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5:13-16, The Believer as Light and Salt

We have seen that the Sermon is chiastically structured (chart), with each element in the first half corresponding to an element in the second. This paragraph is the lone exception, with no counterpart in the second half of the sermon. Its effect is to set off the central sections, dealing with the conduct that should characterize us, from the outer sections, which describe God's blessings on his children but give warnings for those who reject him.

This paragraph has three kinds of statements, arranged in an alternation, but the alternation is broken, lacking the command in the case of salt (chart):

- A statement of the metaphor ("ye are ... salt, light")
- One or more parables involving this image (tasteless salt, hidden light)
- A command (only for light).

The paragraph is a clear transition between the *consequences* of our obedience (the blessings and curses) and the *content* of our obedience (the two great commands of the law).

- The beatitudes teach us that there are two kinds of people: those who are citizens of the kingdom and those who are not. This difference is so stark that those who are not persecute those who are. They remind us that the world is corrupt, needing salt; and dark, needing light.
- The following section tells us the content of the good works that this transition exhorts us to perform.

13, Salt

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?—

This saying is one that our Lord used repeatedly (chart). All three of the synoptics record it, and in different contexts. This does not mean that they are rearranging the Lord's words for their own purposes. Rather, like any active teacher, the Lord often repeats himself, and these repetitions can help us understand the meaning of his figures of speech.

Consider the other instances of this saying.

Luke uses the saying to summarize his teaching (14:25-35) that we must hate our family compared to him (v. 26), take up our cross (v. 27), and forsake all that we have (v. 33) (chart). He concludes,

Luk 14:34 Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; *but* men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The parallel passage in Matthew is 10:37-39, which also exhorts us to love the Lord above all else.

Application: As in the beatitudes, the believer is Gershom, "a stranger in a strange land" (Exod 2:22), a citizen of the kingdom of heaven living in a world ruled by hell. We must be distinctive, showing our

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devotion to him in our daily choices and affections. Otherwise we have become insipid, good for nothing.

Mark records this saying in yet another setting (chart):

Mar 9:49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

This use helps us in two ways in understanding our text.

First, the context in Mark (and the corresponding section in Matt 18:6-9) deals with avoiding unnecessary offenses:

Mar 9:42 And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

So our Lord exhorts us, “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” Note, by the way, that in Mark, our Lord provides the exhortation that is missing in Matt 5:13-16. But this does not mean that we can import it into Matthew. The Lord is using the saying in different contexts, and the lessons he draws are slightly different.

In Luke, our distinctive saltiness sets us apart from the world, and this seems to be the theme that is emphasized in Matthew, in parallel with light.

In Mark, our saltiness makes us pleasant and unoffensive. Paul seems to have this instance of the metaphor in mind when he writes,

Col 4:6 Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Note that this duty extends beyond the circle of believers to “every man.” This exhortation is appropriate for those who have just been warned to expect persecution. Our Lord will shortly amplify the eighth beatitude,

Mat 5:44 Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Application: Our call to be *distinctive* gives us no license to be *offensive*. The believer is to have “a good report of them which are without” (1 Tim 3:7), and “follow peace with all men” (Heb 12:14; cf. Rom 12:18). We need to show the peaceful savor of salt in our dealings with all people, both believers and unbelievers.

Mark’s citation of the saying helps us understand one symbolic meaning of salt. Note the link with the salt of the sacrifices. Leviticus tells us in turn that this is related to the covenant of which the sacrifices were a part (chart):

Lev 2:13 And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer **the salt of the covenant of thy God** to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

In two other places in the OT, salt is related to covenants, and in both cases it symbolizes the

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permanence of the covenant:

Num 18:19 All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute **for ever**: it *is* a **covenant of salt for ever** before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

2Ch 13:5 Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David **for ever**, *even* to him and to his sons by a **covenant of salt**?

It was only in the mid-19th century that mechanical refrigeration became practical. Before that time, in climates with cold winters, ice and snow could be stored through the summer to keep food cool, but in warm climates such as the levant, the only way to preserve food from spoiling was to salt it. This use of salt as a preservative seems to motivate its use to describe a permanent covenant. It makes salt a fitting symbol of peaceable, kindly conversation that does not partake of bitterness or corruption.

In our passage, believers as salt restrain the natural corrupting tendencies in the world. There is much wrong with the church-state paradigm that governed most of European history. But it did make the basic principles of biblical conduct the backbone of Western jurisprudence, and these principles are largely responsible for the economic and social prosperity that the west has enjoyed. Now that our culture is abandoning these principles, we can expect to see widespread decay in every area of life.

Application: While our distinctiveness as believers may bring persecution upon us, it also retards the forces of evil at work in the world around us. We should take encouragement from this insight. Our testimony for Christ not only glorifies his name, but also makes the world a better place (or at least, less of a bad place) for those around us.

The Lord speaks of salt as “losing its savour.” This cannot happen with pure salt, which is a very stable compound. But in much of the ancient world, salt was not purified. It was the residue of evaporated seawater, or a substance mined from the ground, often with other minerals along with it. A common example is Hawaiian red salt, which is actually a salty clay. Judaea has extensive salt clay deposits around the Dead Sea that would have been a source of dietary salt. In such a compound, the salt can be leached out by moisture, leaving only insipid minerals behind. Similarly, there are those who show “a form of godliness, but deny[] the power thereof,” 2 Tim 3:5. What shall we think of them?

it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.—Our Lord’s verdict on insipid Christians is similar to his teaching about other things that do not serve their purpose (chart). They are discarded.

The most common example is trees that do not bear fruit:

Joh 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch ~~in me~~ that beareth not fruit in me, he taketh away

Matthew 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (John the Baptist)

Matthew 21:19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Luke 13:6 A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit

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thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: 9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

But the same is true of useless ground:

Hebrews 6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

Our Lord teaches that this is the destiny of those who claim to be believers but who do not show the savoury, preserving effect of salt. They are hypocrites, and can expect nothing but judgment.

Application: These are sober warnings. They do not teach that those who are truly the Lord's can in fact fall away from grace. Salvation is all of the Lord's work, and none of ours. But there are many counterfeits in the world, and Paul exhorts the Corinthians, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). Recall Herod, who heard John gladly (Mark 6:20), or Agrippa, who said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). One can be "on the way" but not yet arrived, and the worst thing that can happen to such people is to think that they are in fact saved, when they are not. Our saltiness, our fruitfulness, is evidence that we are indeed the Lord's.

14-16, Light

14 Ye are the light of the world.—We are not only salt, retarding the corruption of the world, but also light, revealing its need for salvation and pointing the way to the Savior. We have seen that persecution is a direct result of the reproof that we bring to fallen people, just as our Lord taught in John (chart),

Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

It is interesting that the Lord uses same expression to describe himself.

Joh 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world:** he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

In claiming this title, the Lord is drawing on ancient testimonies.

Num 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: **there shall come a Star out of Jacob**, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

2Sa 23:3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God. 4 And *he shall be as the light of the morning*, when the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the **Sun of righteousness** arise with healing in his

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wings;

The early believers recognized him as the unique light:

Luk 1:78 ... **the dayspring from on high** hath visited us, 79 **To give light** to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Joh 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. 9 *That was the true Light*, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Yet the Savior also calls us “light.” What’s going on here is related to what we saw frequently in our study of Isaiah (chart). Our Lord is the Servant of the Lord, and as members of his body, we become Servants of the Lord as well. He comes as light to reveal sin and call people to repentance, and if we would serve him faithfully, we come for the same purpose.

As with the salt, the metaphor of light is followed by a parable (or in this case, two parables), common statements about the effectiveness of light (chart, Illustration 1¹). These parables point in two different directions (chart). The city on a hill sheds light outward, to draw in unbelievers. The lamp gives light to those “that are in the house,” the community of believers.

A city that is set on an hill [ορος “mountain”] cannot be hid.—The first parable is a city on a hill. The most common building material in Israel is limestone, which is bright white in color. A city on a hill catches the first rays of the morning sun, and can be seen for miles.

14a Ye are the light of the world.

14b A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto **all that are in the house.**



Illustration 1: Two kinds of light

The Lord’s image here no doubt reflects Isaiah’s promise of the coming kingdom, when Zion’s hill is exalted and all nations come to her (chart):

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

1 Top picture: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_5bo3n_N5SQ/SSuNM7fLVYI/AAAAAAAAACdY/fjy0JZ-j4FQ/s400/city-set-on-a-hill.jpg

Bottom picture: http://media.nbclosangeles.com/images/467*350/WhaleyHouseSanDiegoSpooky.jpg

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His command to Zion is

Isa 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

Zion is to shine, reflecting the glory of the Lord to unbelievers to draw them to the Lord. As the light of the world, we serve the same function.

Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ... 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

Phi 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life;

The promise of Isa 2 stands in contrast with the human view of how to become famous. The generation after the Flood, living in Mesopotamia (“the plain of Shinar”), proposed,

Gen 11:4 Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

Sinful people attempt to set up their own high places, in an attempt to achieve unity, but these efforts always fail. The only true center is the light of the Lord, shining through us.

The second parable points inward rather than outward.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.—We

understand, of course, that the “candle” in this expression is not our common wax candle, but an oil lamp (chart, Illustration 2²).

This parable, like that of tasteless salt, appears multiple times in our Lord’s teaching.



Illustration 2: Roman and Byzantine oil lamps

In Mark 4:21 = Luke 8:16, it comes right after parable of the soils (chart). In both cases the Lord gives the parable to the multitudes, but then the disciples ask him about its meaning, and privately he gives them the interpretation, following immediately with this saying and then with the exhortation to “take heed what/how you hear,” that is, to be a good steward of what you have learned. The parables are in fact a means of hiding truth (vv. 11-12). But “in the house,” among the believers, the lamp shines brightly, as he interprets the parable to his disciples.

It also appears in Luke 11, where the Lord extends the gradation in Matthew one step further (chart).

2 Image from <http://www.clioancientart.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/webassets/Groupof7AncientRomanByzantineandEarlyIslamicPotteryOilLamps.jpg>

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Extent	Matt 5:14-15	Luke 11:29-36
Outward, to all the world	14b A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.	29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon <i>is</i> here. 32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas <i>is</i> here.
To the community	15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.	33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth <i>it</i> in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.
Individual		34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when <i>thine</i> eye is evil, thy body also <i>is</i> full of darkness. 35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36 If thy whole body therefore <i>be</i> full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Instead of the image of the city on a hill, Luke uses the examples of Jonah, who went abroad to tell the Gentiles of God’s kingdom, and Solomon, whose fame shone out from Zion to all the world. The candle on the lampstand is again specifically for “they which come in,” and then Luke adds a element, the individual’s eye, which can illumine the body only if it is not distracted.

In both cases, the focus of the candle/lamp is very different from the city on the hill. The OT roots of the former imagery (Isaiah 2, 60) emphasize a light shining out to attract the Gentiles, the unbelievers. The Lord’s other uses of the lamp on the lampstand emphasize the faithful ministry of God’s word within the church (chart).

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

2Pe 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may **be mindful of [μυνησκωμαi remember]** the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

Jud 1:17 But, beloved, **remember ye the words** which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

We saw a striking illustration of this light in our recent meditations on Exodus, in the ninth plague, the plague of darkness.

Exo 10:22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: 23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

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God's people have access to understanding that is denied the unbeliever. God intends his light to shine brightly within the church, and in each of our lives.

16 Let your light so shine before men,—With this verse, the statements of vv. 14-15 become a command. It is a fact that we are light, both to unbelievers and among one another. We are responsible to act consistently with this position.

- Toward unbelievers, we must be known as God's people, “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you” (1 Pet 3:15).
- Toward one another, we must “speak[] the truth in love” (Eph 4:15), taking responsibility for one another.

Our responsibility is governed by two principles.

that they may see your good works,—We usually think of evangelism, or encouragement within the body, in terms of what we say. The Lord wants our light to shine in the form of works. Our words are important, but they must be backed up by a consistent, godly life.

and glorify your Father which is in heaven.—Too often, believers “let their light shine” in a way that emphasizes themselves. The motive must be God's glory, not ours.

With this exhortation, the Lord has made the transition from the darkness and corruption of the world (emphasized in the persecution that we must endure, the conclusion of the Beatitudes) to the conduct required of his people (which he is about to expound, based on the Law and the Prophets).

5:17-19, The Law and the Prophets

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets:—Our Lord uses the combination of “the law” and “the prophets” to refer to the OT. He does this again in the Sermon (chart):

7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is **the law and the prophets**.

These two references serve to mark off the central section of the sermon, and declare its theme.

Later in Matthew, the term recurs with an explanation of its content: the two great commands of the law.

22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang **all the law and the prophets**.

Note that according to this verse, the traditional punctuation of 7:12 is incorrect. The “Golden Rule” is only half of what “the law and the prophets” teach. We'll see that it is the culmination of 7:1-12a, and the “this” in 7:12b refers to everything from 5:21 to 7:12a.

Here, “or” replaces “and” to distribute the negative: neither the law nor the prophets will be done away.

The verb “destroy” καταλυω is often used of tearing down a building. It is the emphatic form of a verb that means “to loose,” “to disassemble,” which is also used of the law:

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Mat 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:

Joh 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

He insists that he has not come to disassemble, to tear down, to bring an end to the law.

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.—It is sometimes suggested that “fulfill” implies that the law is “finished” and thus now obsolete. The meaning of the verb *πληροω* here should be understood in the light of Matthew’s frequent use of the word throughout the book (16x, more than any other book except Acts). Thirteen of these references (including 5:17) talk about the fulfillment of Scripture (chart).

Most of them deal with prophecies or types that anticipate our Lord’s life. He “fulfills” the prophecy or type by presenting himself as the one to whom it refers. We have already seen this verb used five times by Matthew to describe the fulfillment of Scripture by events in our Lord’s life: 1:22 (the virgin birth), 2:15 (the flight into Egypt), 2:17 (the slaughter of the innocents), 2:23 (being called a Nazarene), and 4:14 (the move to Capernaum). Six more times Matthew uses the word in contexts like this, and twice our Lord speaks of the fulfillment of Scripture (here and in 26:54), though in these cases he doesn’t point to a specific promise.

So here, he claims that he fulfills, not only the prophets (whose words dominate most of the other “fulfillment” passages) but also the law. The Law describes the man in whom God is well pleased. By claiming to fulfill it, the Lord is saying that the law has a particular man in view, the Messiah, the last Adam.

Sometimes people say that he fulfills the law by keeping it. It is true that he keeps it, but “fulfill” implies more than this. It implies that when God gave the law, he intended it to point to the Messiah.

Application: We ought to be very suspicious of claims that the law of God is no longer in effect. Indeed, it is impossible for us to obey certain parts of it, because the kingdom of God has no worldly form in this present age. But this entire section presents the Old Testament, law as well as prophets, as an enduring treasure and guide for the believer.

18 For verily I say unto you,—This is the first time in Matthew that the Lord makes this very strong statement. The significance of this expression is best appreciated by comparing it with other expressions of authority that we encounter in Scripture. The Lutheran clergyman Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) notes perceptively (chart, Illustration 3),³

The prophets were wont to say in the third person, *saith the Lord*; the apostles, *It is written*; but Christ, in the first person, *I say unto you*;

This pattern shows us the Lord’s awareness of his own authority. He does not need to cite the Lord (as the prophets do), nor the Scriptures (though the apostles show that they are available), but proclaims

³ He begins, “This formula, frequent and peculiar to the Lord, possesses the highest authority, and denotes frequently a matter declared by Him, which, for special reasons, is neither written expressly in the Old Testament, nor can be clearly proved from any other source, but is first produced by Himself from the secret treasuries of wisdom and knowledge, so that the assent of the hearers may rest on His sole affirmation, and the dull in heart may be deprived of all excuse for the future,” and observes, “. . . St Paul, when again and again compelled to speak in the first person, takes especial care not to trench on the Divine prerogative,” inserting some qualifying expression as in Rom 12:3 or 1 Cor 7:6.

