

*A People of the Book*  
*A Topical Study*

A Study of

# The Sermon on the Mount

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## Blessed Are The Poor In Spirit

### Introduction

In Matthew chapters five, six & seven we will find the comprehensive teachings of Jesus to His disciples. Until this point in Matthew's book the words of Jesus have been limited & general in nature. But now Jesus lays out foundational truths concerning His kingdom. This section of Matthew is unusually referred to "The sermon on the mount". The teachings we find here are revolutionary as far as the religious leaders of Jesus' day are concerned; in fact they struck violently against the traditional views of most.

### Matthew 5:1-3

#### 1. Background

- a. **Most Jews expected the Messiah to be a military & political leader**
  - 1) Someone to deliver them from the yoke of Rome
  - 2) Establish a prosperous & powerful Jewish kingdom to lead the world
  - 3) He would be greater than any king, leader or prophet in their history
- b. **Yet Jesus' kingdom is not of this world – Jn.18:36**
  - 1) The thrust of Jesus' teachings were internal not external
  - 2) They also are spiritual & moral rather than physical & political
  - 3) His concern is not about politics or social reform but about the inner man, because what's in ones heart determines what they do.
- c. **The ideals & principles found here to contrary to those found in society**
  - 1) Jesus exalts those who are seen as the lowest in society
  - 2) Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as the greatest yet he had no possessions, no home & lived in the wilderness
- d. **Religious context**
  - 1) **Pharisees** - right religion consists of God's law & religious tradition.
    - a) Primary concern was fastidious observance of Mosaic Law
    - b) Also wanted every minute detail of the traditions to be followed
    - c) Focus = adhering to the laws of the past
  - 2) **Sadducees** – focus was the present
    - a) Religiously they were very liberal & discounted the supernatural
    - b) Easily modified scripture & traditions to fit their philosophy
  - 3) **Essenes** – were ascetics
    - a) Believed that right religion meant separation from society
    - b) Lived in remote barren areas
  - 4) **Zealots** – fanatical nationalists
    - a) Right religion means radical political activism
    - b) Looked down those who would not take up arms against Rome

#### 2. The setting – vs.1,2

- a. **Jesus focused on teaching His disciples not the crowds**
  - 1) Knew He couldn't reach them alone
  - 2) Sought to prepare the disciples to minister to the crowds

**b. Sat down**

- 1) If He taught while standing or walking – considered informal, unofficial
- 2) What was taught while sitting was authoritative & official
- 3) Examples
  - a) Professors hold a chair (honored position)
  - b) Pope makes an official announcement he speaks “ex cathedra” meaning “to speak from his chair”

**3. Blessed are the poor in spirit – vs.3**

**a. Blessed**

- 1) **Means** – happy, fortunate & blissful
- 2) Used to describe the gods; also a wealthy & successful person
- 3) These were not subject to the poverty, weakness & misfortune of most
- 4) The gods were especially blessed because they were not subject to the circumstances & hardships upon earth.
- 5) **Note** – God desires His children to have a state of joy & well being that does not depend upon physical & temporary circumstances  
Phil.4:11-13
- 6) **Blessedness is a characteristic of God** – Ps.68:35; 1 Tim.1:11; 6:15
  - (1) When we partake of Jesus’ nature we also partake of His blessedness
  - (2) Jesus’ teaching is therefore only for believers
  - (3) Others may see the teachings, but they cannot partake of the benefits without partaking of Christ
- 7) This blessedness is not a superficial feeling, but a contentedness that is based on the fact that one is right with God

**b. Sounds paradoxical** – conditions & blessings not seem to match

- 1) To the natural man & the carnal Christian just sounds like misery with another name
- 2) As if Jesus went into the display window of life & changed price tags
  - a) World says – happy are the rich, noble, successful & glamorous
  - b) Remember – Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world, & external things don’t satisfy mans internal needs.
- 3) **Folly of world’s philosophy**
  - a) The acquiring things is what brings happiness, satisfaction & meaning to life (one who dies with most toys wins)
  - b) Solomon’s quest – Eccles.1:2
  - c) Prov.23:4,5
- 4) **Tragedy** – some Christian writers are spreading the same message
  - a) Faithfulness to Jesus guarantees health, wealth & success
  - b) **Truth** – worldly advantages often limit true happiness
    - (1) The things of the world are what generate pride, lust & self-satisfaction
    - (2) Mt.13:22 – deceitfulness of riches chokes out the word
    - c) Col.3:1-4 – seek things above not the things on the earth

- c. **The beatitudes are progressive in nature**
- 1) Not in a random or haphazard order
  - 2) Each builds up on the previous one
4. **The poor in spirit**
- a. **Meaning** – to shrink, cower or cringe as a beggar or a pauper
    - 1) Refers to one who is totally destitute (crouched in a corner begging)
    - 2) Lk.16:20 – beggar Lazarus (ashamed & hiding his face)
    - 3) Not simply poor but begging poor (no resources, means of self-support)
  - b. **Jesus is not teaching the virtues of material poverty**
    - 1) Lk.6:20 – blessed are the poor
    - 2) Jesus is speaking of spiritual poverty not material poverty
    - 3) No believer is condemned for being rich – not to trust in riches  
1 Tim.6:6-17
  - c. **Idea** – to recognize our spiritual poverty apart from God
    - 1) To see oneself as lost, hopeless & helpless
    - 2) **Spiritually destitute** – no matter the education, wealth or social status
    - 3) Realize one is destitute spiritually & completely dependent on God
      - a) No saving resources in themselves – beggars
      - b) Can only beg & plead for God’s mercy & grace
      - c) Have no spiritual merit & can earn no spiritual favor or reward
      - d) All pride & self-assurance are gone & they stand empty handed before God
  - d. **In spirit** – also conveys the idea that this poverty is genuine & not an act
    - 1) True humility – Isa.66:2 contrite spirit & trembles at my word
    - 2) Ps.34:18 – broken-hearted & crushed
    - 3) Greatest barrier to receiving the gospel is pride
  - e. **Religious leaders of Jesus’ day perverted the Law**
    - 1) David knew he needed God’s power to keep God’s Law – Ps.51:1-3
    - 2) Other sought to bring the Law down to a level that was manageable
      - a) Made traditions that were possible to keep in the flesh
      - b) Traditions became known as the Talmud & eventually superseded the Law – Mt.15:1-9
      - c) Traditions involved the outer man, while God’s Law was for the inner man
5. **Why is poor in spirit (humility) first?**
- a. **Basic element to becoming a Christian** – Mt.18:3,4
    - 1) Until a person surrenders their pride they can’t enter the kingdom
      - a) Can’t be filled till we are empty
      - b) Can’t be worthy until recognize our unworthiness
      - c) Can’t live the Christian life with pride
      - d) Jesus can’t be exalted when self is exalted
    - 2) Rev.3:14-18 – totally unacceptable to Jesus
    - 3) See also – Rom.12:3-6; Phil.2:1-4

**b. How does one achieve this humility?**

- 1) **Doesn't start with us** – can't achieve it on our own
  - a) Not involve putting ones self down
  - b) Are already down spiritually – all can do is recognize this truth
  - c) Simply being helpless & hopeless is not a virtue
  - d) Col.2:16-23
- 2) **We need God to help us see how helpless & unworthy we are**
  - a) Focus on Jesus not self (His holiness not our unworthiness)
  - b) Remove & avoid those things that create pride
    - (1) Don't look for praise, be wary of it
    - (2) Evil is in seeking & glorying in these
  - c) Ask God – Ps.51:10 (create in me a new heart)

**c. Knowing when we are poor in spirit**

- 1) **When we lose our pre-occupation with ourselves**
  - a) Having it our way; focused on fulfilling our desires
  - b) Gal.2:20 – no longer I that live
  - c) Phil.1:21 – for me to live is Christ
  - d) Our full satisfaction is in pleasing Jesus
- 2) **We no longer complain about our situation**
  - a) Know we deserve worse so no circumstance is unfair
  - b) When tragedy comes not say – why me Lord?
  - c) Glorify God in the midst of suffering
- 3) **Able to see the strengths & virtues of others**
  - a) Phil.2:3
  - b) Rom.12:10
- 4) **Prayers will focus on spiritual needs** (beggars)
  - a) Come often because we are always in need
  - b) Like Jacob – refuse to let go until we are blessed
- 5) **Will take Jesus on His terms not ours (He is Lord)**
  - a) Not demanding that things be certain ways
  - b) Not try to modify His standards to meet our desires
- 6) **Continually be thankful for God's grace & mercy**
  - a) Finding opportunities to express it
  - b) Heb.13:15,16

**d. The reward for being poor in spirit**

- 1) The kingdom of heaven
- 2) Isa.57:15 – those God dwells with
- 3) Lk.12:32-34 – gladly gives them the kingdom

## Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

### Introduction

All of humanity cries for release, freedom, escape & deliverance from those things that are burdensome to us. When we face great sorrow, disappointments, tragedy or failure we wish that we could escape the trouble like we escape a thunderstorm – by just running inside. However, comfort from life’s troubles doesn’t come to us that easily. In fact, the deeper our sorrow, the heavier our pressure, the deeper our despair, the more elusive the comfort seems to be. As Jesus discusses comfort here, what He says sounds upside down to most, yet what He offers is a real & lasting comfort.

### Matthew 5:4

#### 1. Sounds absurd

- a. **Too most** – the way to happiness is having things go our way.
- b. Pleasure, money, entertainment, fame, praise – these are what brings happiness
- c. Avoiding pain, trouble, disappointments, frustrations, hardships etc brings happiness

#### 2. Understanding Jesus’ thoughts

##### a. Improper mourning

- 1) Frustrations over unfulfilled evil plans & lusts – 2 Sam.13:2  
(Amnon’s grief caused by unfulfilled incestuous lust)
- 2) Carrying legitimate grief to the extreme
  - a) Grieving too long for the loss of a loved one – can’t function
  - b) 2 Sam.18:33-19:4 – David’s grief over Absalom  
(selfish because of guilt – his actions were cause)

##### b. Proper mourning

- 1) Expressing sorrow opens an escape valve on our emotions
  - a) Keeps things from festering & poisoning our emotions
  - b) Provides a way for healing
- 2) Arab proverb – “all sunshine makes a desert”
  - a) A trouble free life is often a shallow life
  - b) We often learn more & mature more from times of trouble than we do when everything is going our way.
- 3) Examples
  - a) Abraham mourned death of Sarah – Gen.23:2
  - b) David experienced loneliness for God – Ps.42:1-3
  - c) Timothy’s defeat & discouragement – 2 Tim.1:3,4
  - d) Jeremiah’s anguish over the sins of Israel – Jer.9:1
  - e) Paul’s concern for the Ephesians – Acts 20:31

##### c. Godly mourning

- 1) **Has nothing to do with the previous two thoughts**
  - a) 2 Cor.7:10,11 – sorrow that produces repentance
  - b) Ties in with “blessed are the poor in spirit”

c) As we realize our spiritual bankruptcy – come to Jesus empty handed & totally destitute pleading for grace & mercy

2) **Spiritual poverty leads us to godly sorrow**

a) Ps.51 – David after he realized his sin

b) Job 42:5,6 - Job after sensing his unworthiness before God

3) **Are nine different words in Greek for sorrow**

a) Jesus uses the strongest, most severe one - One reserved for grieving over the death of a loved one

(1) In Septuagint – Jacob’s grief over death of Joseph

(2) Disciples grief before knew of Jesus’ resurrection

(3) Rev.18:11,15 – world’s grief over Babylon

b) Word carries idea of deep inner agony which is often expressed in outward weeping & wailing

4) **Blessedness does not come with the mourning**

a) Comes with God’s response to that mourning

b) Godly mourning brings God’s forgiveness, which brings God’s happiness – His comfort

d. **World says** – pick up your troubles & smile, smile, smile

1) Hide your troubles (your sins) & pretend to be happy

2) Be optimistic; use positive & possibility thinking

e. **God says** – confess your sin, your cares & mourn

1) When we do our smiles can be genuine

2) Only mourners over sin are the one who are truly happy because only those who mourn over their sin have their sins forgiven

James 4:8-10

3. **The mark of a mature Christian is not sinlessness – it’s growing awareness of sin**

a. Rom.7:15-25 – not a one time experience

b. We experience victory over sin but it’s not a permanent victory

1) 1 Jn.1:8-10 – say have no sin deceive self

2) Christians are characterized by a continual confession of sin

c. **Mourn** = present participle indicating continuous action

(as we continually mourn we are continually comforted)

4. **The results of mourning – will be comforted**

a. Only those who mourn over their sin will find (experience) this comfort

b. **Comforted** = same word uses in Jn.14:16 to describe the Holy Spirit

1) As our mourning rises to God’s throne God’s comfort descends upon us

2) He is always ready to meet our needs – Heb.4:16-18; 2 Cor.1:3

c. This comfort is in the here & now – Mt.11:28

## 5. How do we make such mourning (godly sorrow) a reality?

### a. Remove the hindrances to such mourning

- 1) **Whatever makes us content with ourselves the way we are**
  - a) What makes us resist God's Spirit?
  - b) Whatever makes us question God's word?
  - c) Whatever hardens our heart spiritually – make us insensitive
- 2) **Primary hindrance** - The love of sin
  - a) Holding onto our sin – Ps.68:18
  - b) Refusing to believe that God can & will help = it's hopeless  
Jer.18:11,12
  - c) Believes God has given up on them – destined to sin
- 3) **Conceit – pride**
  - a) Tries to hide, even deny sin
  - b) Believers there is nothing to mourn about
  - c) Recognizes the need for grace, but not much grace – sin is bad, but not bad enough to confess
- 4) **Procrastination**
  - a) One of these days I will – when things get right
  - b) James 4:14 – life a vapor

### c. Focus on God's holiness & Jesus' sacrifice for you

- 1) Contrast His holiness with your sin
- 2) Jesus' sacrifice was for you personally
- 3) See how repulsive sin is to God – how destructive it is to us
- 4) Pray for a contrite heart – Ps.139:23,24

## 6. Measuring our spiritual progress in godly sorrow

### a. Are you sensitive to our sin?

- 1) Do we laugh about it – make light of it?
- 2) Do we enjoy it?
- 3) Mt.6:1-18 – had an appearance of righteousness
- 4) King Saul regretted his sin but was not repentant – excused it

### b. Are we concerned about the harm our sin does to God's glory?

- 1) Rom.2:24 – name blasphemed because of you
- 2) Are we grieved over the sins of fellow believers? – Ps.119:136
- 3) Mt.23:37-39

### c. Are we sensing God's forgiveness?

- 1) Release & freedom from guilt
- 2) A spiritual peace knowing we are right with God

## Blessed Are The Meek

### Introduction

Most people have little trouble acting spiritually proud & self-sufficient. In fact, putting on a pretense of piousness almost comes to them naturally. They expect God to commend them for their goodness & rarely consider the thought that God might be displeased with them. They also expect God to deal with them gently, but harshly with those who might oppose them. Those in Jesus' audience were not much different, in fact perhaps they were worse because they saw themselves as God's chosen people. What Jesus says had to sound strange to them, especially since much of God's word was being neglected & misinterpreted

### Matthew 5:5

#### 1. Religious expectations during the times of Jesus

- a. **Pharisees** – Messiah come with a great fanfare & show of miraculous power
- b. **Zealots** – Messiah come as a powerful military leader – a conqueror
- c. **All** - expected that He would throw off the yoke of Roman bondage & rule the world from Jerusalem.
  - 1) Few if any expected Him to come meekly & gently
  - 2) They understood military & miraculous power, but not meekness
  - 3) Perhaps this is one of the reasons so many rejected Jesus
    - a) Instead of approving their religion He condemned it
    - b) Instead of leading them to independence from Rome, He despised revolution
    - c) Instead of leading them to dominance, He taught them an even greater concept of subservience.
- d. **To most** – final evidence that proved Jesus wasn't Messiah was His crucifixion
  - 1) Deut.21:23 – all hung on tree were accursed of God
  - 2) Mt.27:42,43 – mocked Him showing God not pleased with Him
  - 3) 1 Cor.1:23 – foolishness to the gentiles
- e. **Besides great causes are fought by the proud not the humble**
  - 1) You don't win victories with poverty & mourning
  - 2) Meekness will not topple a tyrant – it takes might

#### 2. The concept of meekness

- a. **Root word means** - mild or soft; gentleness
  - 1) Word used to describe a soothing medicine or a soft breeze
  - 2) Used of animals with wild spirits being broken & made useful
  - 3) **In humans** - the idea was having a gentle & quiet spirit; a submissive & tenderhearted attitude.
- b. **Difference between poor in spirit & meekness**
  - 1) **As we look honestly at self** – made humble by seeing our sinfulness & unworthiness before God
  - 2) **As we look at God** – humbled as see His righteousness & worthiness

c. **Logical sequence**

- 1) Poor in spirit **is negative** & results in mourning – turn away from self
- 2) Meekness **is positive** & results in seeking His righteousness – turn toward God & seek His righteousness
- 3) Blessedness comes to those who are realistic about their sinfulness & repent & respond to God. The proud are unblessed – shut off from God's kingdom & happiness

d. **Natural man** – concerned about self

- 1) Defending his rights; justifying his ways – serving his needs
- 2) Godly man is concerned about God's ways & God's righteousness

3. **Meekness does not imply or suggest weakness**

a. **Idea is** – power or strength under control

b. **Person without meekness**

- 1) Prov.25:28 – like a city whose walls are broken down
- 2) Prov.16:32 – better is a patient man (controls his temper) than a warrior
- 3) An unbroken animal is useless; medicine that is too strong harms; a wind out of control destroys
- 4) Emotions that are out of control also destroy – James 1:19-21

c. **Meek people use their resources appropriately**

- 1) Jesus defended the glory of His Father but sacrificed Himself for others
  - a) Two different times He drove people from God's temple
  - b) He did not resist slander or repay injustice – 1 Pet.2:21-23
- 2) Jesus refused to use natural or supernatural power to defend Himself
  - a) Mt.26:53 – 12 legions of angels at His disposal
  - b) **Point** - Meekness does not use it's power for it's own defense or selfish purposes – meekness is power completely surrendered to God's control

4. **Examples of meekness**

a. **Abraham** – Gen.13:5-7

- 1) Gave Lot 1<sup>st</sup> choice
- 2) **By rights** Abraham was logical one to choose – Lot was a tag along, an in-law who was largely dependent on Abraham
- 3) **Abraham willingly gave up his rights** for the sake of his nephew & the harmony of their families (witness to Canaanites & Perizzites)

b. **Joseph**

- 1) **In a position to take vengeance** on his abusive brothers
- 2) Had only love & forgiveness for them – Gen.45:1-8; 50:19,20
- 3) He understood that it was God's place to judge & his place to forgive

c. **Moses** – Num.12:3

- 1) He vented his anger on those who harmed his people & rebelled against God
- 2) Did not vent his anger on those who abused him or demanded personal rights & privileges

d. **David**

- 1) 1 Sam.24:5,6 – refused to hurt the Lord's anointed
- 2) 2 Sam.16:5-12 – not harm member of Saul's family who cursed him

e. **Jesus** – 1 Pet.2:21-24

- 1) Left us an example to follow
- 2) Completely innocent yet endured the insults – not retaliate or threaten
- 3) Entrusted Himself fully to God's justice
- 4) Willingly bore our sins so we might die to sin & live for righteousness  
(His wounds bring us spiritual healing – were like straying sheep)
- 5) **Apply**
  - a) **Never a reason to be unforgiving** = natural man
  - b) Mt.18:35 – forgive freely
  - c) Mk.11:25 – don't hold anything against another
  - d) Eph.4:26,27 – don't allow Satan a foothold

5. **The results of meekness**

a. **Blessedness** – joy & gladness of God fills heart

b. **Inherit the earth**

- 1) **Means** – receiving one's allotted position; rightful inheritance
- 2) One day God's rule will be evident – Phil.2:8-10
  - a) We will reign with Him over God's kingdom
  - b) 1 Cor.6:9 – unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom
- 3) Till then we are to live in faith & hope – because we belong to Jesus  
our place in God's kingdom is secure
- 4) **Physical or spiritual** – Jn.18:36 = His kingdom is not of this world

## **Blessed Are Those Who Hunger & Thirst**

### **Introduction**

Our Declaration of Independence states that we citizens have the right to pursue happiness. The founding fathers did not presume to guarantee that all who pursue happiness would find it, because that would be beyond the power of any government to provide. Although we are free to pursue whatever type of happiness we desire within the bounds of the law, most throughout the ages have chosen to pursue the wrong kind of happiness & have ended up empty handed. Jesus offers a pursuit of happiness that ends in complete satisfaction.

