SERMON OUTLINES
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNTAIN
VOLUME ONE
MATTHEW 5:1-48

Prepared By:
Joel D. Hestand

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THE BEATITUDES

Campus Version

Emmanuel Vargas
Washington, DC

Then Jesus took His disciples up the mountain, and gathering them around Him, He taught them saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are the meek.
Blessed are the merciful,
Blessed are they who thirst for justice,
Blessed are you when you are persecuted,
Blessed are you when you suffer,
Be glad and rejoice for your reward is great in heaven.

Then Simon Peter said, "Do we have to write this down?"
And Andrew said, "Are we supposed to know this?"
And James said, "Will we have a test on it?"
And Phillip said, "What if we do not know it?"
And Bartholomew said, "Do we have to turn this in?"
John said, "The other disciples did not have to learn this."
And Matthew said, "When do we get out of here?"
And Judas said, "What does this have to do with real life?"

Then one of the Pharisees present asked to see Jesus' lesson plans and inquired of Jesus his terminal objectives in the cognitive domain...

AND JESUS WEPT...

INTRODUCTION
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNTAIN
MATTHEW 5,6,7

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON:

1. This series of lessons will be a prayerful and thoughtful journey into the heart of God.

2. The Sermon on the Mountain contains 2,320 words, 19 questions by Jesus and uses the words "you" and "your" some 221 times.

3. THE PREACHER: Jesus the Christ - Prince of Preachers.

   (1) He was intelligent - had the Spirit without measure (Matthew 3:16; John 3:34). He knew what to speak, when to speak and how to speak.

   (2) He was effective - revealed what was in man's heart (John 4:29). He is the Preacher to our conscience.

   (3) His life was in harmony with what He taught.

4. THE PULPIT: "The Mountain" - near Capernaum.

5. THE RECEIVERS: "The Disciples" - Jesus shows an enormous love for them.

6. THE TIME: The Great Galilean Ministry.

7. THE EXTENSIVENESS: Embedded is the germ of every moral and spiritual truth. Never was so much put into so few words.

8. This sermon deals with the need for a new life rather than with a legalistic system of morality.

9. The question, "What is the meaning of this sermon for me today?" embraces our study.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. A QUESTION - "WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THIS SERMON?"

1. The sermon can be regarded as the very nature of the Christian religion.

2. It is the most impressive summary of what it means to live a Christian life.

3. Even the most careful observer is aware of the shallowness of our religion.

4. Consider the previous generation in our history.

   (1) When Christians burned with a passion to share their faith with others;

   (2) When Christians would rather die at a stake than compromise one truth of God's revelation, or allow their lives to be tarnished with worldliness;

   (3) When the line between the church and the world was clearly and firmly drawn.

5. This is not the case now - we have lost all of the above.

6. What is the cause of this shallowness?

   (1) Our attitude toward the Bible; our failure to take it seriously; to take it like it is; let it direct our lives.

   (2) Nothing is more important than the way in which we approach and read the Bible - it is our only textbook; the only source; the only authority.

7. Our attitude toward the gospel of Christ can probably be determined by the way we face the teaching of Jesus found in this sermon.

II. A QUESTION - "FOR WHOM WAS THE SERMON INTENDED?"

1. To whom does it apply? What was its real purpose and use? What is its relevancy?

2. Consider the various views toward the sermon:

   (1) The "social gospel" view - It is advocated the sermon in reality is all that matters in the entire New Testament. The simple application would solve all the world's problems.

   (2) The "development of the Law" view - the Pharisees misinterpreted the Law, so Jesus was expounding it and giving it more spiritual emphasis. This view does not account for the Beatitudes; the contrasts with His teachings, nor the fact that Jesus goes far beyond the Law on other points.

   (3) The "Dispensational" view - this view says that the sermon has nothing to do with Christians at all.

      A. It advocates the Lord began to teach about His kingdom, but was rejected and crucified. He could not set up His kingdom, and as a substitute, He established the church and the church age to await His return and the Kingdom.

B. At that time, He will re-introduce the sermon. It is for the "kingdom" age and its law.

C. It is a false, materialistic concept and is an entirely wrong concept.

(4) The "cannot apply" view - since it would deny grace. Some men must come to realize that obedience to commands and the meeting of conditions does not necessarily cancel grace.

III. A QUESTION - "WHY SHOULD WE TRY TO LIVE THE SERMON?"

1. Because Jesus died to enable us to live it - Titus 2:14.

2. Because it shows our need for the new birth and for help from above. The Beatitudes show our helplessness - we can not do it without God's help.

3. Because the more we try to practice it, the more we are blessed. Cf. the issues of living the sermon! Cf. Matthew 5:6

4. Because it is the best approach in evangelism. The world looks for true Christianity. We need to begin simply to live the Christian life. If we all truly practiced this sermon, we would have to build a building three times this size next year. We are not attractive because there is no real commitment to our cause.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Christian finds happiness, not in accordance with the world's standards, but in accordance with these principles of the Sermon on the Mount.

2. It is the poor in spirit - not the arrogant; the meek - not the self-satisfied; the merciful - not the unkind; the peacemaker - not the rebellious - who are called "blessed."

3. A prayer - "Lord, give us the grace to face squarely the teaching of the sermon, to honestly assess ourselves in the light of its precious precepts, to become living examples of it."

Twenty percent of the New Testament consists of the direct words of Jesus. Some 34,450 of the 181,253 words in the entire Testament belong to Him. They would equal approximately ten thirty-minute sermons.

What would Jesus do—how would He preach to your church if He were your guest speaker next Sunday morning? How would He revamp His preaching for our day and age? So much has changed since the first century.

Consider just a partial list of the topics His preaching covered: adultery, anger, anxiety, avarice, death, debts, doubts, eternity, faith, fasting, fault-finding, giving, greed, honesty, hypocrisy, joy, kindness, knowledge, law, legalism, life, lust, marriage, money, oaths, parenthood, prayer, pretense, respect, responsibility, reward, rulers, sex, slander, speech, stewardship, taxes, trust, unkindness, virtue, wisdom, and zeal.

Denton TX 4/22/12

MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN
MATTHEW 5:1-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. Christ pointed out the definite marks of a true disciple in His sermon on the mountain.

2. These marks are a part of a Christian's character, and all true Christians have every mark to some degree.

3. Occasionally we see a man with a particular robe, and a peculiar collar, that identifies him with a religious movement. (Priest; Salvation Army; Mennonites)

4. No outward garment is a mark of a disciple of Christ. The true marks are marks that are a part of his life. (1 Peter 3:3,4)

5. They are not for sale at the market. You cannot go to the store and buy a mark of a disciple of Christ, nor can you have your tailor make one for you.

6. What are some of the true marks of a follower of Christ?

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE THAT HE IS ONE WHO--

I. RECOGNIZES THE NEED OF A HIGHER POWER.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:3.

2. "Blessed" means happiness; soul prosperity; God's care, watchfulness and satisfaction.

3. The one who is poor in spirit realizes he is not "self-sufficient." It is godly, lowly and humble-minded in contrast to self-satisfied, arrogant and proud.

4. A proud and haughty spirit is evidence that a person is not a disciple of Christ.

5. It is impossible to get men to receive help from Christ who do not recognize the need for Christ.

6. The first step toward home in the return of the prodigal son was his realization that he was lost. Before he "came to himself," he did not feel the need for his father.

7. The true Christian is the one who feels the need of his Father. He is fully aware of his poverty. (1 Peter 5:6).

II. REPENTS OF HIS MISTAKES.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:4

2. "Comforted" - powerful inner strength; courage.

3. The idea of "mourning" is not attractive to us. The mourning comes because of the matter of genuine concern. (Cf. lost people; failures)

4. Since man is made of clay he will make mistakes. A real Christian will admit that he has, and does, make mistakes.

5. There is no divine comfort for those who will not admit their mistakes and for those mistakes, to weep.

6. Peter was not ashamed to weep over the mistake he made in denying Christ.

7. The man who mourns for his sins will be comforted.

III. IS SELF-CONTROLLED.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:5

2. "Meek" - self-controlled; poise; balance; strength and reserve.

3. Meekness is not weakness. Moses was the meekest of men, but he was also one of the strongest. (Cf. Numbers 12:3).

4. Cf. Christ; Stephen.

5. The giant who came out to fight the Israelites was proud and boastful, but he was not as strong as the meek and humble David.

6. A true Christian is mild and humble. He is gentle in behavior. His actions are moderate.

7. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

8. When we see men that are hard and severe, we know they are not true to this mark as disciples of Christ. Jesus was gentle and kind, and not harsh and bitter.

IV. HAS AN APPETITE FOR THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:6.

2. The desire for, or relish of, certain foods on the part of some of us was formed by repeated tasting of the food.

3. Was there ever a time spinach was repulsive to you? If you now desire such, it is because you have developed an appetite for such.

4. "For what do you hunger and thirst?"

5. If one is hungry and thirsty for spiritual things he will go where his appetite can be satisfied.

6. Cf. John 10:10.

V. IS MERCIFUL.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:7

2. Jesus is talking about "heart quality."

3. A person who will strive to harm you is not a true follower of Jesus.

4. "Merciful" - not cold; sympathetic; opposite of selfish; not loveless; sense of compassion with desire to alleviate the situation.

5. Mercy means forbearance from inflicting harm. The way we treat an adversary indicates the way we are rated in the sight of God.

6. There is no blessing to the one who is seeking to destroy his brother.

7. Cf. The "good" Samaritan.

8. Mercy is a kind and compassionate treatment of the unfortunate.

VI. HAS A PURE HEART.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:8.

2. "Heart" - intellect, emotions, will and conscience.

3. The outward actions of a man may be clean, but if the heart is impure he is not bearing this particular mark.

4. "Pure" - without hypocrisy; sincere; cleansed.

5. Pure hearts beget pure lives. (Cf. Proverbs 4:23; Psalm 51:10).

6. Many refrain from doing certain things because of the disfavor of the public. If there were some way to do as they desired, and not be found out, they would give themselves to many evils.

7. The heart must be pure as well as the body. When the body sins, it has been directed by the heart.

8. However, the heart may sin, and the body remain free from an overt act. Cf. Matthew 5:27.

9. If one's heart is pure he will have no trouble doing that which is right.

VII. IS A PEACEMAKER.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:9.

2. "Peacemaker" - lovingly aggressive; inner love for peace and others.

3. The making of peace is Christ's highest and best work. Cf. Ephesians 2:14-17.

4. No matter how sanctimonious a person may be, he is no true disciple if he is a "causer" of trouble.

CONCLUSION:

1. A Christian is a "marked" person. The world can tell that he is a disciple of Christ.

2. When one obeys the gospel, he has no outward robe to indicate he is a follower of Christ.

3. All men will know that we walk in the path of righteousness if we are truly dependent upon God, show sorrow for sin, are meek, merciful, clean in heart and in life, desire spiritual things, and promote peace.

4. May God help us wear our "marks" proudly.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT
MATTHEW 5:3

INTRODUCTION:

1. This sermon portrays the life of the Christian in its three most important panorama:

   (1) We must be concerned about God's law (Romans 8:4)

   (2) We must realize that we are always in the presence of God

   (3) We always walk in the fear of the God (1 Peter 4:17)

2. If we find ourselves arguing with what Jesus says in this sermon, something is either wrong with us, or with our interpretation.

3. If we regard any part as impossible, our interpretation is necessarily wrong. Our Lord taught these things - He lived these things - and He expects us to live them as well.

4. It is necessary that we take the sermon very seriously.

I. SEEKING HAPPINESS.

1. Because many Christians are miserable they have little to offer a world that is desperately and often hopelessly searching for happiness.

2. We must recognize that we shall never get anywhere in our search for happiness until we give up trying to find it by our own efforts and receive it instead as God's gift. (James 1:16,17)

3. Jesus shares with us the secrets of happiness.

4. Happiness is the great question confronting mankind. It is tragic to seek it where many seek it - in the world.

5. Sin leads people to think they can find it in worldly pleasures, wealth, fame or power.

6. The beatitudes say that here is the only one who is truly happy. There is a vast difference between the Christian and the world, and how each views happiness.

7. They are different in what they--

   (1) Admire - the poor in spirit are never admired by the world (politics, entertainment, business, etc.)

(2) Seek - the Christian hungers and thirsts after righteousness (cf. wealth, status, power, position, publicity, etc)

(3) Do - Cf. 1 Peter 2:5-9

(4) Think they can do - the Christian is really aware of his limitations. (2 Corinthians 3:5)

8. The Christian and the non-Christian are in two different worlds. The two have, or recognize different rules of life. (Colossians 1:13; Philippians 3:20)

II. "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT"

1. This beatitude is the key to all the others.

2. To become a Christian, we must empty ourselves before we can be filled with Christ. We cannot be filled until we are first empty.

3. Some would interpret this as reading, "Blessed in spirit are the poor" - thus commending poverty. They say the only true indicator of spirituality is a rejection of all material prosperity.

4. The Bible nowhere teaches that poverty is a good thing, or that the poor man is nearer heaven because of his poverty; or that the rich man is farther away because of his riches.

5. Our Lord is concerned here about poverty of spirit. There is certainly a difference in being poor in spirit, and being poor-spirited.

6. Poverty of spirit speaks of a man's attitude toward himself, whether rich or poor.

7. The Lord is speaking about emptying oneself of self-reliance, self-confidence, self-expression.

8. It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face to face with God. That is to be "poor in spirit."

9. This beatitude is not popular today. "If you want to get ahead, believe in yourself."

10. It seems absurd that it should be blessed to be miserable. This certainly arouses our curiosity because most people are striving to get rich, not poor!

11. This kind of thinking dominates our world - books on salesmanship reek with the modern philosophy; move with such self-assurance; an air of success.

III. "POOR IN SPIRIT"

1. What is it to be "poor in spirit?" Whatever it is, it is an absolute necessity. We cannot enter heaven without it!

2. We can get closer to our Lord's meaning if we substitute for the word "spirit" our more modern word "ego."

   (1) Ego means "self" and to be rich in ego is to have too much of the same (proud, haughty and conceited)

   (2) It is an overwhelming sense of our own importance - the self-satisfied, the self-sufficient; the self-seeking; the self-centered.

   (3) It is to possess such an acute awareness of self that one's world begins and ends with self.

   (4) Cf. Luke 18:10-13.

3. The Pharisee was very satisfied with himself. The Publican was possessed of a realization he needed something only God could supply. He felt the need for God's forgiving mercy.

4. This feeling of poverty made him rich.

5. It is difficult to get a man who is "rich" in spirit to study the Bible because he feels no real need to study the Bible.

6. He knows virtually everything he needs to know. He is very dogmatic and confident in his own judgment and in his own infallibility. He is perfectly satisfied with things as they are.

7. Examples of "poor in spirit" are:

   (1) Isaiah - Isaiah 6:5

   (2) Peter - Luke 5:8

   (3) Jesus - John 5:30; 14:10

CONCLUSION:

1. How does a person therefore become poor in spirit? The answer is that you do not look at yourself, or begin by trying to do things to yourself.

2. The way to become poor in spirit is to look at God, and ponder standing before Him.

3. Being poor in spirit signifies not only those who are in need, but those who realize they are in need.

4. It is to know we are nothing and have nothing and we must look to God in utter submission and utter dependence upon Him for grace and mercy.

5. The poor in spirit are much in prayer, much in Bible study, much in attendance, and much in good works of all kinds.

6. How much do you think of yourself? The attributes usually consider necessary to "get ahead" and to "be somebody" are the opposite of the first beatitude.

7. As important as are faith, repentance, confession and baptism, something else is necessary before the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.

8. "A broken spirit - the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

Denton Tx 5/6/12

POVERTY OF SPIRIT
MATTHEW 5:4; ISAIAH 61:3

INTRODUCTION:

1. This second beatitude is even less attractive to the world than the first beatitude.

2. What a paradox - "Happy are those that mourn".

3. The world says, "Happy are they that are merry, carefree, who live for pleasure."

   (1) Shun mourning;
   (2) Forget your troubles - drown your sorrows;
   (3) Be as happy as you can - steer clear of trouble!

