

FIRM FOUNDATIONS

Study #5 (Updated 8-11-17)

Read Matt. 5:17-20 (NIV)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Q: What does Jesus mean when He says He didn’t abolish the Law or the Prophets, but rather, He fulfilled them?

- **Rom. 10:4** *“Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”* (NIV)
 - Jesus Christ is the embodiment of what the Law was aiming at—perfect righteousness. In Him, the Law has found its perfect fulfilment.
 - Because Jesus fulfilled Law, we can now stand as righteous before God, based on our belief in Him, rather than our ability to obey the Law.

Q: If Jesus hasn’t done away with the Law, how does the Law apply to Christians?

- The Law still teaches us about God—who He is, and what He is like.
 - God hasn’t changed; and the Law still reveals God’s heart!
- In each of the statements where Jesus quotes what they have heard about the Law, Jesus doesn’t say they can disregard or ignore what was said. **He says it must go deeper... not in a different direction.**
 - Almost everything Jesus says, in the Sermon on the Mount, had been said earlier; usually in the Psalms or the Prophets, so He wasn’t just making up new standards.
 - Jesus explains the Law more fully... not just telling us **what** is right or wrong, but **why** it is right or wrong.

Q: Why must our righteousness surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law for us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

- The Pharisees and teachers of the Law were the very best at knowing the rules; but knowing the rules didn’t make them want what God wants.
 - We are required to go deeper than rule keeping... our righteousness has to come from the heart.
 - Jesus wants His disciples not just to obey a standard in a visible way, but to obey it in an internal, heart level way.

Read Matt. 22:37-40 (NIV)

Jesus replied: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”**³⁸ **This is the first and greatest commandment.**³⁹ **And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**⁴⁰ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”**

- Jesus said **love** is what the Law hangs on. **Love is what really matters!**

Read Matt. 23:23 (NIV)

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected **the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”**

- **“The more important matters of the Law”** seem to be the same things the **“Law and the Prophets hang on”**.
- **That means that Love is Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness!**
 - **Justice** is: not cheating someone or violating his or her rights.
 - **Mercy** is: not demanding your rights.
 - **Faithfulness** is: being honest and keeping your word.
- Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness are about treating people the way you want to be treated (**Matt. 7:12**).

Love goes beyond the outside “forms” of the law.

- When you pour concrete, you set up forms to mark the edges.
 - The Law showed us the edges of God’s heart.
- Jesus came to fill-in what was supposed to be inside those forms.
 - The remainder of **Matt. 5** contains 6 illustrations of what the Law was trying to get across to us, which is how to love.
- The law was commonly explained in ways that were not loving; that is why Jesus kept saying, *“you have heard it said, but I say”*.
 - Just because you don’t commit murder, doesn’t mean you are being loving.
 - Just because you don’t commit adultery, doesn’t mean you are being loving.

What About You?

Q: How well do you know God?

- What sin(s) do you struggle with the most?
- Why does God call it (or them) a sin?
- What does God’s reason, for calling it (or them) a sin, tell you about who He is and what He is like?
- If these questions are hard to answer, what does that say about how well you really know God?

Q: Do you tend to focus more on trying not to sin, or do you focus more on “doing justice”, “loving mercy”, and “being faithful”?

- What is the difference between these two approaches?