### **Matthew 5:6**

#### **1. To hunger & thirst**

- a. **Speaks of** - a strong desire; a driving pursuit; a passionate force
  - 1) To have a starving spirit; a parched & dying thirst
  - 2) Continuous craving for righteousness
- b. **This hunger & thirst is continuous**
  - 1) Not just for some righteousness but all righteousness
  - 2) **Greek verbs**
    - a) Are usually in genitive case = sometimes feels hunger & thirst (want an apple or a glass of water)
    - b) These are in the accusative case = hunger for whole thing; all is (desires all the righteousness there is)
- c. **Present participle** – continuous longing & seeking
  - 1) Most want just bits & pieces – enough to make them feel comfortable
  - 2) Blessed ones are those who continually hunger & thirst

#### **2. Righteousness**

- a. **Means to both be & do right**
  - 1) **Fully seen in Jesus** – He did nothing but good – Heb.4:14-16
  - 2) God has given to man more than His word to describe righteousness, He has given man His Son to show him what righteousness is really all about – to demonstrate it fully.
- b. **Man has no righteousness of his own**
  - 1) **Rom.3:10-19**
  - 2) There are none who do good but God
  - 3) All man can do is seek God's righteousness – be imputed to him  
2 Cor.5:21
- c. **Must strive to both be & do righteous**
  - 1) Problems when we seek to be righteous & not do righteousness
    - a) False security = thinking belief alone saves – James 2:14-26
    - b) Think can live any way want & not affect salvation

- 2) Problems when we seek to do righteousness & not be righteous
  - a) Self-righteous legalism – trusting works & deeds make one right
  - b) Become judgmental & critical

### 3. Placement of the beatitude

- a. When one realizes how spiritually bankrupt they are & see their sin they mourn & lament & turn from their sin.
- b. As one meekly submits to God's love & power they begin to hunger & thirst to be like God & with God & replace their sin with His righteousness.
- c. Jews greatest obstacle to accepting the gospel was their self-righteousness
  - 1) Rom.10:1-3
  - 2) Were confident in their own purity & holiness
  - 3) Were God's chosen & thought heaven was assured

### 4. We never arrive spiritually speaking

- a. When 1<sup>st</sup> accept Jesus – given righteousness – 2 Cor.5:21
- b. Never stop needing to hunger & thirst for righteousness – Phil.1:9,10

### 5. Filled

- a. Word used of animals feeding until they wanted no more – completely satisfied
- b. Are given total satisfaction
- c. As we continually seek – always wanting & never satisfied – God satisfies  
Ps.23:1,5; 34:10; 107:9; Jn.4:14; 6:35

### 6. Marks of genuine hunger & thirst

- a. **Dissatisfaction with self**
  - 1) Rom.7:24 – O wretched man that I am
  - 2) One satisfied with self has no need of God
- b. **Not seeking things to bring one satisfaction**
  - 1) Only more of God will satisfy them
  - 2) 2 Cor.4:16-18
- c. **Continual craving for the word of God**
  - 1) A hungry man doesn't have to be begged to eat
  - 2) Jer.15:16
- d. **Willingness to fully accept God's will**
  - 1) Jesus in the garden = not my will but yours
  - 2) Even God's reproofs & disciplines – Heb.12:6
- e. **Places no conditions upon God**
  - 1) God given a free hand to provide it as He chooses
  - 2) Willingly obeys His commands no matter how demanding they may be
  - 3) Rich man wanted the kingdom on his terms – part that fit his plans
  - 4) The spiritually hungry don't ask for economic success; personal satisfaction; popularity or anything else. They want only what God in His wisdom provides.

## Blessed Are The Merciful

### Introduction

The previous beatitudes have dealt with inner attitudes of the heart & the mind; being concerned with the way that we see ourselves before God. As our study continues, we will see that the next four beatitudes are manifestations of those inner attitudes. The first of these four mercy, is a desperately needed gift from God to sinful man & the Lord is requiring His people to follow His example by extending mercy to others.

### Matthew 5:7

#### 1. Seeking to understand mercy

##### a. Common misunderstanding of the beatitude

- 1) **Our being merciful** - causes others to be merciful toward us
  - a) Mercy given will mean mercy received
  - b) Such thinking is self-seeking & humanistic
- 2) **With God there is reciprocation with interest**
  - a) Honor God & He honors us
  - b) Show mercy & He shows us even more mercy
- 3) **However, the ways of God are not the ways of man**
  - a) **Romans** – mercy was a disease of the soul
    - (1) A supreme sign of weakness
    - (2) A sign you did not have what it took to be a real man
    - (3) They glorified courage, strict firm discipline & justice
    - (4) Saw mercy as weakness & they despised weakness
    - (5) Roman way of life
      - (a) Father had right to kill his newborn child  
(say is awful – today woman has that right)
      - (b) Citizens had same power over slaves
      - (c) Husbands had right to kill wife
  - b) **Best illustration of this is way Jesus was treated**
    - (1) He was the most merciful man that ever lived
      - (a) Healed & accepted everyone
      - (b) Extended His graciousness to all
    - (2) How was He treated?
      - (a) More mercy He showed – more wanted kill Him
      - (b) Ultimate outcome was the cross
  - c) **Mercy is not a natural characteristic of the proud, the self righteous or the judgmental**
    - (1) To most - mercy is the least of the virtues
    - (2) Is in the same category as love – reserved for those who have shown love to you
- 4) **Note – this beatitude does not teach** – showing mercy to others brings their mercy to us
  - a) **Point** - Our showing mercy to others - brings God's mercy to us

- b) God will be merciful to us whether men are or not
- c) As in the previous beatitudes God is the giver of the blessing

#### b. Meaning of the term

- 1) **To be beneficial or charitable; to give help to the afflicted**
  - a) **It is compassion in action**
  - b) **Greek OT** – mercy, love, loving kindness & steadfast love
- 2) **Not mean** - detached or powerless sentiment
  - a) Sentiment that is unwilling or powerless to help
  - b) Pity that gives help only to soothe the conscience
  - c) Pity that helps to impress others with their virtue
  - d) It is not passive or silent concern
- 3) **It is genuine compassion - expressed in genuine help**
  - a) It is meeting people's needs
  - b) Not merely feeling compassion but showing it
  - c) Not just sympathizing, but giving a helping hand
  - d) It is giving food to the hungry; comfort to the bereaved; love to the rejected; forgiveness to the offender & companionship to the lonely

#### c. Comparisons

- 1) **Mercy & forgiveness**
  - a) God's forgiveness flows from His mercy – Titus 3:5
  - b) Yet God is merciful even when we don't sin
    - (1) He also reaches out to our weaknesses & our needs
    - (2) Lam.3:22 – His mercies never cease
- 2) **Mercy & love**
  - a) God's mercy flows out of His love – Eph.2:4,5
  - b) Yet love manifests itself many ways that do not involve forgiveness or mercy
    - (1) Mercy acts because of affliction; love acts out of affection whether there is a need or not
    - (2) Mercy is reserved for times of trouble – love is constant
  - c) There is no true mercy apart from love, but there can be true love apart from mercy
- 3) **Mercy & grace**
  - a) Mercy & it's related terms have to do with pain, misery, distress & the consequences of sin
    - (1) Mercy led Abraham to rescue Lot
    - (2) Mercy led Joseph to forgive his brothers
    - (3) Mercy led Moses to plead for Miriam
  - b) Unlike mercy - Grace deals with sin not its consequences
    - (1) Mercy offers relief from punishment, eliminates pain
    - (2) Grace offers pardon – cures the source (sin)

#### 4) Mercy & justice

- a) These seem incompatible
  - (1) Justice gives what is deserved while mercy gives less punishment yet more help than is deserved
  - (2) Therefore many can't understand how God can be both just & merciful at the same time
- b) **Truth** - God does not show mercy without punishing sin
  - (1) To ignore sin would be unjust
    - (a) What Saul did with king Agag – 1 Sam.15:3,9
    - (b) What David did with Absalom
  - (2) In every true act of mercy someone pays the price
    - (a) God paid sins price with His Son
    - (b) Samaritan paid the price for the inn – Lk.10
- c) Sadly, today many think it is unloving & unkind, even unmerciful to hold people responsible for their sins
  - (1) Yet that is cheap grace & is not merciful
  - (2) It offers only a band-aid not a solution – left in their sin
  - (3) God doesn't wink at justice & gloss over sin or compromise His righteousness
    - (a) He offers nothing but merciless judgment to those who refuse to repent
    - (b) Those who will not come to God on His terms have no claim to His mercy

#### 2. The importance of mercy

- a. Rom.1:28-31 – description of godless men
- b. Mt.25:41-45 – no mercy means not enter kingdom of God
- c. James 2:12,13 - judgment without mercy for those with no mercy
- d. Mt.18:21-35 – no mercy extended if we are unmerciful

#### 3. Practicing mercy

##### a. Physical activities

- 1) feed hungry etc. & give practical help that is needed
- 2) Gal.6:9,10

##### b. In our attitudes

- 1) Not holding a grudge or harboring resentment
- 2) Not capitalizing on another's failure or weakness
- 3) Not publicizing another's sin (gossip)

##### c. Spiritually

- 1) Grieving over lost souls & spreading the gospel
- 2) Confronting sin – Gal.6:1,2; 2 Tim.2:24,25; Titus 1:11,13
- 3) Praying for the lost & for straying Christians

#### 4. The result of practicing mercy – God will extend to us His mercy

## Blessed Are The Pure In Heart

### Introduction

As we examine this text we need to realize that the nation of Israel is in desperate circumstances politically, economically & spiritually. For centuries they have been oppressed by foreign conquerors & have had limited freedom to develop economically because of the taxes imposed upon them by Rome. However, their spiritual problem was less obvious & yet it was by far the worst of their problems. Jesus did not come to address their economic or political problems, but instead, to address their spiritual ones – their spiritual weaknesses & faithlessness.

### Matthew 5:8

#### 1. The struggle for answers

- a. At the time of Jesus, the most influential religious force was the Pharisees
  - 1) Their legalistic & ritualistic system dominated Jewish society
  - 2) Over the centuries rabbis interpretations of the scriptures had become known as the “traditions of the elders”
    - a) These had become as authoritative, or even more so as scripture
    - b) Basically a list of do’s & don’ts that covered every aspect of life
- b. To the contentious & honest, it was obvious – impossible to keep perfectly
  - 1) Some developed terrible feelings of guilt, frustration & worry
  - 2) Religion was their life & they couldn’t meet it’s demands
- c. Thus some leaders taught - one could keep a few laws – God would understand
  - 1) Mt.22:36 – what is the greatest command
  - 2) Of hundreds – what’s the most important to God?
  - 3) Many were searching
    - a) Jn.3:2 – Nicodemus
    - b) Jn.6:28 – what do to do the works of God?
    - c) Lk.10:25 – lawyer asks – “what shall I do to inherit eternal life”
    - d) Lk.18:19 – rich young ruler
- d. Jesus’ answer – blessed are the pure in heart

#### 2. Understanding the thought

- a. **Blessed** – implies a condition of well being – status of one right with God
- b. **Heart** - represents the inner person
  - 1) Refers to the center of our personality
  - 2) The source of our motives & attitudes
  - 3) **More than emotion & feelings** – includes the thinking process too
    - a) Prov.23:7 – as man thinks in his heart so is he
    - b) Mt.9:4 – why are you thinking evil in your hearts
    - c) The control center of the mind as well as the emotions
    - d) Scripture
      - (1) Ps.51:6 – desire truth in innermost being
      - (2) Mt.15:19 – evil deeds begin in the heart

- c. **Pure** – to make pure by cleansing from dirt, filth & contamination
- 1) **Form of the word from which we get English word “catharsis”**
    - a) Term used in psychology & counseling
    - b) Idea is the cleansing of the mind or the emotions
  - 2) **Also related to the Latin word “castus”**
    - a) Root of English word “chaste”
    - b) To chasten – refers to disciplines to cleans from wrong behavior
  - 3) **Greek term often used to refer to the refining of metals**
    - a) Removing all the impurities
    - b) **Idea** = unmixed, unadulterated
  - 4) **Applied to the heart**
    - a) **Idea** - pure motives; single-mindedness & undivided devotion
    - b) Spiritual integrity & true righteousness
    - c) Double mindedness has always plagued mankind
      - (1) Want to serve God & follow world at same time
      - (2) Mt.6:24 – impossible to do
      - (3) James 4:4 – friendship with world = God’s enemy
      - (4) **Answer** – James 4:8 – purify heart
- d. **In contrast to superficial religion of the day**
- 1) **At very core of man’s being - God requires purity**
    - a) **Not a new truth**
      - (1) Prov.4:23 – out of heart are all issues of life
      - (2) Gen.6:5 – reason for flood was a heart problem
    - b) 1 Sam.10:9 – God changed Saul’s heart so he could rule
      - (1) 1 Sam.16:7 – Saul’s heart rebelled
      - (2) Ps.78:72 – David ruled according to integrity of heart
  - 2) **Our deepest desire should be to be pure in heart**
    - a) **David**
      - (1) 1 Sam.13:14 – David was a man after God’s heart
      - (2) Ps.19:14 – David’s deepest desire (heart be acceptable)
    - b) Even though we may often fail
      - (1) Rom.7:15,21,25 – with mind serve God
      - (2) Deepest desire is purity – flesh sometimes overrides
- e. **Purity of heart is more than sincerity**
- 1) **Motives can be sincere & lead to sinful & worthless things**
    - a) 1 Kings 18:28 - Baal prophets lacerated bodies
    - b) Sincere devotees may do all kinds of things to show piety
      - (1) Walk on nails to prove spiritual power
      - (2) Crawl on knees for 100’s of yards
      - (3) Col.2:16-23 - Still wrong & worthless before God
  - 2) **Scribes & Pharisees were meticulous – yet wrong**
    - a) Mt.23:23 – tithed seeds
    - b) Mt.23:25,26 - Cared for the outward & no concern for the inner

### 3. God's standard for purity – Himself

- a. Mt.5:48 – be perfect as heavenly Father is perfect
- b. **Man's tendency** – set opposite standard
  - 1) Judge self by worst standard rather than the best
  - 2) Lk.18:11 – thank God not like rest of men
- c. **Other scriptures**
  - 1) Ps.15:1-5 – clean hands & pure heart
  - 2) Ps.24:3-6 – How we are to seek God
  - 3) Isa.59:1,2 – impurity separates man from God

### 4. Achieving purity of heart

- a. **Can't be done outside of Christ**
  - 1) Gal.2:15,16 – no one justified by observing the law
  - 2) 2 Cor.5:21 – made sin so we can be righteous in Him
- b. **Our responsibility**
  - 1) 2 Cor.7:1 – cleans ourselves from all that defiles
  - 2) 1 Pet.1:14-16 – be holy in all that you do
- c. **Misconceptions about achieving purity of heart**
  - 1) **Living like a monk – in a monastery**
    - a) Getting away from cares & distraction of the world
    - b) Devoting oneself to meditation & prayer
  - 2) **Second working of grace**
    - a) God miraculously eradicates sin & our sin nature
    - b) Live a sinless earthly life from that point on
  - 3) **Reality** – the problem of sin is not the world around us, but its the worldliness that is within us
- d. **Practical suggestions**
  - 1) **Realize that we are unable to live even a single holy moment without God's guidance & power**
    - a) Prov.20:9 – who can say I have cleansed my heart
    - b) Jer.13:23 – can't change skin color or leopard it's spots
    - c) Begins with recognition of our weakness & His strength
  - 2) **Stay in God's word** - Jn.15:3
  - 3) **Walk in the Spirit** - Gal.5:15 (Rom.8:12-14)
  - 4) **Prayer** - Ps.51:10
  - 5) **Signs of an impure heart**
    - a) Self-centeredness – Rev.3:17
    - b. Finding pleasure in sin – 2 Tim.3:4

### 5. The result of having a pure heart – they shall see God

- a. **Greek tense** = future indicative (in the middle voice)
  - 1) **Literally** – they shall continuously see God for themselves
  - 2) Idea is see God now, not just in eternity
- b. **Sadly many Christians don't see God in their lives**
  - 1) Never see a reason to acknowledge His working in them (Phil.2:12,13)
  - 2) Sin obscures truth – Jn.3:19-21 (what done has been done through God)

## Blessed Are The Peacemakers

### Introduction

Peace, that cherished but often-elusive reality is a dominant theme throughout scripture. There are over 400 direct references to peace in scripture, with many more indirect references. Scripture opens with peace in the garden & closes with peace in eternity. Sin interrupted this peace, but Jesus at the cross, brought the reality of peace to all who would place their faith in Him. Peace can now reign in the hearts of men & someday God's ultimate eternal peace will be a reality as we live in His presence.