4. The man who can make people laugh has it made, if he can make people forget their troubles.

5. The present madness, the money, energy and enthusiasm expended in entertaining people is a gigantic testimony to the efforts of the world to get away from the idea of sorrow, and the spirit of mourning.

6. As was true of the first beatitude - "Blessed are the poor in spirit" - the poor did not refer to finances, rather to something spiritual - poverty of spirit.

7. Jesus is not talking here about natural mourning, but again, that which is spiritual.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. SPIRITUAL MOURNING IS RARE TODAY.

1. Not only does our lesson focus attention on the contrast of the Christian and the world, but also between the first century church and the church today.

2. The church today is failing to have much impact. We are not exemplifying the beatitudes.

3. Nothing is more tragic than for us to think that the church has "arrived" and just needs to evangelize those on the outside.

4. Our own life is not in order, so we start with ourselves.

2. Consider his words to the church at Corinth. (2 Corinthians 5:2,4).

V. WHAT DOES THE LORD MEAN IN THIS BEATITUDE?

1. Mourning comes as a direct result of the first beatitude. It is the recognition of our sinfulness, weakness and unworthiness before God. It grieves us because we know we grieve God.

2. Those who mourn are those who grieve over sin.

3. Without this mourning, there can be no true repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10).

4. One problem today in the church is unconverted membership. No conversion because of no repentance.

5. No mourning because of a defective sense of sin - and this is due to no real sense of God's holiness - our poverty of spirit.

6. The faithful Christian is the one who daily sees his unholiness against the back drop of God's holiness - his ugliness in contrast with God's beauty. (Isaiah 64:6)

7. When we contemplate the life we are expected to live, and then note the life we are living, we mourn.

8. We also mourn over the sins of others. We are concerned about the state of the world and society and weep.

9. We see Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem - its refused righteousness, its refused repentance, its refused Savior and its forthcoming doom. (Luke 19:41-44)

10. So here is the contrast - the world (eat, drink, be merry and don't worry about sin) - the Christian (sees and mourns the presence of sin in himself, the world and the church).

VI. THE BLESSING OF MOURNING.

1. You shall be comforted. Why? Because the mourner will seek help.

2. Mourning produces repentance which draws us to a Savior. He will come to Christ.

3. No one can say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Savior" until he has first said, "O wretched man that I am."

4. Cf. Romans 8:18.

II. WHY WE DO NOT "MOURN" TODAY.

1. People can assume a pious appearance, although not natural, genuine, nor heart felt.

2. Being religious and miserable are not the one and the same.

3. But the idea exists we cannot convert the world unless we radiate brightness and merriment. We have gone to the other extreme today.

4. It is a deliberately affected, assumed, and put one religion. This leads to superficiality and glibness that is not only unintelligent, but it is not from within.

5. Most important, we have a defective sense of sin and the doctrine of sin. We don't take sin too seriously.

6. We also couple with that a misunderstanding of the nature of Christian joy.

III. AS SEEN IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.

1. Jesus is the Ultimate Example.

   (1) He got angry - John 2; Mark 3; He got hungry - Luke 4:2; He got thirsty - John 4, 19.

   (2) There is no record that He ever laughed. If He did, it is not recorded.

2. But He is recorded as a "man of sorrows" - Isaiah 53, and we read in John 11 that "Jesus wept."

3. Cf. Luke 19:41-44.

4. Compare the Biblical picture of Jesus with the brightness and merriment of the world, and also that many think should characterize the church.

IV. AS SEEN IN THE APOSTLE PAUL.

1. Cf. Romans 7:24.

   (1) Paul was grief-stricken about himself and cried out in agony.

   (2) We all should feel that same sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

   (3) Cf. Romans 7:18; 8:23.

CONCLUSION:

1. We are to be sorrowful, but not morose; mournful, but not miserable; serious and sober-minded, but not solemn or sullen; grave, but not grumpy.

2. Let us be braced on the inside - strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.

3. Only at His side can we find true happiness; answering His call, we will find comfort.

There is a looming crisis on the horizon for the Christian church in North America. Research presses the conclusion that there are few differences between the people in our society who regularly go to church when compared to those who do their laundry or go golfing on Sunday morning. The consequences are severe. Non-Christians perceive that Christianity makes no qualitative difference to life on this earth and conclude, "Why bother?" Christians seem to have little to offer beyond the invitation to a privatized faith experience and some new social contacts.

In the past, North American culture has been decidedly pro-Christian. In the present, many sectors of the society are simply passive toward the faith. "If you prefer that brand of belief for yourself, that's fine with me" is the attitude. In the future, we can expect increasing anti-Christian sentiment toward the claims of Christ and toward the people who hold firmly to the Lord's views. Followers of Jesus who understand the dynamics of what is happening around them will be more prepared than surprised.

Donald C. Posterski

MEEKNESS
MATTHEW 5:5; PSALM 37:11

INTRODUCTION:

1. This third beatitude must have been received in shocked silence by Christ's listeners.

2. The natural man dreams of world conquests and wants to possess the whole universe.

3. The world thinks in terms of strength and power, self-assurance and aggressiveness.

4. We would be reminded that the Christian attitude is altogether different from that of the world.

5. The world is not only unlike him, it cannot understand him. The Christian is in a different kingdom. He is an problem to the world.

6. Even the Jews had ideas of a kingdom - not only materialistic, but military as well.

7. The Lord says that it is not like that at all.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE BEATITUDE - "Blessed are the meek"

1. This beatitude is in the natural order of life and salvation. It is a logical sequence.

2. As these beatitudes proceed in order, they will become increasingly more difficult to apply to our lives. Why?

3. The only problem in concentrating on this beatitude is that most of us do want to be meek.

4. We want to think of ourselves as being courageous and strong. Meekness does not appeal to most of us. We want to be conquerors, and meekness sounds to much like surrender.

5. These beatitudes show us the three essential steps toward our salvation:

   (1) The realization of a need of our lives which only God can supply (Poor in Spirit)

   (2) Sorrow for our sin and spiritual decline leads us to repentance (Mourn)

   (3) We are then ready to be submissive to the Lord. Submission means we are ready to do all He would command of us (Meek).

6. Meekness has acquired an unpleasant meaning and is usually imagined to be a spineless, groveling attitude.

7. To many it means a timid soul who is too afraid to resist the wishes of others, therefore, he readily submits to them.

II. SOME EXAMPLES.

1. Abraham - allowed the younger first choice. There was no "murmuring about his "rights."

2. Moses - Numbers 12:3.

3. David - was to be king, yet he suffered Saul's unkind, cruel treatment.

4. Jeremiah - unpopular, hated, but bore it when detractors said unkind things behind his back.

5. Paul - suffered at the hands of churches, false brethren, even his own countrymen. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10.

6. Jesus - suffered scorn, sarcasm, persecution. Cf. Isaiah 42:2-4.

III. WHAT THESE EXAMPLES SHOW.

1. Meekness is not a surrender of our rights. Cf. Paul in prison being released.

2. Meekness does not mean inactivity.

3. Meekness is not flabbiness - so easy going that people like this will tolerate anything.

4. Meekness is not a weakness in our personality, or character.

5. It is not the spirit of compromise, or peace at any price.

6. It is not merely an outward manner, but an inner spirit.

IV. THE ATTITUDE OF MEEKNESS.

1. The Hebrew work for "meek" means "to be molded." To be molded means to become as putty in God's hands, or to be molded by God.

2. The Greek word "meek" means "to be controlled."

3. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good, and therefore, without disputing or resisting.

4. "Meekness" is the opposite of arrogance.

5. The basic element of meekness, derived from its root meaning is "equilibrium." It is the full and complete possession of all the faculties of one's being - an inner mastery.

6. Meekness is a true attitude toward oneself.

   (1) You cannot be meek without being poor in spirit.

   (2) The meek man is void of pride - does not assert or express his personality - does not see it as something to parade.

   (3) A meek person does not demand his rights, or make demands for his position, possessions, or status in life.

   (4) He is not sensitive about himself - not watching his interests - not always on the defensive - not pitying himself.

7. It is an attitude expressed in my relationship to other people.

   (1) It is the spirit of no retaliation.

   (2) I will be patient and long-suffering, especially when I suffer unjustly. Cf. 1 Peter 2:21-23.

   (3) I am teachable - ready to learn - especially in my relationship to God.

8. Meekness is compatible with great strength. It is compatible with great authority and power. Meekness is strength harnessed. It is strength at it's strongest point of view.

9. Meekness is a man placing his will in line with the will of God.

V. <u>THE BLESSING</u> - "Shall inherit the earth."

1. This phrase has a present reference.

   (1) There is a sense in which the meek shall inherit the earth now. For the meek man is the man who is satisfied and is therefore truly content.

(2) Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

(3) The Christian possesses and hold an equilibrium of soul, and mastery of will that gives spiritual victory over the earthly surroundings.

2. This phrase has a future reference as well.

(1) Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2,3.

(2) The meek will inherit the "new earth."

(3) Cf. Revelation 21:1; Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12.

CONCLUSION:

Cf. Luke 14:11; James 1:21; 1 Peter 3:15; Galatians 5:22,23; Colossians 3:12

BY CONTRAST:

CURSED ARE THE COCKY, ARROGANT, HAUGHTY AND BOASTFUL - THEY SHALL HAVE FEW FRIENDS;

UNHAPPY ARE THE ELBOWING, CROWDING, SHOVING, PUSHING, GET OUT OF MY WAY, I'M FIRST BULLIES - THEY SHALL MAKE MANY ENEMIES;

HEADED FOR FAILURE ARE THE KNOW IT ALL'S. DEAF TO CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM, CARELESS OF SHREWD COUNSEL, INDIFFERENT TO WARNINGS - THEY ARE HEADED FOR A FALL.

DOOMED ARE THE HOT HEADS, WHO LOSE THEIR COOL AND ARE TOO PROUD TO SAY, "I'M SORRY." THEY WILL NEVER INHERIT THE EARTH. THEY WILL NOT EVEN HOLD THEIR JOB, OR PERHAPS THEIR HUSBAND OR WIFE.

HELLBENT ARE THE IMPATIENT, RESTLESS, ROOTLESS, RUTHLESS PROMOTERS. THEY MAY GAIN A CROWN AND LOSE THE KINGDOM.

THE MEEK: THE CONTROLLED: THE PATIENT: THE HONEST: THE QUIET: THE FORCEFUL: THE POWERFUL BUT RESTRAINED, DISCIPLINED, POISED PEOPLE.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>:

ARE YOU MIGHTY ENOUGH TO BE CONTROLLED AND DISCIPLINED?

ARE YOU EMOTIONALLY STABLE ENOUGH TO RESIST TEMPTATION?

ARE YOU EDUCABLE ENOUGH TO REALIZE YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL BY YOURSELF?

ARE YOU KIND ENOUGH TO BE SENSITIVE, QUIET, UNSELFISH - CHRIST-MOLDED?

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING
MATTHEW 5:6; PSALM 63:1,2

INTRODUCTION:

1. Millions of this earth are starving, both physically and spiritually.

2. Two of the best known experiences in life are hunger and thirst. These are strong words - driving words - words of strong desire.

3. Nothing could express better the strong desire we should have for righteousness than hunger and thirst.

4. Other beatitudes cause us to look at ourselves, our poverty, our sin and our worthiness.

5. Here we look for a solution. We begin to look more to God, His grace and His mercy.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. DEFINING RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1. Negatively--

(1) Not a general morality among nations (Acts 10:35)
(2) Not simply moral respectability, or social decency
(3) Not merely justification or forgiveness of sins.

2. Positively--

(1) It involves the desire to be free from sin which separates us from God.

(2) It is the desire to keep God's commandments (Psalm 119:172)

(3) It is the desire to be free from the power of sin.

A. This beatitude follows being poor in spirit and mourning.

B. It is the realization that we live in a wicked world controlled by Satan (1 John 5:19)

C. Cf. Ephesians 2:2

D. We want to be freed from the power of that law "in his members" (Romans 7:23)

E. We desire for sin "not to have dominion" (**Romans** 6:14; 6:12)

(4) The desire to be free from the very desire to sin - the tendency to like sin - and find pleasure in sin.

(5) It is the desire to be free from pride, boasting, sensitiveness.

3. It is longing to be perfectly holy.

4. It is that state or condition acceptable to God - to know God- to walk with Him in fellowship - that which becomes the supreme desire of life.

II. <u>WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HUNGER AND THIRST</u>?

1. It is not just a nominal desire for righteousness, but a starving, craving, intense hunger.

2. The physical hunger of some men is only a pale reflection of a far more serious hunger that affects all mankind. (**Amos** 8:11)

3. It is a spiritual hunger which is satisfied only by God through the Lord.

4. How quickly do we separate real spiritual hunger from mere sentimentality and vaguely religious feeling?

5. It is a consciousness of a deep need - a constant, consistent need. Hunger and thirst are not passing feelings.

6. Cf. **Psalm** 42:1-3

7. How can I tell whether I am hungering and thirsting after righteousness?

(1) How do I feel about myself? (**Isaiah** 64:6; **Philippians** 3:7,8)

(2) How much time do I spend with my Bible?

(3) Do I avoid that which may take the edge off my appetite for righteousness?

(4) Do I become so enraptured with some things that I spend more time with, and find myself hungry less for God?

(5) Do I always put myself in places to obtain righteousness? ("But I am so busy!")

(6) How often do I earnestly pray? (A good gauge of my appetite)

III. THE BLESSING - "SHALL BE FILLED"

1. "They shall be filled" - because we will eat and partake of the true bread and water (**John** 6:53,54)

2. We shall be filled with the righteousness we seek.

3. A strange paradox! We are filled by feeling empty!

4. There is no life to compare with it - holiness, joy, love, peace, freedom from guilt.

CONCLUSION:

1. Cf. **John** 15:11

2. The happy people are those who seek, not happiness primarily, but holiness before God.

3. Some seek happiness through other things such as fortune, fame, sex, marriage, etc.

4. The Bible teaches that happiness comes only through righteousness.

5. What is the case in your life? Do you put righteousness first, or do you seek after something else?

6. Cf. **Matthew** 6:33.

7. Have you drunk deeply at that spring and fed on that bread? Or are you still feeding on things that do not satisfy?

8. When the prodigal son left home he expected to find complete satisfaction. He wanted to live - which meant to him money, clothes, food, companionship, and good times.

9. Instead, he found poverty, rags, hunger, loneliness and misery.

10. It was only when he was finally starving that he turned back to his father. In his father's company he found all he had thought to find in the world.

11. His father clothed him, fed him, welcomed him, and rejoiced in his return.

HOW HUNGRY AND THIRSTY?

Esau sold his birth right for a bowl of beans-

Israelites that remembered their garlic and onions so aggravated God as to force him to bring a plague upon them-

Cf. Proverbs 30:9 - "Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

The siege of Jerusalem by General Titus (70 A.D.) brought a famine which "confounded all natural passions." Jews crept out of the city by night "to gather some plants and herbs that grew wild." Children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants. (Wars of the Jews, Book V, Chapter X)

In a Samaritan famine a donkey's head was sold for about $40 and dove's dung was used as food for humans (2 Kings 6:25)

As powerful as is mother love, the desire for physical nourishment sometimes has prevailed: "We boiled my son, and did eat him."

The Lord knew of the almost ungovernable drive in humans to satisfy pangs of hunger and gaspings for water. He knew personally how it felt to go over a month foodless.

He would know how it felt with dry throat and parched lips to exclaim, "I thirst."

He, knowing the physical inborn desire for food and drink, thought he could use no better comparison to show us how desirous we ought to be for spiritual food and drink.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Dika - "right"

"The state of him who is such as he ought to be" - Thayer

Involves doing the right thing for one's self, one's neighbor, and for one's God

Cf. Matthew 20:4
Ecclesiastes 7:20
Jeremiah 23:6
Hebrews 1:9
Matthew 3:15
Psalm 119:172
2 Corinthians 5:21
Numbers 23:10
Psalm 107:9

Who's supreme ambition is not material, but spiritual

A healthy, hearty spiritual appetite

Three aspects:

- Legal - right relationship with God (justification) - Romans 10:3
- Moral - character and conduct which pleases God (inner righteousness of heart, mind and motive) - Cf. text
- Social - human community

Denton
5/27/12

A CHALLENGING STATEMENT
MATTHEW 5:7; HOSEA 6:6

INTRODUCTION:

1. This beatitude looks for a positive reaction from our hearts.

2. The question arises, "Are we what we profess?"

3. Of the eight beatitudes, some say this one is the most appealing and the most important.

   (1) It is the most appealing because mercy brings to mind kindness, unselfish service and good will;

   (2) It is the most important, for without mercy, all of us are without hope.