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truth on his own authority.⁴

Application: There is important lesson here. An ongoing question in our day concerns the role of the Scriptures in the life of the believer. There are some who suggest that the Scriptures are less important now that we have the Holy Spirit, who can guide us directly. But in fact, appeals to the authority of Scripture (“it is written”) are most prominent, not least prominent, precisely in the period after Pentecost. The example of the apostles is to treasure and rely on the written revelation that the Lord has given. In no way do they deprecate it in comparison with the Spirit’s direct guidance.

Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.—The syntax of the verse is strange, with two “until” clauses governing the same verb.

The central claim is the persistence of the law. “Jot” is a reference to the Hebrew letter “yodh,” the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (chart), and one that can often be omitted when it stands for a vowel.

“Tittle” probably refers to the small protrusion that marks the difference between certain pairs of Hebrew letters, such as כ vs. ך or ך vs. ך׃. (If your Bible has Hebrew letters at the head of the sections of Ps 119, look at what makes the difference between the letters before vv. 9 and 81, or between the letters before vv. 25 and 153.) The point is that the least detail of God’s law is fixed and immutable.

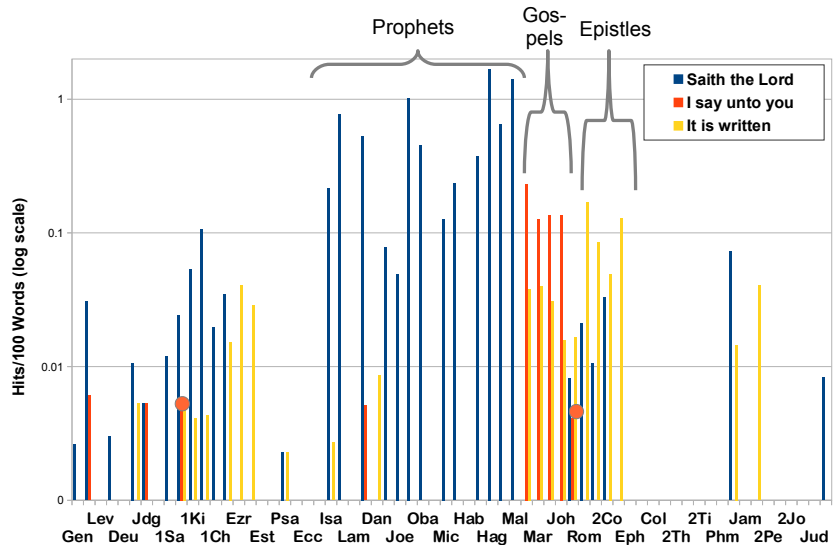


Illustration 3: Sources of Authority in the Bible

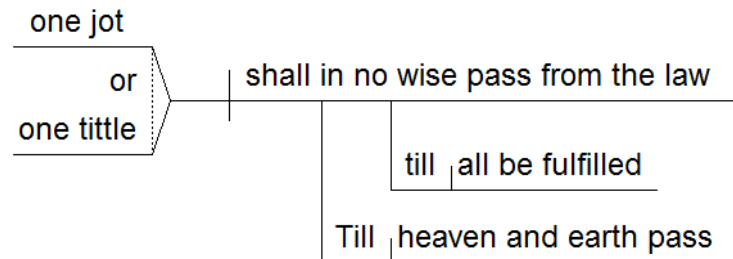


Illustration 4: Grammar of 5:18

This claim is modified by two statements of how long it will endure, using the conjunction “till” or “until” (chart, Illustration 4).

The first terminus is the passing of heaven and earth. The authority of the law persists throughout creation.

The second terminus is expressed with the clause, “till all be fulfilled.” Sometimes this clause is

⁴ It is instructive to consider instances of the expressions outside of their main section. For example, “I say unto you/thee” in the OT is primarily on the lips of the Lord himself, and when Paul uses a similar expression, he qualifies it, as Bengel notes. Again, “saith the Lord” in the NT is almost always part of a quotation from the prophets, and often (Hebrews) is part of the text being quoted.

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understood of our Lord's having fulfilled the law (v. 17), and made the basis for the assertion that the law is no longer in effect. There are two problems with this understanding.

The first problem is that he has already said that the law would endure "till heaven and earth pass." If it has ended with the Lord's fulfillment of it, then the first statement is false.⁵

The second problem is that the word "fulfilled" in v. 18 represents a different Greek word than the one in v. 17. Here, the verb means "be accomplished," "be finished," and is probably in parallel with the first "till" statement. "Until heaven and earth pass away, that is, until everything is accomplished."

It is worth remembering that "until" does not necessarily imply the end of something. "I'll be at the office until 5" is not a promise that I'll leave at 5, only that you can be sure to reach me there up to that time. Luke records our Lord's use of "heaven and earth" to describe the permanence of the law on another occasion, where there is no sense that the law ends when they do (chart):

Luk 16:16 The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. 17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

And indeed, other texts tell us that God's word will outlast heaven and earth.

Mat 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Psa 119:89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

Psa 119:152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

Psa 119:160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

Isa 40:6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodness thereof *is* as the flower of the field: 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (quoted in 1 Pet 1:24, 25).

Our Lord's point is that as long as heaven and earth continue, as long as this present order persists, the law and the prophets continue to be the expression of the will of God. He does not here state what happens in the new heavens and the new earth, but these other references do encourage us that the word of God will continue to abide eternally.

19 Whosoever therefore—It is important to grasp the impact of the "therefore." The fulfillment of the law and the prophets does not lead to a relaxation of them, but to their persistence. It is because the law and the prophets endure, and because they point to Christ, that we are to keep and teach them. Since Christ is the fulfillment of the law, and we are to be like him, we must fulfill the law.

The rest of the NT has a great deal to say about just how this happens. In particular, listing the 613 commandments and checking them off does *not* work. Paul will teach us

⁵ See notes for multiple instances of εως modifying the same verb. In general, they introduce different descriptions of the same terminus, with the second one refining or describing in more detail the first. In one case where the reference is spatial rather than temporal (Zec 14:10-11), they appear to describe successive stations along a trajectory, but if that were the case here, the second εως clause would have to be subsequent to the first.

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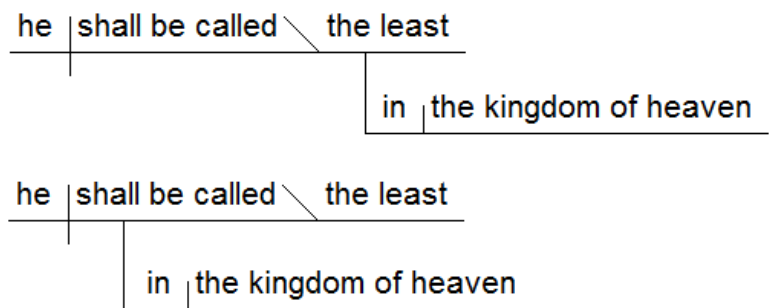
Rom 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is the Spirit, not the strength of the flesh, that produces the works of the law in us,

shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so,—Note the close association between teaching and doing. First comes breaking, then teaching. Often those whose teaching is distorted, are trying to cover their own sin and salve their own conscience. Heresy is not first of all the result of deep learning, but of personal disobedience.

Application: In dealing with people about their spiritual need, don't be distracted by intellectual arguments. The ultimate problem is moral, the conflict between a holy God and sinful people, and that's what we need to bring to peoples' attention, with the command to "repent."

he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:—There is an ambiguity in this phrase (chart). Our version suggests that "in the kingdom of heaven" modifies "least," calling out different positions in the kingdom (much as the disciples were discussing in Matt 18:1,



Mat 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?)

Illustration 5: Alternative Parsings of 5:19

This reading is possible (see notes), but awkward in view of v. 20 and 7:21, which exclude the disobedient entirely from the kingdom. It is probably better to associate the prepositional phrase with the verb, denoting the group who is doing the calling. Those in the kingdom will have very little esteem for one who rejects even the least of the commandments.

but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.—On the contrary, those who seek to obey and teach God's law will be held in high esteem.

Application: We all want to be respected. This legitimate desire is the lever by which Satan exerts the pride of life on us. He would have us think that respect comes by asserting ourselves over others. Our Lord teaches that it comes, instead, by submitting ourselves to the law of God.

5:20-6:18, The Law in Contrasts

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.—This verse is transitional (chart, Illustration 6).

- The introductory "for" presents it as a summary of v. 19, thus looking back: the scribes and Pharisees are examples of those who break the commandments and teach people to break them.

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- But the requirement that disciples should excel the scribes and Pharisees anticipates what follows, which consists of two series of contrasts.

The first set of contrasts (5:21-48) focuses on our relation to our fellow humans, while the second (6:1-18) focuses on our relation to the Lord. In the first group, the contrast is with what was “said to them of old time,” while in the second, it is with “the hypocrites,” but in both cases the reference is to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

5:21-48, Manward contrasts: Ye have heard ... but I say ...

Each of the six contrasts in this section begins with some part of the statement, “ye have heard that it was said to them of old time.” (The consistent use of the grammatical form of “them of old time” with the verb “was said” elsewhere in the Bible shows that we should understand “them of old time” as the ones to whom something was “said,” as the AV margin suggests, not the ones who said it. See notes for discussion.) Different parts of this heading appear with various of the contrasts (chart). The one that is constant throughout is “it was said.” (The complete formula at v. 21 and again v. 31 may indicate two major divisions; we’ll come back to this when we discuss 5:48.)

The saying “it was said” stands in contrast with the common biblical expression, “it is written.”

“It was said” appears elsewhere in the Greek Bible, both in the LXX and in the NT. Always, it describes direct speech, and often, but not always, it refers to the words of God. Sometimes it appears in a NT quotation from the OT, but the NT never uses it to *identify* a text as a quotation.⁶ Its emphasis is on the oral nature of the communication.

This expression contrasts with how our Lord introduces OT quotations. He says “it is written” (4:4, 7, 10; 21:13; 26:31) or refers explicitly to “the Scriptures” (21:42; 26:54), that is, “the writings.” For him (as for the NT writers), the authoritative teaching from the past is what is written down.

The contrast has an important parallel in Jewish teaching. Orthodox Judaism believes that God gave two bodies of teaching to Moses on Mount Sinai. One was the written law, the other was the oral law. The written law was deposited in the ark of the covenant (Exod 25:16, 21; Heb 9:4), but the oral law was passed down from teacher to student.⁷ After the fall of the Second Temple, much of this tradition was codified in the Mishnah, and later in the Talmud. But in the time of Christ, the most appropriate way to describe it was as what was “said to them of old time.”

5:17-19 The law and the prophets in the kingdom

20 **For** I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall **exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees**, ye shall in no case enter into **the kingdom of heaven**

5:21-6:18 Contrasts with the scribes and the Pharisees
 • 5:21-48 Manward contrasts (it was said ... but I say ...)
 • 6:1-18 Godward contrasts (be not as the hypocrites)

Illustration 6: 5:20 as Transition

	21 Murder	27 Adultery	31 Divorce	33 Oaths	38 Revenge	43 Love
Ye have heard that	x	x		x	x	x
It was said	x	x	x	x	x	x
To them of old time	x			x		

Table 1: Repeated Elements in the Manward Contrasts

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In this section, our Lord is contrasting this oral law to his own authoritative teaching. The phrase “you have heard” refers to the citation of this oral law in the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

From the Mishnah and Talmud, we know that the tradition includes citations from the written law. Thus these statements sound like the OT, and sometimes include direct quotations from the law. But they also contain material that is not found in the OT, such as v. 43 “hate thine enemy,” as well as paraphrases of OT texts.

Application: We should always judge the spoken word by the written Scriptures. What we hear from other believers may be helpful. It will often contain scriptural truth. But it is not how God has chosen to preserve his authoritative word. Like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), let us “receive[] the (spoken) word with all readiness of mind, and search[] the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

21-26, Murder

This section has two parts, each with two paragraphs (chart, Illustration 7). First the Lord contrasts the tradition (v. 21) with his teaching (v. 22). Then he gives two applications, first toward our brothers, those who are with us in the community of faith (vv. 23-24), and then toward our adversaries (vv. 25-26).

21, *The Tradition*

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill;—The Jewish tradition that the Lord cites correctly quotes this instruction from Exod 20:13 (chart). “Kill” φονεω, like the Hebrew רצח from which it is translated, does not mean “kill” generically, but “murder.”

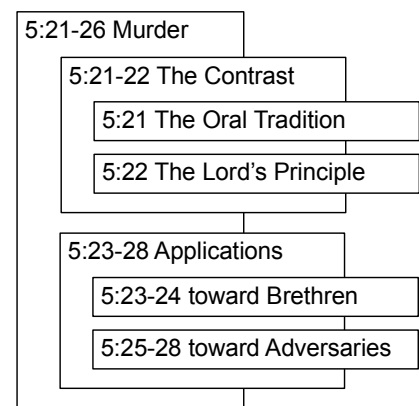


Illustration 7: Structure of the Murder Contrast

and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:—The OT does teach that a murderer is to be punished, but in much more direct terms:

Exo 21:12 He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be **surely** put to death.

Num 35:16 the murderer shall **surely** be put to death.

The tradition has softened the hard edge of the law, making it possible for the society to evade God’s designated punishment for murderers.

Application: Please be careful in quoting scripture. We should always distinguish quotations, which should be exact, with interpretation or paraphrase.

22, *The Lord’s Principles*

V. 22 now identifies three sinful behaviors, each associated with a judgment (chart). In each case there is a gradation. The behaviors increase from inner anger, to insulting speech, to false accusation of ungodliness; the judgment increase from the judgment appropriate to murder (v. 21, administered in the city gate), to the national Sanhedrin, and then to God’s judgment. The increase is clear in the penalties;

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we will have to pay close attention to see it in the offenses.

22a, Vain Anger

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother—The Lord condemns not just murder, but the incentive that leads to it. In doing so, he is not adding anything to what the OT already teaches. The wisdom literature is full of warnings against anger and wrath. Here is one (chart):

Psa 37:8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

Note David's consciousness that anger and wrath can naturally lead to doing evil.

The epistles pick up this instruction:

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto [God's] wrath οργη: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Note the reference to God's wrath. Our anger only gets in the way. God is the only one who is justified in being angry; we should get out of his way and let him do his work.

2Co 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths θυμος, strifes,

Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath θυμος, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath θυμος, and anger οργη, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger οργη, wrath θυμος, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

1Ti 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath οργη and doubting.

Application: Anger, like irresponsibility and haughtiness, is a prerogative of deity. It is appropriate only for someone who has a right to expect something from the world. We have no such right. We are sinful rebels who deserve only death. Everything good that happens to us is undeserved, an example of God's grace, and invites our gratitude and worship. Bad things should stimulate a sense of our unworthiness and provide heighten our gratitude for the good things, not lead us to indignation.

without a cause:—This single Greek word εικη is the subject of much discussion, both textually and interpretively.

Textually, it reflects the majority of the MSS, including some from the second century, but it is omitted by B and κ. Both Jerome (347-420) and Augustine (354-430) claim that their oldest copies omit it. Modern versions and commentaries universally omit it, explaining it (without documentation) as “an early and widespread softening of Jesus' strong teaching” (Carson). But like most text-critical arguments, this one works in both directions. One could equally well suggest that in the light of the

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verses we have cited above, harmonizers removed the word to make the Lord's teaching more consistent with Paul.

(Curiously, the same people who argue to leave out "without a cause" often interpret the verse as though it were there. Carson goes on to say: "The[] absence [of "without a cause"] does not itself prove there is no exception.")

Our approach is to accept the majority text, and thus the word *εικη*, leading to the interpretive question: Is Paul's rejection of human wrath overly strict? Doesn't the NT allow human anger?

I know only four passages in the NT that might excuse our anger. Let's consider each of them (chart).

