

Title: RECONCILIATION, PURITY, INTEGRITY, MATTHEW 5:21-37  
(Chatham, NJ; 03/13/11, AM) [Pc – Expository]

Theme: By contrasting the law and the common interpretations of the law Jesus teaches us to have the characteristics of reconciliation, purity, and integrity of speech.

Purpose: To encourage all of us to develop these virtues.

Introduction:

1. Jesus begins several of these sections with, “You have heard that it was said.”
2. He proceeds to deepen the command; he doesn’t disregard it or do away with it.
3. Probably he isn’t addressing the command but the common interpretation of it.
4. He reaches to the depths of our motivation for murder, adultery, and swearing.
5. In one sense the commands address the symptoms; Jesus addresses the cure.
6. The causes of these things lie deep within the sinful, human soul.

I. Not just prohibition of murder, but a resolution for anger.

A. Liability

1. Murder makes one liable to judgment.
2. Anger also makes one liable to judgment.
3. Insults and saying “You fool” also create liability.
4. Jesus adds “to the fire of hell.”
5. The root cause of these is contempt.

B. Contempt comes in many forms and is caused by many reasons.

1. “Hate is the coward’s revenge for being humiliated,” G. B. Shaw.
2. Hate is also bred by religious, racial, and economic bigotry.
3. Some have contempt for the weak.
4. Contempt is the brother of a condescending attitude. We think we are better and smarter than others.

C. Reconciliation replaces liability.

1. When someone has something against you, reconcile to that person.
2. Jesus couches this in the setting of ritual as well as legal proceedings.
3. A person with anger and contempt stands condemned.
4. A heart that prefers reconciliation cannot stay angry or contemptuous.
5. Forgiveness both given and received is at the heart of reconciliation.

II. Not just a prohibition of adultery, but a resolution for lust.

A. Adultery and divorce are the symptoms.

1. Adultery is a heart problem, a matter of desire.
2. Jesus calls this lust; whoever looks with lustful intent is adulterous.
3. The seriousness of changing this inner mechanism is reinforced by his statement about your eye or your hand causing you to sin (29-30).
4. Jesus seeks to change what we love and what we desire.

B. Divorce was not creation’s intention.

1. There are many other places where the matter of divorce is discussed; this is not the end of the matter here.
2. Jesus said in another place that it was because of the hardness of their hearts that Moses allowed them to give their wives a certificate of divorce.
3. Divorce had become an acceptable way of life.
4. It should be the exception not the rule.

- C. Purity is the antidote to lust.
  - 1. Blessed are the pure in heart.
  - 2. "Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you," Eph. 5:3.
  - 3. Sensuality results from hardness of heart and a darkened understanding, Eph. 4:18-19.
  - 4. Strive for purity of thought; adultery and sexual immorality should be a thing of your old way of life before Christ.

### III. Oaths.

- A. Swearing an oath affirmed your word with a curse for reneging.
  - 1. Swearing is a pathetic confession of our own dishonesty.
  - 2. Jesus says don't take an oath by heaven, earth, or Jerusalem.
  - 3. Don't take an oath by your own head: "cross my heart and hope to die." (You have no more control over this than you do to turn your hair a different color, thus there is false side to this kind of oath.)
  - 4. In Mt. 23:16-22 Jesus demonstrates how the Pharisees had perverted the true meaning of this law. (Do it one way and you are liable; do it another way and you aren't.)
  - 5. It was meant to be a prohibition against lying and perjury, not simply a means of swearing properly.
- B. Cure: speak truthfully.
  - 1. "Let your yes be yes and your no be no."
  - 2. This means simply to be a person of integrity of speech.
  - 3. James 5:12 repeats the same formula.
  - 4. Anything else comes from a fundamentally deceitful disposition.
  - 5. Unadorned by exaggeration or oaths, yes and no should still mean something.

### Conclusions:

- 1. The cure for anger and contempt is to be a person who seeks forgiveness and reconciliation. Romans 12:18 says as far as it depends on you live at peace with all men.
- 2. The cure for adultery similarly demands a changed heart; get rid of the impurity in your own heart. Defilement resides with each human heart, Mk. 7:21-23.
- 3. The antidote to lying is not swearing but truthful speech that comes from a heart of integrity. A person of integrity doesn't need to prove the veracity of his speech.
- 4. A better world begins when we change ourselves.
- 5. Jesus demands that those changes begin with fundamental problems within sinful humanity.
- 6. Only the Gospel breaks the spell of sin, but only you can decide for or against it for yourself. We encourage you to accept it by faith today.