4. "Mercy" emphasizes that which is within man - the condition of our heart and our character.

5. "Meek" is in the passive sense; "Mercy" is in the active sense.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE BEATITUDE - "BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL"

   1. Christianity is not only a "doing" religion, but also, a "being" religion.

   2. Doctrine expresses itself in a new outlook on life and changed behavior. What we believe must always affect our conduct.

   3. "Mercy" --

      (1) Does not mean being "easy-going;"

      (2) Not simply not seeing things, or seeing them, ignoring them, or pretending not to see;

      (3) Is not the person who smiles at transgression, or law-breaking; permissive; carefree.

   4. "Mercy" --

      (1) Is compared to "grace;"

(2) Is a sense of pity plus a desire to help; pity plus action;

(3) Is "refraining from harming offenders or enemies; a disposition to forgive or be kind; the power to forgive." (Dictionary)

5. The word (eleemon) - means more than just to sympathize with somebody in the popular sense of the term; more than just to feel sorry for someone in trouble.

6. It is more than just an emotional wave of pity.

7. "Get right inside the other person until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind and feel things with his feelings."

8. This demands a very deliberate effort of mind and will.

9. It is not a sympathy given from the outside, but which comes from a deliberate identification with the other person until we see things as he does and feels things as he feels them.

10. A good definition - 2 Timothy 1:16-18

11. It is impartiality, gentleness, abundance. It is love reaching out to help those who are helpless.

12. "How can I tell whether I am merciful?"

(1) Someone has transgressed against you and deliberately harmed you;

(2) Now you have that person in your power - how do you feel? What will you do?

(3) "Now is my turn!" - do you manifest vindictiveness rather than pity, sorrow, or kindness?

13. Cf. Joseph (Genesis 45:4,5; 50:15-21); David (1 Samuel 26:8-10; 2 Samuel 19:5) Stephen (Acts 7:59); Jesus (Luke 23:34)

14. To be "merciful" is to treat an offender better than he deserves to be treated.

15. There is abundant opportunity every day to be merciful. We should be moved with compassionate action toward the sinner, the poor, etc., and forgiving those who injure us. We are to show daily the mercy in our hearts.

16. Cf. The father of the "prodigal" son - it was mercy that received the boy back.

17. No quality is more exalted - nothing seems more important.

18. Cf. **Micah 6:8**; **Matthew 23:23**; **Proverbs 3:3**; **Luke 6:36**.

19. When someone has wronged us, our natural reaction is to seek revenge. We might refuse to commit any definite act of vengeance, yet, we cherish resentment in our hearts and we are glad if some misfortune happens to the person who has wronged us.

20. Cf. **Colossians 3:12,13**.

II. THE BLESSING.

1. The merciful are happy because they have obtained mercy.

2. "They" (emphatic) - and they alone - shall obtain mercy.

3. Cf. **Proverbs 21:13**.

4. The Bible often reminds us that we usually receive back that which we have sent out, and in kind.

5. Only the merciful receive God's mercy - only the forgiving receive His forgiveness.

   (1) Cf. **Matthew 6:12,15**
   (2) Cf. **Matthew 18:35**

6. Mercifulness is shown by its characteristics. An excellent illustration of the elements of mercy is when we find ourselves in the position of having the power to forgive.

7. Our attitude toward our fellowman is a more accurate gauge to our religion than all of our religious doctrine.

8. We are never more Christ-like than when we forgive. We are never more unchristian than when we refuse to forgive.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jonah was displeased. God's spokesman he was, but personally he had not partaken of the divine nature!

2. "Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the East side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city."

3. If a man insists on immersion, but exhibits no human kindness, he has not learned what Jesus wants him to know.

4. If a man insists on the name Christian but says nothing about the care of the homeless and outcasts, he has not learned what this beatitude means.

5. Are you really merciful? Look deeply into your heart.

6. Do you feel deep pity, love, kindness, desire to help, at any sign of suffering or sorrow, even on the part of those not very lovable?

The Christian will apply himself to learn the meaning of this attribute which originates with God and is so much a part of God. Cf. Luke 6:36; 2 Corinthians 1:3

Cf. James 5:11; Psalm 103:14; Psalm 85:10

Cf. Matthew 18:34,35; James 2:13

Mercy is the natural expression of pity in practical action. Kind thoughts without accompanying action are counterfeits.

Mercy is a costly virtue, not some limp feeling that costs us little. The Christian who is merciful is the individual who has pity for the life of misery lived by those entrapped in sin.

He also has a strong, active desire to lead such people to that wholeness of life promised to those who are in Christ.

This beatitude is equally revolutionary to the world of Jesus.

The Romans saw compassion as a sign of weakness;

The Stoic philosophers did not think too highly of compassion;

The Pharisees were harsh in their self-righteous attitudes, showing little if any mercy.

Jesus said that they "have neglected the weightier matters of the law - justice and mercy and faith." (Matthew 23:23)

To these self-righteous religious leaders, suffering was seen as the deserved punishment for sin. So here again, Jesus takes sharp issue with the values of the world.

An excellent illustration of the quality of mercy is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37).

Cf. Psalm 69:20 - Mercy is a quality that does not ask, Who is my neighbor? or What is my legal obligation? It is a quality that is always open to opportunity.

It is not a question of who is my neighbor, but of who needs me, where I will go, and what I will do to answer the needs of others.

"Mercy there was great, and grace was free,
Pardon there was multiplied to me,
There my burdened soul found liberty-
At Calgary"

Cf. Ephesians 2:4-7

Denton 6/3

CLEAN MOTIVES
MATTHEW 5:8; PSALM 51:10

INTRODUCTION:

1. This beatitude is undoubtedly one of the most challenging and breath-taking utterances ever made. We certainly feel inadequate and unworthy.

2. Christianity is a religion of the heart.

3. The best way to understand and apply this particular beatitude is to understand more fully the terms that Jesus uses in this verse.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE BEATITUDE.

1. To be pure in heart is to get quickly to the core of our life.

2. The words would be a death-blow to the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Their main concern was the externals of form and ritual.

3. Jesus laid bare the differences between outside "correctness" and "inward filth." Cf. **Matthew** 23:25,27.

4. Christianity is an obedience from the heart - **Romans** 6:17.

5. Christ went beneath all the Jews' pride, outside appearances and bodily purity.

6. He spoke of "heart" purity. God looks deeper than the external actions of an individual into the "deeper" things in life.

7. God wants us to be pure inside - He searches and ponders our heart.

8. Cf. **Proverbs** 21:2.

9. Being pure in heart is essentially a positive attribute. We should not simply lack sin and evil in our hearts, but our hearts should be dominated by Christian characteristics.

10. Cf. **Philippians** 4:8.

11. Jesus did not say "pure in head" or "pure in conduct." He does not start out with "watch your step." He wants to know first of all, "What is the condition of my heart?"

II. "WHAT IS THE 'HEART'?"

1. This is a reference to the center of our personality, and it is this that is the source of our problem.

   (1) Intellect - thinks; understands; believes;
   (2) Emotions - desires, loves, trusts;
   (3) Will - purposes; obeys;
   (4) Conscience - condemns; condemns not.

2. It is these things in which a man must be pure - not just on the surface - but to the very heart and core of our spiritual being.

   (1) Cf. **Jeremiah** 17:9;
   (2) Cf. **Matthew** 12:34; 15:19
   (3) Cf. **Mark** 7:21-23.

3. Some think the world can be changed by improving man's environment, and if you do this his troubles will disappear.

   (1) Cf. our troubles began in the Garden of Eden!
   (2) Our troubles come from within, not without;
   (3) Cf. Jeremiah 17:9

III. "WHAT DOES IT MEAN BY "PURE?"

1. The opposite word means "uncleanness; impurity of mind; impurity; vileness; unclean lives; foul desires; base motives; indecency; sexual immorality; dirty-mindedness." (akatharsia)

2. "Pure" has two main meanings:

   (1) Singleness of heart; without hypocrisy; sincerity - **Matthew** 6:22; **Psalm** 86:11; **Romans** 7:22,23.

   (2) Cleansed; without defilement; freedom from evil desires and purposes - **Revelation** 21:27; 22:14.

3. Only they who are like this will see God - **Hebrews** 12:14.

IV. THE BLESSING - "They shall see God"

1. What does this mean? Is this objective, real and visible? or is it subjective and spiritual?

2. In the very nature of Deity, God cannot be seen for He is Spirit.

3. What we see depends upon what we see with. Only the pure in heart see God, so when our lenses are smeared with dirt our vision is blurred.

4. We must keep ourselves busy entertaining pure thoughts, honest thoughts, good thoughts and true thoughts if we wish to form a character pleasing to God.

5. What we "see" now is nothing compared to that yet to be seen. Cf. **1 John** 3:2; **Colossians** 3:4:

6. If our hearts are pure, we shall be able to see God.

   (1) To see someone's face, or to be in the presence of someone, were Jewish terms expressing great favor.

   (2) It was the supposed desire of every Oriental to stand before his king and to look him in the eyes.

7. The highest joy of a Christian likewise should be to be able to see God - to understand, appreciate and properly evaluate God.

8. To see God is to center the affections of the heart on Him. To see God satisfies the deepest longings of the heart.

V. <u>"HOW CAN WE KEEP 'PURE?'"</u>

1. We must be very careful what we feed our hearts. If we would be pure, feed only on what is pure.

2. Cf. **Psalms** 51:10; **Ephesians** 3:20; **James** 4:8

3. Pray and keep pure!

   (1) "In Whom is no guile" (John 1:47)
   (2) "Love with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22)
   (3) "An unfeigned faith" (2 Timothy 1:5)
   (4) "Love out of a pure heart" (1 Timothy 1:5)
   (5) "Think on things that are true, honorable, just, pure" (Philippians 4:8)

<u>DISCUSSION</u>:

1. With our loyalty divided between the things of the world, and the things of the Spirit, we will never see God.

2. To try to stand with one foot in the church and the other foot in the middle of some unethical business deal, or immoral personal relationship, or to try to hold on to God with one hand, and with the other make friends with the devil is to give up any chance at the promise of this beatitude.

3. Pureness of heart will lead to a purity of life as we will not do things that are wrong because there will not be any motivation in our hearts to do those things.

4. We see what we are prepared to see. When the Bible says the pure see God, it also indicates that the impure do not.

5. Cf. 1 John 3:2,3.

6. Who are the happiest and most contented? Those who are the purest and the cleanest. They are the ones that have come to peace with God.

Denton 6/10/12

HARMONY OR STRIFE?
MATTHEW 5:9; ISAIAH 59:8

INTRODUCTION:

1. "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked." (Isaiah 48:22)

2. The application of the other six beatitudes has been dealing with attitudes. This beatitude appeals for action - doing something.

3. There is no greater need, nor time, in the Lord's church, or in the world, that peacemakers are needed.

4. The keeping of peace, as well as making it, is a vital and important aspect of the Lord's work.

5. The word "peace" is found in each of the 27 books of the New Testament and is used some 88 times.

6. Man cannot find peace of mind in these perilous times. His heart is filled with anxiety, fear and frustration.

7. The Jews were offended with this idea of peacemaking because they thought that the coming kingdom would be a materialistic, military type machine.

8. They thought of being free from Rome, of conquering and being the master race. Jesus had other plans.

9. "He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it." 1 Peter 3:11

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. "GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD PEACE"

1. What is "peace?" It is not the simple absence of strife or the absence of trouble.

2. Peace is a positive force.

3. There is so much turmoil and strife in the world - war; families; churches; brethren - a warfare raging within the souls of many.

4. Peace means not only freedom from trouble, but the enjoyment of all good. The Hebrew word means everything that makes for the highest good - the presence of good things.

5. The dictionary defines peace as "freedom from strife; harmony; serenity; calmness; quietness; peaceful; not quarrelsome; free from disturbance; calm."

6. Cf. God - 1 Corinthians 14:33; Romans 15:33; Proverbs 6:16-19.

7. Cf. Christ - Isaiah 9:6,7; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33.

8. Cf In the church - Romans 12:18; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Peter 3:10,11; Titus 3:10.

9. Some people seem always to be storm centers of trouble, strife, and bitterness. They are always either involved in quarrels themselves, or the cause of quarrels between others.

10. On the other hand, there are those in whose presence, bitterness cannot live - those who heal the chasms; sweeten the bitterness; bridge the distances.

11. If you would have peace in a congregation, it is essential that all of the troublesome things be replaced by the good and worthwhile things.

12. There is peace, not just because trouble is absent, but because there are some good characteristics living there.

13. Peace never comes to a congregation automatically - it is there because the church is composed of peacemakers and they work at making peace.

14. Bible peace does not come from evading issues - "sweeping things under the rug". It comes from facing them, dealing with them in love and conquering them.

II. "PEACEMAKER"

1. Peace must be made - it comes not without effort and diligence.

2. Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the peacelovers" but "peacemakers."

3. To have a peaceable disposition is only half the task, the emphasis falls on the second part - which is bringing about peace between enemies.

4. The reference is not merely to peaceable men, but rather to the active promoters of peace.

5. There are three main ideas promoted by the word "peacemaker" -

   (1) "Blessed are those who make this world a better place for men in which to live"

(2) "Blessed is the man who makes peace in his own heart and soul"

(3) "The highest task one can perform is to establish right relationships between man and man" (Jewish Rabbis).

6. In contrast to citizens of all the kingdoms which are maintained by strife and war, the citizens of the kingdom of God are peacemakers. He who makes peace between man and God is the peacemaker.

7. He seeks peace between self and God - he rids himself of sin that he might have fellowship with God. He seeks to make peace between others and God.

8. He seeks peace between man and man. He promotes unity, harmony, happiness rather than discord and division.

9. He seeks peace between himself and others (**Romans** 12:18). He would rather "take wrong" than to be striving with brethren.

10. A peacemaker is one who watches for opportunities to keep peace from being broken. There is no excuse for Christians causing friction and trouble among God's people.

11. Cf. Peaceful attitudes and actions--

(1) Patient - not irritable or conceited;
(2) No demanding of rights or being self-centered;
(3) Guards his tongue - does not peddle gossip;
(4) Spiritually minded - **Romans** 8:6;
(5) Does good to his enemies;
(6) Prays often.

III. "<u>THE BLESSING</u>" - They shall be called Sons of God.

1. The Bible calls people "sons" because there is a strong resemblance of their Father. The peacemaker resembles God in their peacemaking.

2. "Called" here means "owned." God recognizes them as His children - resemblance.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>:

1. "Make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hate, may I bring love;
Where there is offense, may I bring pardon." (Francis of Assissi)

2. Have you been a peacemaker? Or have you been one who has stirred up trouble, promoted problems, and in general, been a source of discouragement and defeat among the Lord's army?

3. To have peace, both in this world and in our souls, we must not only root out of our lives hate, suspicion and fear, but we must replace them with love, joy, sincerity, patience and understanding.

4. Who are the happiest people in the world? Is it the irritable, the conceited, the people who are always ready to take offense, perhaps even loving to stir up a little bit of strife and trouble?

5. Or the gentle, the kindly, the affectionate people who love and make peace?

6. Who are the happiest?

Denton Tx 6-17-12

PLEASURE IN DISTRESS
MATTHEW 5:10-12

INTRODUCTION:

1. What an amazing and provocative statement! The way of the peacemaker is not going to be easy!

2. It may seem strange that Jesus should pass from peacemaking to persecution - from the work of reconciliation to the experience of hostility.

3. But however hard we may try to make peace with some people, they refuse to live at peace with us.

4. This beatitude is not a trait - it is the reception that we get from the world as a result of possessing these other seven (7) beatitudes.

5. We are engaged in the age old conflict of righteousness versus unrighteousness - good versus evil - truth versus error - right versus wrong - Christ versus Satan.

