



By [Dale J. Sieverding](#)

From Sirach we are faced with the choice of life (choosing the law) or death (turning away from the law.) It is the age-old question of human free will. The human person has the responsibility of choosing between good and evil, fire and water, life and death. The listener is told that the commandments (the law) will save you. The responsorial Psalm taken from the epic Psalm 119 honors the one who follows the law of the Lord.

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians reminds that the wisdom of which he writes is not understood by this age, but comes from God. Indeed, the wisdom and majesty to be revealed by God cannot be fathomed by the human spirit.

The Gospel for this week is a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount that we have heard in the previous weeks. Jesus has come so that all the potential of the law may unfold, "that it may be understood and observed in the Spirit that enlivens it more and more, and in order to 'fulfill' it, to take it to its completion. The imperative to forgive is taken to the next level, by commanding that a gift be left at the altar, so that the person might first be totally reconciled to God and brother/sister. Adultery is not limited to the mere physicality of the act, but Jesus extends it to include lust in the heart. The prescription of divorce is extended as well. The listener is encouraged not to swear oaths under any pretense. This teaching of Jesus "has brought all former revelations to their fulfillment. With an unequalled authority, he teaches righteousness according to God. He reveals the true relationship that human beings must have with the law, purified of all legalism, a law that demands a commitment of the whole being, and of its center: the heart."

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