Mar 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them **with anger**, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Once (and only this once), our Lord is said to be angry with the unbelievers. If we are Christlike, may we also sometimes be angry? In general, this is a good rule, but sometimes our Lord's deity shines through his humanity. We have seen, for example, that he asserts truth on his own authority: "I say unto you," while the apostles defer to what "is written." He can say to the invalid man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," Matt 9:2, something that we have no authority to say except conditioned upon belief and repentance. So our Lord's anger justifies ours only if the rest of the NT confirms it. Does it?

Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, **a revenger to execute wrath οργη** upon him that doeth evil.

Here Paul describes a man as God's agent, and the wrath is most naturally understood as God's wrath.

Eph 4:26 Be ye angry οργιζω, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your **wrath παροργιζμος**:

This reference is probably the one most often quoted, but as we discussed in our studies of Ephesians, its proper understanding depends on recognizing that it is a quotation and paraphrase from Psa 4:4, 6, addressed to Absalom (cf. 3:1), and urging him to depart from sinful behavior. Paul, urging the believers to live at peace with one another, cites David's gentle admonishment to his son. He certainly is not giving a cause that would justify anger.

Jam 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

We might think that "slow to wrath" means that with sufficient provocation, wrath is permitted. But v. 20 seems expressly given to guard against such notions. Recall that this verse outlines the rest of James. The portion of the book that "slow to wrath" summarizes (4:1-5:6) does not give us any "cause" justifying anger, but only exhortations to peace. James certainly does not understand "without cause" as justifying anger. "Slow to wrath" does not justify wrath, but urges us away from it.

If our Lord means to say that there are some circumstances that justify anger, the rest of the NT gives us no help in identifying them.

Perhaps we should reconsider the translation. The standard NT lexicon (BDAG) translates *εικη* only 2x

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(out of its 7 NT instances) as “without a cause): here and in Col 2:18. The other five times, it prefers the translations “without success,” “without purpose,” or “without thought” (chart). Even Col 2:18 is not a clear example of the kind of excuse that we hear in the AV rendering of our Lord’s words:

Col 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, **vainly** puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Paul certainly does not mean that with sufficient cause, a believer is justified in being puffed up. “Vainly puffed up” does not *excuse* being puffed up in cases when it is justified. It simply *explains* the puffed-up attitude as one that is intrinsically vain, intrinsically unjustified and futile. Perhaps this is what our Lord means to say: he forbids his followers to be “causelessly angry,” not to leave them room to be angry when there is cause, but to emphasize that human anger is intrinsically unjustified.⁸ It is

- without cause: we have no right to expect anything from the world, and so are never justified to complain when things do not go our way
- without success: as finite beings, we are unable to carry out the thorough judgment that God’s true anger requires
- without purpose: as James urges us, “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”

Application: We should never excuse or justify our anger, but pray for one another, that the Lord would enable us to avoid this work of the flesh in our lives.

shall be in danger of the judgment:—To understand the progression in the penalties, recall the nature of “the judgment,” which is the same as that which the tradition assigned to actual murder.

In the OT, punishment for murder was the responsibility of the “avenger [redeemer] of blood,” a near kinsman of the slain person. The slayer could take refuge from the avenger in one of six Levitical cities, which were appointed as cities of refuge (chart):

Num 35:11 Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. 12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before **the congregation** in judgment.

So “the congregation” of the city of refuge judged the accused. Who were they?

Joshua 20-21 identifies these cities, three on each side of the Jordan, and tells how they were allotted to the various Levitical families. David divided the priests and the Levites into 24 courses (1 Chr 23-24). Each course served a week at a time, (1 Chr 9:25), twice a year, in addition to three weeks at the pilgrimage feasts (Deut 16:16), or five weeks in each year, so the priests and levites spent much more time in their cities than at the sanctuary. Their responsibility was to

Lev 10:11 teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

They were one of the three traditional sources of instruction on which the people relied:

Jer 18:18 for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word

⁸ Wernberg-Moeller offers support for this semantics from a semitic perspective: “A Semitic Idiom in Matt. v.22,” NTS 3, pp. 71-73, 1956.

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from the prophet.

By assigning cities of refuge to levitical cities, Joshua assured competent judges in capital cases.

The actual course of the judgment is suggested here:

Deu 19:11-12 But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: 12 Then **the elders of his city** shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

The elders of the killer's home city were to come to the city of refuge and make the case against him, but it was up to "the congregation" in the city of refuge whether to release him to the avenger of blood, or to protect him. The "judgment" to which our Lord refers is by the elders of one city.

Some will object that the elders of a local city in our Lord's day would not judge for anger. That is beside the point. The Lord is describing the standards of the kingdom of heaven, and when that kingdom is realized, even unspoken anger will be recognized and dealt with, at the local level.

22b, Rude Insults

and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,—The word is probably a transliteration of the Aramaic word ריקא, meaning "empty one," that is, "empty-headed." The world thinks of such insults as harmless: "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But if the inner anger is so serious in our Lord's eyes, how much more serious is the outward manifestation of it in any way?

The Scriptures warn about deprecating speech (chart). Consider Paul's exhortation:

Eph 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor **jesting εὐτραπεία**, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Aristotle defines the word "jesting" as "well-bred insolence," wittiness, the ability to turn a phrase cleverly, including sarcasm and social insults. It was coveted as a social skill among the Greeks, and in much modern society. But as a hallmark of pride that tears down others even though in jest, it is to have no place among believers, as the OT recognizes:

Pro 26:18 As a mad *man* who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, 19 So is the man *that* deceiveth [dealeth slackly] his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

Ecc 10:1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth* a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom *and* honour.

shall be in danger of the council:—Because outward mockery is greater than the inward anger that stimulates it, it merits a higher penalty. "The judgment" for anger is the congregation of the city of refuge. "The council" is the Sanhedrin, the national court of Israel.

22c, Moral Slander

but whosoever shall say, Thou fool,—The slander "fool" μωρος is not simply a casual insult like

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“Raca.” It includes moral overtones.⁹ The Hebrew root most commonly translated μωρος (4x out of 8 instances of the Greek word in the canonical books) is נבל. Consider the cases where it occurs (chart):

Deu 32:6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O **foolish** people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

Isa 32:5 The **vile** person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said *to be* bountiful. 6 For the **vile** person will speak **villany**, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

These texts use the word to characterize someone who is in rebellion against the Lord. In addition, any reader who knew the Hebrew word underlying these passages would recall the story in 1 Sam 25 of the man Nabal. In the days when David was anointed but not yet on the throne, he sought refuge with this man in the wilderness of Judaea, but was rebuffed. The historian characterizes Nabal,

1Sa 25:3 the man *was* churlish and evil in his doings.

Contrast the attitude of Nabal and his wife Abigail toward David, whom Samuel had already (1 Sam 16:13) anointed king. Abigail recognized David as the promised king. In pleading that he would not attack Nabal, she says,

1Sa 25:30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; 31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

So it was known in their household that David was God’s anointed, but Nabal is more loyal to the defacto king (Saul), and criticizes David as a rebel:

1Sa 25:10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who *is* David? and who *is* the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

When we are angry with people, it is easy to express that anger not only with casual insults, but also by slandering their character and accusing them of moral or spiritual shortcomings. We might even accuse them of being a Nabal, of not being a true Christian, but (like Nabal) serving the defacto king of this world instead of looking forward to the promised kingdom. This is the climax of the offenses that our Lord has in view.

Our Lord prohibits us to be vainly angry, and though he, as God, is said once to be angry (Mark 3:5), we have seen that the NT nowhere gives us a cause that justifies our anger. Similarly, he forbids rude insults, a prohibition that the epistles reinforce. But in this case, with the accusation of “fool,” we must qualify the prohibition. Our Lord does call people by this name:

Mat 23:17 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? ... 19 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

9 John Gill explains it by reference to the fool in Proverbs. This will not work: Proverbs LXX nowhere uses this word. But the idea that the term is moral in nature can be substantiated. See notes for full discussion.

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And Paul does too, correcting a pernicious doctrinal error, though using a different word:¹⁰

1Co 15:36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

In fact, if we are to do our job of calling people to repentance, we must confront them with their sin. The issue seems to be whether we do so out of anger. Our Lord is speaking of the progression of attitudes and statements that would ultimately lead to murder. If we confront people with their sin, it must never be in anger, but with the greatest compassion and tenderness.

Application: We must be very cautious that our assessments of peoples' spiritual needs not be tinged by our personal animosity toward them. It is so easy to slide from inner anger, to rude insults, and then to spiritual slander, but in our Lord's eyes such conduct is as wicked as murder.

shall be in danger of hell fire.—This kind of false spiritual accusation merits the strongest penalty of all, God's eternal judgment.

23-26, Applications

Now the Lord discusses two applications of these principles (chart). We might expect these illustrations to focus on people who have offended us, but remarkably, both of them talk about people who think we have offended them (chart)! After telling us that we should not be angry, he goes on to tell us that we should help other people not be angry with us. This observation suggests two lessons.

The first lesson is of far broader applicability than just anger. The focus of God's law is not on me, but on God. The issue is not just how I can be righteous, but how God's standards can be satisfied. My responsibility is not just to please God myself, but to contribute to an environment that makes it easy for other people to please him. This principle is reflected perhaps most directly in Paul's instruction concerning the weaker brother:

Rom 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

1Co 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

If my conduct causes you to sin, then I have sinned. The only exception would be if the alternative to my conduct would have been to sin directly against the Lord.

The second lesson concerns anger specifically. This sinful emotion perpetuates itself (chart). If you are angry with me, my fleshly response to your anger is to become angry with you, which intensifies your anger, and so forth. Cutting the cycle as early as I can is the best way to guard against falling into anger myself.

The two applications deal with different contexts, and different people (chart). The first is the anger of our brethren in the context of worship. The second is the anger of an adversary, perhaps an unbeliever, exhibited in a legal action.

¹⁰ The Greek word here is *αφρων*, Proverbs' word for folly.

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23-24, Implications for our Worship with our Brethren

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.—The Lord’s teaching lies behind Paul’s instructions concerning the Lord’s Table (chart),

1Co 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

Here the responsibility falls on the one who thinks he may have offended another. In Matt 18, the initiative rests with the one who has been offended:

Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:

The bottom line is that whoever recognizes an offense is responsible for reaching out to remedy it. God’s solution to the problem of offense is reconciliation, not anger.

25-26, Implications for our Relations with our Adversaries

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him;—The Lord repeats this story in another setting in Luke, where it is clear that “in the way” means “on the way to the court” (chart):

Luke 12:58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, *as thou art* in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

As in the previous example, the focus is on someone who is angry with us. But the setting has changed in two ways. No longer do we have to do with our brother, but with an adversary. And we find ourselves not on our way to worship, but on our way to trial.

This principle of seeking peace rather than conflict is to govern our relation even with those who are outside of the church. Again, the rest of the NT echoes this principle:

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Rom 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.—The details of this example show the futility of becoming tangled in a spiral of revenge. Ultimately somebody loses, and it may well be you! Avoiding anger and its sequel is not only pleasing to the Lord, but a wise course of action in daily life.

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27-30, Adultery

27 Ye have heard that it was said ~~by them of old time,~~—This is the shortest version of the introductory formula.

Thou shalt not commit adultery:—This is a direct quotation from the law, Exod 20:14. How does this represent a perversion of the law?

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.—Two words in our Lord's teaching require attention: "lust" and "heart."

The verb "lust" ἐπιθυμῶ is the one used in the LXX to translate קָנָה "covet" in the tenth commandment,

Exo 20:17 Thou shalt not **covet** thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not **covet** thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

With this insight, the Lord may be saying, "The tradition focuses your attention on the actions forbidden in the first nine commandments. But I am directing your attention toward the inner motives summarized in the tenth." The error of the tradition is not in what it says, but in what it leaves unsaid. It focuses on the outward conduct, but does not hold people accountable for their inward fantasies. If we pay attention to the whole law, and in particular to the tenth commandment, we will be slow to assume that outward actions can satisfy it.

This role for the tenth commandments is consistent with Paul's report of how he became aware of his own sin. Before his salvation, he prided himself on his (outward) righteousness:

Phi 3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**

But when the Spirit opened his understanding to the tenth commandment, he realized that he was a helpless sinner.¹¹ His words in Romans 7 probably reflect his meditations during the three days that he spent blind in Damascus in the house of Judas after the Lord appeared to him (Acts 9:8-11).

Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, **Thou shalt not covet.** 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found to *be* unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me.* 12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then

11 Compare the suggestion of David Freedman, in his book *The Nine Commandments*, based on an alignment between the first nine commandments and the major sins in the Deuteronomic history, that the tenth commandment is intended as a summary, pointing to the inner origin of the impulses that lead to violations of all the others.

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that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

The second word in 5:28 that brings us special insight is our Lord's reference to the heart. Superficial conformity to the first nine commandments is not enough. God sees and judges according to the heart, a principle that governed his choice of David as king (chart).

1Sa 16:7 man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

David may be the author of Ps 119, who resolved,

Psa 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

David's advice shows the antidote to wicked thoughts: filling the heart with the Word of God.

Solomon expands this idea, putting the heart first in a list of bodily members that need to be subject to God's law. He also tells how to do this, by storing up sound teaching in the heart:

Pro 4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. 21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine **heart**. 22 For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23 Keep thy **heart** with all diligence [above all keeping]; for out of it *are* the issues of life. 24 Put away from thee a froward **mouth**, and perverse **lips** put far from thee. 25 Let thine **eyes** look right on, and let thine **eyelids** look straight before thee. 26 Ponder the path of thy **feet**, and let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy **foot** from evil.

The Pharisees focused on external behavior, to the neglect of internal motives. Thus even in quoting the seventh commandment, they were misleading people by neglecting the heart attitude. Our Lord raises this issue with them again in the context of the need for ceremonial washings before eating:

Mat 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth **come forth from the heart**; and they defile the man. 19 For **out of the heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Application: This insight teaches us two things. First, we must not pride ourselves on our outward conduct, but judge what we do in the light of our heart. Second, we must protect and preserve our heart's attitude, not feeding our imagination with ungodly media or titillating conversation. "Guard your heart with all diligence."

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.—The Lord has just equated "look[ing] on a woman to lust after her" with the adultery forbidden in the law. Some might think, "Well, yes, the lustful look certainly is related to adultery. But surely it is not on the same order as committing the act." With these verses the Lord rejects such rationalizations. The impure look puts the sinner in jeopardy of hell, just as much as the action, and must be avoided decisively and without hesitation.

Of course, plucking out the right eye will not solve the problem (chart). The left eye is just as effective in lusting as the right, yet he does not command the excision of both eyes. And even if one were to

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remove both eyes, as we have seen from multiple texts, the problem is not the eye, but the heart. Even a blind person can lust. Language can stimulate lustful images just as much as vision can, as authors of popular novels well understand. Plucking out the heart would be suicide, which Scripture associates only with reprobates.

The “right eye” is the aiming eye for a right-handed archer, and losing it would make a man ineffective in battle. In spite of its great value, if it causes sin, it must be discarded immediately. How much more should lesser things be rejected, if they lead us into sin? Paul teaches,

Rom 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

In the case of sexual sin, Job shows us how to apply this principle:

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

Recall Solomon’s exhortation in Proverbs,

Prov 4:25 Let thine **eyes** look right on, and let thine **eyelids** look straight before thee.

In their very helpful book *Every Man’s Battle*, Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker discuss implementing Job’s principle in the “bounce reflex,” resolving not to allow one’s attention to linger on the lustful stimulus, but to bounce one’s eyes away from it immediately. The starting point is “a covenant with mine eyes,” a solemn, deliberate decision to avoid stimulating materials that might lead us into sin.

This same principle can be applied to any sin. Make a resolve to flee from temptation, not to dally around and allow yourself to be teased by it. If you play with the idea, you will progress to the action.