6. We live in an upside down world. People--

   (1) Hate when they should love;
   (2) Quarrel when they should be friendly;
   (3) Fight when they should be peaceful;
   (4) Wound when they should heal;
   (5) Steal when they should share;
   (6) Do wrong when they should do right.

7. This is why Christians seem like "misfits" to the world - to an upside down man, a right side up man seems upside down.

8. The values and standards of Jesus are in direct conflict with the commonly accepted values and standards of the world.

9. An honest assessment of the church must point up that although the country itself is far from being Christian - and is ungodly - nevertheless there is very little persecution of Christians today.

10. Is it possible that Jesus was wrong in this beatitude? Or, are Christians today simply not showing forth the type of righteous character that Jesus said results in persecution?

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE DOUBLE BEATITUDE.

1. We must be careful in this necessity because there is no beatitude which has been more often misunderstood and misapplied than this one.

2. In all ages, Satan has persecuted the people of God. We should realize, however, that not all persecution is for "righteousness sake."

3. What "persecution" is not--

   (1) It is not persecution when Christians are snubbed for pushing tracts onto people who do not want them;

   (2) Or insulting them in the midst of a religious argument;

   (3) Or poking into their affairs when they are not invited.

4. Christ was speaking of the persecution of those who are abused for the sake of His righteousness.

   (1) He does not say, "Blessed are the objectionable," or "because they are being difficult,"

   (2) Or because they "lack wisdom and common sense."

5. Some suffer because of their own thoughtlessness. There is a difference in being offensive and causing offense because of our righteousness.

6. Jesus does not say, "Because they are fanatical, or over zealous". Some are persecuted because they are too forward. Cf. Matthew 10:16; 1 Peter 4:15,16.

7. Some are persecuted because they can't keep their mouths shut, or their noses out of other people's business, and not for righteousness.

8. Some people have a "persecution" complex - anxious for it - court it - align themselves that promises persecution.

9. Much so-called "religious persecution occurred only because of mixing religion and politics.

10. Most people will attempt to justify a wrong act by loud cries of unjustified persecution or prejudice.

II. THE POSITIVE DEFINITION OF PERSECUTION.

1. It means being persecuted for being righteous - for practicing righteousness - for being like Christ.

2. "Blessed are they who are persecuted because they are determined to live as I live." Cf. John 15:18-20.

3. There is no qualification - 2 Timothy 3:12.

4. If we become like Christ, we have become righteous.

   (1) Light exposes darkness - therefore, darkness hates the light.

   (2) We are not to be offensive, foolish, or unwise, nor are we to parade our Christianity.

   (3) We do not do anything that calls for persecution, but, by being like Christ, persecution is inescapable.

5. The supreme Example is Christ - in spite of His perfection, he was persecuted.

6. He was persecuted despite the prophecy of His gentleness. Cf. Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:19.

III. PERSECUTION.

1. We are persecuted from foes without and within - even nominal Christians. Cf. Mark 14:1.

2. We are persecuted because we are different. There is something about the Christian that condemns the unrighteous.

3. We are persecuted because there is a vigilant, holy difference. The Pharisees and Scribes hated our Lord because He condemned them as counterfeits. The life of the righteous is a constant rebuke to everything sinful.

IV. THE FRAMEWORK OF PERSECUTION.

1. Notice the words that Jesus used in these verses:

   (1) "Insult" - reproach; to revile; to be abusive in speech.

   (2) "Persecute" - to suffer ill treatment.

(3) "Falsely say all kinds of evil against you" - not simply in the sense that statements are false, but in the sense of inventing the most improbable lies caused by violent prejudice; nothing too evil to be believed and said.

2. This may take many forms - nicknames, ridicule, cold looks, social exclusion, misrepresentations or deliberate lies, abusive speech, evil speech, ill treatment, destruction of property, imprisonment or death.

3. Some people take the initiative to oppose us, and in particular to "revile" or slander us. Persecution is simply the clash between two irreconcilable value systems.

V. OUR REACTION TO ALL OF THIS.

1. The Christian does not retaliate, reply, or strike back. He does not feel resentment.

2. He not only controls his tongue and hand, but his heart as well.

3. Retaliate? Cowardice? Lukewarmness? Moral cowardice? Resentment? Discouragement? Give up?

4. No, instead the Christian is "rejoicing and is exceeding glad!" (Literally, "leap for joy").

(1) He considers persecution proof of who and what he is;

(2) He knows that he is like the prophets. If we are persecuted today, we belong to a noble succession.

(3) He knows that he is like Christ, and identifies with Him.

(4) He regards it as proof of where he is going - Romans 8:17.

(5) It is a trying of our faith. No one can know how strong his faith is until it is tried.

CONCLUSION:

1. Our value for anything is measured by the price we are willing to pay for it.

2. The man that is faithful to God in all things will be persecuted and opposed.

3. Is there anything in your life that reveals Christ's righteousness? Is there a Christ-like character?

4. It is true we live in a country that has adopted many Christian values, tolerance being among them, and so has risen to a level where persecutions are not likely to be what they were in the early Christian's life.

5. It is also true that much of our Christianity has sunk to a level where it is hardly notice. The world has become tolerant of us, but we have become far more tolerant of the world. There is sometimes precious little true Christian character visible.

6. May God give us great wisdom, discrimination, knowledge and understanding in these things and if we are called upon to suffer, let us be sure it is for righteousness sake.

7. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17,18.

PLEASURE IN DISTRESS

When attachment to Jesus is fully developed, a Christian says, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." (Philippians 1:20).

Cf. Philippians 1:29; Acts 5:41; Colossians 1:24; Revelation 12:11.

FATE OF THE APOSTLES

James, the son of Zebedee died by Herod's sword in 44 A.D.

Philip, after preaching in upper Asia, was scourged, thrown in prison, and then crucified in 54 A.D. at Heliopolis in Phrygia.

Matthew, after preaching in Parthia and Ethiopia, was killed in A.D. 60 by a halberd at Nadabah.

James the Less at 94 years, after being beaten and stoned by the Jews, "finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club."

Peter, crucified with his head being down and his feet upward.

Jude, Thaddeus, brother of James the Less, was crucified at Edessa 72 A.D.

Bartholomew, after preaching in India, was "cruelly beaten and then crucified by the impatient idolaters."

Thomas' ministry in Parthia and India was ended with a spear thrust.

Simon Zelotes evangelized in Mauritania, Africa, and Britain before his crucifixion in 74 A.D.

Mathias - stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

Andrew's served in Asia - at Edessa he was baptized with suffering, being "crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground."

IMPERIAL VISITATIONS

67 A.D. Nero burned Christians "dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees."

Others the emperor had sewed up in skins of wild beasts and turned dogs on them.

Besides killing Paul and Peter, Nero slew Barnabas, Aristarchus, Trophimus, Erastus at Corinth, and Ananias at Damascus.

Domitian (81 A.D.) decreed "that no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."

Dionysius the Areopagite and Nicodemus felt his deadly wrath, and upon Timothy people fell "with their clubs, and beat him in so dreadful a manner that he expired of the bruises two days later."

Marcus Aurelius was instigator of violent excesses in 162 A.D.

At Smyrna, the Romans proconsul gave Polycarp a choice - "Swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ." The Aged man replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my king, who has saved me?" Whereupon he was ordered burned at the stake.

Diocletian decreed copies of the Scriptures must be surrendered. Timothy of Mauritania, being ordered by Governor Arranus to deliver up a hidden copy, said, "Had I children, I would sooner deliver them up to be sacrificed, than part with the Word of God." The angered governor gave order that Timothy's eyes should be burned with red-hot irons, saying, "The books shall at least be useless to you, for you shall not see to read them." Finally, the blinded follower of Jesus was crucified.

THEY TOOK PLEASURE IN DISTRESSES FOR CHRIST'S SAKE BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN TAUGHT THAT WHEN THEY WERE WEAK, THEN WERE THEY STRONG - 2 CORINTHIANS 12:10.

UNIQUE PEOPLE
MATTHEW 5:13

INTRODUCTION:

1. What possible influence could the people described in the beatitudes exert in a hard and tough world?

2. What lasting good can the poor, the meek, the mourners, the merciful, the peacemakers do?

3. What can they accomplish whose only desire is righteousness, and whose only weapon is a pure heart?

4. It is the Lord's will that His people be like salt. It is His intention to involve His disciples in the world. According to these words, we are clearly to influence our society.

5. Salt has always played an important part in life.

   (1) It was used for trading;
   (2) The Roman was paid with salt ("salarium");
   (3) Even used as a covenant sign in the Old Testament **(Numbers** 18:19; **2 Chronicles** 13:5**)**

6. If we are "salt," then we are truly unique people.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. ELEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING.

1. Christians must live in this world **(John** 17:15**)**.

   (1) It is the Lord's will that His people be scattered throughout the world, so that their effect may be felt in all walks of life.

   (2) In the midst of the world and in perpetual touch with all of its environment they would possess not only power to resist but to impart also. **(1 Pt** 2:9; ~~Mk 9:20~~)

2. A Christian must live in the world, though he is not of the world.

   (1) He does not love the world - **1 John** 2:15-17;
   (2) He is not conformed to the world - **Romans** 12:1,2;
   (3) He has separated himself from the world - **2 Corinthians** 6:17
   (4) He has crucified the world - **Galatians** 6:14.

II. THE PART WE HAVE IN THE WORLD

1. The Christian is different. This is the most significant feature of salt.

   (1) It is different from the meat into which it is rubbed;
   (2) It is different from the food into which it is placed;
   (3) It is different from the wound into which it is placed for healing;

2. A Christian is separate, unique, outstanding, and with a different scale of values.

3. Only when Christians maintain their distinctiveness will they be the salt of the earth.

4. The Christian is exposed to the spirit of this world. If he is not careful, he will yield; if he yields, he loses his power for good.

III. "WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH ME?"

1. You are the ***SOURCE*** of influence - "You ***ARE*** the salt of the earth."

   (1) The source of our influence is found in the person we ***are***.

   (2) Jesus did not say, "You have salt," or "You dispense salt," but you <u>are</u> salt.

   (3) So, we are dealing with "influence."

   (4) It is only as an individual IS salt in his life, character and person that he can exercise the influence of salt in society.

   (5) None of us exert influence upon other people by our words, if what we say is not backed up by what we are.

   (6) The Christian who would be spiritually influential must hold high standards of speech, conduct, thought and action.

2. The ***SPHERE*** of influence - "You are the salt of the ***EARTH***."

   (1) We are to exercise our influence in the "here and now," in the community where we are, and in the face of the needs that confront us.

   (2) Salt does its most effective work by being brought in direct contact with that on which it is to work.

   (3) Christ is saying the Christian is to life what salt is to food. We lend flavor to life and to those around us.

(4) In a world so depressed and seemingly losing the luster of life, we are charged with the responsibility of being the salt of the earth adding flavor to life.

3. The ***SACRIFICE*** of influence - "But if the salt loses its saltiness..."

(1) This is a warning to us about possible dangers. We can lose our saltiness! Then it is of no value.

(2) Salt can lose its saltiness by ISOLATION.

A. Separate the grains and salt loses its flavor.
B. The same is true with the disciple who separates himself from the fellowship of the believers, and walks in disobedience, indifference and non-involvement.

(3) Salt can lose its saltiness by CONTAMINATION.

A. Dust, sawdust or some other substance mixed with salt will cause it not to be able to perform its unique function.

B. The disciple is put on guard against letting attitudes and ambitions enter his heart that would contaminate and pollute so as to destroy his influence.

4. None of us are immune to losing our own savor. If we are not fulfilling our purpose as salt, we are on the way to disaster.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>:

1. If we become contaminated, our influence is gone and the action is lost. We become useless as salt without flavor - having no property, no function and are good for nothing.

2. To be a disciple of Christ will cause your life and influence to function as the salt which creates thirst for the living water of life found in Christ.

3. Apart from His church our Lord has no plan or program by which the service we are to render can be accomplished.

4. So, let us be salt!

5. There is the Purpose - "Glorify our Father in heaven"

   (1) Never is our shining meant to draw attention to ourselves, but to God.

   (2) The goodness which is conscious of itself and draws attention to itself is not the kind of goodness of which Christ is speaking.

   (3) The Christian is never to think of what he has done, or whether it has reflected favorably on him, but he must seek to draw the eyes of people to Jesus, and not to himself.

CONCLUSION:

1. As lights we should let our lights shine--

   (1) Brightly - nothing to dim the light;
   (2) Conspicuously - take advantage of opportunities;
   (3) Individually - no one can assume such a responsibility for another;
   (4) Continuously - no place for "spasmodic Christianity."

2. Being "salt" means this is what we are; being "lights" means this is what we do.

3. We must not hide the light under a bushel - our life should be open for all to see.

4. Cf. Philippians 2:15.

Phil 2:15
so that you may become blameless and
pure, children of God without fault in a
crooked and depraved generation, in
which you shine like stars in the universe

"THE FULL DEPTH OF MEANING"
MATTHEW 5:17-20

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Lord said what no other prophet or Scribe had ever used - "I say unto you!"

2. Was He setting Himself against Moses? Was He setting Himself up as an Authority?

3. What does Jesus mean by the Law?

4. Jesus says that His teachings are not destructive of Moses' law, and also, that the Law demands a righteousness not seen in Israel.

5. There is a definite relationship between Jesus and Moses; between His message and the Law and the Prophets.

6. There is a definite relationship of the Christian and the Old Law; a relationship of Christ and the Old Law.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. SOME DEFINITIONS.

1. ***THE LAW*** - a term that is comprehensive for the total divine revelation of the Old Testament. In the days of Christ, the Law was specifically the Pentateuch.

   (1) Cf. Matthew 5:17,20.

   (2) Certainly it was not the burdensome additions the Scribes had added.

   (3) He refers to the heart and the essence of the Law itself.

   (4) The Old Testament consisted of three sections: (1) Doctrinal - Torah - revealed instruction; (2) Prophecy - looks forward to the days of the Messiah; (3) Ethical Precepts - the moral law of God.

   (5) Christ reduced the 613 laws of the Scribes to the law of love for God and one's neighbor.

2. ***THE PROPHETS*** - the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Cf. Luke 24:27,44.

3. ***FULFILL*** - "to carry out as a promise; to do; a duty; to satisfy; to bring to an end; complete" (Webster)

   (1) To fulfill the Law means to express the Law. Jesus saved the Law from its oral distortions; clarified its purpose; redefined its application.

   (2) His sayings were no repeal of the former, but a "drawing out" and "filling up" of them.

   (3) "To cause God's will to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises to receive fulfillment." His purpose was to reveal the full depth of meaning that it was intended to hold.

4. ***DESTROY*** - used in the sense of invalidating; a revolutionary destruction of existing institutions.

5. ***TILL ALL THINGS BE ACCOMPLISHED*** - no part of the law of God or the prophets would be abrogated until God's purpose in giving them has been accomplished.

   (1) The Lord had a great respect for the Old Testament.

   (2) He quoted from nearly every book;

   (3) He talked about Adam and Eve; Jonah; Lot's wife; Sodom and Gomorrah; Noah and the flood.

II. <u>"TILL ALL BE FULFILLED"</u>

1. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures. This is the strongest proof of His Messiahship. Cf. John 5:39.

2. He fulfilled its prophecies (birth; sufferings; resurrection), and He fulfilled the Law of God. (Micah 5:2; Psalm 22:16; 16:10)

   (1) He kept it perfectly; He was under it; He obeyed it. (Galatians 4:4; John 8:46 Hebrews 5:8,9)

   (2) He fulfilled it in the completion of its purpose. He fulfilled it in carrying out its penalty for sin.

3. The Law made sin known, condemned sin and pronounced its penalty.

4. Since Jesus was sinless, He became the Sacrifice for our sins. (1 Peter 1:19; 2:22)

5. This is the gospel preached - 2 Corinthians 5:21.

6. Jesus proclaimed, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

III. A CHALLENGE.

1. A tremendous challenge! It seems as though Jesus is asking us to do quite the impossible. He is challenging us to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

2. They had an extremely high standard of righteousness. Why issue the challenge?

   (1) He does so because in their commitment to the Law, the Pharisees had made the Law purely external and mechanical. It lacked the inner dynamics of a religion of heart and soul.