### Matthew 5:9

#### 1. Opening thoughts

##### a. Peace does not characterize man's earthly existence

- 1) This reality prompted someone to suggest, "Peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload".
- 2) In 1968 a major newspaper reported that to that date there were 14,553 known wars since 36 BC
  - a) Since 1945 there have been more than 70 wars & nearly 200 internationally significant outbreaks of violence
  - b) Since 1958 over 100 nations have been involved in some form of armed conflict
- 3) Some historians say that the United States has had 2 generations of peace in her entire history
  - a) From 1815 – 1846 & 1865 – 1898
  - b) However that claim can only be made if you exclude the wars with the American Indian tribes

b. **Fact** – in spite of all the concerted effort man puts into having & maintaining peace, few would claim that there is any more peace upon earth than there was a hundred years ago.

- 1) **Two reasons stand out** – the opposition of Satan to God & the disobedience of man to God's authority.
- 2) **Another reason** – the world only honors peace with words – lip service
  - a) In every age their greatest heroes are warriors
  - b) Man always honors the powerful & exalts the destructive
    - (1) Model for manhood is not meekness – it's being macho
    - (2) Heroes are not the self-giving & generous – they are the self-seeking & the selfish
    - (3) Heroes are not the gentle, but instead are the aggressive & the proud - they are not the meek & submissive but instead are the cruel
- 3) **Popular philosophy of the world today is to put self first**
  - a) When self is first – peace is always last
  - b) James 3:13-16 – focus on self generates strife, division, hatred, resentment & war

- c. **Another fact** – the peace, which Jesus speaks about, is not like the peace that the world knows & strives to achieve.
- 1) God's peace has nothing to do with arbitration, compromise or even negotiated treaties
  - 2) The peace of which the Bible speaks never evades the issues, glosses over or hides the truth.
    - a) It also never rationalizes or excuses wrong behavior
    - b) It confronts problems & seeks to resolve them
    - c) Then it seeks to build bridges between those separated after their problems have been resolved.
  - 3) God's peace often brings with it - struggling, pain, hardship & anguish, these are often the price of healing.

## 2. The meaning of peace

### a. Peace is more than the absence of strife & conflict

- 1) Men can stop fighting & still not have peace
    - a) What man often calls peace is simply the cessation of hostility
    - b) Until disagreements & hatreds are resolved, conflicts simply go underground & fester - waiting to break out again
  - 2) God's peace not only stops the hostilities, but settles the issue so the parties can truly come together in love & harmony.
    - a) To accomplish this - righteousness must be a part of peace
    - b) Men cannot live together peacefully without righteousness
    - c) Righteousness not only ends the harm, but administers the healing of love
    - d) Thus peace is a creative aggressive force for goodness
  - 3) James 3:17 – wisdom from above = 1<sup>st</sup> pure then peaceful
  - 4) Heb.12:14 – pursue peace & holiness
  - 5) Trying to bring harmony to a situation while compromising truth & righteousness ends up destroying peace
- b. Matt.10:34 – do not think that I came to bring peace on earth
- 1) The peace Jesus brings is not peace at any price
    - a) His peace brings opposition before it brings harmony
    - b) The world always opposes God's truth & righteousness
  - 2) Whenever truth exposes falsehood there is always strife
    - a) Until unrighteousness is changed to righteousness there will never be godly peace
    - b) Righteousness & truth will always produce antagonism before they produce harmony
      - 1) The gospel must convict before it brings salvation
      - 2) Like a surgeons scalpel - it must first cut before there is healing

**c. The great enemy of peace is sin**

- 1) **Sin separates & brings disharmony** – between both God & man
  - a) Man's disharmony with God causes him to have disharmony with others
  - b) The world is filled with strife because it is filled with sin
  - c) Peace cannot reign where sin reigns
- 2) **To speak of peace without repentance from sin is sheer foolishness**
  - a) Jer.8:4-12
  - b) Isa.48:22 – there is no peace for the wicked
- 3) **To be a peacemaker one must be willing to confront sin**
  - a) Peaceful relationships will not happen until sin is dealt with
  - b) Jesus never hesitated to confront sin & false ideas
  - c) If we are unwilling to disturb & disrupt we cannot be God's peacemakers
  - d) To come to terms on anything less than God's truth & righteousness only confirms sinners in their sin & leaves them further from the kingdom than they were before.
  - e) God's peacemaker does not just let sleeping dogs lie if it is opposed to God's truth just to maintain the status quo

**3. Characteristics of a peacemaker – 2 Cor.5:18-21**

**a. Must 1<sup>st</sup> be one who has personally made peace with God**

**1) Outside Christ**

- a) Col.1:21 – alienated & enemies of God
- b) Eph.2:1-3 – deserving of God's wrath
- c) Rom.5:10 – were God's enemies

**2) Are reconciled to God through the blood of Christ**

- a) Rom.5:10
- b) Must continually be cleansed by our fellowship with Him  
1 Jn.1:7

**b. Continually seeks to help others make peace with God**

**1) 2 Cor.5:19 – committed to us the message of reconciliation**

- a) God is calling everyone through us
- b) Mt.28:18-20

**2) Church is not an elite group of those who have spiritually arrived**

- a) Are cleansed sinners commissioned to carry a message of hope
- b) **Pharisees** – embodiment of what peacemakers are not
  - (1) Smug, proud & complacent
  - (2) Determined to have their way – defend their rights
  - (3) Cooperated only when it was to their advantage

**c. Seeks to help others make peace with others**

**1) Starts by first building bridges with others themselves**

- a) Mt.5:22-24 – willingly goes 1<sup>st</sup> to make amends (duty)
- b) Rom.12:18 – willingly seeks to live at peace

- 2) **Willingly confronts sin** – Mt.18:15-17
  - a) Accepts the fact that this will stir up controversy & resentment
  - b) Sin that is not dealt with only destroys real peace
  - c) Mt.5:29,30 – any price is worth it to be rid of sin
  - d) Col.1:19,20 – God made peace with man through the cross

- 3) **Sadly peacemakers are often accused of being troublemakers**

- a) 1 Kings 18:17 – Ahab accused Elijah
- b) Lk.23:2,5 – Jewish leaders accused Jesus

- d. **Peacemakers are always endeavoring to find a point of agreement**

- 1) Never willingly compromises or weakens truth & righteousness
- 2) Yet no one is so wicked or ungodly that there is no point of agreement
  - a) Seeks to contend without being contentious
  - b) Eph.4:15 – speaks the truth in love
  - c) 2 Tim.2:24-26 – not quarrel
- 3) Starts with whatever peaceful point of agreement they can find
  - a) Willingly gives the other the benefit of the doubt
  - b) Never assumes they will resist God's truth
  - c) When met with opposition– tries to be patient

## Blessed Are The Persecuted

### Introduction

An interesting study was done about things that make people happy. What was found, was that happy people enjoy other people but are not self-sacrificing. Happy people also refuse to participate in any negative feelings or emotions & have a sense of accomplishment that is based upon their own self-sufficiency. This type of thinking clashes with the words of Jesus, especially when He says, “Blessed are the persecuted”.

### Matthew 5:10-12

#### 1. Godliness generates hostility – holy people will pay a price

##### a. Scripture

- 1) Matt.10:22 – all men will hate you because of Me
- 2) Jn.15:20 – if they persecuted Me they will persecute you
- 3) Acts 14:22 – must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom
- 4) Phil.1:29,30 – granted not only to believe, but to suffer
- 5) 1 Thess.3:4 – kept telling you we would be persecuted
- 6) 2 Tim.3:12 – all who strive to live godly will suffer persecution

##### b. Reasons this is true

- 1) Jn.3:17-21 – because man’s deeds are evil
- 2) Jn.7:7 – Jesus exposes that what man does is evil
- 3) Jn.15:18 – we no longer belong to the world – are God’s chosen
- 4) 1 Jn.3:11-13 – because world’s actions are evil & ours are righteous

##### c. Has always been the reality – will always be the reality

- 1) Gal.4:29 – born of flesh persecuted one born of the promise
- 2) Cain hated Abel because his works were righteous
- 3) Moses suffered for choosing his people – Heb.11:26
- 4) To live for Jesus is to live in opposition to Satan
- 5) If never experience ridicule, criticism or rejection – reason to question your faithfulness to Jesus

##### d. The way to avoid persecution – live like the world

- 1) Mimic the world’s standards – “live & let live”
- 2) Never criticize wrong actions or activities
- 3) Keep quiet about the gospel
- 4) Be ashamed to take a stand for Jesus
- 5) Go along – laugh at the world’s jokes; enjoy its entertainment; smile as it mocks God & uses His name in vain
- 6) Willingly compromise God’s truth – renounce Jesus as Lord

##### e. When = whenever

- 1) Will not be constant opposition or ridicule
  - a) Jesus was not continually opposed
  - b) There were times of peace & popularity
- 2) Not all believers will suffer at the same time or in same way
- 3) We are not to seek out persecution but be willing to endure it

## 2. Types of persecution

### a. Physical

- 1) **Persecute** – basic meaning is chasing or driving away or pursuing
- 2) Came to mean harassment, abuse & other unjust treatment

### b. Verbal

- 1) **Insult** = reviling, upbraiding or serious insulting
- 2) **Say all kinds of evil** = to throw abusive words into the face of an opponent; to vigorously mock someone

### c. False accusations

- 1) Refers to things said behind your back
- 2) Harder to defend against because it has time to spread & be believed.  
Therefore much harm is done even before we are aware of it.

### d. On account of Me; for the sake of righteousness

- 1) Not all persecution is blessed – bring some of it upon ourselves
  - a) Selfish or prideful actions
  - b) Opposition to change
- 2) Blessed persecution is because of our faithfulness to Jesus

## 3. Attitude God wants us to have toward persecution

### a. Willingness to accept & expect persecution

- 1) James 1:2-4 – joyfully
- 2) Phil.4:4-8 – without worry or frustration
- 3) Heb.12:7 - as disciplines to help us mature

### b. Problem church is facing – tempted with self-glorification & recognition

- 1) Want the world to accept us – legitimize us
  - a) To get them to stop opposing us
  - b) Want to make the gospel more appealing
- 2) Willing to use the ways of the world to make us more appealing
- 3) Must always remember – when the world is pleased with us – God isn't

### c. Attitude – rejoice – (literally – to skip & jump with excitement)

## 4. The promise – great is your reward

### a. Now – Mk.10:29,30

- 1) **Joseph** – made 2<sup>nd</sup> in command
- 2) **Daniel** – most valued commissioner of king Darius
- 3) **Yet not every believer is physically rewarded in this life**
  - a) Missionaries that were killed
  - b) Stephen & others who were martyred
  - c) All are rewarded with God's strength; comfort & joy & the assurance that no service or sacrifice for Jesus is ever in vain – 1 Cor.15:58

### b. Eternally

- 1) Regardless of what the world might do – they can never take away our eternal reward
- 2) Mt.6:19-21 – moth & rust can't corrupt & thieves can't steal

## Salt Of The Earth & Light Of The World

### Introduction

In these next four verses Jesus summarizes the function of believers. If we were to reduce them to one word it would be the word “influence”. Whenever we live according to what Jesus teaches in the beatitudes we are going to function as salt & light in the world. Christian character affects those around them & whenever we fully live as Christians we will have an effect on the world around us.

### Matthew 5:13-16

#### 1. This world is both corrupt & dark

- a. **Comment from John MacArthur’s commentary** – “Many philosophers, poets, and religious leaders at the end of the last century had great optimism about man’s having come of age, about his inevitable moral and social improvement. They believed that Utopia was around the corner and that man was getting better and better in every way. The golden age of mankind was near. Wars would be a bad memory, crime and violence would disappear, ignorance would be gone, and disease would be eradicated. Peace and brotherhood would reign completely and universally. Few people today hold to such blind, unrealistic ideas”.

b. **Scripture says the world is corrupt & decaying**

- 1) Gen.6:5 – every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was evil
- 2) Gen.8:21 – from childhood his thoughts are evil
- 3) Lk.11:24 – when evil goes out it returns again
- 4) Jn.3:17-21 – man hates light because deeds are evil
- 5) Jn.7:7 – hate Jesus because He speaks that what they do is evil
- 6) Rom.1:28 - filled with every kind of wickedness
- 7) Eph.2:1-3 – outside Christ are following the ways of Satan
- 8) Col.1:21-23 – enemies of God because of evil thoughts
- 9) 2 Tim.3:13 – evil men will go from bad to worse
- 10) James 1:13,14 – tempted because of evil desires within
- 11) James 1:21 – evil that is so prevalent
- 12) 2 Pet.1:4 - corruption in the world caused by evil desires
- 13) 1 Jn.5:19 – whole world under the control of the evil one

c. **Reality – world can’t do anything but get worse**

1) **No inherent goodness in man**

- a) Rom.3:10-21 – none that do good
- b) Rom.7:14 – sold as a slave to sin
- c) He is infected with a deadly virus called sin

2) **Over the years man has greatly increased in knowledge**

- a) In many areas – scientific; medical, technological etc.
- b) Yet man is unable to change his basic nature & improve society
- c) Man’s knowledge has greatly improved, but his morals have progressively degenerated.

- d) Though his confidence has increased
- (1) His peace of mind has diminished.
  - (2) His sense of purpose & meaning have disappeared
  - (3) Instead of improving the moral and spiritual quality of his life, man's discoveries and accomplishments have simply provided ways for him to express and promote his depravity faster and more destructively.
  - (4) Modern man has simply invented more ways to corrupt and destroy himself.
  - (5) 2 Tim.3:7 – ever learning but never understand truth

**d. The only cure for man is God**

- 1) Jn.3:17-21 – man rejects this
- 2) Quote from MacArthur's commentary  
 “Bertrand Russell devoted most of his 96 years to the study of philosophy. Yet at the end of his life he acknowledged that philosophy proved to be a washout, and had taken him nowhere. Nothing he had thought or had heard that other philosophers had thought had changed the world for the better. He felt that the basic causes of man's problems, not to mention the solutions, had evaded the best minds of every age including his own.
- 3) Another interesting thought  
 “Some scientists have proposed that by surgery or careful electronic stimulation of the brain, a person's bad impulses can be eradicated, leaving only the better part of his nature. Others propose that the ideal, crime-free, problem-free person will be developed by genetic engineering. But every part of every man is corrupt. He has no inherent, naturally good traits that can be isolated from the bad. His total nature is depraved.”

**2. We are the world's only hope – it's salt & light**

- a. “**You**” – emphatic & plural = you (church) are the only salt, only light
- b. **The ones the world persecutes & rejects are it's only hope**
  - 1) Jn.14:6 – Jesus is the only way
  - 2) Sodom & Gomorrah would be saved by 10 righteous souls
- c. “**Are**” – emphasis is on “being” rather than doing
  - 1) Stating a fact not giving a command
  - 2) Salt & light is what we are – the only question is whether or not we are effective
  - 3) Jesus uses us to accomplish His work – Eph.2:10

**d. Some of the ideas of being the Salt**

- 1) **Salt is white & therefore represents purity**
  - a) Our purity is in stark contrast to the world's corruption
  - b) 1 Pet.1:13-17 – be holy as He is holy
  - c) James 1:27 – keep self unspotted from world

2) **Salt adds flavor**

- a) As salt makes food more palatable, so we change world's flavor
- b) We bring God's blessings to the world (blessed through us)
- c) 1 Cor.7:14 – unbeliever blessed by believer
- d) **Attitude** – we add flavor & excitement, not to be boring
- e) **Problem** – world sees Christianity as stifling, restrictive & always raining in the world's parade

3) **Salt stops corruption**

- a) Stings when placed upon a wound
- b) Christians are to sting the world; prick its conscience; make it uncomfortable about the corruption that is there

4) **Salt creates thirst**

- a) As salt increases the body's craving for water; God wants us to increase the world's craving for righteousness
- b) See our peace in trying circumstances & seek God

5) **Primary characteristic of salt is preservation**

- a) We retard the moral & spiritual corruption
- b) When the church is taken out of the world, Satan's perverse & wicked power is unleashed in an unprecedented way
- c) We are the salt that prevents the world from degenerating even faster than it already is

e. **Idea of being light**

1) **Whereas salt is hidden – light is obvious**

- a) Salt works within (secretly) light works without (openly)
- b) Salt is an indirect influence; light is direct communication
- c) Salt works privately through our lives; light works openly through our speech & actions
- d) Salt is negative seeking to stop corruption, whereas light is positive seeking to change corruption to incorruption; not only revealing what is wrong, but helping to produce what is righteous

2) **God's people are to proclaim light (His word) to the world**

- a) Ps.119:105 – word is a lamp
- b) 1 Jn.1:5-7 – God is light – our fellowship is with Him
- c) 2 Cor.3:12-18 – we reflect His glory not try hide it
- d) As secret Christian is inconsistent & out of place
- e) Gospel was not given so that a select few may know it  
Mt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15,16

3. **The danger – losing our saltiness & covering our light**

a. **Jesus isn't talking about losing our salvation here**

1) **Speaking about our influence**

- a) Corrupted salt is worthless & destructive
- b) Hidden light is useless
- c) 1 Cor.3:10-15 – works burned up yet he saved

2) **Jesus will allow the world to trample useless salt underfoot**

a) Lk.21:20-24 - Jerusalem be trodden under the foot of Gentiles

b) 1 Cor.9:24-27 – disqualified for service

b. **Goal – world sees our works & glorifies God**

1) **Good works** – attractive & beautiful appearance, not just quality

2) **Let light shine** = what we allow God to do through us – Phil.2:12,13

3) **We want to bring attention to God not too ourselves**

## Jesus & The Law

### Introduction

Today in America we are experiencing a massive loss of confidence in both religion & law. One of the reasons for this that has been set forth, is the radical separation of church & state that has taken place over the years. If this trend continues, American society is doomed to relativism in her laws, because there will be no absolutes. In fact, you cannot have workable rules for behavior without religion, because only religion provides the absolute base on which morality & those laws can be based. As men break away from the idea of authoritative religion & the concept of God, they are also breaking away from the probability of absolute truth. The only remaining resource we are left with is existential relativism, an ever-changing base on which no authoritative system of law or morals can ever be built. The reality is, that a consistent, coherent legal system cannot be built upon philosophical humanism, which teaches that right & wrong is something that is ever fluctuating according to man's ideas & feelings. In these verses Jesus tells us that He did not come to teach or practice anything that was contrary to the law of God.