Balaam did not follow this principle when the messengers came to him from Balak king of Moab asking him to curse Israel. God told him clearly that he should not go:

Num 22:12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed. 13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, **Get you into your land:** for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

When they returned with even greater inducements, he should have simply sent them away. Instead, he went back to the Lord:

Num 22:19 Now therefore, I pray you, **tarry ye also here this night**, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

Instead of “bouncing away” from the temptation, he lingered over it. Instead of urging them again “Get you into your land,” he invites them, “Tarry ye also here this night.” He is toying with the temptation instead of rejecting it outright.

Though God hindered Balaam from cursing Israel, we learn from the Revelation¹² that he did find a way to help Balak, presumably gaining a reward for it:

Rev 2:14 thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit

12 The history is also preserved in Jewish tradition, see Gill for references.

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fornication.

David did not follow this principle when he caught a glimpse of Bathsheba bathing. Notice the last clause, showing that he paused to enjoy the view:

2Sa 11:2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon.

But Joseph did follow it with Potiphar's wife:

Gen 39:12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.—In moving from the eye to the hand, the Lord extends the principle beyond sexual sin. We must resolve not to be tolerant of sin in our lives, but to put away every “provision for the flesh.”

Hendriksen:

Sin, being a very destructive force, must not be pampered. It must be “put to death” (Col 3:5). Temptation should be flung aside *immediately* and *decisively*. Dillydallying is deadly. Halfway measures work havoc. *The surgery must be radical*. Right at this very moment and without any vacillation the obscene book should be burned, the scandalous picture destroyed, the soul-destroying film condemned, the sinister yet very intimate social tie broken, and the baneful habit discarded. In the struggle against sin the believer must fight hard. Shadow-boxing will never do (1 Cor 9:27).

31-32, Divorce

31, *The Tradition*

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:—The tradition is based on Deut 24:1-4, and closely resembles the KJV translation (“let him write her a bill of divorcement”). The reading of the tradition (and of the KJV) sees three commands in this passage, the first of which explicitly allows divorce:

Deu 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.

However, it does not match either the LXX or the underlying Hebrew, in two ways, grammar and vocabulary.

Grammatical Problems

Grammatically, the text does not authorize the issuing of a “bill of divorcement,” but simply describes the fact that such a custom existed (chart). It contains, not three commands, but only one, with a

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lengthy condition that includes the existence of one or more divorces. The only command is that under these conditions,

Deut 24:4 **then** her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled.

I discuss the reasons for this translation extensively in chapter 4 of *Except for Fornication*. One important piece of evidence is Jeremiah's summary of this law:

Jer 3:1 If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted?

Jeremiah treats the putting away as a condition, not as a command or permission.

The OT and Divorce

Deuteronomy 24 is one of several OT passages that regulate divorce, but this does not mean that it approves of it (chart).

(A man who falsely accuses his bride of impurity:) Deu 22:19 she shall be his wife; **he may not put her away all his days.**

(A man who violates an unmarried girl:) Deu 22:29 she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, **he may not put her away all his days.**

But God states clearly that he hates the process:

Mal 2:14 Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. ...
16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Some will say that because the OT regulates the practice, it is therefore implicitly permitted. Here's a counter-example. One regulation is that priest is not allowed to marry a woman who is divorced. He is also not allowed to marry a whore:

Lev 21:7 They shall not take a wife *that is* a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he *is* holy unto his God.

If regulation implies permission, then whoredom is permitted as well as divorce, but we know that it was not:

Deu 23:17 There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel,

The references to the certificate of divorce and putting away in Deuteronomy 24 are a regulation of an ungodly practice, not an endorsement of the process and certainly not a command.

Lexical Differences

The tradition and the OT differ not only grammatically, but also lexically (chart). The tradition allows a man to "put away" his wife, using the Greek verb *απολυω*. This verb appears only four times in the OT,

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with no consistent Hebrew parallel, and never describes divorce. The OT does talk about divorce, but with different Greek words in the LXX, most commonly εξαποστειλω “send out and away.” The KJV uses “put away” for both verbs. To distinguish them, we can translate Pharisees’s verb as “dismiss.”

The Pharisees’ verb is commonly used in secular Greek to describe a divorce, and this shows the root of their problem. The OT does give a mechanism for a man to be released from a marriage: if his wife is found guilty of fornication (sexual impurity), either before marriage or after, she is to be stoned (Deut 22:20-22) (chart):

Deu 22:20 But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of virginity* be not found for the damsel: 21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall **stone her with stones that she die**: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. 22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then **they shall both of them die**, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23 If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and **ye shall stone them with stones that they die**; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

Stoning had become relatively uncommon in the first century. The Jews began to follow the Roman custom of easy divorce, and also the Gentile terminology. As a result, they treated true impurity much less severely than God intended.

God’s purpose throughout history has been to maintain a holy people, a separate people

Exo 33:16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

Lev 20:26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy, and have severed you from *other* people, that ye should be mine.

The Pharisees blurred this critical distinction and followed the world’s ways rather than the Lord’s.

Application: Beware the temptation to accommodate the Scriptures to the world’s practice. This syncretistic tendency is pervasive in the history of the church—and deadly.

32, The Lord’s Teaching

Our Lord rejects this tradition. Here and throughout the gospels, he uses the Pharisee’s word, because he is responding to their tradition. But we will see that he uses it with a particular twist.

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away [dismiss] his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced [dismissed] committeth adultery.—Consider first the verse, leaving out the exception, “saving for the cause of fornication” (chart). If a man dismisses his wife and she remarries, both she and the future husband are guilty of adultery. The first clause says that she commits adultery in remarrying; the second clause condemns her new husband. In God’s eyes, the first marriage is still in effect, and the

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second union is adultery. This principle is in keeping with the rest of the NT:

Mar 10:11-12 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put [dismiss] away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put [dismiss] away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luk 16:18 Whosoever putteth away [dismisses] his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away [dismissed] from her husband committeth adultery.

Rom 7:2-3 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. 3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress:

So far, everything is clear. The Pharisees, by twisting Deuteronomy 24 (and ignoring Jeremiah's interpretation), allow people to divorce. The Lord condemns any remarriage after divorce as adultery.

Now consider a dismissal "for the cause of fornication." In this case, the wife does not commit adultery in a remarriage. But the exception is falls the middle of the first half of the verse, and so does not apply to the second half. Anyone who remarries a dismissed woman is guilty of adultery, with no exception for fornication. How can fornication save the wife, but not her future husband, from adultery?

Most commentators neglect the position of the exception, and assume that it applies to the entire verse. If the Lord had meant the exception to apply to both clauses, he could made that clear (chart).

He could have repeated it with each half:

I say unto you,
whosoever shall dismiss his wife, **saving for the cause of fornication**, causeth her to commit adultery:
and whosoever shall marry her that is dismissed, **saving for the cause of fornication**, committeth adultery.

He could have put it before the pair:

I say unto you, that **saving for the cause of fornication**,
whosoever shall dismiss his wife causeth her to commit adultery:
and whosoever shall marry her that is dismissed committeth adultery.

Or he could have put it after both conditions:

I say unto you,
whosoever shall dismiss his wife causeth her to commit adultery:
and whosoever shall marry her that is dismissed committeth adultery,
saving for the cause of fornication.

But there is no grammatical precedent for a modifier that falls in the middle of one clause to be applied to neighboring clauses as well.

The solution to the problem lies, not in twisting the grammar of the verse, but in the verb "dismiss" ἀπολῶ. Recall that this is not the OT verb for divorce, but a secular verb from the Greco-Roman culture of the first century. It was used for divorce, but it has a much broader meaning, and three places

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where it occurs in the Greek Bible give us an important clue (chart).

Gen 15:2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing **I go [middle of απολω]** childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?

Num 20:28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. 29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron **was dead [passive of απολω]**, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, *even* all the house of Israel.

Luk 2:27 and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Lord, now **lettest** thou thy servant **depart [απολω]** in peace, according to thy word: 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

In each of these cases, the verb means “to dismiss from life,” a meaning that it commonly has in other Greek literature. The biblical way to deal with fornication in a marriage is by executing the guilty party. When that is done, the other party is of course free to remarry.

So the Lord’s message turns on a double meaning of this verb (chart). If a man dismisses his wife for any reason other than fornication, her remarriage makes both her and her future husband adulterers, for the bond with her previous husband is still in place. However, if he dismisses her for fornication, following the instructions of Deuteronomy 22, he dismisses her from life. Now she cannot remarry, and her widower is certainly free to remarry without adultery.

Application: The Lord’s teaching on divorce leaves no loophole. Throughout the Bible, the Lord hates divorce. His law recognizes that it takes place, and regulates it, but it is still sin, and remarriage is adultery. The Scriptures provide no exceptions. This is the most important single thing for a young person to keep in mind when entering into marriage: if you intend to live pleasing to the Lord, the marriage commitment is permanent, and there is no godly exit except by the death of the spouse.

33-37, Oaths

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time,—This is the second instance of the full introductory formula. The two instances introduce the first and third contrasts.

Vows and Oaths

To understand this passage, we must understand the difference between vows and oaths (chart). Both are promises:

Num 30:2 If a man **vow a vow** unto the LORD, or **swear an oath** to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

But they are addressed to different hearers. A vow is a promise to God. The associated verb is “vow.” An oath is a promise to men, and the associated verb is “swear.”

A critical feature of oaths (but not vows) is that they often invoke God to guarantee them. Here’s an example, David’s promise to Amasa to make him captain of the host in place of Joab:

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2Sa 19:13 say ye to Amasa, *Art* thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

The promise is, “thou shalt be captain of the host,” but David expresses it by saying, “May God punish me if you do not become captain of the host.” Sometimes the reference to the punishment is left out, but the promise is still expressed as a condition.

Swearing by a deity acknowledges that deity’s power, and indicates belief in the deity, and the law actually commands the use of God’s name (rather than another god’s) in oaths:

Deu 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you;

Many godly people swear oaths in the NT, including not only David (often), but also Jacob, Abraham, Abraham’s servant, Moses, the spies to Rahab, and Solomon. In fact, the law requires an oath of a woman accused of adultery:

Num 5:19 And the priest shall charge her **by an oath**, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness *with another* instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse:

Notably, even God sometimes swears:

Gen 22:16 **By myself have I sworn**, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

And Hebrews notes this event approvingly:

Heb 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, ... 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

33, *The Tradition*

The vocabulary in v. 33 deals with oaths, not vows; that is, promises made to men. Let’s consider each clause of the tradition separately. Neither is a direct quotation from the OT, but we can identify some likely antecedents.

Thou shalt not forswear thyself,—To “forswear” means to break an oath. The verb appears nowhere in the canonical LXX, but there is a close parallel in Leviticus,

Lev 19:11-12 Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. 12 And **ye shall not swear by my name falsely**, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD.

Because an oath invokes the name of the Lord, breaking an oath would dishonor the name of God. So here the tradition paraphrases a valid OT principle.

but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:—This part of the tradition may have in mind

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Psa 50:14 (LXX 49:15) Offer unto God thanksgiving; and **pay thy vows unto the most High**:

But again, the precise wording is different. Importantly, Psalm 50 is talking about *vows* (to God), while the tradition applies it to *oaths* (to men). A sympathetic reading of the tradition would interpret it as encouraging people to take their promises to men as seriously as they do their vows to the Lord. But we must be clear that this is an interpretation, and one that confuses distinctions that the text itself makes.

34-37, The Lord's Teaching

34 But I say unto you,—The Lord tells his followers not to swear oaths. He gives three reasons for this. We'll consider them, and then consider how the rest of the NT reflects his teaching.

Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.—As we have seen, a critical feature of oaths is that they invoke God to guarantee them, and breaking such an oath would profane God's name. Judaism has always been scrupulous about not profaning God's name (chart). This care led to the replacement of the divine name יהוה with אדוני "Lord" when the text is read, and ancient manuscripts sometimes wrote the divine name in a different font to remind the reader not to pronounce it directly. One consequence of this was to replace the name of God in oaths with something associated with God, such as heaven, or earth, or Jerusalem.

Once this substitution was made, the scribes and Pharisees began to argue over how binding a promise was if it did not actually name God. Our Lord condemns this sophistry later in Matthew (chart):

Mat 23:16 Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! 17 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 19 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

His first prohibition has to do with these substitutions, originally meant to safeguard the Sacred Name, but turned into ways to wiggle out of a commitment. He discards all this sophistry. God knows what they promise, and will hold them to it, regardless of how they form the words. The first reason not to swear an oath is that it risks profaning God's name.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.—The second reason behind his prohibition is that we can't control the future. The Jews would sometimes swear by their own head (see Gill for examples), probably with the meaning, "May evil fall on my head if I do not keep my promise." But we should be very careful with promises, because the future is really out of our control.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay:—This is the closest the Lord has come so far to deviating from the OT teaching. As we have seen, OT saints, and even God himself, swear oaths. Is the Lord here changing the standard? The next clause will help us understand.

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for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.—The predicate here literally is, “is from the evil.” The expression “the evil” is ambiguous.¹³ There are three possible meanings.

The KJV understands “the evil” as a reference to evil as a principle. This use of the expression is well attested throughout the OT, in the expression “to do evil” (which 90x takes the article, “to do the evil”), and the NT uses it as well. On this interpretation, the Lord traces the source of the oath back to the sinful human nature.

There are two ways in which an oath could come from wickedness, and both are problematic.

1. He might mean that the oath is intrinsically sinful. But then many OT saints sin when they swear an oath, and so does God. On this reading, the Lord is deviating from the OT teaching, something we have not seen him do up to this point.
2. He may mean that the oath is necessary because people lie, and people lie because they are wicked. But abstaining from an oath doesn't fix this problem.

It has recently become popular to understand all uses of “evil” with the article as personal. This is not required by usage, but it is a possible meaning. Those who invoke this meaning understand the person in question to be Satan, a usage that we find several times in the NT. In this case, rather than blaming the intrinsic wickedness of the human heart, the Lord invokes the influence of the tempter.

We have the same dilemma here that we did with blaming human wickedness. If oaths come from Satan, what about OT saints, and God's oaths? And if he is saying that the lying that makes oaths necessary comes from Satan, that doesn't explain why we should not use oaths.

There is a third possibility. In the OT, when the phrase “the evil one” refers to a person, it always refers to an evil human, never to Satan. While the NT does use the expression of Satan, it also uses it of people. We could paraphrase the clause to bring out this sense: “Characteristically, oaths come from wicked people.” Adding oaths is a sign that the speaker is ordinarily not trustworthy.

We may find some help in deciding among these options in James, who frequently shows his knowledge of the Sermon. This is one of the passages that he cites:

Jam 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation [MT hypocrisy].

James does not focus on an external source for oaths (like the devil), but on what they say about the speaker. They reflect a lack of sincerity in the ordinary conduct of life, and lead people to condemn us as hypocrites. Here is the third reason not to swear an oath: if you do, you are raising questions about your truthfulness when you do not swear, and so it's better to abstain from them entirely.

The Example of the NT

As with the other contrasts, it will be helpful to review how later NT writers apply this one.

Paul frequently invokes God as a witness to what he says (chart).

Rom 1:9 For **God is my witness**, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that

¹³ See notes for extensive discussion.

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without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Rom 9:1 **I say the truth in Christ**, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

2Co 1:23 Moreover **I call God for a record** upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

2Co 11:30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31 The **God** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, **knoweth that I lie not.**

2Co 12:19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we **speak before God in Christ:** but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

Gal 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, **before God**, I lie not.

Phi 1:8 For **God is my record**, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

1Th 2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; **God is witness:**

1Ti 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (**I speak the truth in Christ**, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Rather than seeing a conflict between our Lord and his apostle, we should recall the nature of an oath: a promise that is secured by appeal to the deity. None of Paul's statements is a promise. In none of them does he "swear," or call his words an oath. These are all statements of fact, not promises or obligations for the future. Our Lord is not talking about statements such as these, and Paul's conduct shows that it is not a violation of Matt 5:34-37 to call God as a witness to such a statement of fact.