   (2) The maze of rules and regulations with which Christ had to contend is illustrated by an 800 page book the Scribes had written interpreting the Ten Commandments. This book is known as the "Mishnah."

   (3) As though this volume were not enough, later Jewish scholars busied themselves making commentaries explaining the Mishnah. These commentaries are known as the "Talmud."

   (4) They consist of 12 printed volumes! All this started with 10 simple guidelines.

III. CONCLUSION:

1. Today, we are under the New Covenant.

2. The Old Law is dead (Romans 7:4); broken down (Ephesians 2:14); taken out of the way (Colossians 2:14).

3. We have a new law (Jeremiah 31:31).

4. Cf. Romans 10:4.

These verses supply preliminary remarks to the rest of His sermon.

1. His teachings are not destructive of the Old Testament scriptures

2. His teachings require a righteousness far greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Here was a Teacher so unusual - so great - so dogmatic - so authoritative.

He was not brought up in the rabbinical schools - He was not a Pharisee.

He is criticizing the Pharisees and their traditional interpretations of the Law.

It would be natural for some one to ask - "Does not this new teacher believe the sacred scriptures?" - "Is He out to destroy everything we have come to hold sacred?"

So, He explains to them the relationship between Him and Moses - His message and the Law and the Prophets.

So, He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy..."

Jesus takes into His hands the Jewish people's whole experience and memory of the past.

No part of that tradition is more vital to the Jews than the Law of God as given to Moses.

Jesus could move in several directions in His sermon:

He could REJECT everything in the people's past - their tradition and their law. Some would have welcomed this approach. People often welcome prophets who throw out the past with its apparent impotence, and offer what appears to be a totally new option. The law represented condemnation to them because they felt its weight upon their shoulders, and if Jesus were to cancel it, He would probably have had their support.

He could simply and plainly RESTATE the law as the common tradition of the people. He might return strictly to the texts of the Pentateuch, or He might include the broader way of the Pharisees.

He chose the third option - He REFOCUSES the law. He now draws together the separate parts of the Law toward the completion of their original intention.

The claims Jesus makes in these opening words are remarkable for their boldness. His words imply that He is the One who fulfills the very intent of the Law itself, because as Jesus dares to take the Law into His hands, He has dared to interpret its central purpose.

He not only claims His authority with regard to the law; He also claims to fulfill the expectations of the prophets. "Law and Prophets" is the phrase a first-century Jew would use to describe the essence of the Old Testament message.

His claims include the whole Old Testament expectation, teaching, and history. He is the rightful fulfillment of it all. We are standing at the source and the completion of the whole of the promises, warnings, and teachings.

We are now at the theological center of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic threads of Old Testament history and expectation have now converged in the Lord of the Sermon.

Jesus Christ makes the claim that the profound streams of holy history properly and meaningfully converge in Himself.

This means that all Old Testament teaching needs to be interpreted in the context of its fulfillment in the gospel. His words will intensify, not lessen, the demand of the Law of God.

("TORAH" - The Hebrew word for "law." It is used 221 times in the Old Testament. The word comes from the root 'yara' which means 'way' and therefore TORAH means literally and concretely 'the way found.'

According to Jewish tradition, the Torah existed in heaven before God created the world. The parchment scrolls, containing the first five books of the Bible, are the most cherished objects in Jewish life. Their value is not merely religious: Torahs cost from $10,000 to $20,000, since each must be hand-lettered by scribes, a process that takes at least a year. Since January, 88 Torahs have been stolen from fourteen New York City synagogues; another 50 have vanished elsewhere in the nation.

A CHALLENGE TO EXCEED
MATTHEW 5:19,20

INTRODUCTION:

1. A tremendous challenge - it seems as though Jesus is asking us to do quite the impossible. He is challenging us to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

2. They had an extremely high standard of righteousness. Why does He issue this challenge?

   (1) He does so because in their commitment to the Law, the Pharisees had made the law purely external and mechanical. It lacked the inner dynamics of a religion of heart and soul.

   (2) The maze of rules and regulations with which Christ had to contend is illustrated by an 800 page book the Scribes had written interpreting the Ten Commandments. This book is known as the "Mishnah."

   (3) As though this volume were not enough, later Jewish scholars busied themselves making commentaries explaining the Mishnah. These commentaries are known as the "Talmud."

   (4) The consist of 12 printed volumes. All this started with 10 simple guidelines.

3. This saying by Christ must have been a difficult saying for the people to accept.

   (1) The Pharisees were so highly esteemed and regarded. To be a Pharisee was a matter of praise. The Lawyers were honored as "Masters of the Law."

   (2) Jesus was not saying that for a man to get to heaven he must have more of the same kind of righteousness that the Pharisees and Scribes had.

4. The Scribes and Pharisees are named directly, and in so doing, Jesus would bring to an end the false standards of religion and morality they had erected.

5. Our lesson will center on two questions: (1) "Who are the Scribes and Pharisees?" (2) "What kind of righteousness did they have, and what must we do?"

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. "WHO WERE THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES?

1. They were famous for their righteousness. Was not their obedience to God's law the master passion of their lives?

2. Did they not calculate that the Law contained 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions? Did they not strive to keep them all?

3. How then can Christian righteousness actually exceed Pharisaic righteousness? How can this superior Christian righteousness be made a condition of entering into God's kingdom?

4. The Jewish people were so divided religiously that it was impossible for the Lord to avoid conflict with the religious leaders and escape criticism and censure.

5. The Scribes - men who spent their lives copying and teaching and interpreting the Law. They were the authorities; everyone looked up to them.

6. The Pharisees - members of a Jewish sect known for their outstanding piety.

   (1) They were separatists, i.e., "one set apart."

   (2) They were the conservatives and legalists of their day.

   (3) They had drawn up a code of rules and regulations which went far beyond anything demanded by the Law.

   (4) This set of rules made them "paragons of virtue."

7. One reason that Jesus said so much about and to the Pharisees was that the common people looked up to them. The people depended on them for teaching and guidance.

8. The Lord would point out the Pharisees' hollowness and hypocrisy of their lives.

II. "WHAT WAS THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS?"

1. First, a definition of "righteousness."

   (1) "The state of one who is such as He ought to be, or which is the same thing, a condition acceptable to God." (Thayer)

   (2) As used by Jesus: "According to the same authority; correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting."

2. Secondly, notice the Pharisees' righteousness.

   (1) Their preaching and practice was not consistent - Matthew 23:3.

   (2) Their motivation was corrupt. Cf. Matthew 23:5-7. They were rooted in pride, self-esteem and ambition. They loved uppermost rooms, chief seats, and big greetings and titles.

   (3) They were more interested in quantity than quality. They had a fierce sectarian enthusiasm. They had an active visitation program. Cf. Matthew 23:15.

   (4) Their righteousness was external and formal. Cf. Matthew 23:16,18; Luke 16:15; Matthew 23:25-27.

   (5) They were more concerned with the ceremonial than the moral. Cf. Matthew 23:14.

      A. That has always been, and is, a very common type of religion.

      B. As long as one "goes to church on Sunday;" professing that having the communion fixes you up for the rest of the day and week.

   (6) They majored in minors and minored in majors. Cf. Matthew 23:23,24.

3. The Pharisees' righteousness was one of man-made rules and traditions. Cf. Luke 18:9-14.

   (1) The Pharisee was self-righteousness. The ultimate objective was not glorifying God, but self.

   (2) Cf. Romans 10:1-3.

4. Their righteousness fed on comparisons and criticisms. They had a regrettable, tragic attitude toward other people. They were highly critical of others; uncharitable in judgment. Cf. 2 Corinthians 10:12

5. Entry into God's kingdom is impossible without a conformity better ("much better") ***emphatic*** than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, for God's kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness.

6. Christian righteousness far surpasses Pharisaic righteousness because it is deeper, being a righteousness of the heart. Cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27.

CONCLUSION:

1. Human righteousness is a different kind of righteousness from that which God requires. God asks for the "divine" righteousness.

2. The righteousness which is pleasing to Him is an inward righteousness of mind and motive.

3. Jesus is saying that God will never be satisfied ever with such a supposed high standard of righteousness as theirs.

4. The Pharisee was the very opposite of everything Jesus was teaching in His sermon.

5. They were interested in:

   (1) Details rather than principles;
   (2) Actions rather than motives;
   (3) Doing rather than in being.

6. How do we stand today in righteousness? How is your righteousness?

THE NEW SPIRIT
MATTHEW 5:21-48

INTRODUCTION:

1. Matthew 5:21 marks the beginning of a new section of this sermon.

2. People of Jesus' day, very much like people of our time, were for the most part content with just an external religion (righteousness and goodness).

3. By contrast Jesus taught that the only righteousness agreeable to God is a "divine" righteousness that brings about a full change of the disposition.

4. It is necessary to consider the meaning of the phrases "letter of the law" and the "spirit of the law."

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW (Verses 21-48).

1. Jesus immediately sets about to draw a contrast of the righteousness He demanded, that of the religious teachers of His day.

2. In this process He uses six illustrations to contrast what God meant, and what the Pharisees and Scribes taught.

   (1) Murder - verse 21
   (2) Adultery - verse 27
   (3) Divorce - verse 31
   (4) Swearing - verse 33
   (5) Revenge - verse 38
   (6) Love - verse 43

3. Each is to be studied separately, but we need to see the "spirit" behind the Law.

II. JESUS' PRIMARY EXPRESSION - "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago"

1. The Pharisees had built up generations of their traditions, and they were very attached to these traditions.

2. The often recited the "fathers" in their teachings.

3. But notice Jesus did not say, "You have read in the Law of Moses," or "As it is written in the Scriptures."

4. At the time, it was practically impossible to distinguish between law and interpretations of the Pharisees.

III. THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS - "but I say unto you"

1. At least 132 times in the four gospels we find Jesus saying, "I say unto you."

2. He does not hesitate to set Himself up as the "Authority." Cf. Matthew 7:28,29.

3. He claims the Authority of God because He is God - John 1:1,2; Hebrews 1:1-3.

4. He was not simply another teacher - another man - another expounder of the Law - another Pharisee.

5. Cf. John 14:9; Matthew 1:23; John 7:16.

IV. WHAT IS JESUS' PURPOSE?

1. He is more interested in the principles of the Law than in "legal" details.

2. It would be improper to say He was giving a "new" law or code.

3. He is concerned with the quality of the man within.

4. It would be nice if God gave us a definite list of "do's and don'ts" but that would be impossible.

5. We want a cut and dried list of regulations so we can run a "check list" of our life and feel good and safe.

6. The gospel does not treat us like children. It lays down certain basic principles and asks us to apply them whatever the circumstance, wherever and whenever.

V. WHAT ARE SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES?

1. It is the spirit of the Law that matters primarily - not the letter ONLY.

   (1) The Law is not meant to be mechanical, but "living."

   (2) The Pharisees concentrated so much on the letter, they missed the spirit.

   (3) Spirit is something that always must be manifested in form - 2 Corinthians 3:6.

   (4) The Pharisees thought that as long as they did not murder a man, they were OK.

2. Conformity to Law must not be thought of in terms of action only.

   (1) Thoughts, motives, and desires are equally as important as action.

   (2) The Lord is as concerned about what leads to the actions as about the action itself.

   (3) This is not to say that action is not important. Cf. Mark 7:21-23.

3. The Law should be thought of positively as well as negatively.

   (1) Law is not merely to prevent us from doing that which is wrong.

   (2) It is to lead us positively, not only to do right, but to love to do right.

   (3) The Jewish concept was altogether negative - "I must not kill, etc."

   (4) Jesus wants us to "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

   (5) How sad to think today as many do - "I don't drink, commit adultery, etc."

4. The Law is not to keep us in a state of obedience to oppressive rules, but to promote free development of spiritual character.

   (1) We must not think of Christianity as something hard, grievous or servile. Cf. 1 John 5:3.

   (2) If we think of Christianity as restricting and cramping, we have not understood our Christianity at all.

5. God's laws must never be thought of as ends in themselves.

   (1) They are not something to which we just must conform.

   (2) The real end of the Law is to come to know God - to follow Christ - to love one's neighbor as himself.

   (3) Cf. Matthew 22:36-40.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>:

1. Jesus is certainly emphasizing the importance of the spirit of the Law.

2. Cf. Proverbs 4:23; 23:7.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST DEMANDS OF ALL
MATTHEW 5:21-48

INTRODUCTION:

1. Perhaps the greatest demands of all of the teachings of Christ are found in this segment of His sermon.

2. Christ confirms how respect for others affects our conduct. He expects those of us who believe to respond.

3. Christ makes it quite clear that Christianity is no easy "do as you please" religion.

4. In love, and yet in firmness, He says if we dare bear His name we are to conduct ourselves properly.

5. Christianity is not simply a private affair between you and God. We also have a relationship with other people around us.

6. Our lesson involves 5 problems with others that we will not have when we not only believe, but behave properly.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. ***THE PROBLEM OF ANGER***. (Verses 21-26).

1. Christ asserts that outward conformity to the Old Law which forbids killing is not sufficient. We will be judged according to the inward motives of the heart also.

2. Clearly, the Law stated, "Thou shall not kill." But Jesus forbids even the attitude of anger against a brother.

3. It is not enough simply to refrain from hitting a man; we should not even desire to strike a person, and we should not harbor ill-feelings against a brother.

   (1) THE DANGER OF ANGER - verse 22. "Guilty" is used 3 times in the NASV. God has given us ability to feel anger, but He expects us to use it constructively.

   A. He is not speaking about anger concerning a situation, but anger directed toward individuals. It is a selfish and vindictive anger.

   B. The word "Raca" can hardly be translated because it describes a tone of voice more than a content, or meaning.

C. Jesus forbids the use of this word because it displays a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous anger.

D. The word "fool" was used to cast disgrace on the moral character of another person.

E. Christ is forbidding us to destroying another person's name and reputation. to persist in doing so is to be liable to the severest judgment.

(2) THE DEFEAT OF ANGER - verses 23-26.

A. Christ paints the picture of a worshipper standing before the altar involved in the very act of worship itself.

B. He says one should discontinue worship, go to his brother, make things right, and then return to worship.

C. The Christian takes the initiative in reconciliation. It will never come by wishful thinking, or even by prayer alone.

D. Reconciliation is a pre-requisite to fellowship with God. Whenever we hold resentments and grudges and attitudes of anger toward others, we become disloyal to God.

II. ***THE PROBLEM OF ADULTERY***. (Verses 27,28)

1. Any act that damages everyone concerned can never lead to a happy, or Christlike, life.

2. In the matter of adultery, everybody involved will lose. Never is there a happy ending to an "affair" whether that affair be extra-marital, or pre-marital.

3. Christ meets this problem head-on. He says if you believe as you should, you will behave as you ought in personal morals.

(1) THE ROOT OF ADULTERY - verse 28. Jesus distinguishes between the deed and the disposition. The Law condemned the ACT of adultery; Jesus condemns the ATTITUDE of adultery. He deals with the root of the problem - the heart.

(2) THE REMEDY FOR ADULTERY - verses 29-32. He offers two remedies:

A. PERSONAL PURITY. Amputation may remove thievery, but it does not remove the heart of the thief.

B. RESPECT FOR MARRIAGE. Divorce was a husband's pre-rogative in the Old Testament. He could terminate the marriage any time he chose to do so. But Christ says that marriage is respected as the Divine institution of God.

III. ***THE PROBLEM OF DISHONESTY***. (Verses 33-37)

1. Compounded by empty oaths. (Verses 34-36). The Jews divided oaths into two classes. Those absolutely binding, and those not binding. Those that contained the name of God were binding, but an oath that omitted the name of God was not binding. Christ is rejecting the "on again; off again" truth telling. We must tell the truth under all circumstances.

2. The problem is solved by CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, verse 37. A man's word should be his bond.

IV. ***THE PROBLEM OF RETALIATION*** - Verses 38-42.

1. The law of the jungle prevails, and might makes right - the law of many today.

2. It is an "eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth."

3. Christ contends repaying evil with evil falls far short of the Christian concept.

   (1) THE SENSELESSNESS OF RETALIATION - Verse 38. What good does retaliation do? Does it restore a lost eye, or does it replace a broken tooth? Exchanging retorts and sarcastic criticism gets us nowhere except in serious trouble. Violence seems to always breed violence.