### Matthew 5:17-20

#### 1. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law & the prophets

a. **Do not think** – indicates that many had a wrong concept about His teachings

- 1) Most Jews thought that the Rabbi's instructions about scripture were the proper interpretations of the Law of Moses
- 2) Since Jesus did not keep these traditions, He must be doing away with the Law or negating it's importance.

b. **Abolish** – utterly overthrow or destroy

- 1) Word used concerning the destruction of the Temple – Mt.24:2; 26:6
- 2) Basic idea is to tear down & smash; obliterate completely
- 3) Used figuratively to indicate bringing to naught or rendering useless

c. **The Law & the prophets**

- 1) Jesus uses the definite article = God's Law
- 2) **The Law** – different meanings
  - a) The 10 commandments
  - b) The Pentateuch (books written by Moses)
  - c) Entire OT scriptures
  - d) Sacred traditions of the rabbi's
- 3) **The Law & the prophets** = OT scriptures

#### 2. Jesus came to fulfill the law & the prophets

a. **Jesus claimed to be the theme of the OT**

- 1) Lk.24:27,44
- 2) Jn.5:39
- 3) Heb.10:7

- b. Ways Jesus fulfilled the law**
- 1) **His teachings** – OT was outline & He filled in the detail – completed what was incomplete by giving it full dimension & detail
    - a) **Fulfill** – to fill up; not add to; to complete what already present
    - b) Jesus did not add to God’s Law but clarified original meaning
  - 2) Jesus also fully met all the requirements (demands) of the Law  
(Kept every detail down to its smallest requirement)
  - 3) **Jesus fulfilled the OT by “being” its fulfillment**
    - a) Did more than teach & exemplify it
    - b) He was it – the word in the flesh
- 3. The permanence of the law – vs.18**
- a. I tell you the truth**
- 1) Original word was a strong intense affirmation
  - 2) Absolutely, without the slightest qualification, with full authority
- b. God’s Law is absolute & permanent**
- 1) Until heaven & earth pass away (throughout man’s history)
  - 2) God’s Law outlasts the universe
  - 3) What was true of the Law was also true of Jesus’ teachings – Mt.24:35
- c. Not the smallest letter or the least stroke**
- 1) Greek word is “iota” (smallest letter in Greek alphabet)
  - 2) It looked something like an “apostrophe”
  - 3) **Stroke** - literally “a little horn” = small marks that help distinguish one Hebrew word from another
  - 4) **Therefore** - not even the smallest letter or even the smallest part of a letter could be erased from God’s Law. Even the most insignificant part was not to be removed until all was accomplished.
- d. Accomplished** – idea of completion or filling up
- 1) Everything in the Law was fulfilled - personally & vicariously by Jesus
  - 2) Lk.4:16-21
  - 3) Jesus used the authority of scripture to establish His own authority  
Mt.11:3-5; Mk.11:17
- e. Our attitude toward scripture should be**
- 1) Accept it for what it is – James 1:21
  - 2) Honor it as God’s word – 2 Tim.3:16,17
  - 3) Allow them to dwell in us richly (obey it) – Col.3:16; 2 Tim.2:15
  - 4) Earnestly defend it – Jude 3
  - 5) Proclaim it to the entire world – Mt.28:19,20

#### 4. Sensing the relevance of God's Law

##### a. Consequences of violating it & teaching others to do the same

- 1) **Popular approach to behavior** = "do your own thing"
  - a) Not new – Judges 21:25
  - b) Rejecting laws, rules & regulations
  - c) No one is accountable to anyone or anything
- 2) **Breaks** – loose yourself from its requirements or standards
  - a) Human nature resents probations & demands
  - b) Satan tempts us to modify or weaken God's standards
- 3) James 3:1; Acts 20:28-30; James 2:10

##### b. Blessings for those who keep God's Law & teach others to do the same

- 1) Uphold law by both your lifestyle & your teaching
  - a) 1 Thess.2:10-12
  - b) 1 Tim.4:11,12
  - c) 1 Tim.6:11,12
- 2) Attitude towards scripture determines greatness in God's kingdom
  - a) Gal.1:7-9
  - b) 1 Cor.4:6
  - c) Lk.10:16

##### c. Christians are not under the Law

- 1) It's curse or condemnation – Rom.8:1
- 2) Jesus abolishes the law of commandments contained in ordinances  
Eph.2:14,15 – refers to the civil judicial law of OT
- 3) The ceremonial law was removed – curtain torn - Mk.15:38  
Temple worship & sacrifices no longer valid – that part of the law was fulfilled in Jesus' sacrifice of Himself
- 4) We are free from the laws righteous requirements – Rom.6:11-15  
Rom.10:4 – Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness  
2 Cor.5:21 – He is our righteousness  
Rom.10:1-3 – wrong to try to establish our own  
Gal.5:16-18 – when led by Spirit not under law  
Gal.3:24-27 – law leads us to Jesus to be clothed in Him
- 5) OT was a moral guide to reveal sin – Rom.3:21; 7:7  
Rom.7:25 – in the flesh we sin, but in our mind we serve the law of God  
Righteousness cannot be obtained through keeping the law  
Gal.2:21; 3:21-25

#### 5. Our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the Scribes & Pharisees

##### a. Legalistic works orientated religion is not good enough

- 1) **Scribes** – those who recorded, studied & interpreted scripture
  - a) Civil scribes = notaries involved in various government duties
  - b) Ecclesiastical = devoted selves to study & interpretation

- 2) **Pharisees** – most rigid sect of the Jews
  - a) Confident in their system of righteousness
  - b) Convinced God was obligated to honor their devoted & demanding works
- 3) **The righteousness of the Scribes & Pharisees**
  - a) **Was external not internal**
    - (1) consisted of the observance of law & tradition
    - (2) Unconcerned with motives & attitudes
      - (a) No matter how much they hated a person, as long as they didn't kill him
      - (b) No matter how much they lusted they were not guilty of adultery unless did the physical act
    - (3) Mt.23:25-31; Mt.6:1-18
  - b) **Meticulous but neglected weightier matters of the law**
    - (1) Mt.23:23
    - (2) Mk.7:7,8
  - c) **Reworked scripture to fit their desires**
    - (1) Mt.15:1-9
    - (2) God called for pure attitudes & they made them rituals
  - d) **Was self-centered**
    - (1) Produced by self to glorify self
    - (2) Rituals were showy things they could boast about
    - (3) Focus was to be seen of men as righteous – Mt.6

**b. Lord requires genuine righteousness**

- 1) Inner righteousness – 1 Sam.16:7
- 2) Perfect righteousness – Mt.5:48
- 3) Only way to achieve this righteousness – In Jesus
  - a) Mt.19:13-26
  - b) Jn.14:6
  - c) Rom.3:21,22
  - d) 2 Cor.5:21
- 4) The righteousness God requires He gives
  - a) It cannot be deserved, earned or accomplished
  - b) It can only be accepted by accepting Jesus as your Lord
  - c) Rom.8:4,5 – as live by the Spirit
  - d) Phil.3:7-9 – comes by faith in Jesus
- 5) Those who insist on coming to God in their own & in their own power will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

## Who Is A Murderer

### Introduction

The focus of Jesus throughout this sermon has been on the internal person - what is in the hearts & minds of men. In our last study, Jesus closed with the thought that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes & Pharisees. In the rest of this sermon Jesus will explain what constitutes righteousness in the eyes of God. Jesus will contrast the thinking of the religious of His day with what God has always required of His people throughout history. Remember, Jesus is not giving us a new law, but is merely reemphasizing what God has already said in His word.

### Matthew 5:21-26

#### 1. On overview of chapter 5

- a. **Primary thrust** - reemphasizing God's standards for living in His kingdom
  - 1) What God said in the OT in contrast with Jewish traditional thought.
  - 2) Righteousness God requires is 1<sup>st</sup> internal
  - 3) If not exist in heart – not exist
  - 4) Scripture
    - a) 1 Kings 8:39 – you alone know the heart of all men
    - b) 1 Chron.28:9 – Lord searches heart – knows intents
    - c) 2 Chron.16:9 – eyes upon those whose heart devoted to Him
    - d) Prov.16:2 – Lord weighs motives of heart
- b. **Thus** – a good deed is valid only if it honestly represents what is inside
  - 1) Jer.17:10 – search heart; test the mind
  - 2) Rev.2:23 – search mind & heart to give each as deserves
- c. **The presumed good deeds of the scribes & Pharisees** – fell short
  - 1) **Phrase** – “you have heard that it was said” refers to traditional thought
    - a) Contrasts human teaching with God's word
    - b) Shows God's righteousness surpasses the religious leaders
  - 2) **Jesus illustrates this with:**
    - a) Two of the 10 commandments
    - b) Two of the general principles of the Law of Moses
    - c) Two of the broader principles of mercy & love
  - 3) **Thus Jesus is emphasizing that every area of our lives should be measured by God's perfect standard of righteousness**
- d. **The condition of Judaism was much like church in dark ages**
  - 1) **Dark ages** – early 16<sup>th</sup> century
    - a) **Catholic religion was moving away from the Bible**
      - (1) Common man had no way of knowing this
      - (2) Everything was done in Latin
      - (3) People had nothing to go by to know if true or not
    - b) **To the people** – what church taught was what God taught
      - (1) Until Bible translated in language of people = in dark
      - (2) Protestant reformation greatest contribution - translation

## 2) Jesus' day

### a. People were separated from scriptures

- (1) After exile Jews lost use of Hebrew language
- (2) Many spoke Aramaic or Semitic (dialect of Hebrew)
- (3) Septuagint – a Greek translation used by Roman Jews  
(not by those living in Judean area)
- (4) Copies of scripture were bulky & expensive

### b. Therefore when scripture read – most not understand

- (1) At first teachers would translate – give sense of
- (2) Most just taught from the Talmud (traditions)

### c. Reason people are amazed at way Jesus taught – Mt.7:28,29

## e. Principles Jesus taught

### 1) The spirit of the Law is more important than the letter

- a) Law not a mechanical set of rules (do in own strength)
- b) Given as a guide to the character of God

### 2) Law is positive as well as negative

- a) **Negative** – prevent both inner & outward sin
- b) **Positive** – promote both inner & outward righteousness

### 3) Law is not an end in itself

- a) Purpose is deeper than purifying lives of God's people
- b) Supreme purpose is to glorify God

### 4) God alone is qualified to judge men

- a) He alone knows their hearts
- b) He alone knows their deepest inner workings

### 5) Everyone is required to live by His perfect standards

- a) Law points to & insists upon perfection
- b) This makes it impossible for man to keep fully
- c) Therefore God had to provide a redeemer – Jesus

## 2. Do not murder - All murderers are subject to judgment

### a. Said to people of old – referring to traditions taught

- 1) Had become more important than scripture
- 2) Referring to the traditional interpretations of sacred commands

### b. Ex.20:13 – you shall not kill (murder)

#### 1) Doesn't forbid every form of killing

(Capital punishment; legal warfare; accidents & self-defense)

#### 2) Refers to intentionally killing another human being

#### 3) Gen.9:6

- a) **Penalty** – death for the killer
- b) **Reason** - is an assault to the sacredness of God's image

#### 4) God holds man personally responsible for murder

- a) Can't blame Satan, the environment or any other external cause
- b) Mt.15:19 – out of the heart comes murder
- c) These things may tempt us & make it easier – but we decide

**c. No one is truly innocent of the crime of murder**

**1) The 1<sup>st</sup> step in murder is anger**

**a) Jesus here shatters the illusion of self-righteousness**

- (1) Murder is not limited to the physical act of taking a life
- (2) God commands heart-righteousness not just external
- (3) 1 Jn.3:11-15

**b) Teachers of Law had obscured this truth**

- (1) Taught is subject to judgment – not death
- (2) God's holy character not taken into consideration  
(disobeying His Law; desecrating His image)
- (3) Said nothing about the inner attitude of the crime

**c) Teachers had turned murder into merely a civil issue**

- (1) Prosecution was up to a human court to decide
- (2) Confined its evil to simply a physical act
- (3) Flagrantly disregarded what God taught in scripture

**2) Murder originates in the heart not the hands**

**a) Starts with evil thoughts** - whether do the physical act or not

- (1) Model law-abiding citizens can be guilty of murder
- (2) Be angry with; hate; curse or malign another = murder
- (3) Many deep in their heart have such anger & hatred that  
they desire another's death = murderer
- (4) Fear of judgment; cowardice or lack of opportunity  
doesn't diminish the crime – they are murderers.

**b) All anger is developing (early stages of) murder**

- (1) 1 Jn.3:15
- (2) Therefore all of us are guilty before God
- (3) **Question** – who has never hated?
- (4) Hatred is just an extension of anger
- (5) The best of people are as bad as the worst of people

**3. The evils & dangers of anger**

**a. Not all anger is wrong**

- 1) Jesus' righteous anger moved Him to cleanse the Temple
- 2) Eph.4:26 – be angry & sin not
- 3) In our day of peace at any cost – positive thinking & confusing godly love with human sentimentality – is need to show anger
  - a) Trends in society
  - b) Philosophies & standards children exposed to
  - c) Unscriptural philosophies & standards need be challenged
  - d) Ps.7:11(KJV) – God is angry with every wicked way
- 4) Jesus not talking about anger over God being dishonored

**b. Jesus is talking about a selfish kind of anger**

- 1) Someone has wronged you; done something against you
- 2) Someone irritates you or displeases you

- 3) Also has to do with a brooding & simmering anger
  - a) Anger that is nurtured & not allowed to die
  - b) The holding of a grudge
  - c) Smoldering bitterness that refuses to forgive
- 4) The kind of anger that cherishes resentment – not want reconciliation
- 5) Heb.12:15 – root of bitterness (defiles)

**c. Subject to judgment**

- 1) Tradition made only the physical act a crime
- 2) Jesus puts anger on the same level of seriousness as murder
- 3) Murder merits execution – so does selfish anger

**4. The evil & danger of slander**

- a. **Raca** – commonly used epithet (label) with no exact modern equivalent
  - 1) All the versions just transliterate it
  - 2) A term of malicious abuse or slander
  - 3) Probably what soldiers said to Jesus as put crown of thorns on His head
  - 4) Brainless idiot; worthless person; empty-headed silly fool
- b. **To slander a creature made in God's image is to slander God**
  - 1) Jesus makes this equivalent to murder = serious
  - 2) Contempt for another is murder in your heart
  - 3) Answerable to the Sanhedrin – serious offenses tried here

**5. The evil & danger of condemning character**

- a. **You fool** – stupid or dull (root of our word moron)
  - 1) Greek literature = obstinate godless person
  - 2) Related to Hebrew word meaning “to rebel against”
  - 3) Was to accuse them of being stupid & godless
- b. **Speaking about slanderously calling one a fool out of anger & hatred**
  - 1) Three illustrations show increasing degrees of seriousness
  - 2) We know there are fools & we must warn them – not slander them
- c. **In danger of the fire of hell** (Gehenna)
  - 1) Name of valley southwest of Jerusalem = city dump
  - 2) Trash was continually burned & the stench never ceased
  - 3) Originally desecrated by king Ahaz – 2 Chron.28:3
    - a) Set up altars to Moloch
    - b) Sacrificed (burned alive) his own children to this god
  - 4) Later called the valley of slaughter – Jer.19:6
  - 5) King Josiah tore down the altars & turned it into a garbage incinerator
  - 6) Became a metonym for the place of eternal torment

**6. How anger & hatred effects our worship to God**

**a. Internal sin makes outward acts of worship unacceptable**

- 1) **Worship begins in the heart**
  - a) Ps.66:18 – cherish iniquity Lord not hear
  - b) 1 Sam.15:22 – delights in obedience not burnt offerings

2) **Reconciliation must precede worship**

- a) Offering gift = to be reconciled to God
- b) Unresolved conflict must be settled
- c) Settle breach with brother before you can settle breach with God

b. **Repentance has always been mandatory before worship**

1) **Scripture**

- a) Isa.1:11,16,17 – make selves clean of evil deeds
- b) Isa.58:5-7 – cease evil & learn to do good
- c) Jer.7:9,10 – will you do evil & stand before Me?

2) **Phrase “Brother has something against you”**

a) **Two possibilities**

- (1) You have wronged your brother
- (2) Also - Anger or hatred on your brother’s part – even if we have nothing against him personally

b) **We should do everything in our power to be reconciled**

- (1) Can’t change their heart or attitude toward us
- (2) Rom.12:17-21 – as much as it lies in you be at peace
- (3) Regardless of who is guilty – determine to make reconciliation before we come to god to worship

3) **When there is animosity of any sort in the heart there cannot be any integrity in our worship. It is hypocrisy to ask for forgiveness & then not be forgiving.**

7. **Pay your debts as soon as possible**

a. **Here the focus is on the one who is guilty**

- 1) Roman law allowed you to bring the accused before a judge
- 2) One could settle the matter before they came before the judge
- 3) After the court is involved – there will be a judgment – usually prison

b. **To avoid judgment you must resolve your conflict**

- 1) Had to pay the “last cent” (smallest coin made)
- 2) God will hold you accountable – supreme judge

**Final thought** – In the fullest sense, of course, because no one ever fully has the right attitudes toward others, thus no worship is completely acceptable. Thus everything Jesus teaches in this passage, as in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is to show us the absolutely perfect standard of God’s righteousness and the absolutely impossible task of our meeting that standard in our own power. He shatters all self-righteousness in order to drive us to His righteousness (Jesus), which alone is acceptable to God. Rom.3:9-20

## The Sin Of Adultery

### Introduction

Jesus continues to contrast the external self-righteousness of the religious leaders of His day with the righteousness that is acceptable to God – a righteousness that is of the heart. God’s evaluation takes place within the heart & without this purity within, what we do in our actions makes little or no difference. God judges the origin of our sin not just the action or lack of action. As Solomon wrote in Prov.23:7 - “as a man thinks in his heart so is he”. In these verses Jesus deals with three things - the sin of adultery, the desire that is behind it & our deliverance from it.