In another group of passages, Paul gives a charge to his readers concerning their future behavior, and reinforces it by reminding them that they must answer to God (chart):

1Th 5:27 I charge you **by the Lord** that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

1Ti 5:21 I charge thee **before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels**, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

1Ti 6:13 I give thee charge **in the sight of God**, who quickeneth all things, and **before Christ Jesus**, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

2Ti 2:14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them **before the Lord** that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

2Ti 4:1 I charge thee therefore **before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ**, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

This language reminds us that whether or not we adorn our promises, God witnesses them, and expects us to carry them out. He hates "a lying tongue" and "a false witness that speaketh lies" (Prov 6:16-19). We should guard our speech carefully so that we do not fall into this trap.

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38-42, Revenge

38, *The Tradition*

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:—The tradition accurately quotes the law (chart). The original statement deals with recompense for injury to a fetus ,

Exo 21:22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as **the judges determine**. 23 And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, 24 **Eye for eye, tooth for tooth**, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

It is also applied to injury to another mature person (Lev 24:20), or even, in case of false testimony, as retribution for what one unsuccessfully tried to bring on another person (Deut 19:21).

In each case, the principle is given as guidance for the judges, not as justification for personal revenge, which was clearly forbidden in the OT (chart):

Lev 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Job 31:29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: 30 Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.

Pro 20:22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Pro 24:29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

But the instances that our Lord brings up show that in his time, the OT law was cited to justify revenge.

39a, *The General Principle*

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist *αντιστηναι* not evil:—This negative is followed by four positive examples, the last doubled and adorned with a negative to show that it is the last (chart). This initial statement as the summary, which is then expounded in four specific examples.

Each example presents an offense to which we might react with a spirit of revenge, but instead are told to receive graciously. The examples are ordered from the most severe offense to lesser ones, perhaps to help us recognize how pervasive is the self-centeredness that leads us to seek revenge.

“Evil” is “the evil,” as in 5:37, and as there, it might mean the devil, or abstract evil, or the evil man (chart). It probably does not mean the devil:

Jam 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist the devil** *αντιστητε δε τω διαβολω*, and he will flee from you.

1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 **Whom resist** *αντιστητε* stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

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We are to resist the Devil, but not resist ο/το πονηρος/v . Another option is that the word might be neuter, referring to evil or wickedness in the abstract. In this light, compare Paul's exhortation:

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day αντιστηναι εν τη ημερα τη πονηρα, and having done all, to stand.

James himself gives us a third option, in 5:6.

Jam 5:6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist αντιτασσομαι you.¹⁴

The just person who does not resist the oppressor is simply obeying Matt 5:39. In this case, τω πονηρω is masculine, referring to an evil person.

NT practice shows a distinction between personal offense and carrying out our duty to the Lord (chart):

Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood αντεστην him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

In Galatians 2, Paul reports how Peter fellowshiped freely with the Gentile believers, even eating with them, contrary to Jewish custom. But when some Jewish believers arrived from Jerusalem, he stopped eating with the Gentiles. Paul rebuked him for his hypocrisy. In this case the offense was not against Paul personally, but was a violation of a broader responsibility.

We've seen this tension before. In 5:22, our Lord commands us not to call another person a fool, yet Paul writes to those who would deny a physical resurrection,

1Co 15:36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

In 1 Cor 15, Paul is not trying to hurt the person he is correcting, but warning him of his error. Similarly, in rebuking Peter, Paul is carrying out his duty as one of the responsible brothers at Antioch, not seeking personal revenge. In both cases, he is seeking to restore a sinner, not attack an enemy.

Such correction is tricky. The flesh is strong, and it is all too easy for someone to claim to be doing the Lord's work, while in fact simply manifesting fleshly tendencies. Perhaps that's why the Spirit led Paul to warn us that maturity is a necessary prerequisite for this sort of ministry:

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

In each of the four specific cases, an action by another that would offend the flesh and might invite thoughts of getting even, instead is to stimulate us to a gracious, kind response. In each case later teaching, and even the personal example of our Lord, shows that we are not completely passive. The Spirit has given us examples to help us apply these principles, but we should not miss the basic point of the principles. *The believer, faced with an offensive world, does not take offense. Where the unbeliever seeks revenge, the believer seeks the good of those who give offense.*

39b, Physical Harm

The first case is the most severe, someone who harms us physically.

14 The verb is different (αντιτασσω vs. ανθιστημι), but Rom 13:2 uses the two in parallel, showing their close similarity in meaning.

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but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.¹⁵—The reference to the right cheek suggests that the slap is either with the left hand or with the back of the right hand. Either would be a particularly demeaning insult.

The Lord's instruction here is confirmed by his personal example. The prophet wrote of him (chart),

Isa 50:6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

And we know historically,

Luk 22:64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?

We are expected to follow this example:

1Pe 2:20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Yet our Lord's example also shows some modulation of this principle (chart):

Joh 18:22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by **struck Jesus with the palm of his hand**, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? 23 **Jesus answered him**, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

And Paul follows his example:

Act 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him **to smite him on the mouth**. 3 **Then said Paul unto him**, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? 5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Paul's apology is for the insult, "thou whited wall," not for speaking. Like his Lord, and perhaps in direct imitation of his Lord, he challenges unjust actions, but does not strike back. They both resist the wickedness involved in the action, while not resisting the people who commit the action.

40, Essential Property

The second offense is less severe: depriving us of property essential to our well-being.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.—

The cloak (the outer garment) was protected property, inaccessible to legal action (chart):

Exo 22:26 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: 27 For that *is* his covering only, it *is* his raiment for his skin: wherein

¹⁵ The Lord may have in mind Lam 3:31, which uses willingness to be slapped as an indication of trust in the Lord.

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shall he sleep?

Yet even that is to be yielded, rather than seek revenge. Paul seems to have the passage in mind when he exhorts the Corinthians,

1Co 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

But when the Jews bring a suit against him, he does not hesitate to appeal to Caesar to defend himself.

Act 25:9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

In appealing to Caesar, Paul is not attacking the Jews in revenge, but simply taking whatever steps are available to him to protect himself from unjust treatment. On the one hand, we are to accept suffering and abuse patiently; on the other, if God provides a way to escape from the difficulty, we may take it.

41, *Personal Freedom*

An even less severe offense is government oppression that restricts our freedom.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.— “Compel to go” ἀγγαρεύω is a Persian word (Herodotus 8.98), originally describing the Persian postal system, based on relay riders. The Romans picked up the idea, and their army would compel people to help them carry their equipment, for a distance of up to one mile. We have an example of this in the passion account:

Mat 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they **compelled** to bear his cross.

This background shows that the focus of the verse is on an oppressive government that denies us basic freedoms. We are not to protest and resist, but be subject to the powers that God has ordained, a principle reinforced in the rest of the NT:

Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Governments are intrinsically oppressive. Our responsibility as believers is to submit to their authority even if it impinges on our freedom. However, this spirit of submission does not mean that we may not take actions that are both legal and godly to improve our situation. Consider the principle that Paul articulates to the Corinthians:

1Co 7:20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. 21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if **thou mayest be made free, use it rather.**

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The greatest conceivable offense against personal liberty is slavery. An enslaved believer should be content; yet, if the legal system affords an opportunity for freedom, he is free to exercise it.

42, Minor Property

The offense involved when someone asks us for a gift or a loan seems so small that most of us would not consider it an offense to be avenged.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.— We must not miss the radical nature of this command. A request for support is the mildest of the four offenses that the Lord describes. A beggar distracting us on the street, or a solicitation arriving in the mail, is more a distraction than an offense. Taking revenge in the other cases requires us to exert ourselves. Turning away from a solicitation is so easy—how could it be wrong?

At root, rejecting the needy reflects the same fleshly tendencies as do more energetic forms of revenge. In each case, we feel offense because we are self-centered, concerned with our own comfort, or security, or freedom, or our own personal agenda from which the beggar distracts us. Offense and revenge are all about me and my rights. The Lord wants me to realize that I have no rights (chart):

1Co 6:19 know ye not that . . . ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

To understand this instruction, it is useful to consider our Lord's own practice as recorded later in Matthew. His practice seems paradoxical in light of this teaching. But it becomes clearer when we consider the OT teaching on charity on which the Lord's statement is based, and that in turn leads to a better understanding of the NT pattern of charitable giving.

The Paradox of Matt 15

Our Lord's instruction seems to be a blank check to anyone who would take advantage of us. Yet later chapters of Matthew show that even our Lord did not behave in this way (chart).

In 15:21, after a confrontation with the Pharisees, our Lord withdraws from Jewish territory¹⁶ “into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon,” where a Canaanite woman meets him with a request.

Mat 15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

She comes to the Lord with a request that he is fully able to grant. Based on 5:42, we should expect him to respond immediately. Surprisingly, at first he neglects her:

23 But he answered her not a word....

His explanation is striking:

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26 But he answered and said, It is

¹⁶ A common strategy in the early part of his ministry: 4:12, to Galilee, after the arrest of John; 12:15, from the synagogue, after the Pharisees began plotting his death; 14:13, by ship to a remote place, after learning of John's death.

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not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs.

His aid is not for all, but for Israel. She, as a Gentile and pagan, has no claim on it.

She submissively acknowledges that she has no right to what she asks, but recognizes Israel as the “masters,” taking the position that all Gentiles will take in the coming kingdom.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

The Lord accepts her statement as evidence of her faith, and then grants her request.

28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Within the borders of Israel, the Lord heals all who come to him, including some from “Syria” (4:24), which includes Tyre and Sidon. But on Gentile territory, he insists on clear evidence of faith before granting her request.

The OT teaching on giving helps us understand his policy.

The OT Pattern of Giving

The OT attests three major means of caring for the poor: periodic sacred feasts, gleaning, and servitude. Let's consider each of these, then summarize the principles.

Sacred Feasts, Deut 14:22-16:17

Our attention is drawn to this passage by the Lord's admonition “from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” This command echoes an instruction in Deut 15:7-11. The context is a description of the rules for the sabbatical year, which include the forgiveness of debts. Moses anticipates that some people might refuse to lend to a poor person as the seventh year approaches, in fear that they may not be repaid. He commands:

Deu 15:7 If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: 8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth. 9 **Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought;** and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

This section of Deuteronomy describes Israel's sacred calendar, and is an expansion of the third commandment, to remember the Sabbath Day (chart). The first part (14:22-15:23) describes events that happen once every one, three, or seven years, while the second part (16:1-7) zooms in on the three pilgrimage feasts that happen each year. Bracketing the entire set, the first event in the multi-year cycle is the last in the annual cycle, the harvest feast or the feast of booths/tabernacles.

A recurring theme throughout this section is caring for the poor.

- We have already seen this theme in lending to the poor even as the sabbatical year approaches. Note (15:3) that the release is only for Israelites, not for foreigners.

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- Once every three years, there was to be a harvest feast in one's home town. 14:28-29 specifies that this feast is to include "the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which *are* within thy gates."
- The annual feast in 14:22-27 is the feast of tabernacles, described further in 16:13-15, where we read that it is to include "thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within thy gates." Of course, they would have to have made the trip to Jerusalem in order to partake of this feast.
- The other two pilgrimage feasts are Passover and Pentecost. Passover appears to be strictly a family affair, but of Pentecost (16:9-12), we read that it is to include "thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* among you."

Thus the law commands the faithful Israelite householder to include the poor in the recurring religious feasts. Perhaps this is why the early church included a meal, intended to feed the poorer members of the community, in its meetings, until Paul put an end to the custom in 1 Cor 11:22, 34. This provision requires those who receive charity to be part of the community, participating in its worship. Even "the stranger" is one who is "within thy gates," and elsewhere the law requires such resident aliens to be circumcised (Exod 12:48-49) and obey the religious laws (Lev 16:29; 17:12; 18:26).

Gleaning, Deut 24:19-21

A recurring phrase in Deuteronomy 14-16 is "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow," the classes of society who would most likely be in need of help. If we search the OT for instances of this phrase, in addition to the laws connected with the sacred feasts, we find this instruction (chart):

Deu 24:19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for **the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow**: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. 20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for **the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow**. 21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean *it* afterward: it shall be for **the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow**.

The best example of this custom is the story of Ruth, when Boaz recognized the worthiness of the young widow and instructed his reapers to "let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not" (2:16). Like the religious feasts, gleaning requires the poor person to be part of the community. A stranger (like Ruth!) could benefit, but only if she came into the community. In addition, it requires the poor to exert themselves.

Servitude

A third mechanism of charity was servitude (chart). A poor person could be sold as a servant, probably to pay a debt (chart):¹⁷

Lev 25:39 And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee;

¹⁷ In spite of occasional KJV translation as reflexive, the verb in both cases is passive, suggesting that somebody sells them. For examples, see 2 Kings 4:1-7, Neh 5:1-5; and Isa 50:1

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Lev 25:47 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother *that dwelleth* by him wax poor, and sell himself [*Niphal*, “be sold”] unto the stranger *or* sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family:

If the slave is an Israelite, the servitude is temporary, ending after seven years (Deut 15:12) or at the year of Jubile (Lev 25:40), though an Israelite servant could choose to remain in the household perpetually (Deut 15:16). But foreign servants could be retained indefinitely (Lev 25:46).

There was also short-term (daily) servitude, where people could offer themselves by the day:

Mat 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

Like the religious feasts and gleaning, servitude provides for impoverished people who are local, part of the community. Like gleaning, it requires the recipient to work for the provision they receive.

Principles

Charity in the OT is not a matter of handing out money to panhandlers, or sending foreign aid overseas. It is for those who share the community and spiritual life of the giver,. Except for the feasts a few times a year, it requires the recipient to work in exchange for the gift (chart).

In summary, our Lord's exhortation not to turn away the borrower presumes Deuteronomy 15 and the sabbatical cycle. In turn, these examples suggest why the Lord did heal people from Syria who came to him in Galilee, but hesitated to grant the request of the Canaanite woman. The obligation is focused on fellow Israelites, and applies to the stranger who is “within thy gates.”

NT Teaching on Charity

The New Testament reflects these same emphases: 1) a responsibility to give, 2) focused on other believers, and 3) requiring the recipients to be diligent and productive.

First, the NT enjoins this same principle of generosity. A recurring theme throughout the NT is the financial need of the Jerusalem saints (chart).

- There was a “daily ministration” of food for poor widows that was so extensive, it motivated the ordination of assistants to the apostles (Acts 6:1).
- The church at Antioch sent relief to Jerusalem in a time of famine (Acts 11:27-30).
- 2 Corinthians 8, 9 describe in detail how Paul was collecting money from the churches in Greece for Jerusalem, and contain many exhortations to encourage the Corinthians to give. Romans 15:25-27 reports the result.

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There are more general exhortations as well:

1Ti 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, ... 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Heb 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Heb 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Second, this aid is mainly for other believers. Paul's collection was for the saints in Jerusalem. He also urges the support of itinerate Bible teachers (recall the "Levite within thy gates" in Israel):

1Co 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

But resident teachers are to earn their own living:

Act 20:34 these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

As in the OT, there is provision for this bounty to spill over to "the stranger within thy gates."

Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

But note the "especially." Our main responsibility is toward other believers.

Third (chart), the rest of the NT shows that there are limits, cases in which charity should not be offered. The OT examples show that regular support requires work, and Paul imposes this restriction:

2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, **neither should he eat**. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

In addition, there are circles of responsibility. The family has the first obligation to care for its own, and believers' broader charity should be reserved for "the fatherless and the widow," those who have no family to care for them:

1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. ... 16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and **let not the church be charged**; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Summary

Our Lord's instruction concerning giving is very carefully formulated.