   (2) THE ALTERNATIVE - Verses 39-42. The law of no retaliation. Suffering wrong rather than doing wrong.

V. ***THE PROBLEM OF HATE*** - Verses 43-48.

1. Hate destroys our reward. It destroys our influence. We become no different from the those who are lost around us.

   (1) Hate distorts our judgment; hate breaks down our peace of mind; hate creates nervous disorders.

   (2) We owe to ourselves, our influence, our congregation, our Christ, not to hate.

2. The destruction of hate - verses 44,45.

   (1) Love our enemies;
   (2) Bless our enemies;
   (3) Do good to our enemies;
   (4) Pray for our enemies.

CONCLUSION:

1. Cf. Verse 48 - not to be sinless or flawless, but rather to be whole, complete, mature.

2. Quit acting like a child; grow up and become mature.

CARELESS ANGER IN THE HEART
MATTHEW 5:21-26

INTRODUCTION:

1. Perhaps the greatest demands of all the teachings of Christ are found in out text.

2. The unique authority of Jesus was startling to those about Him.

3. But the standard which He set before them was more startling still!

4. This commandment is not only a prohibition against the overt act of murder, but also against any careless anger in the heart against a brother.

5. "What does it mean to us today?"

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE PHARISEES' USE OF THE LAW.

1. "By them of old time" - a reference to the glossary; the interlinear translation, explanations and commentaries which the Scribes and Elders added from time to time to the text of the Law.

2. This is what the "common" people usually heard as "the Law."

3. The Scribes and Pharisees were evidently seeking to restrict the application of the Sixth Commandment to the deed of murder alone - the act of spilling human blood in homicide.

4. If they refrained from this, they considered that they had kept the commandment. And this apparently is what the Rabbis taught the people.

5. "You shall not murder" is an accurate quotation of the Law, but they had added to it - "and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."

6. They had taken this Six Commandment (Exodus 20:13), and had combined with a verse in Numbers 35:30 that demanded death for anyone who unlawfully took innocent life.

7. They had made the commandment simply a prohibition against committing actual murder.

8. They had weakened it by making it appear that disobedience brought only punishment at the hand of civil magistrates.

(1) God is not mentioned! It was to them a "legal" law - "if you kill you will suffer punitive consequences."

(2) Since they were not "murderers" they could feel good about keeping this law.

9. Before we judge them, we need to understand that we still tend to be guilty ourselves.

(1) We define the law of the Lord so that we can keep it in a negative way.

(2) Cf. Paul in Philippians 3:3-6.

(3) Cf. The rich, young ruler in Matthew 19;16-22.

(4) Cf. The Pharisee's prayer in Luke 18:11.

10. A man can do the worst possible things that a person can do in this life, and when he is brought face to face with his actions, he will find a dozen reasons why they were not faults at all, or why it was necessary for him to commit these acts.

11. We continually find it easier to substitute the ceremonial aspects of religion for the demands of a clear conscience before God.

12. How easy it is to worship God outwardly while harboring evil thoughts and intentions against other people.

13. How impossible it is to try to atone for moral failure by going through the outward motions of worship.

II. <u>THE INWARD DESIRES OF THE HEART</u>.

1. The Lord contends that outward conformity to the Old Law which forbids killing is not sufficient.

2. He teaches that we shall be judged according to the inward desires of our hearts.

3. The "danger" appears three times in this one verse, obviously underscoring the danger of anger.

4. We must not only not kill - we must not be angry without cause.

5. The true application of the commandment was much wider than they had supposed.

6. It included thoughts and words a well as deeds, anger and insult, as well as murder.

7. Angry thoughts and insulting words may never lead to the ultimate act of murder, yet, they are equated to murder in God's sight.

8. Cf. 1 John 3:15.

9. God regards anger as demanding the same punishment! To feel hatred is to be guilty of murder in the eyes of God.

10. To hate, have harsh and unkind feelings of resentment, produces the same guilt.

11. Some authorities say that the phrase "without cause" is not in the text. If that is correct, it makes the commandment twice as difficult.

12. We lose our temper; harbor grudges; gossip. We kill by neglect, spite, and jealousy.

13. We would learn that we actually do worse things than these if only we could see our hearts as God sees our hearts.

14. We must admit that most of us are angry at some wrong done against ourselves, whether real or imaginary, or at some insult or some undeserved neglect.

15. This in turn motivates from us a dislike and even hatred for the one who may have done us wrong.

III. THE USE OF WORDS AGAINST OUR BRETHREN.

1. We must not only not be angry, we must never be guilty of using expressions of contempt.

2. If murder is a dreadful crime, vicious anger and insult are dreadful as well.

3. So is every deed, word, look or thought by which we hurt or offend a fellow human being.

4. We need to be more sensitive about these evils. We must never allow an enmity to remain, still less to grow larger.

5. Not only is unjustified anger forbidden, but according to Jesus, God will not even excuse a person who is guilty of expressions of disgrace.

6. Cf. Matthew 5:21.

7. The word "RACA."

   (1) An insult to a person's intelligence; an empty-headed person; nitwit; blockhead; numskull; bonehead; contempt for a man's head; stupid person.

   (2) The word confirms an attitude of contempt, i.e., to dismiss someone as unworthy of attention; scorn; derision.

   (3) The Pharisees talked about murder, robbery, drunkenness, but Jesus spoke of "evil thoughts;" "enmity;" "strife" in the heart.

   (4) Men have been destroyed short of murder - confidence is destroyed by a whispering criticism - deliberate fault finding.

8. The word "FOOL."

   (1) A Christian must never use abusive expressions - verse 22.

   (2) This is the heart showing hatred and bitterness by expressing itself in words.

   (3) A fool is a term of extreme vulgarity and moral reproach - especially as it is used here.

   (4) "Fool" comes from a Hebrew word meaning a "rebel; apostate; outcast."

   (5) In this the man who tells his brother that he is doomed to hell is in danger of hell himself.

9. These two terms are terms of abuse. They were clearly derisive and insulting names.

10. Cf. Ephesians 4:31; James 3:6.

11. It is no accident that even in our own speech such things sometimes are termed "Character Assassination," or that we speak of destroying a person by words. Jesus says we are not to be that way.

12. Contempt we feel for others leads to actively seeking to destroy that individual's character, and other people's confidence and trust in him or her.

13. Killing is not done by weapons alone, but by hatred, anger and contempt.

IV. <u>WHAT ABOUT US TODAY</u>?

1. What is the state of your heart in the light of this teaching?

2. The state of our heart must be free from feelings of contempt, hatred and revenge.

3. Not only are Christians to avoid hatred, contempt and murder, they are to make positive efforts to establish right relationships with their brothers.

4. Cf. Matthew 5:23,24.

5. Any individual who has been the cause of anger must remove such a cause if he hopes to be able to worship God in an acceptable manner.

6. We must take steps to remove the trouble.

7. Jesus warns us of a subtle danger - trying to atone for moral failure by doing something good, hopefully to counterbalance it.

8. The Lord's application here indicates that no act of worship, however sacred, will be acceptable to God while the worshipper cherishes ill-will against his brother.

9. Some feel that when they have done something wrong, they just need to go to church. Jesus said, "Don't come to church until the other is straightened out."

10. Cf. Luke 16:15; Psalm 66:18.

11. This principle is important because of our relationship to God. Cf. Matthew 5:25,26.

    (1) God's law asks, "What is your relationship with your brother?"

    (2) Bad blood? Something wrong? Settle it at once. You may not be here tomorrow morning, and you certainly do not want to enter eternity like that.

CONCLUSION:

1. What of the things you have done? Said? Thought? Failed to do?

2. These practical instructions Jesus drew out from the Sixth Commandment as its logical implications.

3. It is just not possible to develop spiritually until resentment, anger, condemnation and hatred aimed at one's fellowman is put out of one's life.

4. Indignation, resentment, the desire to get even or to see others get what they deserve are all things which form an impenetrable barrier to spiritual growth and entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

ADULTERY IN THE HEART
MATTHEW 5:27-30

INTRODUCTION:

1. Jesus now uses His second example in comparing God's righteousness to that of the Pharisees. He turns from the Sixth Commandment to the Seventh Commandment.

2. The Scribes and Pharisees had reduced the Law of God to externals and physical acts with very little emphasis on the inner quality of man's response to the Law, and to the purpose of God.

3. Jesus states that the true meaning of God's command is much more extensive than a simple ban of acts of sexual immorality, or impurity.

4. The Tenth Commandment said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife."

5. This shows that strongly craving a woman not lawfully yours, makes you a sinner, whether guilty of the act or not.

6. The Pharisees evidently found it more comfortable to ignore this Tenth Commandment.

7. In their view, they kept the Seventh Commandment, provided they avoided the act of adultery itself.

8. They thus gave a conveniently narrow definition of sexual sin, and a conveniently broad definition of sexual purity.

9. We have always been tempted to suppose that as long as our deeds conform to the law we have done all that can be reasonably expected of us.

10. We also tend to believe that our thoughts and feelings are of little importance, and that in any case these are our own business alone.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. "YOU HAVE HEARD"

1. "Do not commit adultery."

2. Cf. Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10,18.

3. Note the authority behind the command:

   (1) "God spoke all these words", i.e., of these commandments. Cf. Exodus 20:1

   (2) They are given by the One who made us male and female. Cf. Genesis 1:27

   (3) The One who knows all, including what is best for us in this matter.

4. Note the definition of "adultery."

   (1) The command is a simple declarative sentence. It is impossible to misunderstand.

   (2) Cf. the Hebrew word "naaph" - all kinds of illicit sexual relations.

   (3) Cf. the Koine Greek word "mocheia" - all illicit physical intercourse.

   (4) For practical purposes "adultery" and "fornication" are synonymous.

   (5) "Porneia" is a broader term, and means "uncleanness;" forbids all forbidden sexual activity.

5. The command then says that any forbidden sexual activity, before or after marriage, is a most serious action.

6. Note the seriousness of the sin:

   (1) Under the Old Testament, punishment was death. Cf. Deuteronomy 22:22-29.

   (2) Under the New Testament, punishment is an eternity in hell. Cf. Galatians 5:19ff; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 21:8.

   (3) It has always been, and must be, regarded as a sin of particular seriousness because:

      A. It is a sin against God;
      B. It is a sin against self, partner, marriage mate, and community.

7. Note the reasons for abstaining:

   (1) Religiously - violation of God's law;
   (2) Morally - taking what belongs to another;
   (3) Physically - pregnancy; disease;
   (4) Emotionally - produces overwhelming sense of guilt and worthlessness.

8. God made the physical love of a man and woman good, pure, beautiful and uplifting.

9. BUT, He put a fence around it - marriage!

10. Everywhere and always, outside that fence of marriage, sexual gratification is sinful and hurtful.

11. So God says to both the unmarried, and to the married, "Do not commit adultery."

12. And yet, adultery is one of the most widespread sins of our nation.

II. "BUT I TELL YOU."

1. "That anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

2. This part of the Lord's teaching is not dealing with a breach of the matrimonial law, but with the desire for gratification.

3. There is a separation between the thought and the act.

4. Some inquirers are always asking if the thought is as bad as the act - the answer will depend upon the motive.

5. Some have asked if it is a sin to look - the answer is determined by the purpose.

6. Let us notice some definitions:

   (1) "Lust" - sensuous desire; sexual desire as a degrading passion; inordinate or sinful desire.

   (2) "Inordinate" - not ordered or kept within bounds; unregulated; unrestrained and excessive; immoderate.

7. The phrase "Lust after" expresses the will and the purpose, decision and intention, to act - lacking only the opportunity if the actions are not materialized, or the deeds not performed.

8. The interaction of the eye and the hand in verses 28 and 29 as instruments of the acts intended, is condemned.

9. The emphasis is on the importance of thoughts and feelings as distinguished from their display in outward acts.

10. Notice this principle in the New Testament:

(1) Cf. Romans 13:14; Galatians 5:16
(2) Cf. Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 2:11
(3) Cf. 1 John 2:15-17.

III. THE DIFFICULTY PRESENTED TODAY.

1. Our nation is bombarded with sex.

(1) Cf. Canaanites - Baal; Ashtoreth; practiced immorality in the name of religion.

(2) Ancient Corinth - Aphrodite; 1,000 priestesses.

(3) Ancient Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. Cf. Movies (even the titles); Pornography ("filthy writing")

3. Cf. Literature in abundance (lewd, sensual)

(1) 20 million "smut" magazine read each month;

(2) Smut grosses between 1/2 and 1 billion dollars every year;

(3) 34.5% read regularly a certain "girlie" magazine featuring nude pictures;

(4) "Respectable" pornography - ads on TV, billboards; magazines.

(5) Modern social and dating customs - close contact; familiarity of dancing.

4. Our response to all of this:

(1) Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:18
(2) Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:22
(3) Cf. 1 Peter 2:11

CONCLUSION:

1. The reference to LOOKING on the woman does not condemn appreciation or admiration for feminine beauty.

2. The look that is condemned is when it is sensually employed, and the desires press with an imperious drive for gratification, hence a crave for unlawful satisfaction.

3. Lust is the equivalent of adultery, just as anger is the equivalent of murder.

4. The outward act is nothing more than the symptom of the thoughts of the heart.

5. Any outward act is but the sequel to a thought, and the type of thought which we allow to become habitual will sooner or later find expression in outward actions.

SPIRITUAL SURGERY
MATTHEW 5:27-30

INTRODUCTION:

1. The nature and consequences of sin required the death of the Son of God.

2. Sin is of a very serious design. Our soul and its destiny are important, also. Cf. Matthew 16:26.

3. As a Christian, sin must be hated and destroyed at any cost. Cf. Psalm 97:10. We can train ourselves to hate sin.

   (1) Cf. Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5
   (2) Cf. Galatians 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:22

4. The prohibition of adultery included the lustful look and imagination.

5. We commit murder with our words and anger; we commit adultery in our hearts.

6. We should consider these following points before progressing further:

   (1) The natural sexual relations within the commitment of marriage are God-given;

   (2) This teaching refers to the unlawful sex outside marriage, whether practiced by married or unmarried people;

   (3) That which is forbidden is looking lustfully at a woman;

   (4) Jesus' inference is to all forms of immorality;

   (5) To argue that the reference is only to a man lusting after a woman and not vice versa, or only to a married man and not an unmarried man, is to be guilty of the very reasoning which Jesus was condemning in the Pharisees.

   (6) Jesus' emphasis is that any and every sexual practice which is immoral in deed is immoral also in look and thought.

7. What is particularly important to grasp is His equation of looking lustfully at a woman committing adultery with her in the heart.

8. It is this relation between the eyes and the heart which leads Jesus in the next two verses to give some very practical instruction about how to maintain sexual purity.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE SOLVING OF THE PROBLEM AT THE BEGINNING.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:29,30.

2. If to look lustfully is to commit adultery in the heart, the only way to deal with the problem is at its beginning, which is our eyes.

3. Cf. Job 31:1,7,9.

4. Cf. 2 Peter 2:14.

5. The control of the heart was due to the control of the eyes. The teaching of Jesus, confirmed in the experience of Job, is still true today.

6. Deeds of shame are preceded by imaginations of shame, and the inflaming of the imagination by the indiscipline of the eyes.

7. It is doubtful that human beings are victims of immorality, who have not first opened the floodgates of passion through their eyes.

8. This may be an appropriate moment to refer in passing to the way women and girls dress:

   (1) It is one thing to make yourself attractive; it is another to make yourself deliberately seductive;

   (2) Girls know the difference, and so do men.

II. THE STARTLING COMMAND!

1. Jesus quoted the command more than once. Cf. Matthew 18:8,9.

2. The foot is added to the eye and the hand, and the reference is a general one to temptations to sin, not expressly to sexual temptation.

3. On the surface it is a startling command to pluck out an offending eye, or to cut off an offending hand or foot.

4. But the statement is expressing forcibly the demand to cast away anything, however cherished, that becomes the occasion of sin.

5. A few people, whose zeal greatly exceeded their wisdom, have taken Jesus literally and mutilated themselves. Cf. Origin of Alexandria.