### Matthew 5:27-30

#### 1. Adultery

##### a. Meaning

- 1) **Dictionary** – sex act involving a married person with someone with whom they are not married
- 2) **Thayer** - 3431 moicheuo- to commit adultery
  - a) To be an adulterer
  - b) To commit adultery with, to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife
  - c) Used of the wife: to suffer adultery, to be debauched
  - d) A Hebrew idiom, the word is used of those who at a woman's solicitation are drawn away to idolatry, that is, to the eating of things sacrificed to idols
- 3) Over the last 300-400 years scholars have defined this word with a view toward a purely sexual emphasis – “to have unlawful sexual intercourse with another’s wife”
  - a) However, they also list other uses – 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> definitions
  - b) There are instances when the meaning is definitely not sexual
  - c) There they refer to it as “figurative” or “symbolic” adultery
    - (1) Rev.2:22; Jer.3:29 – drawn away into idolatry
    - (2) The intimate alliance of God with His people is likened unto marriage. Those who relapse back into idolatry are said to have committed adultery
- 4) **There are times when the word has no reference to sex or idolatry**
  - a) Mt.12:39 – seeking a sign
  - b) James 4:4 – friendship with the world
  - c) Mt.19:9 – divorcing & remarrying
- 5) **History of the original word**
  - a) Started off being transliterated (becomes a new word – baptism)
  - b) **Latin version** = “adultero” meaning to alter or adulterate by adding something
  - c) **Tyndale translation** (1535 AD) refers to adultery as “breaking wedlock” – the betrayal of the marriage covenant

- d) Over the years the word has evolved into a word with a purely sexual connotation
- e) The original idea seems to be that of - the breaking of vows or covenant obligations.
- f) Thus the one who looks lustfully upon a woman has violated the one flesh relationship of marriage “breaking wedlock”  
Matthew 5:32 – makes her an adulteress

**b. To the religious of His day only the physical act itself constituted adultery**

- 1) Murder violates the sanctity of human life
  - a) Anger & hatred make one a murderer
  - b) It’s source is the heart
- 2) Adultery violates the sanctity of the marriage relationship
  - a) Looking for the purpose of lusting constitutes adultery
  - b) It’s source is also within the heart – Mt.12:34,35

**2. Looking to lust**

**a. I say to you** – indicates that Jesus puts His words above the traditional view

- 1) Religious focused upon the traditions of the rabbis that were passed down through the centuries – Talmud
- 2) Jesus goes back to God’s original word & intentions
- 3) The religious had rationalized away & ignored God’s word – Mt.15

**b. Looks** – present participle (continuous action)

- 1) **Refers to the continuous process of looking** – not the incidental or involuntary glance
- 2) **Idea is intentional looking for the purpose of lusting** – looking to satisfy ones evil desires
- 3) **Examples**
  - a) Going to X rated movies or selecting TV shows known for their sexual orientation
  - b) Going to the beach or park to look at the scanty swimsuits & clothing
  - c) One who does anything with the expectation & desire of being sexually titillated
- 4) **Not the unexpected or unavoidable exposure to sexual temptation**
  - a) See a woman provocatively dressed – Satan will try tempt
  - b) No sin if temptation is resisted – gaze turned elsewhere
  - c) Continuing to look to satisfy lustful desires is what is condemned – evidence of an immoral heart
  - d) David was not at fault for seeing Bathsheba – she in full view. Sin was dwelling on the sight & willfully submitting to the temptation. The fact that he summoned her to himself expressed the immoral desire he was already allowing in his heart.

**c. Has already committed adultery with her in his heart**

- 1) Looking does not cause one to commit adultery
- 2) The act has already been committed in the heart before one looks
- 3) The sin in the heart causes the lustful looking
- 4) It's not what she wears or doesn't wear – it's what you allow in heart
- 5) Lustful looking just expresses (exposes) what is already in the heart

**d. What about those who dress to attract sexual attention?**

- 1) Is Jesus just condemning the man who looks lustfully?
- 2) What of the women who dress to incite men to lust?
  - a) Desiring to be looked at & lusted after
  - b) Deliberately seeking to arouse the sexual passions of men
- 3) What of the mothers (and fathers) who allow their daughters to dress as lascivious temptresses?

**3. Deliverance from looking to lust**

**a. Job 31:1-12 – made a covenant with my eyes**

- 1) He knew sin begins in the heart
- 2) Just as deserving of punishment as if he had done the deed
- 3) Knew it was **his personal responsibility** to deal with this

**b. Need to make plans to avoid temptation**

- 1) Mt.5:29,30 – dramatically sever sinful impulses
  - a) Figuratively not literally cut these off
  - b) The mutilation of the physical does not cleanse the heart
  - c) In Jewish culture the “right hand” & the “right eye” represent a persons best & most precious faculties.
  - d) **Idea** – willingly give up whatever is necessary
- 2) Nothing is so valuable (worth preserving) at expense of righteousness
  - a) Causes you to sin = bait stick that springs the trap
  - b) Anything that morally or spiritually entraps us – eliminate it quickly & totally
- 3) **Means consciously & purposely controlling what's around us**
  - a) Where we go – what we do – what we watch or read – the company we keep – the conversations we have
  - b) 1 Cor.9:27 – buffet body
  - c) 1 Thess.4:3-8 – not use body to take advantage of another
  - d) Rom.6:11-14 – not offer parts of body to evil desire
  - e) Rom.13:14 – make no provision to fulfill lust of flesh
  - f) **If we don't** – our environment & lusts will control us  
Gal.5:16-18

**c. Especially important in today's society**

- 1) We live in a time of unbridled indulgence & sexual passion
  - a) Is the uninterrupted theme of entertainment
  - b) Sex is used to sell & glamorize everything
  - c) Infidelity & perversion is encouraged & justified (Bolder Co.)
  - d) Sex is simply a biological function & has no moral significance

2) Some Christians have reacted to the extreme

a) Concluded that sex is evil & should be avoided – 1 Cor.7:1-7

(1) Mutilated themselves or geographically tried to escape

(2) Col.2:16-23 – appear wise – of no value in restraining  
the flesh

(3) 1 Tim.4:1-3 – to deny marriage is doctrine of demons

c) Bible teaches

(1) Jn.17:15-18 – in the world but not of the world

(2) Rom.12:1,2 – do not conform to the world

(3) 1 Pet.2:11 – abstain from fleshly lusts that war against  
the soul

## Divorce & Remarriage

### Introduction

Today there are many confusing & conflicting ideas about what the scriptures teach about divorce & remarriage. I believe that the problem is not because of the lack of revelation from God, but because of the sin & preconceived ideas which man has as he comes to the subject. The result is that truth becomes clouded & man sees truth through the lenses of his preconceived ideas & the straightforward simplicity of truth is lost. In this lesson we will seek to understand what Jesus taught about divorce & remarriage as well as what was taught & commonly accepted by the religious of Jesus' day.

### Matthew.5:31,32

#### 1. The teachings of the scribes & Pharisees

- a. **"It is said"** – refers to the traditional thought (Rabbi's of old)
  - 1) Commonly accepted Jewish traditions
  - 2) Especially Rabbi's during Babylonian exile
- b. **Common thought** – majority accepted divorce & remarriage for any reason
  - 1) **Only requirement** – give them a certificate of divorce
  - 2) **Divorce so easy** – trivial & insignificant things were acceptable reasons
    - a) Burning the meal
    - b) Embarrassing man in front of his friends
  - 3) **Justification based upon Deut.24:1-4**
    - a) Place that 1<sup>st</sup> mentions a certificate of divorce
    - b) **Passage focus is not** – is divorce permitted
      - (1) **Focus is** - how breaking the covenant defiles
      - (2) Divorce was permitted in some circumstances if it was accompanied with a certificate of divorce
      - (3) This passage does not condone or command divorce – it is to regulate whatever divorce takes place
      - (4) If she remarries she is **not permitted to go back** to her original husband
  - 4) **This certificate did not make divorce right** – it protected the woman
    - a) From slander
    - b) Gave her consent to remarry
  - 5) **"Something indecent about her"** – nakedness of a thing
    - a) Thayer -OT:6172 - nakedness, nudity, shame, pudenda, genitalia
      - a) pudenda (implying shameful exposure)
      - b) nakedness of a thing, indecency, improper behavior
      - c) exposed, undefended (figurative)
    - b) Strongs - OT:6172 `ervah (er-vaw'); from OT:6168; nudity, literally (especially the pudenda) or figuratively (disgrace, blemish):
    - c) Edersheim – includes every kind of impropriety & describes a generally poor reputation – Deut.23:13,14 "indecent thing"

- 6) **Can't refer to adultery** – punishment was death – Deut.22:22-24
- 7) **Probably** some kind of unfaithfulness that stopped short of adultery
- 8) **Primary purpose was not to give an excuse for divorce but to regulate it & show the potential for evil in the act of divorce.**
- 9) **God was serious about sexual sins** – Lev.20:10-14

## 2. The teaching of the Old Testament about divorce

### a. God's plan for marriage

- 1) Gen.2:24 – cleave to wife & become one flesh
- 2) **Intended to be a monogamous life long relationship**
  - a) **Cleave** = firm permanent attachment
  - b) **One flesh** = a spiritual & physical oneness
  - c) Blending of 2 minds; 2 wills; 2 emotions & 2 spirits
- 3) **Sin perverted God's intentions for marriage**
  - a) Woman's desire became to dominate the man
  - b) Man's desire became to dominate her by force
  - c) The result is divorce (hardness of your heart – Mt.19:8)

### b. Divorce was never God's will

- 1) **Sin always brings problems to relationships**
  - a) Focus becomes self & self-preservation
  - b. People try to solve their problems by dissolving the union
  - c) Is like cutting off the arm because there is a splinter in the hand
- 2) Mt.19:6 – what God joined together man must not divide
  - a) 2 of the 10 commandments relate to marriage (Adultery & covet another man's wife)
  - b) Mal.2:13-16 – **I hate divorce** says the Lord
  - c) God never commands, endorses or blesses divorce
- 3) **God recognizes divorce as a reality, but it is always sin**
  - a) Isa.50:1 – gave Israel a certificate of divorce
  - b) Jer.3:1 – divorce & remarry can't return
  - c) Lev.21:7,8,13,14 – priest not to marry divorced woman
  - d) Ezra 10:1-5 – only place people told to divorce (whole chapter)
    - (1) Deut.7:1-6 – background for decision
    - (2) Their future existence as God's people was in jeopardy
    - (3) Was the lesser of two evils – neither one was right

## 3. The teaching of Jesus

### a. Taught what Moses taught in Deut.24

- 1) Unjustified divorce leads to adultery – Mk.10:11,12; Lk.16:18
- 2) Your teaching of no fault divorce has contaminated God's people
- 3) You have lowered God's standards & have brought the people under God's judgment
  - a) **Interpreted Moses** – “if you find something distasteful about her then divorce her”
  - b) They saw the paperwork as the only issue

**b. Divorce without proper cause (fornication) – makes her adulterous**

**1) Fornication**

- a) Strongs - NT:4202 porneia (por-ni'-ah); from NT:4203; harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry:
- b) Thayer – NT 4202 - porneiaa.
  - a) used properly, of illicit sexual intercourse  
Acts 15:20,29; 21:25
  - b) Used in accordance with a form of speech common in the O.T. and among the Jews which represents the close relationship existing between Jehovah and his people under the figure of a marriage  
NT:4203 porneuoo;
    - 1. to prostitute one's body to the lust of another
    - 2. to give oneself to unlawful sexual intercourse; to commit fornication 1 Cor 6:18
    - 3. by a Hebraism metaphorically, to be given to idolatry, to worship idols: 1 Chron 5:25
- c) Refers to any illicit sexual intercourse = incest; prostitution; homosexuality; bestiality – Lev.20:10-14

**2) She becomes guilty of violating her marriage covenant (adultery)**

- a) Her husband is the one who is guilty of doing this to her
- b) She is the one who is the victim
- c) **Makes** = passive voice (action is received)
- d) **In addition** the man who marries her commits adultery
  - (1) He becomes involved in this covenant breaking as well
  - (2) 1 Cor.7:10,11 – God's will is she remains unmarried or be reconciled to her husband
  - (3) To do anything else is to commit adultery
- e) A man or a woman who has no right to divorce also has no right to remarry – they have committed adultery

**4. What do if one has violated God's will about divorce & remarriage?**

**a. Same as with any sin – repent**

**b. Do you have to divorce mate & return to previous mate?**

- 1) **No passage that tells us to do this** – OT God says no!
- 2) **Some say** God doesn't recognize this marriage so not really married – just living together in adultery
- 3) **Problem** – no passage says God doesn't recognize this 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage (Misunderstanding of Mt.19:4-6)

**c. To repent** – admit that what you did was not God's will & don't do it again

## Trustworthiness

### Introduction

Satan is referred to as the “father of lies” & since he is the ruler of this world it should not surprise us that mankind has a problem with trustworthiness. In every facet of society - truth is so scarce that everyone is suspect – business people, advertisers, sales people, lawyers, doctors, teachers, politicians & even preachers. Our whole society is built upon a network of manufactured truth. We shade the truth, we cheat, we exaggerate, we misrepresent, we make promises we never intend to keep, we make up excuses etc. & all as a matter of normal everyday living. They say that so much of business, politics, government, science, religion education & even everyday family life is built upon half-truths, that a sudden revelation of the whole truth would cause society, as we know it to disintegrate. It would be too devastating to handle. Jesus calls His disciples to live above this & be fully trustworthy.

### Matthew 5:33-37

#### 1. Truth is often revered in principle but not in practice

- a. Even the most corrupt in society realizes that truth “real truth” is necessary
  - 1) Courts require witnesses to tell the whole truth & nothing but the truth
    - a) Without this – any semblance of justice would be impossible
    - b) So important that perjury itself is a crime – severe penalties.
  - 2) Even criminals demand truth among themselves – necessary to survive
- b. Problem - Mankind is inclined to truth only when it benefits them
  - 1) Daniel Webster – “There is nothing as powerful as truth & often nothing as strange as truth.”
  - 2) Rabbi’s considered lying to be one of the four great sins that would keep one out of God’s presence.
    - a) Scoffing; hypocrisy; slander & lying
    - b) Why they went to such great lengths to appear to truthful

#### 2. Traditional teaching = a composition of ideas based upon several scriptures

- a. Lev.19:12 - Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord
- b. Num 30:2 - When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.
- c. Deut 23:21 - If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.
- d. **The idea of the word vow** = to enclose as with a fence, or to bind together
  - 1) Therefore to make a vow is to enclose or bind yourself
  - 2) Thus - what one has pledged is strengthened by that which one has invoked on its behalf.
  - 3) Heb.6:16 – men swear by something or someone greater

a) An oath in God's name is calling God as a witness & to avenge it if it is a lie

b) Any oath thus taken was therefore taken as absolute truth

**e. Taking oaths was widely practiced**

1) Gen.14:22-24 – Abraham confirmed promises to king of Sodom

2) Gen.21:23,24 – Abraham confirmed promises to Abimelech

3) Gen.24:1-4 – Abraham made his servant Eiezer take an oath

4) Gen.26:31 – Isaac swore an oath to Abimelech

5) Gen.31:44-53 – Jacob & Laban took an oath

6) 1 Sam.20:16 – David & Jonathan

7) Even God made oaths on certain occasions

a) Gen.22:16,17 – to Abraham

b) Heb.6:13,14 – swore by Himself (none greater)

c) Reason – to impress upon men the importance of His promises

8) Jesus & oaths

a) Words – “truly I say unto you”; “verily, verily I say”

b) Mt.26:63,64 – swore an oath before Caiaphas

**f. Since man was prone to deceit & lying, God provided for proper oath taking in His name**

1) He knew man's inclination to lie made him distrust others

a) Thus in serious situations an oath was permissible

b) Ps.15:1,4 – righteous expected to keep regardless the cost

2) Some oaths were made sincerely but foolishly

a) Joshua 9:15 – Joshua with Gibeonites

b) Judges 11:30,31 – Jephthah sacrifice whatever comes out door

c) 1 Sam.14:24 – Saul made men swear oath not to eat

d) Matt.14:7 – Herod to his daughter

5) God wants man to understand that He is serious about oaths

a) Lev.5:4-6 - Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil-- in any matter one might carelessly swear about-- even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty. When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned and, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to the Lord a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.

b) Josh 9:18-20 - But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them ... We will let them live, so that wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them."

c. Eccles.5:1-6 – keep vows or God be angry & destroy the work of your hands

### 3. Their sin concerning oaths

#### a. Any kind of oath & oaths for any circumstance were acceptable

- 1) As long as what said was not false & the person kept their word
- 2) This led to frivolous & meaningless oaths – none taken seriously
  - a) Promoted skepticism not confidence
  - b) Saying - How tell if one is lying – their lips are moving
  - c) Mt.23:16-20 – swear by altar is nothing

#### b. Only the oaths taken “in God’s name” were mandatory

- 1) If invoked God’s name had to keep word
- 2) Invoking anything else made the oath optional
- 3) Lev.19:12 - Perverted scripture = swearing falsely by any other name was acceptable as long as it was not in the name of the Lord.  
God only said “don’t swear falsely in My name”

#### c. Thus God’s absolute standard of truthfulness was corrupted

- 1) Lowered to accommodate man’s sinful, selfish ways
- 2) Wanted to lie & not going to allow God’s standard to hinder them

### 4. God’s teaching concerning oaths

#### a. Only to be made on important occasions – only in His name

- 1) Mt.5:33-37 – see flippant, profane oaths
- 2) Not use them to make an impression or to spice up conversation

#### b. Jesus does not forbid the taking of oaths under any circumstances

- 1) Heb.6:13-17 – God swore an oath
- 2) Lk.1:63-79 – Zechariah quotes about God’s oath
- 3) Acts 2:30 – David speaks of God’s oath about resurrection
- 4) Mt.5:17,18 – Not come to destroy the Law – to fulfill it
- 5) Rom.9:1 – Paul called God as his witness – telling the truth

#### c. Realize that every lie is against God & dishonors Him

- 1) Lies can’t be compartmentalized – truth has no shades
- 2) A half-truth is a whole lie
- 3) God has no standard less than absolute truthfulness
  - a) Ps.51:6 – He desires truth in the innermost being
  - b) Prov.6:16,17 – one of the 7 things He hates “a lying tongue”
  - c) Prov.12:22 – lying lips are an abomination
  - d) Rev.21:8 – destiny of all liars – lake of fire

#### d. Every word we speak ought to be truthful

- 1) James 5:12 – let your yes be yes & no be no
- 2) God is a holy God & His people are to be a holy people
- 3) Anything less than truth is evil

## An Eye For An Eye

### Introduction

As Americans our constitution allows us certain inalienable rights. However, in our day the number of rights being claimed has risen greatly. Movements have developed for civil rights, women's rights, children's rights, worker's rights, prisoner's rights & even illegal alien's rights & terrorist's rights. Never has a society been so concerned about rights as we are today. As a result, the respect for law & the respect for others has been trampled under foot. Another consequence we are seeing is the diminishing of justice, which is being replaced by vengeance. This is a just another natural consequence of putting rights first. James 4:1,2 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God."