By associating it with other warnings against revenge, he challenges our complacency in the face of the poor. Our reluctance to give, the sense of imposition we feel, stems from the same self-centeredness

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that drives his other examples of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” We must confess our self-centered attitudes and allow the Spirit to change them.

By his allusion to Deuteronomy 15, and by his own practice, he shows that his command is not a beggar’s charter. Our duty is first of all to the household of faith, and then to unbelievers who are “within the gate,” associated with us. And it is legitimate for us to recognize circles of responsibility, and require those who receive aid to work.

43-47, Love your Enemies

The last contrast taught us not to resist our enemies. Here we are to seek their well-being.

43, *The Tradition*

The Jewish tradition is an interesting example of over-generalizing from Scripture (chart).

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour,—A quotation from the OT:

Lev 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

and hate thine enemy.—Though it seems consistent with the first principle, this clause has no parallel in the OT, and in fact contradicts Lev 19:18a!

44-47, *The Lord’s Teaching*

The Lord begins with a series of four commands, then motivates them with God’s example.

44, *The Commands*

44 But I say unto you,—The Lord gives four commands, each describing something good that we are to do for those who are opposed to us. Note the progression among the four instructions (chart).

Love your enemies,—The first step is our mental attitude. We are to love our enemies.

Perhaps the prominent OT example of this attitude is David (chart). Saul repeatedly tried to kill David, at first in the palace with a javelin (1 Sam 18:11; 19:10), then by pursuing him in the wilderness. Twice during this pursuit, David had the chance to kill Saul, but did not: in the cave at En-Gedi (1 Sam 24), and at the hill of Hachilah (1 Sam 26). Listen to David’s words to Saul after he spared him in the cave.

1Sa 24:11 Moreover, **my father**, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; ..

He tenderly calls him “my father,” in spite of Saul’s hatred. When Saul dies, David mourns bitterly:

2Sa 1:11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him: 12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, **for Saul**, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

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bless them that curse you,—The next step is to speak well of those who speak ill of us. David again is an example, in his treatment of Shimei as he was fleeing Absalom:

2Sa 16:5 And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: ... 7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: ... 9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. 10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? 11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this* Benjamite *do it?* let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

do good to them that hate you,—Having moved from our internal thoughts to our speech, the Lord now commands our actions. We are to do good toward our enemy, something the law commands:

Exo 23:4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. 5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;—Finally, we are to pray for them to the Lord, who can do far more for them than we can. Even here, the OT is our example. In Numbers 12, Aaron and Miriam complained against Moses (chart):

Num 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard *it*.

As a result, the Lord smote Miriam with leprosy. It was Moses who prayed for the Lord to heal her:

Num 12:13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

This last example is paralleled with the behavior of our Lord and Stephen, when they were killed:

Luk 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Act 7:60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Paul gives us a similar example:

2Ti 4:16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge.

Before we go on to the example of God's love, we should consider a paradox (chart). David is an OT example of the attitude that the Lord commands. Yet David is also known for his imprecatory psalms, in which he cries out to the Lord for vengeance against his enemies.¹⁸ For example:

Psa 35:4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned

¹⁸ My understanding in this section draws heavily on the excellent article by Chalmers Martin, "Imprecations in the Psalms." *Princeton Theological Review* 1 (1903), 537-553. <http://journals.ptsem.edu/id/BR190314/dmd003>

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back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them*. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

It will not do to say that this is an OT attitude that our Lord is correcting, for we have seen that his teaching comes from the OT. In addition, the NT manifests this same spirit. Three Psalms are the main focus of imprecation in the OT: 35, 69, and 109, and these psalms are quoted approvingly in the NT. Psalm 69 is particularly interesting in this regard (chart):

- When the Lord cleansed the temple, “Joh 2:17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (69:9)
- In the upper room, the Lord told his disciples, “Joh 15:25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” (69:4; cf. 35:19; 109:3)
- Peter was guided by this Psalm: “Act 1:20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.” (69:25; 109:8)
- Rom 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. (69:9)

Clearly our Lord and his apostles view David in this Psalm as speaking not for himself alone, but as ancestor and type of the Messiah.

Paul prays for God’s judgment against Alexander for his resistance to the gospel:

2Ti 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

The Revelation shows this same imprecatory attitude. The martyrs cry to God for vengeance:

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And the assurance of the judgment of their enemies is presented as “the patience ... of the saints”:

Rev 13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. **Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.**

Rev 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. 12 **Here is the patience of the saints:**

How can we reconcile this imprecatory attitude with our Lord’s command to “pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”?

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In seeking out the answer to this question, I reviewed the use of the expression “pray for” προσευχομαι υπερ throughout the Greek Bible.¹⁹ It occurs seven times, always in the sense of asking for something positive, and usually in the sense of interceding with God for someone who has sinned.

One verse actually contains the expression twice, and holds a clue for our paradox (chart). Eli is rebuking his sons for their ungodly conduct. According to the KJV, he says,

1Sa 2:25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him?

The contrast between the two halves of the verse is not very clean. The lack of an intercessor in the second half suggests that we should expect one in the first half, where we find instead a judge.

In the LXX, the contrast much clearer,

1Sa 2:25 If a man should at all sin against another, then shall **they pray for him to the Lord**; but if a man sin against the Lord, **who shall intreat for him?**

In Hebrew, the verbs in the two references to prayer are different forms of the same root. The first instance is very rare, appearing only four times in the OT, but in every case “to intercede” makes good sense, and the LXX translation in this case is not bad. I would only change it a bit:

1Sa 2:25 If one man sin against another, then shall **he** pray for him to **God**; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?

Eli points out that there are two different kinds of offenses: one against man, and one against God. In the case of an offense against a man, the man who has been offended may in fact pray for the offender. Here, Eli is anticipating our Lord’s teaching. But in the case of an offense against God, there is no recourse. John knows the same contrast:

1Jo 5:16 If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Eli’s principle offers an answer to our paradox. When someone offends us, they may or may not also be breaking God’s law. Eli teaches us to consider the two offenses separately.

When someone offends us, we are not to “press charges.” This is consistent with the examples we have of prayer for adversaries.

- Moses prayed that Miriam could be cured of the leprosy.
- Our Lord emphasized that his executioners did not have personal animus against him; they were simply doing their job as the arm of the magistrate.
- Stephen asks the Lord not to lay the sin to their charge. He does not press charges.
- Paul uses the same language that Stephen does.

What should our attitude be toward people who offend the Lord? The scriptures clearly teach his wrath against sin, and the judgments he will pour out on the wicked. If we are to worship him for his attributes, we must praise him for these judgments as well. And throughout the Bible, this is the case.

¹⁹ See notes for details.

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In his valedictory song, Moses reports God's resolve for judgment:

Deu 32:41 If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. 42 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; *and that* with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

Then he tells us the attitude we are to have toward that judgment:

43 Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people.

When he commanded the nation to recite the law at Shechem, all were to say "Amen" to each of the twelve curses pronounced from Mt. Ebal (Deut 27:11-26).

Deu 27:13 And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; ... 14 And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, 15 Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

In the coming kingdom, a central feature of our regular worship of the Lord will be contemplating the judgment of the wicked:

Isa 66:23 ... from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These are not only Old Testament sentiments. Consider the response to the destruction of Babylon as the Messiah is about to return to earth:

Rev 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

"It is the duty of men to acquiesce in the righteous dealings of God, as well with the wicked as with the righteous" (Martin, p. 552). Imprecation is the appropriate response of the saint who contemplates the rebellion of the wicked against God. With respect to the offense we may feel, we must pray for the offender. With respect to their offense against God, we must say our "Amen" to the curses from Mt. Ebal. We are to love our enemies, but also hate God's enemies:

Psa 139:21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

Paul in his last epistle gives us a wonderful example of this paradox. Side by side we see prayer for enemies with imprecation. Alexander opposed the preaching of the gospel, and Paul prays for judgment:

2Ti 4:14-16 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his

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works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

But he has no bitterness for those who abandoned him through fear:

16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge.

45, The Example

The Lord's teaching on this topic is syntactically more complex than on the others. Like the others, there is coordination among parallel clauses, but there is also subordination by way of the conjunctions "that" (v. 45) and "for" (vv. 45, 46). These subordinating conjunctions explain the reasons for the instruction that he gives. They remind us of the precious relation we enjoy with our Lord, not as servants (blindly following orders), but as friends (to whom he explains the reason for his instructions).

The conjunctions distinguish the commands (v. 44) from the example of God (45), and the counterexample of sinners (46-47). Each of these uses parallelism to emphasize its point: we have four commands, and two examples each for God and the sinners. The overall logic looks like this (chart):

Love your enemies
 that **ὡς** ye may become the sons of God
 for **ὅτι** he is kind to his enemies
 for **γὰρ** the sinners do not love their enemies

The "that" and the second "for" give two motives for the command.

- "That" looks forward: this will make you sons of God.
- The second "for" looks backward: you don't want to be like the sinners.

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:—This is the first of two motives for us to love our enemies. Two improvements to the translation will help us understand the Lord's teaching better.

1. Like English, Greek distinguishes "be" and "become." The verb here is the one more appropriately translated "become" (γίνομαι).
2. The word "children" is better translated "sons."

Let's first consider the title "son" υἱός (381x in BYM) (chart). Greek words indicating "child" are βρέφος (8x, fetus or infant), νηπιός (14x, infant, minor), τέκνον (99x, the most general term), and παῖς (24x, which overlaps with "servant" and emphasizes subordination). "Son" emphasizes maturity and the position of being the legal heir to the family estate. Compare Gal 4 (chart),

Gal 4:1 Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a **child**, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were **children**, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of **sons**.

He makes a clear distinction between the position of a *child*, who has no authority or privilege, and that

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of a *son*. The title “son of God” is frequently applied to our Lord throughout the NT, but rarely to us, and in special settings where its distinctive meaning is in focus. When the Lord wants to address his disciples, he does not call them “sons,” but “children” *τεκνα*.

Paul emphasizes this distinction in Romans 8.

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the **sons of God**. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the **children of God**: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the **sons of God**.

We are now the children of God *τεκνα θεου*. The creation is waiting for us to be manifested as the sons of God *υιοι θεου*, those who are led by the Spirit of God, those who are spiritual.

So in commanding us to love our enemies, the Lord is not giving a condition for our salvation, but telling us what we need to do to bring our practice in alignment with our position. There are many children of God who hate their enemies, but if we would truly be God’s sons, we must love our enemies.

The underlying principle that we should be like our Father is very general, and very old. It is a recurring refrain in Leviticus:

Lev 11:44 For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and **ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy**: Cf. 11:45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8

Paul invokes it to urge the Ephesians to godly conduct, and specifically to a loving, forgiving attitude. Perhaps he has this command specifically in mind:

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 5:1 **Be ye therefore followers *μιμηται* of God**, as dear children;

For οτι he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.—God’s sons should be kind to their enemies because this is the demonstrated conduct of God, and as his sons we should resemble our heavenly Father.

Our Lord is referring specifically to God’s gift of the blessings of nature without discrimination to all people. Paul in Lystra presents this observation as part of God’s witness to all people:

Act 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Indeed, their failure to be thankful for this common grace will one day condemn them, and those who abuse our patience will one day answer to the one we imitate for their hardness of heart. But our duty is to grow into the likeness of our Father.

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46 For *ya*p if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?—The first motive for us to love our enemies is to become like one whom we respect, our heavenly Father. The second motive is for us to distinguish ourselves from the wicked. The principle advocated by the tradition is one that even the wicked follow. We are called to a higher standard.

48, Summary to the Contrasts

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.—We could see this as concluding only the sixth contrast, but it probably has broader scope. This exhortation broadens the principle of v. 45. There, the behavior in view was loving one's enemies. Here, it is perfection, that is, completeness or maturity. We are to grow up from childhood to sonship in every area of our lives.

The scope of the exhortation may be reflected in the headings of the contrasts (chart). Recall that only the first and fourth contrasts have all three elements: 1) ye have heard 2) that it was said 3) to them of old time. These full headings thus set off two triplets. The first triplet (no anger, no lustful thoughts, no divorce) is difficult to motivate as the imitation of God. In fact, he *is* angry:

Psa 7:11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

God *does* divorce idolatrous Israel:

Hos 2:1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. 2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she *is* not my wife, neither *am* I her husband:

Isa 50:1 Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

But the last three contrasts all enjoin upon us virtues that have close parallels in God's treatment of us (his truthfulness, his willingness to give to those who ask of him, and his patience with his enemies).

The summary nature of this expression can also be seen in how the Lord arranges similar thoughts in the Sermon on the Plain that he gave shortly after this message (Luke 6, chart). There, the section corresponding to the contrasts (6:27-36) draws only from the last two contrasts in Matthew, as well as two other sayings from the Sermon on the Mount, but it shuffles their order, showing how closely related they are to each other. In Luke, the Lord starts with an exhortation directly parallel to Matt 5:44, in the sixth contrast.

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

Then he turns to themes from the fifth contrast, rejecting revenge.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not *to take thy* coat also. 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again.

At this point he inserts a summary that in Matthew comes at the end of the law section, in 7:12:

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31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Now he's back to the example of how sinners love their own, corresponding to the sixth contrast. But the theme of "lending" recalls the command of the fifth not to turn away those who would borrow of us.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34 And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

Finally, he returns to the command with which he began in v. 27, loving one's enemies, from the sixth contrast, again with the reference to lending from the fifth mixed in, and adding the promise of reward in the face of persecution from Matt 5:12.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great,

In the Sermon on the Plain, it's at this point that the Lord brings in the theme of imitating God.

and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil. 36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

In Luke, this summary covers the themes that in Matthew are in both the fifth and sixth contrasts, and the distinctive heading on the fourth contrast suggests that perhaps that contrast as well (which the Lord does not address in Luke) falls under the same principle.

Paul's Summary in Romans 12

Like most of Paul's epistles, Romans begins with a doctrinal section (ch. 1-11), then moves into practical exhortation (12-16). Chapter 12, which opens the practical section, shows heavy dependence on what we have seen so far in the Sermon. It has three parts (chart):

- 1-2, a summary of what is required: a radical transformation of our minds.
- 3-8, our roles in the local church, according to the *gifts* of the Spirit
- 9-21, the *graces* that we are to show.

This last section is redolent of the Sermon. It shows us the degree to which these words of our Savior dominate the thinking of the early believers. We note the alignment with the B(eatitudes) and the C(ontrasts) (chart).

Romans 12	Matthew 5
9 <i>Let</i> love be without dissimulation [hypocrisy].	33-37 (C4) truthfulness
Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.	6 (B4) hunger and thirst after righteousness
10 <i>Be</i> kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;	7 (B5) merciful
11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;	5 (B3) meek

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12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;	10-12 (B8) persecuted for righteousness' sake 44 (C6) love your enemies 5 (B3) meek
13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.	7 (B5) merciful
14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.	44 (C6) bless them that curse you
15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.	4 (B2) they that mourn
16 Be of the same mind one toward another.	23-24 (C1) be reconciled to your brother
Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.	3 (B1) poor in spirit
17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.	38-42 (C5) resist not evil
18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.	9 (B7) peacemakers
19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but <i>rather</i> give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance <i>is</i> mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.	22 (C1) whoever is vainly angry with his brother ... 38-42 (C5) resist not evil 43-45 (C6) do good to them that hate you
21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.	(summary)

As we have seen throughout the Sermon, the Lord's teaching is firmly endorsed by the rest of the NT, and forms the foundation for their ethical injunctions.

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Notes

Λωω and καταλωω

The interchangeability of the two words is suggested by

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy λωω this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Mat 26:60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

Mat 26:61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Πληρωω in Matt

Matthew's comments about things fulfilled by the Lord.