6. The command to get rid of troublesome eyes, hands and feet is an example of the use of dramatic figures of speech.

7. What Jesus was advocating was not a literal physical self-maiming, but a ruthless moral self-denial. Not mutilation - but humiliation.

8. Mortification, or taking up the cross to follow Jesus means to reject sinful practices so resolutely that we die to them or put them to death.

   (1) Cf. Mark 8:34; Romans 8:13
   (2) Cf. Colossians 3:5; Galatians 5:24

III. THE PRACTICE OF SELF-DISCIPLINE.

1. If your eye causes you to sin because temptation comes to you through your eyes, i.e., what you see, then pluck out your eyes! Don't look!

2. Behave as if you had actually plucked out your eyes and flung them away, and were blind and so could not see the objects which previously caused you to sin.

3. If your hand or foot causes you to sin, because temptation comes to you through your hands, i.e., what you do, or your feet, i.e., places you visit, then cut them off! Don't do it! Don't go!

4. Behave as if you had actually cut off your hands and feet, and had flung them away, and were now crippled and so could not do the things or visit the places which previously caused you to sin.

IV. THE APPLICATION TO US TODAY.

1. One wonders if there has ever been a generation in which this teaching of Jesus were more needed or more obviously applicable than our own, in which the river of filth is in abundance. (Pornographic literature; sex films)

2. Pornography is offensive to Christians first and foremost because it degrades women from human beings into sex objects, but also because it presents the eye of the beholder with unnatural sexual stimulation.

3. If we have a problem of sexual self-mastery, and if nonetheless our feet take us to those films, or our hands handle this literature, and our eyes feast on the pictures they offer to us, we are not only sinning but actually inviting disaster.

4. If your eye causes you to sin, don't look; if your foot causes you to sin, don't go; if your hand causes you to sin, don't do it.

5. What is necessary for all those with strong sexual temptations, and indeed for all of us in principle, is discipline in guarding the approaches of sin.

6. We shall have to eliminate from our lives certain things which either are, or could easily become, sources of temptation.

CONCLUSION:

1. How sin can make us think we are innocent when we are guilty! We are satisfied because we did not do the deed.

2. Rather, we should ask ourselves, "Why did I want to do it?"

3. Many highly respectable men would never dream of committing the act of adultery, but enjoy sinning in mind and imagination.

4. It is better to forgo some experience this life offers in order to enter the life which is life indeed.

5. It is better to accept some cultural amputation in this world than risk final destruction in the next.

6. This teaching runs counter to our modern standards of permissiveness.

7. It is based on the principle that eternity is more important than time, and purity than culture, and that any sacrifice is worth while in this life if it is necessary to ensure our entry into the next.

8. We have to decide, quite simply, whether to live for this world, or the next; whether to follow the crowd, or Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 2:9
I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes,

1 Pet 3:3
Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.

1 Pet 3:4
Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

These scriptures can be summed up by three questions:

1. "Is it in good taste?" - modest; well-arranged. What would be modest on one occasion may not be on another.

2. "Does it reveal a reserved, or a forward nature?"

   (Women are to dress so as to be with "shamefastness" or "bashfulness." A woman who dresses in such a manner as to be "forward" is violating the will of God.)

3. "Does it create respect, or passion, in others?"

   (Does it expose the body in such a way as to create lust in others?)

The Bible places the emphasis on the clothing of a woman and the "lusting" of a man.

No doubt this is because the man is more likely to lust, and the woman is more likely to cause it.

Both should dress and act properly at all times.

Women exercise much influence over most men, whether it be Godly or ungodly, good or bad. Of all natural desires, man's sex drive rates second only to his instinct for survival.

It is to be modest in appearance - cost - behavior.

THE GRACE OF MARRIAGE
MATTHEW 5:31,32

INTRODUCTION:

1. We remind ourselves of the context for our lessons - Matthew 5:20.

2. Jesus is contrasting "true" religion with hollow rituals.

3. The question of divorce and remarriage is a vital issue today. It is a Bible question, and such, should be often discussed.

4. To attempt to settle such a vital question as this one without consulting God's word, is to be guilty of the sin of ignoring God's will.

5. There is a strong temptation to pass over this section of the sermon because:

   (1) Divorce is a debatable and complex subject;

   (2) There is a wide range of teaching on it;

   (3) The conflicting, and apparently incompatible, schools of "scholarly" thought on it;

   (4) The tendency to avoid controversial subjects and the lack of personal understanding to the point of being certain, or dogmatic, on all the points;

   (5) The consequences, both temporary and eternal, that depend upon our understanding God's will;

   (6) The subject is a subject sensitive to people's emotions at a very deep level.

6. On the other hand, we desire to be honest with God's word, and to "declare the whole counsel" so far as knowledge and ability permit.

7. The deteriorating quality of marriage and the home, compel us to at least attempt to set forth what God originally intended marriage to be.

8. What is the answer? How do we get out of the marital bog we are in? There is no easy solution - no easy "magic" formula - no appealing cure-all.

9. Many marital problems exist before people become Christians, and some seem incapable of solution, either because of innumerable and complex ramifications of the problem, or lack of willingness on the part of the involved parties to accept the solution.

10. We need a "restoration movement" in marriage as well as in "religion" and the time to begin is now, and the place to begin is with us and our children.

11. No child is brought up in the nurture and counsel of the Lord who is not mentally, morally, spiritually saturated, fortified and equipped with Christian ideas of marriage.

12. As stated previously, Jesus' attitude toward the law, and the whole spirit of His teaching, was opposed to the ethical legalism of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. WHAT WAS CONSIDERED IN THE LAW OF MOSES.

1. The Lord's words, "It has been said," are a reference to the law of Moses which had a statute recognizing a "bill of divorcement."

2. It should be carefully observed that this liberty was "suffered" because of the hardness of heart then characteristic of the people of Israel.

3. Cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-5.

4. We note also that divorce is not mentioned in these verses.

5. What was the object and purpose of the Law in relation to divorce?

   (1) This law was given to control divorce;

   (2) The Jews had interpreted Moses' granting divorce for some "indecency" as adultery, barrenness, or almost any offensive deed or condition.

   (3) The legislation was introduced in order to regulate and control a situation that had become not only confused, but also flagrantly unfair to women.

6. The Law does introduce three basic principles concerning marriage and divorce:

   (1) It limited the putting away to certain causes - all other frivolous excuses were prohibited. The Jews allowed divorce for many causes.

   (2) It required a husband to give her a bill of divorcement. It had to be given before two witnesses.

   (3) He could not remarry her. This was to emphasize that one could not lightly walk in and out of marriage at will.

II. THE TEACHING OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES IN THE DAYS OF CHRIST.

1. The teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees on the question of divorce seemed to be about as follows - "If any man wishes to divorce his wife for any cause, he may do so, provided that he gives her a writing of divorcement."

2. Their views were based on Deuteronomy 24:1.

3. There were different schools of thought among the Jews on the question of divorce:

   (1) Rabbi Hillel - a man might put away his wife "if she cooked her husband's food badly or salting or roasting it too much. This reduced divorce to the level of an ordinary or minor fault.

   (2) Rabbi Shammai - held that only the most serious offense, such as adultery, was sufficient grounds for divorce.

   (3) Rabbi Akiba - "If she find no favor in his eyes as giving permission to a man to divorce his wife, if he saw a woman fairer than she."

   (4) Josephus - "About which time I divorced my wife also, as not pleased with her behavior, though not till she had been the mother of three children."

4. The only factor that apparently ever came to the forefront in the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees was that the woman be given a writing of divorcement.

5. They had made it appear that a man had to divorce his wife under certain conditions.

6. The important thing was not the prevalence of divorce, nor the plight of the woman, but that of making sure that the letter of the Law was observed.

7. The Talmud made little to do about the justice of divorce, yet was rigid in regard to the form of the divorce bill, insisting that it be done just right legally.

8. Cf. Matthew 19 - they had made it say that Moses commanded divorce.

9. By legal technicalities and clever interpretations, they avoided and sidestepped the teachings of the Law.

III. THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:3-9.

2. This was God's original intent and purpose when He gave the Law of Moses.

3. It was God's will, from the beginning, that a man and woman as husband and wife, be joined together for life - that nothing be allowed to put them apart.

4. Jesus' teaching on the subject lifts the whole question out of the "low region" of mere personal taste, pleasure, or convenience, and places it in the high region of the kingdom of God and its claims.

5. The Bible clearly teaches that it is impossible for a divorce to occur with God's approval without sin, at least on the part of one of the principals.

6. Again, several principles are learned from these verses:

   (1) The Godliness of marriage - it is a covenant between man, woman and God.

   (2) This has been so from the beginning - Matthew 19:4,5.

   (3) Man is not to put asunder this relationship - Matthew 19:6 - marriage was to be permanent.

   (4) Marriage is an act of God. God has never commanded divorce. The same excuses offered long ago are still being offered today.

   (5) There is only one legitimate cause for divorce - Matthew 19:9.

   (6) God established the legitimacy of divorce in the case of adultery.

7. Marriage is a holy and permanent love - an union between a husband and wife, that can be broken only by the sin of adultery.

III. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

1. In today's society, as in Jesus' day, divorce and remarriage are treated with a great carelessness.

2. As a result of this looseness, many Christians have allowed their standards to be adjusted to what other people do, or say, and not what God wills.

3. We cannot lower our standards and remain in harmony with the will of God.

4. We must continually strive to be a people of the Book.

5. Marriage is more than a life adventure - more even than a solemn commitment before the presence of God.

6. Marriage is a solemn covenant which shadows forth the love that exists between God and mankind.

7. Divorce is indicative of a failure. It will always be the destruction of what God designed for man's highest welfare and happiness.

8. Cf. Genesis 2:18,24; Matthew 5:31,32; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7;10-17,39.

CONCLUSION:

1. It is not hard to see what is responsible for the conditions of our society and world.

2. If we are not faithful in our most sacred bonds and vows, it is no wonder that other vows are lightly regarded.

3. Sin is always in God's disapproval, therefore, the status of the sinner is a precarious one.

KEEPING OUR WORD
MATTHEW 5:33-37

INTRODUCTION:

1. If the Rabbis tended to be permissive in their attitude toward divorce, they were permissive in their teaching about oaths, also.

2. It is another example of their perverse treatment of Old Testament scripture in order to make it more agreeable to obedience.

3. Life cannot be divided into neat little compartments, some of which are exempt from righteousness and truthfulness.

4. God is concerned with all areas of life, and as such is concerned that righteousness and truthfulness be the goal of man in every realm of day to day activities.

5. Everything a Christian does is important because of who we are, and because we effect the lives of other people.

6. The best way to a better world is to create a better me.

7. "How important is our word?" "How important is it to be honest?"

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE LAW OF MOSES.

1. Jesus is concerned with correcting the false interpretations of the Law, and not only to correct them, but to reveal the true intent of God.

2. Cf. Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:13; Leviticus 19:12.

3. "What went wrong?"

4. The legislation is against the abuse of oaths and the corresponding abuse of the truth that went with such.

5. The taking of oaths in or of itself was not a forbidden thing to do.

6. The object of the legislation was to restrict the oath to serious and important subjects.

7. An oath is that in which the speaker calls upon God to witness his vow, and to punish him if he breaks it.

8. So, taking an oath was a very serious, solemn matter.

9. The Jews were children of God, and everything they did and said was important.

10. But somehow, they took the commands of God, and summarized, "Thou shall not forswear thyself."

11. The people under Moses were also taught not to swear falsely, i.e., renounce under oath or perjure themselves; instead, they were required to keep their word faithfully. Cf. Leviticus 19:12.

II. <u>THE PHARISEES' DISTORTION</u>.

1. "You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord."

2. This is not an accurate quotation of any one Law of Moses.

3. At the same time, it is not an inaccurate summary of several Old Testament precepts which require people who make vows to keep them.

4. The taking of oaths had been greatly abused, and it had developed to the point that the practice was actually weakening truth.

5. Oaths had become so lightly esteemed that men resorted to oaths on even the most petty matters and concerns.

6. The Scribes and Pharisees interpreted this commandment literally, but urged that such oaths were binding only when the name of God was used in connection with the oath.

7. They were more concerned about the letter than the spirit of the Law.

8. As long as they kept the letter of the Law, they were happy - Cf. murder; adultery, divorce.

9. It was also their practice concerning oaths.

10. The distortion displays itself in that they interpreted the Law so as to involve perjury only.

    (1) They regarded perjury - deliberate false swearing - as serious.

    (2) You could take all kinds of oaths, do all kinds of things, so long as you did not commit perjury.

(3) "False swearing" meant profanity, not perjury. So they developed elaborate rules for the taking of vows.

11. They made a distinction between oaths.

12. By taking oaths men were actually giving the impression that they would not tell the truth unless placed under some necessity.

13. "Second-class" oaths were not considered to be very binding.

14. The religious leaders thought that by so swearing, they would not incur the guilt of breaking the Third Commandment of the Decalogue.

15. They listed which formula was permissible, and they added that only that formula which included the divine name made the vow binding.

16. One need not be so particular, they said, about keeping vows in which the divine name had not been used.

17. In harmony with this idea, they had introduced a number of oaths in common conversation, oaths which they by no means considered binding, because they had sworn by some part of the creation or institution.

18. To swear by the altar was not binding - but to swear by the gift on the altar was binding.

19. This was the abuse which Christ desired to correct - the practice of swearing in common conversation and by created things, oaths which they did not consider binding and which they did not hesitate to break.

III. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE LORD'S TEACHING.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:34-37.

2. Jesus reveals that oath-taking is a very serious matter, and must be reserved for only serious and unusual causes and conditions.

3. Jesus begins by arguing that the question of the formula used in making vows is a total irrelevance, and in particular that the Pharisees' distinction between formula which mentions God and those which do not, is entirely counterfeit.

4. So, if the precise wording of a vow-formula is immaterial, then a preoccupation with formula was not the point of the Law at all.

5. Since anyone who makes a vow must keep it, strictly speaking all formulae are redundant.

6. "What does the Lord mean when He says, 'Do not swear at all?'" He obviously does not mean that we should not take an oath at all.

7. He does not forbid ordinary oaths administered in a court of Law, or the signing of leases, or entering into partnerships, etc.

8. Jesus' sermon here is a treatise on the spiritual life of man. He is underscoring the fact that we must not use God's name in an evil, or casual, manner.

9. There were Old Testament regulations and legislation as to when and how oaths were taken:

   (1) In bearing witness;
   (2) In oaths of allegiance;
   (3) In covenants.

10. Men of God practiced oath-taking:

   (1) Moses - Deuteronomy 10:20
   (2) Abraham - Genesis 24:3
   (3) Jacob - Genesis 47:31
   (4) Joseph - Genesis 50:25
   (5) Jonathan - 1 Samuel 20;16,17
   (6) Jeremiah - Jeremiah 12:16,17
   (7) Apostles - Romans 9;1; 2 Corinthians 1:23
   (8) God Himself - Genesis 9:9-11; Isaiah 49:15ff

11. "What was our Lord teaching in these verses?"

12. Cf. Matthew 23:16-22.

   (1) The name of the Lord should never be used in swearing or cursing. Cf. Exodus 20:7 - yet, you hear cursing on the streets, in busses, and on TV everyday.

   (2) One must not swear by any creature, because all belongs to God. Our oaths must be taken under full realization that they are before God Who created all things.

   (3) Oaths were to be taken only in the name of God Himself, therefore, should be only the most solemn matters.

(4) A person should never use oaths in ordinary conversation. Cf. Matthew 5:37. Instead of an oath for confirmation on ordinary occasions, Jesus calls for a simple affirmation or denial.

(5) Jesus calls for the truth always.

13. The reason given - "Whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one."

(1) Because of a want of truth on the part of the one making the oath;

(2) Because of suspicion of this on the part of the one making and exacting the oath;

(3) Cf. James 5:12.

14. Some evils of false swearing:

(1) Profane swearing is always the evidence of an evil heart;

(2) Profane swearing is no mark of a gentleman or lady;

(3) Swearing to anything in common conversation does not cause one to be believed any more easily;

(4) False swearing does not elevate character in any sense;

(5) God will not hold the profane swearer guiltless.