### Matthew 5:38-42

#### 1. The principle of an eye for an eye

a. **OT texts** - Ex.21:22-24; Lev.24:17-22; Deut.19:15-21

b. **Principle** – punishment is to match the crime

1) **Expressions** - Tit for tat; quid pro quo

2) **Two basic purposes**

a) Curtail further crime – Deut.19:20

b) Prevent excessive punishment – Gen.4:23,24

3) **Punishment was to match the crime, not exceed it**

c. **Always given to the courts – civil authorities - not the individual**

1) Punishment was sometimes carried out by the victim, but the trial & sentencing **was always done** by duly appointed judges or by a large representative body of citizens

2) See Ex.21:22 – “whatever the court allows”

a) Deut.19:18 – “judges make a thorough investigation”

b) Lev.24:14 – “entire assembly to stone him”

3) **Under no circumstances was the individual allowed to take the law into his own hands** – Prov.24:29

d. **Was a merciful law** – limited the inclination to seek retribution

1) Man's tendency is like Lamech – get our pound of flesh

2) Anger & resentment demand retaliation – justice is never enough

3) Vengeance is always limited to God

Deut.32:35; Rom.12:19; Heb.10:30

e. **Also a beneficent law** – protected society by restraining evil

Eccles.8:11 – punishment not carried out the people learn do evil

#### 2. The traditional teaching

a. Each man was permitted to become his own judge, jury & executioner

1) Civil justice was being perverted to allow personal vengeance

2) Had turned the law into individual license

b. Still today people pervert try to this law = mandate for vengeance

### 3. Common misinterpretations

#### a. Means Christians must be doormats

- 1) **Pacifism** – refusing to retaliate regardless the offense
- 2) **Conscientious objection** to military service
- 3) **Book “war & peace” thesis**
  - a) Eliminate police; military & other forms of authority – utopia
  - b) Makes lawlessness & anarchy beneficial

#### b. Jesus not come to abolish the Law – Mt.5:20

- 1) Jesus forbids retaliation in personal relationships – not civil
  - a) Never taught that one is to take no stand against evil
  - b) Jesus & apostles continually opposed evil
    - (1) Cleansed Temple – Mt.21:12; Jn.2:15
    - (2) Are to resist the devil – James4:7; 1 Pet.5:9
    - (3) Rom.12:9 – abhor that which is evil
    - (4) Gal.2:11 – Paul withstood Peter to his face
    - (5) 1 Cor.5:13 – remove the wicked man
    - (6) Mt.18:15-17 – refuse repent = tell to church
    - (7) 1 Tim.5:20 – rebuke in presence of all

#### 2) Governments are ministers of God for justice

- a) Rom.13”1-7 – to punish evil
- b) 1 Pet.2:13,14 – sent by God to punish evil doers

#### c. We have a responsibility to uphold law & resist evil

- 1) **Reporting crime & criminals is an act of righteousness**
  - a) God hates what is evil & so should we – Rom.12:9
  - b) Is an act of love & compassion – 1 Cor.13:4-8
- 2) **To excuse, belittle or hide wrongdoing is wickedness**
  - a) Undermines justice
  - b) Undermines righteousness
- 3) **As long as natural man exists** – law must restrain evil
  - a) When God is forsaken – law is also forsaken
  - b) God is both gracious & just
  - c) To not restrain evil is not kind & loving
    - (1) It fails to protect the innocent
    - (2) It encourages wickedness

### 4. Jesus’ teaching

#### a. Do not resist an evil person

- 1) **Resist means** – to oppose; withstand; stand against
- 2) Idea is personal – for resentment, spite & vengeance – Rom.12:17-19
- 3) Vengeful retaliation has no place in society
- 4) Are to overcome evil by doing good – Rom.12:21
- 5) Do all you can to be at peace – Rom.12:14-18; 1 Pet.3:8-17

**b. Reaction to affronts upon your dignity**

- 1) **Man has the right to be treated with dignity**
  - a) All were created in God's image
  - b) Therefore, all should be respected
- 2) **Slap on face** – most demeaning & contemptuous act can do
  - a) It's an attack upon ones honor
  - b) Treating them with disdain – less than human
  - c) Was a vicious angry action intended to insult & demean
- 3) **Our reaction** – turn other cheek
  - a) **Note** – speaks more of what not to do than what to do
  - b) Symbolizes a non avenging, non retaliatory, gentle spirit
- 4) **Jesus strongly resisted evil directed against others**
  - a) Especially His Father
  - b) Yet He did not resist personal attacks directed at Himself
  - c) Accepted physical & verbal abuse quietly – Isa.50:6
  - d) Prayed - “Father forgive them” on the cross – 1 Pet.2:20-23

**c. Reaction to affronts to ones security**

- 1) **Not robbery but legitimate claims** – sue you
- 2) **Person had no money** – pay fine with clothing
  - a) Law required return coat before dark – Ex.22:26,27
  - b) Court could not make you give coat – volunteer it
  - c) Do everything can to pay the debt – Rom.13:8
- 3) **Better to be defrauded than to be bitter, resentful & spiteful**

**d. Reaction to injustices to your liberties**

- 1) **God's original intention is man's freedom**
  - a) Slavery & bondage are consequences of the curse
  - b) Man has the right to cherish his freedom
- 2) **Yet liberty not to be protected at the expense of righteousness**
  - a) Roman law – soldier could compel anyone carry pack one mile
    - (1) Designed to relieve soldier not as an inconvenience
    - (2) Problem – Rome was the oppressor – despised
  - b) Wants us to willingly accept burdens – go 2 miles
    - (1) Surrender even more than demanded
    - (2) Exalt righteousness – shame them

**e. Reaction when asked to give up your property**

- 1) **Man dislikes giving up what is his**
  - a) Even if it is temporary
  - b) Possessiveness is a characteristic of fallen man
- 2) **Remember we are stewards** – nothing belongs to us
  - a) We do have a right to keep & distribute as we see fit
  - b) This right also is to placed upon the altar of obedience
- 3) **Idea** - Asks with a legitimate need – not foolish selfish demands
  - a) Wants us to be generous – loving desire to help others
  - b) 1 Jn.3:16-18

## Love Your Enemies

### Introduction

In these verses Jesus contrasts the humanistic, self-centered love of the Scribes & Pharisees with God's divine standard for love. The way the Scribes & Pharisees viewed themselves in relation to others was absolutely corrupt & ungodly. They had totally corrupted God's word by taking part of what God said, omitting the part they didn't like & then added something entirely different. What they came up with was totally perverted from God's basic intentions. We will examine the OT teachings concerning love, their traditional teachings & finally Jesus' perspective about love

### Matthew 5:43-48

#### 1. The teachings of the Old Testament concerning love

- a. Lev.19:9-18 – various commands about the treatment of others
- b. Deut.22:1-4 – neighbors property
- c. Ex.23:4,5 – enemies property
- d. Job 31:29-32 – attitude toward all
- e. Ps.7:4,5 – David knew it was wrong to do evil against others
- f. Ps.35:12-15 – David's response to enemies misfortune
  - 1) Refused to harm God's anointed – Saul
  - 2) Refused to harm Shimei (relative of Saul)
- g. Prov.17:5 – not rejoice in calamity of others
- h. Prov.25:21,22 – how to treat enemy (Prov.24:29)

#### 2. Traditional teaching

- a. **Love was reserved for those you get along with** – enemies are to be hated
- b. **They omitted “as yourself”**
  - 1) To them this was inconceivable, unthinkable & unimaginable
    - a) No one could ever love another as you love yourself
    - b) Although they knew truth – neither taught or practiced it
    - c) Reduced law to an acceptable human level
  - 2) This part of the law was too difficult – ignored it
- c. **Narrowed term “neighbor” to only include those preferred or approved**
  - 1) Tax collectors & sinners were not in this group – Lk.18:11
  - 2) Also despised & looked down on common people – Jn.7:48,49
- d. **They added the phrase “hate your enemy”**
  - 1) **To justify this** – God's commands to Moses & Joshua
    - a) Ex.33:2 – angel drive out inhabitants
    - b) Deut.7:1,2 – destroy them totally
  - 2) **Also used some of the psalms**
    - a) Ps.69:22-24
    - b) Took David's words as a personal vendetta, not a concern for God's holiness & glory (see vs.9)
    - c) One thing to defend God's honor & another to hate your enemy

### 3. Jesus' teachings concerning love

#### a. "I say unto you"

- 1) Placing what He said above traditional thought
- 2) Placed His words on same level as scripture – standard of truth

#### b. Love your enemies

- 1) OT concept of neighbor included personal enemies (Ex.23:4,5)
- 2) Human tendency - base love on the desirability of the object
  - a) Love people who are attractive to us
  - b) Love hobbies that are enjoyable to us
  - c) Love cars or houses because they look nice & please us
- 3) True love (God's love) however is based on need, not desirability
  - a) Word – agape = love that seeks & works to meet another's highest good
  - b) Agape love may involve emotions but always involves action
  - c) Love's question is never - **who** to love, but **how** to love most helpfully
- 4) Enemies
  - a) Not always those who threaten our lives
  - b) Also includes the mean, impatient & judgmental people
    - (1) Self-righteous & spiteful people
    - (2) Those who happen to disagree with us

#### c. Pray for those who persecute you

- 1) Persecution is the world's response to truth
  - a) Jn.15:20 – to be expected
  - b) 2 Tim.3:12 – all who seek to live godly will be persecuted
- 2) First response to them = pray for them (their healing & well being)

#### d. Manifest your relation to God with your love

- 1) Love shows you belong to God
  - a) Jn.13:34,35
  - b) 1 Jn.4:16, 20
- 2) Loving others does not make us sons of God, but gives evidence that we are sons of God
  - a) God's blessings are given without respect to merit
  - b) If had to be merited – no one receive blessings – Rom.3:10-20
- 3) Anything less is just ordinary self-centered love
  - a) Tax collectors & gentiles do this
  - b) No more righteous than they are
  - c) God has a much higher standard for His people
- 4) Christians
  - a) Ought be best workers – most honest & considerate there
  - b) Ought to be the most helpful & caring in community
  - c) Our goal – to be perfect like our heavenly Father
    - Perfect = mature, complete, to reach an intended end
    - In this context God is our standard (absolute perfection)

## Acceptable Giving

### Introduction

As we begin chapter six we see the focus changing from what men believed about the Law to how men practiced the Law. Jesus will use three illustrations – giving, praying and fasting. Jesus has discussed the lack of real inner righteousness and now allows us to see hypocritical righteousness in action.

### Matthew 6: 1-4

#### 1. Beware of hypocritical righteousness

a. **Sadly, a great deal of religious activity these days is often nothing more than seeking to impress the world with one's supposed humility.**

- 1) Since their devotion is to self not God, their humility becomes a sham, nothing more than an act – a game
- 2) The scribes and Pharisees were good at this game – Mt.23
- 3) Since the fall of man there have been hypocrites
  - a) Cain's worship – what he wanted, not what God wanted
  - b) 2 Sam.15:7-10 – Absalom's allegiance to his father David
  - c) Judas's following of Jesus as a disciple
  - d) Ananas & Saphria in their giving – Acts 5
  - e) 1 Tim.4:1-3 – paying attention to demons teachings

b. **God has never treated hypocrisy lightly**

- 1) Amos 5:21-24 – I hate & reject your festivals
  - a) Actions were prescribed by God but worthless
  - b) Performed insincerely; not accompanied by righteous living
  - c) Intent was not to glory God but to glorify self
- 2) Outside of idolatry, Israel's hypocrisy was their greatest sin
  - a) God continually chastised them for this
  - b) Isa.1:11-18; Jer.11:19,20; Amos 4:4,5; Micah 6:6-8
  - c) Mk.7:6,7 – spoken to scribes & Pharisees

c. **Wording of text**

- 1) **Beware** – to pay attention to something especially in the sense of being on your guard
- 2) **To be seen** – related to word from which we get theater
  - a) Idea is a spectacle to be gazed upon
  - b) Religious acts were to be shown off like a play (not real life)
  - c) Does not demonstrate what is in the heart & mind of the doer, its only designed to make an impression (a certain impression)
- 3) **Actions performed to impress not to serve** – magnify actor not God
- 4) **No reward from God**
  - a) Only reward you get is what is given you from men
  - b) You have robbed God of His glory

## 2. The practice of giving alms

- a. **Alms** – refers to any act of mercy given to the poor & needy
- 1) Came to be used primarily for the giving of food, money or clothing
  - 2) Greek word is root of English word charitable
  - 3) Notice word “when” = indicating He expects His disciples to do this
  - 4) God has always delighted in acts of mercy & generosity
    - a) Lev.25:35 – sustain neighbor who becomes poor
    - b) Deut.15:13,14 – not to send slave away empty handed
    - c) Therefore some Jews believed it was easier for the rich to enter God’s kingdom
      - (1) Believed could buy their way by giving to the poor
      - (2) Catholicism – pope Leo the great declared  
“ By prayer we seek to appease God, by fasting we extinguish the lust of the flesh, and by alms we redeem our sins”.

### b. Do not sound a trumpet

- 1) No evidence from history or archeology a literal trumpet was used
  - a) Figure of speech to describe getting attention
  - b) Many of the wealthy, not just scribes & Pharisees sought to draw attention to their giving
    - (1) Wanted the glory & recognition of being generous
    - (2) Gave to impress others with their generosity
- 2) Are many subtle trumpets people use
  - a) Plaques on ends of pews
  - b) Name on building or a plaque on the wall
  - c) Making sure people know of your generosity, actions
  - d) Make our good actions accidentally noticed
  - e) Just wanting our gift to be noticed even though doing nothing to attract attention
  - f) Using non-Christian methods to motivate support for a ministry
    - (1) Framed certificates; published names of contributors
    - (2) Promoting hypocrisy by appealing to the flesh
    - (3) Mt.18:7 – woe to one who offers a stumbling block

## 3. True giving

- a. **Not allow left hand to know what right hand is doing**
- 1) A proverbial saying referring to spontaneity
    - a) Right hand is primary hand – does things as a matter of course.
    - b) Right hand giving be normal action – not involve left
    - c) Give & forget it – just what you do
  - 2) Need met so just go about your business
    - a) Whether recipient is grateful or not doesn’t matter
    - b) Not looking for appreciation or recognition

**b. Not mean everything must be done in secrecy**

- 1) Mt.5:16 – light shine so men see good works
- 2) 1 Jn.2:29 – know who practices righteousness
- 3) Gal.6:9,10 – do good to all – as have opportunity
- 4) **Point not** – are good works seen, but are they being done to be seen
- 5) Purpose & motivation are what concerns Jesus

**c. Giving is a part of God's cycle of blessing**

- 1) Prov.11:25 = generous man will prosper
- 2) Mal.3:10-12 – give tithe & pour out blessing can't contain
- 3) Lk.6:38 – give & be given overflowing
- 4) 2 Cor.9:5-12 – sow sparingly & will reap sparingly

**d. Principles of non-hypocritical giving**

- 1) **Must be given from the heart to God** – Lk.6:38; 2 Cor.9:6
- 2) **Is to be sacrificial** – 2 Sam.24:24 – cost him
  - a) Not measured by size of gift but in comparison to possessions
  - b) Widow with two mites – Mk.12:41-44 – gave more than rest
- 3) **Responsibility to give not based on how much have**
  - a) Not give if have little = not give if have much – Lk.16:10
  - b) Important to teach children to give to Lord even if have little
- 4) **Way we use material things affects spiritual blessings given**
  - a) Lk.16:11,12
  - b) Improperly handling money effects ministry can do for Lord
  - c) Spiritual effectiveness has a lot to do with way handle finances
- 5) **Given out of generosity not legalistic percentages or quotas**
  - a) 2 Cor.9:7 – not grudgingly of under compulsion
  - b) 2 Cor.8:1,2 – Macedonians 1<sup>st</sup> gave self to God
  - c) Phil.4:15—18 – Philippians' generosity from heart
- 6) **Are to give in response to needs**
  - a) Early church shared without reservations
  - b) Sadly there are many professional Christian beggars – able to work but won't. Under no obligation to help them  
2 Thess.3:10
- 7) **Giving demonstrates love not the keeping of the law**
  - a) NT has no specified amount that is to be given
  - b) Gift to be determined by love in heart & the size of the need
  - c) Jesus sacrificed all to redeem us, our love for Him ought to motivate us to give generously to spread His kingdom

## Prayer Without Hypocrisy

### Introduction

No one fully understands the function of prayer in God's scheme of things. Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God & states that God will work according to His perfect will regardless of how much or fervently man might pray. Going to this extreme makes prayer meaningless, just an exercise of tuning into God's will. On the other extreme Armenians teach, that God's actions concerning us are fully determined on the basis of our prayers. Thus making our prayers that which motivates God to do what He normally would not do. Scripture emphasizes both God's sovereignty and the fact the prayers of a righteous man avails much. I believe somewhere between these two extremes lies the truth.

### Matthew.6:5-15

#### 1. Don't pray like the hypocrites

##### a. Some of the ways Jewish tradition had perverted prayer

##### 1) Allowed prayer to become a ritual

- a) Wording & forms of prayer were set
  - (1) Would simply be read or repeated from memory
  - (2) Thus they paid little or no attention to what saying
  - (3) Simply a routine semiconscious religious exercise
- b) Faithful Jews had certain times of prayer
  - (1) Repeat Schema morning & evening
  - (2) Repeated "the eighteen" (prayers for all occasions)
  - (3) Both said daily regardless what doing or where you are

##### 2) Developed prescribed prayers for every object & occasion

- a) Prayers for good news, bad news, rain, new moon, traveling etc
- b) Original intent = bring every aspect of life into God's presence

##### 3) Limited prayer to specific times & occasions

- a) Offered at times & occasions with no regard for desire or need
- b) Not stop true prayer (Daniel, Cornelius), easily a ritual

##### 4) Esteemed long prayers – effectiveness directly proportional to length

- a) Mk.12:40 – for appearance sake
- b) Contributed to repetition & rote
- c) Verbosity was confused with sincerity

##### 5) Allowed prayer to become meaningless repetition

- a) Pagans continuously repeated same phrases
  - (1) Trying to get their gods to pay attention to them
  - (2) 1 Kings 18:18,26
- b) Often added adjective after adjective before God's name, trying to outdo one another in extolling God's attributes.