- Direct prophecies (“fulfillment” in the sense of a specific prediction) (8x)

1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

8:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

12:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. 19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

21:4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

26:56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

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27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

- Types (patterns to which the Lord's life conforms) (3x)

2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Jesus' use of the word

- Things other than Scripture being fulfilled

3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

13:48 Which, when it [the net] was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

23:32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

- Scripture being fulfilled

5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

26:54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

The most generic sense of the word is some sort of matching. The net or a measure is full when its contents match its capacity. Righteousness is fulfilled when it is realized in action.

I've tried to divide the cases where the Lord fulfills scripture into two groups.

- Eight times, the scripture appears to be a direct foretelling of the Messiah, a proposition that would have no referent if he had not appeared. These scriptures require his coming.
- Three times, it is a more general pattern to which he conforms, but there are others who also fit the pattern as well. They would still make sense even if he had never come, but his coming exemplifies them in a special way, and helps us to see them as part of a broader pattern.

But this is my distinction, not Matthew's, and perhaps the two blend together. In both cases the fulfillment calls attention to a way in which the Lord makes an earlier statement concrete.

How does this help us with 5:17? The big question here is whether his fulfillment consists in the explanations that he gives in the first set of contrasts (5:21-48), or in his own person and conduct, which satisfies the law.

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A big help in sorting this out is Greg Welty's article.²⁰ I've followed his line of thought in the exposition of this paragraph.

Double εως clauses with single verb

Spatial Extent

Gen 13:3 And he went *to the place* whence he came, into the wilderness **as far as** Baethel, **as far as** the place where his tent was before, between Baethel and Aggai,

Eze 47:20 This part of the great sea forms a border, **till one comes** opposite the entrance of Emath, *even as far as* the entrance thereof. These are the parts west of Emath.

Jer 31:40 And all the Asaremoth even **to** Nachal Kedron, **as far as** the corner of the horse-gate eastward, shall be <1> holiness to the Lord; and it shall not fail any more, and shall not be destroyed for ever.

Num 21:24 And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon *was* strong.

Mic 1:9 For her wound *is* incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem.

Zec 14:10-11 From the gate of Benjamin to the place of the first gate, to the gate of the corners, and to the tower of Anameel, as far as the king's winepresses, 11 they shall dwell <1> in the city; *sounds like successive goals*

Jer 48:34 (LXX 31:34) From the cry of Esebon even to <1> Aetam their cities uttered their voice, from Zogor to Oronaim, and their tidings *as* a heifer of three years old, for the water also of Nebrin shall be <2> dried up. *Might be different dimensions*

Jer 31:40 And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, *shall be* holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

Eze 47:20 This part of the great sea forms a border, till *one comes* opposite the entrance of Emath, *even as far as* the entrance thereof. These are the parts west of Emath.

Temporal Extent

Exo 15:16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be *as* still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, *which* thou hast purchased. *Second clause refines the first*

Lev 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day, until ye have brought an offering unto your God:

²⁰ "Eschatological Fulfilment and the Confirmation of Mosaic Law." http://www.the-highway.com/mosaic-law_Welty.html, accessed 5/18/2014.

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Num 11:20 *But* until a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you:
Again, refinement, additional detail

Jdg 5:7 *The inhabitants of* the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

2Sa 17:22 And David rose up and all the people with him, and they passed over Jordan till the morning light; until there was not one missing who did not pass over Jordan.

2Ch 36:16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy.

Dan 12:4 And thou, Daniel, close the words, and seal the book **to** the time of the end; **until** many are taught, and knowledge is increased. *Second clause provides more detail*

Jer 1:3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. *Different descriptions of the same terminus*

Other (τυ ... ην idiom)

Jdg 20:48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

5:19-20

There is a puzzling tension. One who sets aside the least commandments is declared to be in the kingdom—least in the kingdom, but still in the kingdom. But the Scribes and Pharisees are declared to be excluded from the kingdom entirely. I have found two explanations, which differ in how the sentence is parsed.

Καλεω modifies “called”: no claim of kingdom position

One possibility is that the prepositional phrase “in the kingdom of heaven” describes the place of calling: “those who are in the kingdom will call such a person least or great.” In this case the verse makes no statement about whether the person is or is not in the kingdom—that is the subject of the following verse. This seems to be the position of those like Gill and Calvin.

Look at instances of the passive future of καλεω with the preposition εν:

Gen 21:12 = Rom 9:7 = Heb 11:18 for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. *The εν phrase functions as the title that is called.*

Gen 48:6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. *Prepositional phrase indicates where the calling takes place.*

Deu 25:10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed. *Here the εν clearly represents the domain in which he is called, not an assertion that he is an*

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Israelite.

Hos 1:10 = Rom 9:26 Yet the number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea, which shall not be measured nor numbered: <1> and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, even they shall be called the sons of the living God. *The place is clearly the place of calling. The status of the people is determined by their title, not their location.*

Dan 4:30 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὕτη ἐστὶ Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἣν ἐγὼ ὠκοδόμησα καὶ οἶκος βασιλείας μου ἐν ἰσχύι κράτους μου κληθήσεται εἰς τιμὴν τῆς δόξης μου *Here the ev phrase appears to function as the title, as with Isaac.*

Examples such as Deut 25:10 and Hos 1:10 show that the pphrase certainly can be understood with reference to the verb.

Καλω modifies “least” or “great”: person is in the kingdom

Another possibility is that “in the kingdom” modifies “least” or “great.” Then the person is in the kingdom, though with different stature depending on their attitude. This is suggested by the AV.

A.B. Bruce in the Expositor’s Greek Testament develops this view, which is also advocated (but in less detail) by Meyer. He understands the setter aside of the least commandments as a zealous reformer, in the spirit of John the Baptist:

The Baptist was in some respects such a man. He seems to have totally neglected the temple worship and sacred festivals. He shared the prophetic disgust at formalism. Note now what Christ’s judgment about such really is. A scribe or Pharisee would regard a breaker of even the least commandments as a miscreant. Jesus simply calls him the *least* in the Kingdom of Heaven. He takes for granted that he is an earnest man, with a passion for righteousness, which is the key to his iconoclastic conduct. He recognises him therefore as possessing real moral worth, but, in virtue of his impatient radical-reformer temper, not great, only little in the scale of true moral values, in spite of his earnestness in action and sincerity in teaching.

It is tempting to try to relate this to the superficially similar saying in 11:11,

Mat 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

But “least” there is μικροτερος, and besides, the Lord does not call John the “least,” but puts the “least” above him. Something else is going on in 11:11.

Bruce thus distinguishes three classes:

Christ’s statements concerning these classes of the Jewish community, elsewhere recorded, enable us to understand the verdict He pronounces here. They differed from the two classes named in 18,²¹ thus: Class 1 set aside the least commandments for the sake of the great; class 2 conscientiously did all, great and small; class 3 set aside the great for the sake of the little, the

21 *Sic*; he must mean v. 19

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ethical for the sake of the ritual, the divine for the sake of the traditional. That threw them outside the Kingdom, where only the moral has value. And the second is greater, higher, than the first, because, while zeal for the ethical is good, spirit, temper, disposition has supreme value in the Kingdom. These valuations of Jesus are of great importance as a contribution towards defining the nature of the Kingdom as He conceived it.

Nothing, little, great: there is a higher grade still, the highest. It belongs to Christ Himself, the Fulfiller, who is neither a sophisticated scribe, nor an impatient reformer, nor a strict performer of all laws great and small,

Though some commentators reject the alignment of the Lord's words with the "light and heavy" distinction of Judaism, Bruce's approach would seem to fit it very well. In addition, his contrast between those who reject the "light" and the Pharisees fits with a later statement:

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Word Order

At first glance, Bruce's solution, while elegant, appears to suffer the disadvantage of the word order, in which "in the kingdom" follows "shall be called" immediately, but "least" or "great" precedes the verb, and is thus not adjacent to the prepositional phrase:

ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν·
μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Contrast the order in 11:11, where the prepositional phrase immediately follows the adjective:

Ὁ δὲ **μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν** μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.

But there are numerous examples in Matthew where a predicate adjective precedes its verb, which in turn is followed by a prepositional modifier clearly associated with the adjective rather than the verb:

Mat 2:6 Καὶ σὺ Βηθλεέμ, γῆ Ἰουδα, οὐδαμῶς ἐλάχιστη εἶ ἐν τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν Ἰουδα· least ... among the princes of Judah

Mat 5:22 ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός. Guilty ... of the Gehenna of fire

Mat 18:1 Τίς ἄρα μείζων ἐστίν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν; greater ... in the kingdom of heaven

Mat 27:24 Ἄθῶός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ δικαίου τούτου· blameless ... of the blood

In 11:11, the adjective is used nominally, as the subject of the clause, but in these examples it is predicate. We see similar examples elsewhere:

Jdt 16:16 ἐλάχιστον πᾶν στέαρ εἰς ὀλοκαύτωμά σοι

Jdt 16:16 all the fat is not sufficient for thy burnt offering

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Here the prepositional phrase modifies ελαχιστος even though it is separated from it (in this case, not by the verb, but by the subject).

Even better, with a passive copula,

Pss 2:26 ὑπὲρ ἐλάχιστον ἐξουδενωμένον ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης

Pss 2:26 more set at naught than the smallest thing on earth and sea.

In fact, I don't know whether <adj> <pphrase> <copula> is even attested as a predicate adjective construction. (Though certainly <adj> <copula> <pphrase> can have the pp modifying the copula: 11:22, 24.)

Thus the construction is ambiguous. <adj> <copula> <pphrase> is a common pattern for enhancing the adjective with the pphrase when the adjective is predicate (as in 5:19, but not 11:11). But the pphrase could also be understood to modify the copula.

Resolution

It may be that the best clue is the conjunction γὰρ that introduces v. 20. As Bruce himself notes, his theory would be strengthened by δε, suggesting a new category, but γὰρ suggests that 20 is a restatement or explanation of what precedes, rather than a third category. So I will prefer the first explanation, that those in the kingdom will esteem people based on their attitude toward the law of God.

Ye have heard that it was said ερρεθη by them of old time τοις αρχαιοις

The verb and the dative both require attention.

The dative has been understood both as the source of the speaking (AV) and as the recipients. The universal usage of the dative with verbs of speaking in the Bible, though, is of recipients. Even the AV renders it as recipient elsewhere (2 Sam. 5:6; Hos. 2:1; Dan. 7:23; Rom. 9:12, 26; Gal. 3:16; Rev. 6:11; 9:4). It seems inescapable that we should understand it in this sense here. The entire expression is in contrast with “I say unto you,” and “them of old time” is thus parallel to “you.”

It is sometimes asserted that the verb implies that God is speaking (Guelich actually translates “God said,” and France notes that the aorist passive is “relatively rare” and “is used in the NT specifically for quotations of Scripture or divine pronouncements”). The “divine pronouncements” would be Rev 6:11; 9:4, and it is not at all clear that these are spoken by God. As for “quotations of Scripture,” all the instances are indeed in OT texts, but they are reports of direct speech, whether by God or others, embedded in Scripture, and the verb marks the direct speech, not the Scripture as such. For that, the common phraseology is “it is written” or some reference to “the Scriptures.” Throughout the OT, the verb is used of non-divine speech (2 Sam 5:6; Jon 3:7) as well as of God's words.

In support of the assertion that the verb here might refer to divine speech, the aorist passive is used regularly (as the participle, not the indicative as here) in Matthew's fulfillment sayings, e.g.,

Mat 1:22 ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet

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Sometimes (e.g., 4:14) “by the Lord” is omitted, but the persistent introduction of the prophet by *δια* instead of *απο* (except in the MT of 3:3) shows that the prophet is viewed as a channel rather than the source. This common usage reflects what the prophets themselves testified concerning the source of their revelation: “Thus saith the Lord.”

This usage is distinctive to Matthew as the narrator, and he never puts it on the lips of our Lord. When the Lord wants to refer to Scripture, even in Matthew, he does so with “it is written” (4:4, 7, 10; 21:13; 26:31) or refers explicitly to “the Scriptures” (21:42; 26:54), that is, “the writings.”

But the most important thing about the verb is not the subject, but the verb itself. Of course the Jews understood that God gave the oral law, and that oral tradition was active in the first century, so it was true that “it was said.” The key thing is the contrast between “it was said” and “it is written.” This contrast reflects the Jewish distinction between the oral law and the written law. The oral tradition was held to originate from Sinai:

Pirke Abot 1:1 Moses received the Thorah from Sinai, and he delivered it to Jehoshua', and Jehoshua' to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets delivered it to the men of the Great Synagogue. (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/sjf/sjf03.htm>)

The reference here is not to the written law, which was deposited in the Ark of the Covenant, but to the living tradition.

“You have heard that it was said to them of old time” thus may be paraphrased, “You have heard [from the scribes and Pharisees, in their homilies in the synagogues] that it was said to them of old time [a description of the giving and transmission of the oral law].” The omission of “you have heard” in v. 31, or of the references to the ancients in four of the six contrasts, does not contradict this. Understanding. There was an oral tradition. “It was said” is our Lord’s citation of this oral tradition. References to “them of old time” merely confirm that we are looking at this ancient tradition, rather than some some arbitrary sayings, and “you have heard” emphasizes that this tradition was routinely utilized in Jewish teaching.

Legitimate Anger

First of all, distinguish anger *οργη* from wrath *θυμος*. Trench distinguishes the two in terms of intensity: *θυμος* is the intense but transient flaring of emotion, while *οργη* is the settled purpose to oppose somebody.

Οργη is often attributed to God, so much so that in Rom 12:19 it is understood to be God’s prerogative. It is often condemned in people, but only a few passages in the NT might be thought to justify it in believers, and never is it directly commended.

Mar 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. *This is a man acting as God’s agent, thus the wrath may be*

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understood here as God's wrath.

Eph 4:26 Be ye angry ὀργίζω, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath παροργίζω: *A quotation and paraphrase from Psa 4:4, 6, addressed to Absalom, cf. 3:1, and urging him to depart from sinful behavior.*

Jam 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath βραδύς εἰς ὀργήν: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. *We are enjoined to be slow to wrath, not to abstain entirely from it. This is the very attribute that God claims for himself in Exod 34:6, so one might think that James makes it difficult to draw a line between God's anger and ours. Yet recall that this verse outlines the rest of James, and if we read the portion of the book that it summarizes (4:1-5:6), we see no justification at all for anger, but only exhortations to peace.*

Θυμος is never spoken of approvingly for men.

Hebrew Antecedents of "fool" μωρε (v. 22)

Gill suggests that we understand "fool" in v. 22 in the sense of Proverbs, a morally deficient person. A challenge to this view is that this term nowhere appears in LXX Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. These books use αφρων (96x, 113x total in canonical books), never μωρε (8x in the other canonical books). So how should we understand our Lord's reference?

Correlates

Here are its correlates in Proverbs:

Hebrew	Total instances in Prov	Times in OT translated by αφρων
אױל	19	12
כסיל	49	56
נבל	4	10

In the canonical books, μωρος represents נבל three times, נבלה once, אױל and כסיל once each and two more times without clear correspondent, for a total of 8 instances. So it is dedicated to נבל, though not dominant there. Here are its correspondences with נבל:

Deu 32:6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?*

Isa 32:5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said *to be* bountiful. 6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

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Use Elsewhere in the NT

The two words are much more evenly distributed in the NT. Μωροϛ appears 13x, all in Matthew (7x) and Paul (of which 4 are in 1 Cor). Αφρων appears 11x: 2x in Luke, once in 1 Pet, and the rest in Paul (of which 1 in 1 Cor, 5 in 2 Cor).

Αφρων is regularly used in the NT for places where the writer or speaker chastises the audience:

Luk 11:40 *Ye* fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

Luk 12:20 But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

1Co 15:36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

But Matthew does not know the word, and uses μωρε in similar contexts:

Mat 23:17 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? ... 19 *Ye* fools and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

The Evidence of Sirach

μωροϛ is very common in Sirach, which contains 26 of the 37 instances in the LXX. Sirach also uses αφρων, 11x. The two appear together in 16:23,

Sir 16:23 He that wanteth understanding will think upon vain things: and a foolish man αφρων erring imagineth follies μωρα.