CONCLUSION:

1. Cf. the relevance of this in today's world.

2. We accuse certain people of being worldly if they practice such things of sin, yet, pride, a corrupt heart, gossip, hatred, and such "minor" sins are considered as unimportant to us.

3. From all of this we must realize the great importance of honesty and commitment to oaths.

4. The increase of divorce, dishonesty in business, politics, government and international relations all reveal the great need in our world today for honesty.

5. We think it not bad to exaggerate - to tell "white" lies - so long as we do not commit perjury. We think it not bad to leave false impressions.

6. Our daily speech must be as trustworthy and truthful as any oath we might take.

7. The real implication of the Law is that we must keep our promises and be people of our word.

"HAVE WE NO RIGHT?"
MATTHEW 5:38-42

INTRODUCTION:

1. We live in a day when we are conscious of our rights and privileges.

2. We often find ourselves asking the question, "What are my rights as a Christian?"

3. Our lesson today is a lesson that must be learned by everyone of us as Christians.

4. The Lord says to us that we have no right to retaliation, no right to things, no rights to our time, and no right to our money.

5. All that we have is in trust from the Lord, and that we are obligated to use them to help other people.

6. A tendency to insist on our own rights lies deep in our heart, and it is nowhere more apparent than in our natural instinct for retaliation.

7. So strong is our sense of it that we naturally tend to justify retaliation as "to even the score" or to give the other man "what he deserves."

8. The Christian will fight that tendency.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW OF RETALIATION.

1. Cf. Exodus 21:22-25; Leviticus 24:19,20; Deuteronomy 19:15-21.

2. Our instinct says that when someone hits me, I strike back and harder.

3. For a slight injury, I will have my revenge.

4. There is the tendency for wrath, anger, retribution and retaliation.

5. This law from God was given to demand justice, equality and equity of punishment.

   (1) The punishment had to fit the crime, not exceed it.

   (2) It is doubtful that the Law ever demanded the eye - only demanded that no more could be required.

   (3) The Law was never intended to encourage or permit personal revenge.

6. We note in our reading of the Scriptures that the Law was given to and for JUDGES, and not to and for individuals.

7. One cannot take the law into his own hands, to interpret for himself what ought to be done, and to follow his natural impulse.

8. When rightly understood, the real object was not to sacrifice a member of the body, but rather to save both the offender and the offended by causing the would-be assailant to realize that every injury which he might inflict upon another, he would in the end inflict upon himself.

II. THE PHARISAIC INTERPRETATION.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:38.

2. The Scribes and Pharisees used this law to justify personal and private retaliation, thus defeating the very purpose of which it was given.

3. The Old Testament clearly forbade personal revenge:

   (1) Cf. Leviticus 19:18
   (2) Cf. Proverbs 20:22; 24:29.

III. THE LORD'S INTERPRETATION.

1. The Lord uses vivid cameos drawn from different life situations.

2. Each introduces a person, in the context a person who is in some sense evil, who seeks to du us an injury, one by hitting us in the face, another by prosecuting us at law, a third by commandeering our service, and a fourth by begging money from us.

3. All have a very modern right to them.

4. His illustrations and examples depict not the weakling who offers no resistance.

5. They depict the strong man whose control of himself, and love for others, are so powerful that he rejects absolutely every conceivable form of retaliation.

6. To retaliate is to lower one's standards to those of the oppressor.

IV. THE EXAMPLES.

1. Matthew 5:39b - the realm of physical violence.

   (1) A slap in the face has been regarded as a gross insult, but it is not an assault that imperils life.

   (2) If we keep in mind that Jesus forbids revenge, we have no trouble in understanding that we do not possess a spirit of malice, but instead a spirit of love.

   (3) Cf. Romans 12:19-21.

   (4) It is much better to suffer wrong twice, than to do wrong once.

   (5) This attitude rids ourselves of the tendency to retaliate.

   (6) Our spirit is not easily offended, and does not seek a means of retaliation.

   (7) Jesus does not advocate further wrongs by weak non-resistance, but does condemn the common tendency within all of us to fight and quarrel in retaliation.

2. Matthew 5:40 - judicial injustice.

   (1) The coat was the inner garment, while the cloak was the outer garment.

   (2) The Jewish law limited what a man could be sued for (Exodus 22:26,27).

   (3) The idea is to be ready to give up that which cannot be taken by law.

   (4) Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:7; Hebrews 10:34.

   (5) Our Lord is concerned here about the tendency to demand legal rights.

   (6) "I have my rights!" We seem to be more concerned about right than duties.

3. Matthew 5:41 - governmental oppression.

   (1) The exercise of this power of compelling men to enter such service was exceedingly distasteful to the Jews of Jesus' day.

   (2) When some individual presents such a burden to us, we should be willing to go even beyond what has been demanded of us.

(3) It is much better to travel the extra mile of one's own accord, than to manifest a spirit of rebellion.

(4) Verse 41 concerns itself about our natural resentment of demands made of us.

4. Matthew 5:42 - people begging from you.

(1) Instead of the Christian's conduct being selfish and revengeful, it should be generous and liberal.

(2) A benevolent disposition casts our revenge as light does darkness.

(3) The giving and lending referred to here are limited to cases of real need.

(4) Cf. 1 John 3:17,18.

(5) Giving or lending to the encouragement of vice or indolence cannot of course be included in this injunction.

5. The lessons to be learned from this short paragraph is that retaliation has no place in the kingdom of God.

6. If in any case we deem it necessary to defend our rights, it should always be done, if at all possible by a properly constituted process.

V. THE APPLICATION TO US TODAY.

1. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:4-6; 12,19.

2. Paul willingly gave up his natural human rights for the sake of the gospel.

3. We must become dead to self today.

(1) The self's spirit of self-defense when wronged;
(2) The self's desire for revenge;
(3) The self's attitude toward possessions.

4. It is hard to die to the world, it is harder to die to brethren and friends, but it is hardest to die to self!

5. Our Supreme Example is Jesus Christ.

(1) He "emptied Himself" - Philippians 2:5-7;
(2) His words were not His words - John 12:49;
(3) His works were not His works - John 14:10;

(4) Cf. 1 Peter 2:23; Luke 23:34.

6. We are to be conformed to His image - Romans 8:29.

CONCLUSION:

1. Cf. Matthew 16:24.

2. It takes a new man to live that kind of life!

3. It deals with the whole personality, even down to the little practical details.

4. It involves a holiness from a deep commitment from within.

GOD'S LAW OF LOVE
MATTHEW 5:43-48

INTRODUCTION:

1. How ridiculous! Enemies were to be hated, and such hatred was not considered strange to "true religion."

2. In fact, the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees in this matter was "you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

3. The problem was that the Jews narrowed the term "neighbor" to include only the Jew, and only the "likable" Jew at that!

4. The Jew had no love, care and concern for the non-Jew.

5. How obvious a perversion of the Law of God because of what it omits from the Commandment, and adds to it.

6. It deliberately narrows both the standard of love (leaves out the important words "as yourself" which raises its standard very high), and its object (qualifies the category of "neighbor" by specifically excluding enemies from it, and adding the command to hate them instead).

7. It is totally lacking in justification, and yet the Rabbis would have defended it as a legitimate interpretation.

8. We ask, "What is God's Law of Love?"

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE--

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING.

1. Cf. Leviticus 19:17,18; Exodus 23:4,5; Proverbs 24:17,29; 25:21,22.

2. God's Law of Love, therefore, required a benevolent attitude toward both neighbor and enemy.

3. Personal revenge or punishment was not permitted even under the Law of Moses.

II. THE TEACHING OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:43b.

2. The statement "hate your enemy" is nowhere found in the Law of Moses.

3. The neighbor was a fellow Jew whom they loved, and everybody else was not only an alien, but an enemy to be hated.

4. The Scribes and Pharisees seemed to have made little or no distinction between the sinner and his sins.

5. They had a misconception of the Law, and their feelings which God expected them to have for their enemies.

6. We know of the hatred and bitterness of the Jew toward other people:

   (1) Cf. John 4:9
   (2) Cf. Acts 10:28

7. They did try to justify themselves by the Scriptures:

   (1) They were to exterminate the Canaanites;
   (2) They were to fight against the Amorites, Moabites, Midianites, Philistines;
   (3) They were told to utterly destroy the Amalekites;
   (4) Cf. the "imprecatory" Psalms, i.e., Psalm 69:23-25.

8. Where did they go wrong?

   (1) All of these incidents and events were always judicial - never individual or personal in nature.

   (2) David in his Psalms was concerned about the enemies of God, foes of God's people.

   (3) This true of the strong speech of Jesus in Matthew 23.

III. <u>THE TEACHING OF JESUS</u>.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27,28.

2. These verses have been considered the most difficult and unique teachings of Jesus.

3. Many people have thought it impossible to love an enemy, because they understood the word "love" to express the same feeling which they feel for a friend or relative.

4. The word Jesus uses is "agapao" - to have a preference for; wish well to; regard the welfare of.

5. Christ bids us "agapan" our enemies because an emotion cannot be commanded - only love can be required as a choice.

6. Love is more than a feeling or sentiment - 1 John 5:3.

7. The love which Christ commands means to be kindly disposed toward our enemies, wish them well; have a regard for their welfare which will lead us to seek the opportunity for doing that which is best for them.

8. The point Jesus is making is the true love is not sentiment so much as service which is practical, humble and sacrificial. Cf. Luke 6:27,35.

9. Love means treating those we do not like as if we liked them. Love is wanting to help even one whom you do not like.

10. My treatment of others depends upon what they are and not on what they do to me.

11. Did Jesus come because He liked us? Because we were likable, lovely people?

12. Such a wrong attitude will lead us to see what is wrong with our enemies - to desire and seek for the opportunity of helping them - and then make an earnest effort to free them from their vicious ways of life.

IV. <u>HOW DO I OBEY THIS COMMAND OF JESUS</u>?

1. The difficulty we face in this command is the same kind that the Scribes and Pharisees faced.

2. We tend not to draw this distinction between God's judicial process and our personal feelings.

3. We tend to hate our enemies and judge them, thinking that they are enemies of God also because they are enemies of ours.

4. Anybody whom we hate, dislike, or who is offensive to us, we automatically judge as being an enemy of God also, so we pronounce judgment against him.

5. The Christian's response to other people must never be governed by what they do or how they act in relation to us.

6. Our response to others must be determined by our love and concern for their well-being.

7. "Bless them that curse you." Reply to bitter words with kind words. Cf. Romans 17:17; 1 Peter 3:9.

8. "Do good to them that hate you." Initiate benevolent actions for spiteful actions. Seek opportunity to do good.

9. "Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." It is hard to hate someone you are praying for. (Stephen - Acts 7; Cf. Luke 23:34).

V. THE PURPOSE OF OBEYING THE COMMAND.

1. Cf. Matthew 5:45.

2. That by doing so we will be transformed into the image of the Father, and will begin to resemble Him as sons should. Cf. Luke 6:35,36.

3. Cf. Matthew 5:46,45 - not only are the Lord's people to be like Him, they are to be unlike those who do not serve the heavenly Father. The Christian is different, and does more than others.

4. Cf. Matthew 5:48 - the context seems to indicate that the reference is to perfection in love.

5. "Perfect" means 'brought to completion; full-grown; lacking in nothing necessary to completeness.'

   (1) Cf. Matthew 19:21; Ephesians 4:13
   (2) Cf. Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28
   (3) Cf. James 1:4; 1 John 4:18

6. A love, therefore, which has for its object only one's friends, and which does not embrace his enemies as well, is incomplete. It has not reached the goal of perfection.

7. But if the perfection mentioned in verse 48 embraces more than perfection in love, then it doubtless has reference to the moral perfection of God as our Model.

8. There must be in us the "family likeness."

9. To require the perfection of God is to keep man in constant remembrance of his inferiority; and, at the same time, to keep him forever struggling for a closer approach to his great Model.

10. Such a requirement is uncommonly wise and good.

CONCLUSION:

1. The only way we can ever hope to gain this maturity is to die to self and strive to become like Christ.

2. God is concerned with man and He values man. He sends His rain and sunshine on the just and the unjust.

3. Jesus concludes this section of His sermon with these words - "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

4. The Christian's attitude toward his fellowman must be like the attitude of God's.

5. Our love toward others must be like God's - candid, sincere, constant, not turned aside toward vengefulness no matter how great the provocation.

6. The Christian must go beyond the legalistic fulfilling of the Law, beyond the standard of morality and behavior of the Scribes and Pharisees to the high calling of being like God Himself.

7. It is in giving ourselves in obedience to this God and this Son that we can be perfected.

THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT
MATTHEW 5:47

INTRODUCTION:

1. This question was asked by Jesus as He was teaching His disciples to love their enemies.

2. It was intended to emphasize the fact that Jesus means for His disciples to be exceptional.

3. A great part of the battle for human advancement has been won when men learn to give to others more than they themselves receive.

4. We grow and advance when we learn to give to others more than we receive.

5. If we desire to demonstrate whether or not we are being benefited by these teachings of Jesus, we should ask two questions:

   (1) "What difference is Christ's teaching making in my life?"

   (2) "What is there about me as a Christian which is special or noteworthy?"

6. It still remains a fact that when people sincerely follow the Lord, they may be described as the "people who are different."

7. Assuming that our Christianity is real, what is there about us which is distinctive?

8. We are able to get a clear answer to this question by looking at the early church.

9. What were some of the distinctive traits of those early disciples of the Lord - traits which made them different from those who were around them?

10. The answer may be revealing.

DISCUSSION: LET US NOTICE THEY WERE--

I. CHARACTERIZED BY UNWAVERING LOVE.

1. Love for one another - the badge of discipleship.

   (1) Cf. John 13:34,35; Acts 4:32
   (2) Cf. 1 John 3:14-18; 4:20,21.

2. Love for those outside of the body of Christ.

   (1) There was no chasm between them and those who were without the church which was too deep and wide for their love to cross.

   (2) Such love led them to do good to all men; and that attitude was responsible for leading many to the body of Christ.

3. Love for their enemies.

   (1) Cf. Matthew 5:44; Luke 23:34

   (2) Cf. Acts 7 - Stephen.

II. A CROSS-BEARING PEOPLE.

1. This was a condition of their discipleship - Luke 9:23.

2. They were out, not only to follow Christ, but to represent Him in their lives.

3. Christianity has been defined as the reproduction of the life of Christ in the human heart - Proverbs 4:23.

4. Cross-bearing is not some certain trouble or burden which may come to saint and sinner alike.

5. Cross-bearing is something additional to that which MUST be borne - something which is taken up voluntarily.

6. It is, therefore, within the power of the Christian to refuse to touch it.

7. We bear our cross when we voluntarily make a sacrifice, or in some way suffer for the good of others.

8. The testimony of the Scriptures regarding this attribute is unmistakable. (Consider Hebrews 11:32-40; Romans 15:4; Acts 4:23-31; 1 Peter 3:13-17).

III. HAPPY WHILE SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

1. The story of Christianity during its early years is the story of suffering.

2. For 300 years the religion of Christ was a persecuted religion in the Roman Empire.

3. The purpose was "to abolish the Christian name from the earth." Cf. Revelation 6:9-11.

4. The Roman Officers, accordingly, invented every conceivable instrument of torture to exterminate the church:

   (1) Dragged by the heels through the streets behind fast horses;
   (2) Laid upon red-hot gridirons;
   (3) Skin was peeled off in strips;
   (4) Sawed into pieces - fingers, toes, and then arms and legs;
   (5) Wrapped in skins, soaked in pitch, and used for torches;
   (6) Left to rot in dungeons;
   (7) Torn apart by lions and hugged to death by bears;
   (8) Wild bulls tossed them upon their horns;
   (9) Boiled alive;
   (10) Every other imaginable manner of death.

5. Yet, Christianity continued to spread throughout the land. It could no more be swept back than the mighty ocean tide.

6. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church!

CONCLUSION:

1. It is interesting to observe that never once do we find a faithful follower of Christ complaining at his lot in life.

2. It mattered not how intense his suffering may have been.

3. Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3.

4. They counted it a joy to suffer for their Lord. Cf. Acts 5:41.