##### 6) Wanting to be seen & heard – impress others with devotion to God

- a) Rooted in pride & motive purely self-glory
- b) This was the perversion Jesus addresses

**b. Loved to stand & pray in synagogues & street corners**

- 1) **Standing was the normal position** for Jewish prayers
  - a) OT see them kneeling, standing t& lying prostrate
  - b) NT standing was the most common position
- 2) **Synagogue** – appropriate place for public prayer
  - a) Local place of assembly
  - b) For worship, civic & social functions
- 3) **Street corners**
  - a) Also a normal place of prayer
  - b) Word refers to a wide major street corner
    - (1) Place a crowd likely to be
    - (2) Loved to pray where had the largest audience
- 4) **To be seen of men**
  - a) Motive insincere
  - b) Exalting self not God

**c. Is all public prayer (praying in public) wrong?**

- 1) Jesus prayed in the presence of His disciples – Lk.11:1
- 2) Jesus blessed the food before feeding the multitudes – Mt.14:19
- 3) Church prayed after Peter & John arrested – Acts 4:24

**d. When you pray go to inner room & shut the door**

- 1) Do everything you can to shut out disturbances
- 2) As private as can so not tempted to show off piety
- 3) Jesus regularly got away from crowds & His disciples to pray

**2. Don't do as the gentiles who pray with meaningless repetition**

**a. Refers to thoughtless idle chatter**

- 1) Do so because is easy & demands little or no concentration
- 2) Value in prayer seen in quantity of words not the quality of them

**b. Pagans thought their deities had to be awakened or intimidated**

- 1) Acts 19:24-34 – crowd chanted same words for 2 hours
- 2) Examples
  - a) Buddhists spin wheels containing written prayers
  - b) Catholic tradition of lighting candles
  - c) Catholic tradition of reciting the rosary  
(Started from Buddhism by way of Spanish Muslims)
  - d) Charismatic groups repeat same words or phrases until it degenerates into unintelligible confusion

**c. All of us have been guilty of doing this**

- 1) Repeating same prayers meal after meal
- 2) Praying with little or no thought to the words we are speaking
- 3) Remember – repetition is not what is forbidden (meaningless)
  - a) Lk.18:1-7 – parable of widow
  - b) 2 Cor.12:7,8 – Paul repeated same 3X
  - c) Mt.26:39-44 – Jesus in garden

### 3. God already knows your needs

#### a. Purpose of prayer is not to inform God of our situation

- 1) He knows the end from the beginning
- 2) Nothing is hidden from Him

#### b. Yet He wants to hear from us – commune with us

- 1) His love & concern for us is far greater than ours is for Him
- 2) He urges us to come before Him in sincere confidence & pour out our hearts before Him – 1 Pet.5:7; Phil.4:4-7

### 4. The importance of prayer

#### a. See the life of Jesus

- 1) Habitually rose up early to pray
- 2) In evenings at Mount of Olives

#### b. Sadly most Christians do not sense prayers importance

- 1) **Saying** – Christians offer prayers like sailors use their pumps – when the ship leaks
- 2) **Scriptures**
  - a) James 5:16 – prayers of righteous
  - b) Abraham’s servant prayed & Rebecca appeared
  - c) Jacob prayed & Esau’s mind turned from anger
  - d) Hannah prayed & Samuel was conceived
  - e) Isaiah & king Hezekiah prayed & 185,000 Assyrians died
  - f) Elijah prayed & didn’t rain for 3 years
- 3) So important part of Spirit’s work is intercession – Rom.8:26,27

#### c. Prayer’s purpose is to glorify God – Jn.14:13

### 5. A model for prayer

#### a. Never intended to be recited or repeated as a prayer

- 1) **Words** – pray then in this way
  - a) Lk.11:1 – Disciples want Jesus teach them how to pray
  - b. Not looking for a prayer – certain words that get God’s attention
- 2) Jesus had just warned them not to pray with meaningless words
- 3) Nowhere in NT do we find this prayer repeated
- 4) It is a skeleton, not a substitute for our own prayers

#### b. Our Father who is in heaven

- 1) Title especially for believers & followers of Jesus
  - a) Satan is father to unbelievers – Jn.8:44
  - b) He is the Father of all in creation, but not in relationship (Acts 17:28)
  - c) Believers given right to become children of God – Jn.1:12
- 2) Realize as we come as His children
  - a) Ends all fear – He is our Father – Eph.3:20
  - b) Gives us hope & settles all uncertainties – Mt.7:11; Jn.10:29
  - c) Never to be alone or rejected again – Heb.13:5,6
  - d) Eliminates selfishness – plural pronoun “our”

**c. Hallowed be your name**

- 1) **Prayer** = a demonstration of reverence, appreciation & honor to God
- 2) **Hallowed**
  - a) Means to make holy; acknowledge His holiness
  - b) God is intrinsically holy (is, always has been & always will be)
  - c) Holiness is something that is uniquely His
  - d) To hallow His name is to revere, honor, glorify & obey Him
  - e) His name is hallowed when
    - (1) We behave in conformity to His will
      - (a) Mt.7:21-23 – more than say Lord
      - (b) 1 Cor.10:31 – do all to His glory
    - (2) As we attract others to Him by our commitment to Him
- 3) **Name** = more than a title – represents all that He is = character
  - a) Ex.34:5,6 – characteristics of God
  - b) Each of titles of God in scripture reveal His character & will
    - (1) Elohim – creator
    - (2) El Elyon – possessor of heaven & earth
    - (3) Jehovah Jireh – the Lord will provide
    - (4) Jehovah Shalom – the Lord of peace
    - (5) Jehovah Tsidkenu – the Lord our righteousness
  - c) Jesus is the greatest revealer of God's name – Jn.1:18; 17:6

**d. Your kingdom come**

- 1) **Kingdom** – the rule & reign of God
  - a) Jesus came to bring this about on earth
    - (1) To destroy the work of the devil
    - (2) To restore man back to God
  - b) Our desire ought be – God rules in all men's lives
    - (1) That God rule & His name enthroned in man's heart
    - (2) Would think, speak & act in accordance with His will
  - c) Church is God's kingdom on earth
    - (1) Col.1:12,13
    - (2) Rev.1:6,9
- 2) **Your will be done**
  - a) **God's sovereignty**
    - (1) God has absolute rule & authority
    - (2) Yet God's will is often not done on earth
      - (a) Not God's will that people die – else why did Jesus come to destroy death – Heb.2:
      - (b) Not God's will that people go to hell – 2 Pet.3:9
      - (c) Not God's will that man sins; rejects Jesus etc  
Mt.23:37-39; Lk.13:34
  - b) **God is looking for obedience from His creation**
    - (1) Ps.103:20 – what angels do in heaven
    - (2) What He wants us to do on earth – unwaveringly, completely, sincerely, willingly, fervently etc.

**e. Give us this day our daily bread**

**1) Bread represents all physical needs**

- a) Everything necessary for the preservation of life
- b) Every physical thing comes from God's provision

**2) Give** = recognize that He is the source – 2 Cor.9:10,11

**3) Us** = those who belong to Him

- a) Throughout history there have been famines & plagues
- b) Cause is spiritual – not the lack of resources

(1) Only 15% of land used for agriculture ( 1/2 year use)

(2) No major area in the world is incapable of supporting its population

(3) Places where Christianity is not accepted place a low value on human life

(a) India – Hinduism promotes their poverty  
poverty, disease & starvation are just divine judgments which a person must accept as penance to be born into a higher life form.  
To help them would interfere with the karma & do them spiritual harm.

(b) Communist countries; dictatorships etc

(4) Christian influence on Europe & America blesses

(a) Concern for human rights

(b) Care for the poor & the sick

(c) Care for orphans; prison reforms; hospitals

(5) Today humanism threatens all this

(a) Abortion

(b) Euthanasia

**f. Forgive us as we forgive others**

**1) Man's greatest enemy is sin**

- a) It dominates man's mind & heart – Eph.2:1-3
- b) It has contaminated everyone – Rom.3:10-19
- c) It brings misery, death & damnation

**2) Jesus came to eliminate this problem** – seek & save lost

- a) Rom.8:1 – in Christ we are freed
- b) Yet sin continues to plague us – 1 Jn.1:8-10
- c) Thus we need continual forgiveness

**3) The prerequisite for forgiveness** – forgiving others

**a) Why be forgiving?**

(1) It is the character of righteousness – the mark of a truly regenerated heart (character of God in us)

(2) Jesus' example – Eph.4:32; 1 Jn.2:6

(3) Because it reflects God's glory – Mt.5:16

(4) To free us from guilt & bitterness – Ps.66:18

(5) To escape God's discipline Heb.12:5-13; 1 Cor.11:30

**b) God deals with us as we treat others** Mt.6:14,15; Mk.11:25

**g. Lead us not into temptation**

**1) Paradox**

- a) God can't sin or entice anyone to sin – James 1:13-15
- b) Would never purposely entice anyone to sin
- c) Yet allows us to be tempted to do evil – see Job

**2) Trials & temptations are a means for our spiritual growth**

- a) James 1:2-4
- b) Heb.12:5ff

**3) Yet we have no desire to be in a place where be tempted**

- a) Jesus asked that cup be taken away
- b) Paul wanted the thorn removed
- c) Gods promise - situation for our good – Gen.50:20; Rom.8:28

## **Fasting That Matters**

### **Introduction**

In chapter 6 Jesus has been discussing the perversion of God's standards by the religious of His day in the areas of giving & praying. They had made a mockery of these & turned them into mere rituals done for the exclusive purpose of showing man how religious they were. Spiritually their actions were worthless, something that God hated & despised. Jesus has been showing His disciples what real giving was & what real praying was all about. It was to be done secretly, solely for the purpose of glorifying God. The same is also true for fasting.

### **Matthew 6:16-18**

#### **1. The practice of fasting**

##### **a. By the pagans**

- 1) Believed demons entered the body through food
- 2) Felt under demonic attack – to prevent more demons from entering
- 3) Yogis of most eastern religions & cults fast for long periods of time
  - a) Receive mystical visions & insights during these times
  - b) Time of greater enlightenment
- 4) Today it is popular for physical & cosmetic reasons
- 5) Bible nowhere teaches fasting for practical reasons
  - a) Always has a spiritual purpose
  - b) Never presented as having any value in & of itself

##### **b. By Jews in OT times**

- 1) **Only time commanded** is in connection with Day of Atonement
  - a) Lev.16:29-33 – must deny yourselves (humble your soul)
  - b) Lev.23:26-32 – deny self
  - c) Was a national fast involving every man, woman & child
  - d) Forsook food as an act of self-denial
  - e) Did so once a year & was an integral part of the worship
- 2) **Many in Bible practiced fasting**
  - a) Moses; Samson; Samuel; Hannah; David; Elijah; Ezra  
Nehemiah; Ester; Daniel
  - b) Some in NT also practiced fasting – Jesus; Anna; John the Baptist & his disciples; Paul
- 3) **Often spoken about favorably** but except for the Day of Atonement is never required; not a spiritual duty – always voluntary thing

#### **2. Hypocritical fasting**

##### **a. Many made obvious display of their fasting** – self righteous & proud

- 1) A ritual to gain merit with God & get attention from men
- 2) Largely a religious show
- 3) Many Pharisees fasted twice a week Mon. & Thurs.– Lk.18:12

- 4) Reasoning behind 2X week
  - a) Days Moses made trips to receive tablets from God
  - b) Also were the major Jewish market days (crowds)
- 5) Practice
  - a) Put on a gloomy face & neglect appearance
  - b) Wear old clothes purposely torn & soiled
  - c) Make a mess of their hair
  - d) Cover selves with dirt & ashes
  - e) Use makeup to make them look pale & sickly
- 6) Whole purpose – to be seen of men to fast
- b. Some saw no purpose for fasting** – of no value
  - 1) A useless exercise physically & spiritually
  - 2) Food was a gift from God & would be judged for having not eaten

### 3. Proper fasting

- a. Legitimate form of spiritual devotion** – mentioned about 30X in NT
  - 1) “When you fast” – indicates fasting is normal & acceptable
    - a) Jesus expected His disciples to fast
    - b) Assumed they would, but gives no commands concerning it (when, where, how)
    - c) Validity of Day of Atonement ceased = is no command to
  - 2) Disciples didn’t fast until after Jesus resurrected – Mt.9:14,15
  - 3) Fasting never shown to be means to heightened spiritual awareness
    - a) No vision or special insight promised as some claim
    - b) Fasting is appropriate but only as a response to special times of testing, trial & struggling
- b. Some reasons to fast**
  - 1) **In times of great sorrow**
    - a) David when his child dying – 2 Sam.12:16
    - b) David when Abner died – 2 Sam.3:35
    - c) David on behalf of his enemies – Ps.35:13
  - 2) **In times of overwhelming danger**
    - a) Jehoshaphat when threatened by enemy – 2 Chron.20:3
    - b) Ester before going before the king – Ester 4:16
    - c) As exiles leaving Babylon for Judah – Ezra 8:21-23
  - 3) **When expressing penitence**
    - a) David after his sins over Bath Sheba
    - b) Ahab after being confronted by Elijah – 1 Kings 21:27
    - c) Nineveh after Jonah’s preaching – Jonah 3:5-7
    - d) Daniel after understanding Jeremiah’s prophecy  
Dan.9:2,3
  - 4) **When beginning an important task or ministry**
    - a) Mt.4 – Jesus before Satan tested him
    - b) Acts 13:2,3 – before sending Paul & Barnabus
    - c) Acts 14:23 – before appointing elders

**c. Fasting is always linked with prayer & obedience**

- 1) Can pray without fasting, but can't fast properly without praying
  - a) Fasting is an affirmation of intense prayer
  - b) The outcome of a deep spiritual struggle with God
  - c) Never to be done for merit – is a sin when done for any reason apart from knowing & following the Lord's will.
- 2) **Must be associated with obedient godly living**
  - a) Zech.7:5-10
  - b) Isa.58:5-9
  - c) Can be no right fasting apart from a right heart, right living & the right attitude

**d. Benefits to fasting**

- 1) Deepen humility – Ps.35:13; Ezra 8:21
- 2) Helps us focus – Jn.4:31,32
- 3) To triumph over the flesh – 1 Cor.9:27

**e. Dangers when fasting**

- 1) **Doing for wrong motivation**
  - a) Ritual to earn merit – Zech.7:1-7
  - b) Has some magical power in itself
  - c) To parade your humility - Mt.6:16-18
- 2) **Failing to follow through with an obedient lifestyle**

## Where Is Your Treasure?

### Introduction

Human beings are naturally “thing” orientated, inclined to wrap ourselves up in seeking, enjoying & protecting material possessions. In Jesus’ day & as is still true today, even the religious were preoccupied with things. In all walks of life we find people being greedy, covetous, manipulative & grasping after material things. Lk.16:14 says that the Pharisees “loved money” which adds to the long list of things Jesus uses to illustrate living in true righteousness. In the rest of chapter six Jesus deals with man’s perverted view concerning non-essential things as well as his perverted view concerning essential things. In this lesson we will examine His teaching about non-essential riches.