Associations of the word: μωροϛ in Sirach is mostly opposed to the wise. 22:12 links it with the ungodly ασεβοϛ;

Sir 22:12 Seven days do men mourn for him that is dead; but for a fool and an ungodly man all the days of his life.

see also

Sir 27:13 The discourse of fools is irksome, and their sport is the wantonness of sin.

Associated with apostates and gentiles:

Sir 50:26 They that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sicheim.

Proverbs: out of 37 instances of “fool,” most are parallel with “wise,” but again a few are linked with the wicked:

Pro 19:1 Better *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity, than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool כסיל.

Pro 26:10 The great *God* that formed all *things* both rewardeth the fool כסיל, and rewardeth transgressors.

Reading over the instances in Sirach, they strongly resemble many of the proverbs.

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Resolution

The usage of the LXX surveyed above suggests that Gill's solution, as stated, is not likely. However, his idea that we should look to the OT for the meaning of the word is sound, if we trace it through נבל. The uses in Deuteronomy and Isaiah establish the moral overtones that Gill suggests attach to the word, and would lead a bilingual reader to think immediately of the man Nabal, who set himself against David, God's anointed, during the period of his weakness (1 Samuel 25). The writer characterizes him thus:

1Sa 25:3 the man *was* churlish and evil in his doings

Calling someone a fool is thus tantamount to accusing him of being a Nabal, a wicked person. Nabal would submit to the crowned king to protect his own interests, but he would not recognize the anointed one in his weakness. He is like the scribes and Pharisees, who rejected our Lord in the period before his investiture. We are thus warned against uncharitable accusations of our brethren, accusing them of being hypocritical and not true followers of the Lord as a way of venting our anger against them.

This position must be maintained with caution, since Paul, in later uses of μωρος, does not appear to have this sense in view.

OT Origins of 5:33

Critical to this section is the distinction between oaths and vows.

Oaths (nouns שבועה, ορκος; verbs שבע, ομντω) obligate a person to take certain actions toward another person. They may invoke the deity as a witness or guarantor, but the promise is between men.

Vows (Hebrew root נדר, Greek noun ευχη, verb ευχομαι, commonly translated "to pray") are a promise to God, such as Jacob made at Bethel (Gen 28:20), or the nation before attacking the king of Arad (Num 21:2).

The Greek words in this section uniformly refer to oaths, not vows, making it appropriate for discussion of our manward responsibilities.

Mat 5:33a Οὐκ ἐπιορκήσεις,

The verb appears nowhere in the canonical LXX (it does appear in 1 Esd 1:46 and the parallel in Wisd 14:28). The closest parallel is Lev 19:12,

Lev 19:12 οὐκ ὀμείσθε τῷ ὀνόματί μου ἐπ' ἄδικω

It was common to invoke the deity in making promises to people. Leviticus insists that such promises be true. Thus far, the tradition paraphrases rather than quotes the OT, but the meaning appears unimpaired.

Mat 5:33b ἀποδώσεις δὲ τῷ κυρίῳ τοὺς ὄρκους σου·

The closest OT parallel is Psa 49:14 (KJV 50:14),

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Psa 49:14 και ἀπόδος τῷ ὑψίστῳ τὰς εὐχὰς σου

But this refers to vows, not to oaths

Πονηρος with and without the article

It is customary to prefer the translation “the wicked one” for articular forms of πονηρος in the NT (e.g., Matt 6:13, and suggested for 5:37). Is this warranted? And if it is, is the reference to Satan (as proponents almost always assert)?

Data Exploration

Here’s the distribution of the two forms, in all cases and numbers (BGM ‘o@d* =gcn πονηρος@*):

	Articular	Anarthrous	Total
LXX	163 = 84%	219=82%	382
NT	30	48	78
Total	193	267	460

Both forms are very common, making it difficult to insist that the articular form is specially marked. But what then is the difference between the two?

Masculine instances are much less frequent. Here are the counts of forms parsed by BGM as masculine (recognizing that in the genitive and dative the gender is ambiguous) (BGM ‘o@d?m* =gcn πονηρος@*):

	Articular	Anarthrous	Total
LXX	18 = 49%	58 = 72%	76
NT	19	22	41
Total	37	80	117

This summary shows that the NT uses the masculine form much more than one would expect from the distribution of all articular forms.

Consider the articular masculine forms in the OT. The 18 instances fall into these categories.

- Attributive position, referencing a specific antecedent: with demonstrative, Num 20:5 “this evil place,” Neh 13:17 “this evil thing,” Est 7:6 “this wicked Haman”; without demonstrative, Jer 12:14 “the evil neighbors
- A Deuteronomic formula, to “put away” בער the evil from among you,” always with reference to a specific sin that is to be punished: 13:6 (MT 5); 17:7, 12; 19:9; 21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7. By marking this form as masculine, the LXX indicates that it refers to the person who is being

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punished.

- Personal, “the evil person,” Job 21:30; 34:17; Isa 32:7; 53:9
- Predicative, Sir 14:5 ο πονηρος εαυτω “he that is wicked to himself”

This summary has two interesting features.

- There are no cases where “the evil” clearly means abstract evil.
- When it does refer to a person, the person is a wicked human, not the devil!

But any references to abstract evil were probably coded as neuter. So next we look at singular neuter instances. There are 90 of these in the OT, in 87 vv, all accusative. Almost all are the object of ποιω, to “do evil.” Here are the five exceptions:

- Attributive position: Ex 33:4; Tobit 3:17; Tobit S 3:17;
- Others:

2Sa 14:17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so *is* my lord the king to discern good and **bad το πονηρον**: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

Amo 5:14 Seek good, and not **evil το πονηρον**, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

The anarthrous singular adjective comes as object of ποιω only twice: Num 24:13; Mal 2:17.

Clearly, this OT usage supports the articular neuter in the sense of “the principle of evil.” In fact, there are more instances of the neuter in the sense of abstract evil (87) than there are of the masculine in the sense of a person (13), though both are well enough attested that we should not be surprised to find them in the NT. But there is no reference that clearly points to Satan.

So now let’s consider all possible masculine articular instances of πονηρος in the NT. We note right away that Matthew (6x) and 1 John (4x) dominate the instances (21 total ambiguous oblique cases)

- attributive position: Matt 12:35 = Luke 6:45, Mt 12:45; Eph 6:13; Col 1:21; 2 John 1:11
- Clearly personal:
 - Referring to a human: 1 Cor 5:13 (contextual reference to a person)
 - Referring to Satan: Matt 13:19 (“cometh,” =Mark 4:15 “Satan,” Luke 8:12 “the devil”); Matt 13:38 (“children of ...”), ; Eph 6:16 (throws darts); 1 John 3:12 (“Cain ... of the wicked one”)
- Instances meriting discussion. Discussed in the next section

Analysis of Ambiguous NT passages

We’ll consider our focal verse last. Some of the others appear to be cited later in the NT, and we’ll consider each group together.

Matthew 5b-7

Matt 5:39 and citations

Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil μη ανιστηναι τω πονηρω: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

This verse poses an interesting contrast with James 4:7

Jam 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil ανιστητε δε τω διαβολω, and he will flee from you.

We are to resist the Devil, but not resist ο/το πονηρος/v . Given James' frequent citations from the Sermon, it's unlikely that he would say this if he understood 5:39 to refer to the devil. But if he understood it as neuter, telling us not to resist wickedness, how likely would he have been to urge us to resist the prince of wickedness? In this light, compare Paul's exhortation:

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day ανιστηναι εν τη ημερα τη πονηρα, and having done all, to stand.

James himself gives us another option, in 5:6.

Jam 5:6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

The just person who does not resist the oppressor is simply obeying Matt 5:39. In this case, τω πονηρω is masculine, referring to an evil person, as in 1 Cor 5:13.

Matt 6:13 and citations

Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. = *Luke 11:4*

Joh 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. *Sounds like Mt 6:13*

2Th 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil. *Sounds like Mt 6:13*

We'll study these when we get to ch. 6.

Instances in 1 John

1Jo 2:13 I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. *Or: wickedness*

1 Jo 2:14 I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

1Jo 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. *Probably personal, though could be wickedness*

1Jo 5:19 *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

These need more study.

Matthew 5b-7

Rom 12:9

Rom 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Clearly not personal.

Our verse

Mat 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of [lit. "is of"] evil.

Three meanings are possible.

1. του πονηρου is neuter, referring to evil or wickedness. → Excessive oaths stem from the intrinsic sinfulness of the human heart.
2. του πονηρου is masculine and refers to Satan. → It is the adversary who leads people into excessive oaths.
3. του πονηρου is masculine and refers to the wicked man. → Excessive oaths come from the wicked person, and characterize him as wicked (perhaps because he is trying to deceive, or because his usual speech is not usually truthful). This has the advantage of aligning with the use of the term two verses later, 5:39. It also increases the alignment with another verse from James that is widely recognized to refer to 5:37:

Jam 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

“Fall into condemnation” refers then to the verdict that the Lord has already pronounced, that excessive oaths reflect on the moral character of the one doing the swearing. (But this may have to be nuanced based on the majority reading “hypocrisy” instead of “condemnation.”)

Grammar of the Sixth Contrast

This contrast has more complex clause dependencies than the others, marked by the conjunctions.

Love your enemies, ...

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven

for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good...

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Be ye **therefore** perfect,

even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

For reasons given in the exposition, it is likely that v. 48 concludes at least the last three contrasts, rather than being part of the sixth alone.

Matthew 5b-7

44, Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute your

Two kinds of prayer for enemies

The Scriptures contain two sets of examples of prayer by those who are persecuted concerning their persecutors.

In the first set of examples, the saints pray for the benefit of the persecutor.

Num 12:1-2 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard *it*. ... 9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. 10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam *became* leprous, *white* as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was* leprous. ... 13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

Luk 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Act 7:60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

But there are also examples of saints calling on the Lord to judge their enemies. Best known are David's imprecatory psalms, for example, Psalm 35.

Psa 35:11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. 12 They rewarded me evil for good *to* the spoiling of my soul.

He says that he prayed for them, but apparently before they turned against him.

13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother.

But he is not ignorant of their offense, and asks the Lord to intervene:

Psa 35:1 Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation. 4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them*. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

Similarly, in the Revelation, martyred saints are pictured as crying out to the Lord for vengeance:

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

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And the assurance of the judgment of their enemies is presented as “the patience ... of the saints”:

Rev 13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Rev 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. 12 Here is the patience of the saints:

The combination of kindness to the enemy with the desirability of judgment is reflected in Solomon’s later instruction, which Paul quotes approvingly in Rom 12:

Pro 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Which kind does our Lord command?

Does the command in v. 44 refer to praying for their benefit (as exemplified by Moses for Miriam, or our Lord and Stephen in their passions), or calling on the Lord to judge them (like David in Ps 35)?

Study the expression προσευχομαι προς in the LXX.

1Sa 1:27 **For** this child I **prayed** התפלל אל; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

1Sa 2:25 If one man sin against another, **the judge shall judge him** ופללו אלהים; but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall **intreat for** him?

1Sa 12:19 And all the people said unto Samuel, **Pray for** התפלל בעד thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

2Ch 30:18 For a multitude of the people, *even* many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah **prayed for them** התפלל על, saying, The good LORD pardon every one.

Psa 32:6 **For** על this shall every one that is godly **pray** התפלל unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

Different sense: because of what has happened, prayer will result

Dan 9:20 And whiles I *was* speaking, and **praying** התפלל, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God **for** על the holy mountain of my God;

In addition to Matt 5:44, there is only one NT instance:

Col 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to **pray for you**, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

In each case except Psa 32:6, the prayer is for the benefit of the object of προς, and never for the harm

Matthew 5b-7

of that object. So the Lord can hardly be referring to imprecatory prayer.

These references lead us to the instance of פלל D in 1 Sam 2:25a, which might be a close parallel to our Lord's words. פלל D appears only 4x in MT, and Feder²² argues that it can have the sense "intercede" in all of these:

Gen 48:11 And Israel said unto Joseph, **I had not thought** to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. *I didn't dare to pray...*

1Sa 2:25 If one man sin against another, **the judge shall judge him** וּפְלַל אֱלֹהִים: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. *They may pray to God; note contrast with Dt in second half of the verse.*

Psa 106:30 Then stood up Phinehas, and **executed judgment**: and so the plague was stayed. *By his action, interceded to God to stop the plague*

Eze 16:52 Thou also, **which hast judged thy sisters**, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. *Jerusalem's actions effectively plead for God's mercy on her sisters because she is worse than they are.*

In each case except Gen 48:11, the prayer is for God to forgive the offender, a sentiment that is in view in 1 Sam 12:19; 2 Chr 30:18; and Dan 9:20 as well.

Reconciling the Two Meanings

Martin, in his excellent essay on the imprecatory Psalms,²³ points out that those against whom they are directed have offended not only the psalmist but more importantly God. These psalms reflect the true fate of those who oppose the Lord, a fate that it is the duty of the saint to approve, reflected in the "amen" that the people said to the curses from Gerizim (Deut 27:15ff). Compare Paul's imprecation,

1Co 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

1 Sam 2:25, understanding פלל in its likely sense as "intercede," captures this distinction perfectly:

1Sa 2:25 If one man sin against another, one may pray to God for him [פלל with two direct objects: the 3ms suffix, and אֱלֹהִים]: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him?

Eli here distinguishes the offense against us as an individual, which we are required to forgive, and the offense against the Lord, for which no intervention is possible:

Psa 49:7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8 (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) 9 That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

So in commanding us to pray for our enemies, the Lord is enjoining on us the attitude of 1 Sam 2:25a,

²² Yitzhaq Feder, Pleading One's Case Before God: A Hittite Analogy for תפלה. *ZAW* 125 (2013), pp. 650–53.

²³ Chalmers Martin, "Imprecations in the Psalms." *Princeton Theological Review* 1 (1903), 537-553.

<http://journals.ptsem.edu/id/BR190314/dmd003>

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and may even have that use of προσευχομαι υπερ in mind. In that light, the prayers of Num 12, Luke 23, and Acts 7 express the forgiveness of the one offended against the offender. But when we consider the offense of the wicked against God, we must recognize the judgment that faces them, and acquiesce in that coming judgment, as expressed in the imprecations of both the OT and the NT.

The Contrasts in Matthew and Luke

Luke appears to mix the last two man-oriented contrasts together, and these are all of the contrasts that he considers.

Matthew 5	Luke 6
<p>38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.</p>	<p>27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. → Matt 7:12 32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, → Matt 5:12 and ye shall be the children of the Highest: cf. Matt 5:9 for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36 Be ye therefore merciful, cf. Matt 5:7 as your Father also is merciful.</p>

Let A = no revenge, B = love your enemies, C = Imitate your father, D = No better than the sinners. Then Matthew = ABCDC, while Luke is chiasitic around Matt 7:12a at the center, BA_7:12_DB, with C pulled together as the overall unmatched summary, drawing heavily from the beatitudes. . Note that D is closely allied to A; both have to do with the idea of reciprocity, whether of bad things (A), or of good things (D).

Luke also uses επι instead of γινομαι in the expression about υιοι θεου, but as a statement of what is achieved, rather than a purpose.

The quotation of Deut 32:35 in Rom 12:19 is interesting. Paul presents two phrases. The first is from the Hebrew, while the second is from the LXX translation. Heb 10:30 uses the same version. The commonality may go back to the Targum, which reads, קדמי פורענותא ואנא אשלים

Matthew 5b-7

Words for "child"

	בן	ילד	עולל	נער	עבד	פתי	Gk Total
υιος	4051				1		5204
τεκνον	135	8	1				313
νηπιος			8	3		4	
Παις, παιδιον, ...	18	62		165	336		
Heb total	4943	90					

Βρεφος does not occur in the LXX.