**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**10/25/2020**

**Righteousness that Exceeds the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Pt. 2)**

**Matt. 5:17-48**

Last week on our program we began talking about the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

In Matthew chapter 5, in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, several times we read Jesus saying, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old...”* and then He would state a particular teaching, and then Jesus would say, *“But I say to you...”* and then give His teaching. We stated last week that in order to understand this passage it is important to recognize that teaching at this time could be divided into three different categories. First, there was the teaching of the Law. This is what the Law of Moses actually said, which was still binding at that time. Second, there was what the people were hearing that the Law of Moses said. What the Law of Moses actually said and what the people were hearing was not necessarily the same. Thirdly, there was the teaching of Jesus concerning how it will be in His kingdom. As I understand this passage Jesus is not comparing His teaching with Moses’ Law, but He is comparing His teaching with what they were hearing that Moses taught. Notice what He says in verse 20: *“ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* Many people viewed the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees as being what the Law actually was saying. But that was not true. What the scribes and Pharisees were teaching was one thing, and what the Law actually said was another. Jesus tells them that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. He gives examples of where their righteousness needed to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. We looked at the first two last week, concerning murder in verses 21-26, and then concerning adultery in verses 27-30.

Now let us look and what Jesus says in verses 31-32. *“Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”* Apparently, by the time Jesus was born there had come to be loose views among the Jews in regards to divorce. The School of Hillel taught that a man might put away his wife for various causes, even trivial causes such as if there was someone else the man liked better, or if the wife cooked his dinner badly, etc. They seemed to fine justification for this in Deut. 24:1-4 where Moses permits the man to give her a certificate of divorce and to put her away. Jesus proceeds to give the correct view of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Jesus says there is only one cause for divorce that God allows – and that is for “sexual immorality,” fornication. Some within the church today have the idea that it is alright to divorce one’s mate for other reasons as long as he or she does not remarry. The idea is that the divorce is not sin, but it is the remarriage that is sin. But notice the wording of our Lord in this passage. He says, “*But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery...”* A man who divorces his wife for some other reason than sexual immorality places his wife in a position of temptation, and in that position of temptation she remarries and commits adultery. Now, when she is tempted and gives in to the temptation and she commits adultery, yes she sins, but what the Lord is saying here is that the husband who divorced her is not guiltless because he has put her in that position. He “caused” her to commit adultery. Jesus is saying the divorce is also sin. And Jesus also says, “*and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”*

In Matthew 19 verse 3 the Pharisees asked Jesus the question, *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”* Jesus answers their question by going back to the beginning where the Scripture says God made them male and female, and *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* Jesus concludes from these statements that God is the one who joins husband and wife together, and *“what God has joined together, let not man separate.”* You see, divorce for some other reason than sexual immorality is separating what God joined together, and that is sin. They then question Jesus about Deuteronomy 24. They says, *"Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"* Jesus responded, *“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”* (Matt. 19:8-9) Jesus’ teaching concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage is based upon what God established at the beginning. God established marriage to be between a man and a woman, and they are to stay married until death parts them. To divorce except for sexual immorality is to commit sin, it is separating what God joined together, and Jesus says it will cause your mate to commit adultery.

Today, marriage is taken so lightly by so many. They do not understand the seriousness of the commitment they are making. In the excitement of the wedding, the vows that are made by the bride and groom go right over their heads. They say “I do,” but they have little understanding to what they have said “I do.” It is important for someone to get with the couple before the wedding day, and when there is not the excitement of the moment, they can talk about what they are going to vow before God and to one another. Jesus wants us to understand the seriousness of marriage.

Back in Matthew 5, Jesus says in verses 33-37, *“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”* The Jews, had introduced a number of oaths in common conversation which they believed did not have the binding force of an oath. It seems the scribes and Pharisees taught that oaths which did not include the name of God were not binding. Oaths “by heaven,” “by the earth,” “by Jerusalem,” “by your head,” were not binding. Because of this distinction, daily conversations included meaningless oaths to make impressions. Jesus shows that these distinctions did not change the binding force of their oaths. He shows that one cannot swear by these things without involving God. Heaven is the throne of God. Earth is His footstool. Jerusalem is the city of the great King, who is God. Only God can make our hair white or black. He also says, *“do not swear at all”* by these. What does He mean? We know that the Law of Moses allowed swearing and making oaths as long as they kept their oaths. Moses said to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 6:13, *“You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name.”* But it was emphasized that they were to keep their oaths. Emphasis was placed on truthfulness and faithfulness. Numbers 30:2, *“If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”*  Deuteronomy 23:21, *“When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.”* Under the Law of Moses a person was to be truthful when he swore an oath. He was to be faithful in keeping the oath. Not only that they were always to be truthful in their hearts. Psalm 15:1-2, *“LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart.”* The Law did not prohibit swearing oaths, but it required truthfulness and faithfulness in all things.

But in the days that Jesus lived upon the earth it appears that the emphasis had shifted from being truthful and faithful in all things, to finding ways to make promises they didn’t have to keep. And so the scribes and Pharisees made these ridiculous distinctions in oaths, some were binding and some were not. Jesus is emphasizing that they need to always tell the truth. He says, “*But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”*

But is Jesus saying all swearing of oaths are sinful? Well, no, because we have already seen that the Law of Moses allowed oaths as long as they kept the oaths. We also know that God Himself made oaths. Hebrews 6:13 says, *“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.”* Jesus answered to an oath before Caiaphas (Matt. 26:63-64). Paul made an oath when writing to the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 1:23. He said, *“Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.”* To call God as a witness against your soul is to make an oath, it is swearing that what you are saying is the truth. And so obviously, not all oaths are sinful. Judicial oaths, and oaths of solemn religious importance are not included in His prohibition. It is not wrong to swear an oath in a court of law. It is not wrong to make vows before God on your wedding day. So what does Jesus mean when He says, “do not swear at all?” He is prohibiting the frivolous oaths in common conversations that allowed them to make promises they didn’t want to keep. He is saying, Stop doing that and tell the truth in all you say. Let your “yes” be “yes,” and your “no,” “no.” We are to be so truthful that our “yes” means “yes,” and our “no’ means “no.” We should be so truthful that it would not be necessary for us to swear oaths in order to be trusted. Jesus is emphasizing the importance of always telling the truth.

Out time is gone for today, but we want to continue our study of Matthew 5 next week. Join us then.

Before we close we want to invite you to check out our website. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of Bible topics, and you also are able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts. The web address is sjchurchofchrist.com, that’s sjchurchofchrist.com.

Also, if you would like a free audio CD copy or a transcript of today’s program or of any of our Bible Talk broadcast, just give us your name and address along with the title of the program you would like a copy of and we will be glad to send it to you, absolutely free of charge.

There are three ways you may send in your requests:

You may email it in: Our email address is sjchurch@sjchurchofchrist .com.

You may call it in: Our phone number is 573-265-8628.

Or you may mail it in through the US postal service: The address is Bible Talk, PO Box 308, St. James, MO 65559