness and with a good grace.” What Jesus is saying is: “Don’t be always thinking of your liberty to do as you like; be always thinking of your duty and your privilege to be of service to others.

16. When a task is laid on you, even if the task is unreasonable and hateful, don't do it as a grim duty to be resented; do it as a service to be gladly rendered."

17. The inefficient workman, the resentful servant, the ungracious helper have not even begun to have the right idea of the Christian life.

18. The Jewish law of giving is a lovely thing. It is based on Deuteronomy 15:7-11:

If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart and you say, "The seventh year, the year of release is near." And your eye be hostile to your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and it be sin in you. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him; because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you. You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.

19. Jewish Laws of Giving:

Giving must not be refused

Giving must benefit the man to whom the gift is given. (Not just the bare necessities. Remove the humiliation of poverty.)

Giving must be carried out privately and secretly.

The manner of giving must benefit the character and the temperament of the recipient. (Sometimes you see and you must go and offer.) The manner of the giving must be as much a help as the gift itself.

Giving was at once a privilege and an obligation for in reality all giving is nothing less than giving to God.