### Matthew 6:19-24

#### 1. Wrong values & actions always seem to be accompanied by greed & immorality.

- a. 2 Pet.2:1-3 – greed led to the exploitation of believers
- b. 2 Pet.2:13,14 – experts in greed seduce the unstable
- c. 1 Sam.2:12-25 – Eli’s sons took advantage of their priestly position
- d. Jn.2:14-16 – High Priest ran or licensed concessions in God’s Temple
- e. Throughout history religious charlatans used ministry to accumulate wealth
  - 1) Saw their prosperity as an evidence of their spirituality
  - 2) Thought were blessed because they were spiritually superior
  - 3) Deut.28:1,2 – blessings come upon you & accompany you
    - a) Are contingent upon obedience – if greed motivates not of God
    - b) Claiming God’s approval based on wealth perverts God’s word
- f. **Reality** - the root cause behind economic problems is sin
  - 1) Problems are brought about by greed
  - 2) Also they seem to be impossible to solve because of that same greed

#### 2. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth

- a. **Words** – “lay up” & “treasure” come from the same Greek word
  - 1) “Thesaurus” = English word Thesaurus
  - 2) **Literally** – do not treasure up treasure for yourselves
  - 3) **Idea is stockpiling & hoarding wealth** – wealth not being used
    - a) Storing it for safekeeping
    - b) Kept to make a show or to create an environment of over indulgence – Lk.12:16-21
- b. **Jesus doesn’t teach that poverty is the way to spirituality**
  - 1) Only once told someone to sell all he had & give to the poor – Mt.19:21
    - a) Purpose behind that was wealth was his idol
    - b) Was a barrier between him & eternal life (following Jesus)
    - c) Excellent opportunity to tell how committed the man was
    - d) Problem was not his wealth but his unwillingness to part with it
    - e) Had he given it up would receive 100X that – Mt.19:29

- 2) Jesus doesn't tell His disciples to give up all their wealth
  - a) He does require obedience no matter what this might cost
  - b) Foundational truth underlying "don't steal" & "don't covet" is the right to personal have property
  - c) Stealing & coveting is wrong because what is stolen or coveted rightfully belongs to another
- 3) Ananias & Sapphira did not die because they kept back some of the profits, but because they lied to the Holy Spirit
  - a) They were selfish but they had the right to keep their wealth
  - b) Acts 5:4 – rightfully theirs before & after sale
- 4) God expects us to be thankful & even enjoy our material blessings
  - a) 1 Tim.6:17 – provided for our enjoyment
  - b) Warning is about being conceited & trusting our wealth
- 5) Many of God's faithful were rich
  - a) Abraham
  - b) Job
  - c) Many verses encourage hard work & good business practices
    - (1) Mt.25:14-30
    - (2) Prov.6:6-8
    - (3) Prov.14:23
    - (4) Prov.24:3,4
    - (5) Prov.28:19

**c. It is right to provide for our families – make reasonable plans for future**

- 1) Make wise investments – have money to carry on business
- 2) Give to the poor & support the Lord's work
- 3) Being dishonest, greedy, covetous & stingy that is wrong
- 4) To honestly earn, save & give is wise & good
- 5) To hoard & spend only on ourselves is sinful

**d. The key to Jesus' warnings is the word "yourself"**

- 1) To accumulate for our own sake is sin
- 2) Whether it is to hoard it or to spend it selfishly
- 3) When everything is for self – it has become an idol

**3. Laying up treasures on earth is always insecure**

**a. Nothing we own on earth is completely safe**

- 1) Always be thieves & things which devour possessions
- 2) Whatever the possessions – on earth it is corruptible

**b. Using your time & possessions to serve others = heavenly treasures**

- 1) 1 Tim.6:17-19
- 2) Gal.6:7-10

**c. Heavenly security is the only absolute security**

#### 4. Where you store your treasure effects your heart

##### a. Where treasure is – heart is

- 1) Treasure possessions = heart centered on earthly
- 2) Treasure in heaven = heart centered spiritually
- 3) The location of our treasure indicates where our heart already is

##### b. Sinful acts originate in sinful hearts – righteous acts in righteous hearts

- 1) Mt.12:33-37
- 2) James 4:4

#### 5. Single vision

##### a. Jesus uses the eye as an illustration of the heart

- 1) The lamp or lens of the body is the eye
  - a) Only channel for illumination we possess
  - b) Our only means of vision
- 2) Spiritually the heart is the eye of the soul
  - a) Everything spiritual comes through our heart
  - b) When heart (spiritual eyes are clear) whole body is full of light
    - (1) Clear means single – single-minded devotion
    - (2) When heart is clear (fully devoted to God) our whole spiritual being flooded with spiritual understanding

##### b. Eyes bad = evil or full of evil.

- 1) Bad eye = Jewish colloquialism for stingy or grudging
  - a) Deut.15:7-11
  - b) Prov.23:6-8
- 2) A bad eye is a heart that is selfishly indulgent
  - a) Materialistic, greedy & spiritually blind
  - b) He is blind because no real light can enter

##### c. No one can serve two masters

- 1) World & God are diametrically opposed
  - a) Can't coexist
  - b) Gal.5:16-19
  - c) Rom.6:18
- 2) Jesus can't be our Lord if our allegiance is to anything else
  - a) Lk.6:46
  - b) When know His will & resist – our allegiance is elsewhere

## **Don't Worry About The Essentials**

### **Introduction**

In the previous lesson we saw Jesus teach about our attitude toward luxuries, the unnecessary physical possessions people stockpile for selfish reasons. In this lesson we will focus on what Jesus says about our attitude toward the necessities in life, things that we absolutely must have to exist. Both lessons concern our attitude toward monetary things though each from different perspectives. Our last lesson's focus was more to the rich who have a tendency to trust in their riches. This lesson deals more with the attitude of the poor who have a tendency to doubt God's provision.

### **Matthew 6:25-34**

#### **1. The need for teachings on attitudes toward monetary things.**

##### **a. Attitudes toward material possessions says a lot about spiritual character**

- 1) As earthly creatures it is natural to be concerned with earthly things
  - a) However, in Christ we were recreated as heavenly beings
  - b) Now our focus should primarily be heavenward
- 2) 16 of the 38 parables deal with money (nearly half)
  - a) 1 out of 10 verses in NT deals with money
  - b) In scripture
    - (1) Are about 500 verses on prayer
    - (2) Are less than 500 verses dealing with faith
    - (3) Are over 2000 verses dealing with money

##### **b. We live in an age of shameless materialism**

- 1) Greed, ambition, self-indulgence & obvious consumption prevail
- 2) Our emphasis on continuous economic growth has become a black hole
  - a) Already sucked up the majority of world's natural resources
  - b) Even Christians are consumed with this attitude = hard to relate

#### **2. To worry is to be unfaithful to God**

##### **a. "Therefore" – refers back to previous verse**

- 1) Can't serve two masters – either God or money
- 2) A bondservant's only responsibility is to his master
  - a) As Christians our master is God
  - b) Because God is our master - to worry is a sin

##### **b. "Don't be anxious about your life" = physical, mental, emotional & spiritual**

- 1) Command is all inclusive – everything about life
- 2) Absolutely nothing justifies worry when we have God as our master

##### **c. When we worry we are distrusting both the promises & providence of God**

- 1) Root of English word worry = to strangle or choke
- 2) Is precisely what worrying does physically, emotionally & spiritually
- 3) Our natural state of mind ought to be contentment
  - a) Phil.4:11-13
  - b) 1 Tim.6:6-8

- 4) Our God owns everything – Ps.24:1
  - a) Everything we have (now or ever will have) belongs to God
  - b) Why worry about Him taking from us what is already His?
- 5) Our God also controls everything – Dan.2:20-21
- 6) Our God is also the provider of everything
  - a) Gen.22:14 – Abraham’s faith
  - b) Phil.4:19 – to be our faith

**d. “Is not life more than”**

- 1) Eating, drinking & clothing only pertain to the physical body
- 2) Life is far more than just caring for the physical body
- 3) Our bodies are not the source of life – God gave them life

**3. Worry is unnecessary because God is our Father**

**a. Foolish to worry about food – “look at the birds”**

- 1) They have no intricate & involved process for acquiring food
  - a) Don’t sow or reap or gather into barns
  - b) Lord provides them with the resources needed to eat  
(Abundance & instincts to find them)
  - c) Gather food until they have enough – then go on with life
- 2) If God cares for insignificant creatures – why worry?
  - a) You are created in His image
  - b) You are now His chosen ones

**b. Foolish to worry about the length of our life “does worry add time to life”**

- 1) Today people are obsessed with trying to lengthen life
  - a) Eat right; exercise regularly; supplement diet with vitamins
  - b) Do almost anything to add a few years to life
- 2) These may improve the quality of life –will not force God to lengthen it
  - a) Heb.9:27 – appointed once to die
  - b) God knows when where & how – in His hands
- 3) However, people can worry themselves to death
  - a) Worry affects every organ in the body adversely
  - b) Our concern should be to obey, honor & please God

**c. Foolish to worry about clothing “consider the lilies”**

- 1) Wild flowers beautify the fields (even some of the weeds)
  - a) Fields make no effort to design or color themselves
  - b) Yet God makes even the deserts bloom with color
- 2) Man spends so much time & energy to dress himself
  - a) Lust after costly stylish clothes
  - b) Base motivation is pride

**d. To worry about such things shows how little our faith really is**

- 1) We have little or no faith that God will finish what He has begun
- 2) Think about it - You believe that God can save you, break the power of Satan & prepare for you a place in heaven & yet do not trust Him to supply your daily needs – how foolish.

- e. **Worry is a blow to both God's love & His integrity**
- 1) Our worry says that our God is untrustworthy
    - a) That His word & His promises mean nothing
    - b) That He will not honor them
  - 2) Worry says we are mastered by our circumstances not by our God
    - a) Our perspective & understanding matters more than His word
    - b) Slanders & smears God's reputation & name
4. **Worry is inconsistent with our faith "acting like gentiles"**
- a. **Worry is a characteristic of unbelief**
    - 1) Those who have no hope naturally put their hope in physical things
      - a) They have nothing to live for except the present
      - b) They have no God to supply their needs – present or eternal
      - c) Anything they get they must get for themselves
    - 2) Gods of the world are inspired by Satan – 1 Cor.10:20
      - a) Are uncaring – gods of fear, dread & appeasement
      - b) Gods who demand much, promise little & provide nothing
  - b. **God knows you need all these things**
    - 1) Phil.4:6 – worry about nothing
    - 2) Rom.12:2 – don't conform to the world
  - c. **Seek 1<sup>st</sup> His kingdom & His righteousness**
    - 1) Focus your attention & hope on the things of the Lord
    - 2) Seek the things of the one to whom we belong
    - 3) Lose yourself in obedience to the Lord – Acts 20:24; Phil.1:21
      - a) Win people to Jesus
      - b) Glorify God in everything you do
      - c) Col.3:1-4
5. **Worry is unwise – tomorrow is in God's hands**
- a. God is the God of today as well as the God of tomorrow – Lam.3:22,23
  - b. Concentrate on the temptations, trials & opportunities of today
  - c. Make reasonable plans for the future, but don't worry about it
  - d. Isa.26:3,4 - You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

## The Sin Of Having A Judgmental Spirit

### Introduction

In the first 12 verses of chapter 7, Jesus sums up God's principles concerning human relationships – stop criticizing & start loving. Problem - anytime an individual or a group of people develops their own standards of religion or morality, they will inevitably begin to judge others by those standards or beliefs. In Jesus' day, Jewish leaders had for centuries modified God's word to suit their own thinking & had replaced God's word with these traditions. In addition the Pharisees of Jesus' day had become overly critical & proudly looked down on anyone who was not like them. They were unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful & totally lacking in compassion & grace & therefore evaluated others based totally upon appearances.

### Matthew 7:1-6

#### 1. Understanding a judgmental spirit

##### a. Classic example – Lk.18:11-14

- 1) Parable of Pharisee & tax collector
- 2) The inseparable result of justifying ourselves is condemning others
- 3) When we elevate ourselves everyone else is lowered accordingly

##### b. Erroneous use of this passage

- 1) **Some say passage teaches believers never to evaluate or criticize**
  - a) World hates absolutes, especially spiritual & moral absolutes
  - b) This interpretation provides them an escape from condemnation
- 2) **Many teach an all-inclusive love & unity doctrine**
  - a) They resist dogmatism & strong convictions
  - b) To them emphasizing doctrine divides the church
- 3) **Reality** – God's prophets have always been confrontational
  - a) Have always been resisted – even by the religious
  - b) Sin is always opposed to righteousness – Gal.5:16,17
  - c) To the carnal person absolute doctrine & high moral standards are always going to be controversial
- 4) **Jesus does not here or anywhere else forbid courts of law**
  - a) Both the OT & NT speak of necessity of courts of law
  - b) Deut.19:15-21; Rom.13:1-7
- 5) **Christians are to be discerning about what they believe**
  - a) Mt.7:15 – beware of false prophets
  - b) Mt.18:15-17 – speak up to erring brother
  - c) Rom.16:17,18 – watch out for those who cause dissensions
  - d) 1 Cor.5:11 – remove the evil brother
  - e) Gal.1:8 – don't accept any other gospel
  - f) 2 Jn.10,11 – different doctrine = not accept
- 6) **To not rebuke sin is to not be acting in love**
  - a) Lev.19:17 – love rebukes a neighbor in wrong
  - b) 1 Cor.13:4-8 – rejoices in truth not evil

**c. Jesus condemns self-righteous egotistical judgment**

- 1) **Their primary concern** is to condemning not helping
- 2) **Are making a judgment as to the motives** of another
  - a) Something no human is capable of knowing
  - b) Rom.14:13 – don't put an obstacle in another's way
  - c) Prov.18:13 – giving an answer before one hears – jumping to conclusions before one gets all the facts
- 3) **God's example – make sure He is right first**
  - a) Gen.11:15 – tower of Babel = go see if what hear is true
  - b) Gen.18:21 – Sodom & Gomorrah = go see if true

**2. Why such judging is sinful**

**a. It gives people an erroneous concept of God**

- 1) "Lest you be judged" = reminder **we are not the final judge**
  - a) To judge & condemn them is to play God
  - b) When we take on the role of judge we blaspheme God
- 2) Rom.14:4 – to his own master he stands or falls
- 3) James 4:11,12 – become judges of the law not doers
- 4) Only God is qualified to judge the motives of the heart

**b. It gives an erroneous view of others**

- 1) Many feel free to judge because they **see themselves as superior**
  - a) Pharisees thought they perfectly measured up to God's standards
  - b) Based upon their human standards & traditions
- 2) **Jesus says** – God will judge you with same kind of judgment
  - a) When we assume - know all the facts, circumstances & motives
    - (1) Lk.12:48 – given much = much required
    - (2) James 3:1 – stricter judgment for teachers
    - (3) Called to practice what we preach – Rom.2:1,2
  - b) **God has no double standards** – He plays no favorites
    - (1) To condemn unmercifully gives the impression that we are above criticism
    - (2) Only Jesus has the right to judge – Jn.5:22

**c. It gives an erroneous view of ourselves – OK to be a critic**

- 1) "Speck" = splinter, small stick or twig
  - a) Though small in comparison with a log – not insignificant
  - b) Jesus is comparing something large with something gigantic
  - c) **Point** – sin of critic is much greater than sin of one criticized
- 2) **The self-righteous are always blind to their own sin**
  - a) Look at own sin & see righteousness
  - b) Self-righteous trust in self to determine right & wrong
- 3) **Jesus wants us to 1<sup>st</sup> stop & think about our own sin**
  - a) Until we have done than we are in no shape to help others
  - b) James 1:21-24 – hypocrite

### 3. The answer – get the right balance

#### a. “1<sup>st</sup> take the log out of your eye”

- 1) Confess your sin = self-righteousness & judgmental spirit
- 2) Ask God to forgive you
- 3) Then & only then can you see clearly enough to help others
- 4) Seeing God as the judge & others as needy sinners just like we are

#### b. Ps.51:10-12 – create in me a clean heart... then teach others

- 1) Lk.22:32 – when converted strengthen brothers
- 2) Gal.6:1 – restore with a spirit of gentleness

### 4. Believers must be discerning & make proper judgments when required

#### a. Don't give what is holy to the dogs – cast pearls before swine

- 1) Dogs were not household pets – were scavengers
  - a) Were greedy, snarling & vicious
  - b) They were dangerous & despised
- 2) Swine were also wild – considered unclean

#### b. Point – don't try to share holy things with people who are atomistic

- 1) Mt.11:25 – spiritual hidden from wise & intelligent
- 2) Mt.13:10-13 – why spoke to them in parables
- 3) Jesus showed Himself only to believers after His resurrection

#### c. Are times we just have to just turn away

- 1) Mt.10:14 – shake dust off feet
- 2) Acts 18:6 – your blood be on your own head
- 3) When people reject the gospel & insist on mocking – don't waste what is holy on them – leave them to the Lord
- 4) Titus 3:10,11 – reject a factious person after the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> warning
  - a) Don't condemn them; just recognize their self-condemnation
  - b) Mt.23:37,38; Lk.19:41,42 – Jesus wept over the city

## Allow Love To Dominate Your Relationships

### Introduction

In these verses Jesus concludes the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has stated the standards of His kingdom which relate to self, to morality, to religion, to money & possessions & now finally to relationships. In our last lesson the focus was on the negative concerning being judgmental & critical toward one another. In these verses Jesus gives us the positive side by emphasizing our actions toward others. Real love is not just the absence of judgment & criticism, or the absence of wishing or wanting evil to happen to others, but is also the willful doing of good toward others. The key in these verses is vs.12 “in everything do to others what you would want them to do to you”. Jesus gives us three reasons this should be our guiding principle in relationships.

### Matthew 7:7-12

#### 1. God's supply is unlimited – Vs.7,8

a. **We have unlimited access to His treasures** – more than enough to meet needs

- 1) Eph.1:3 – every spiritual blessing in heavenly realms
- 2) Eph.1:7,8 – riches of His grace that He lavished (super abound) on us
- 3) 2 Cor.9:10,11 – supply... increase... enlarge... made rich in every way

b. **However, this is not God giving us a blank check**

- 1) **Everyone** – refers to those who belong to God
  - a) Primary emphasis in Sermon on mount is God's family
  - b) See the repeated references to “heavenly Father” & to fellow believers as “brothers”.
  - c) Believers are the family of God – His household - Gal.1:10
- 2) **Must be obedient to God to receive promises** – 1 Jn.3:22
- 3) **Must have the right motivation** – James 4:3  
(God not obligate Himself to answer selfish worldly requests)
- 4) **Must be submissive to His will**
  - a) Mt.6:24 – Can't serve God & money
  - b) James 1:7,8 – double minded man goes unblessed
  - c) 1 Jn.5:14,15 – ask anything according to His will
- 5) **Must persevere in asking, seeking & knocking**
  - a) Tense = Present imperative
  - b) Idea is continuance & consistency – keep on asking etc.
  - c) Also see a progression of intensity – ask, seek, knock  
(each is more aggressive that the first)
- 6) **Our requests are not to just be passive** – ask & then sit & wait
  - a) Whatever we know of His will we must be doing
  - b) Ask for a job = be seeking a job while we wait
  - c) Ask for needs – be working to provide those needs
  - d) Ask for wisdom to help brother – be searching His word
  - e) It is not faith but presumption to ask for God's provisions & not use what He has already provided

- c. **For what should we ask?**
- 1) **Context** – wisdom to be discerning & not judgmental
    - a) James 1:5 – need wisdom ask God
    - b) Given principle but not specific methods for every conceivable situation – be too tedious – things changing etc.
  - 2) **God desires a relationship** – have to rely on Him directly
    - a) Have His word
    - b) Also need His Spirit to interpret & illuminate – 1 Cor.2
    - c) Need His encouragement & strengthening – Phil.4:10-13
    - d) Scripture is a storehouse of wisdom & revelation of which we can never exhaust
      - (1) Given enough truth to be responsible for actions
      - (2) Also enough mystery to keep us dependent upon God
2. **God’s example in His generosity towards us – Vs.9-11**
- a. Eph.5:1,2 – Be imitators of God... live a life of love
    - 1) God’s nature should be reflected in His people – imperfect as they are
    - 2) 1 Cor.11:1 – follow me as I follow Christ
  - b. **Compares God with unbelieving fathers**
    - 1) **Unbelieving fathers**
      - a) No father give son a stone when asks for bread
      - b) No father gives a snake (unclean) when asks for a fish
      - c) Not natural for father to ignore needs of his children
    - 2) **How much more** – limitless goodness
      - a) Lk.11:13 – give Holy Spirit to those who ask
      - b) Eph.1:3,7,8 – all spiritual blessings (lavished on us)
3. **God’s goal for His children – live the golden rule - Vs.12**
- a. **Not just doing good to those who do good to you**
    - 1) Mt.5:43-47 – even the world does this
    - 2) How we treat others is not to be determined by how they treat us
    - 3) No other religion or philosophy teaches this – Jesus is revolutionary
      - a) Jewish rabbi –  
“What is hateful to yourself, do not to someone else”
      - b) Apocryphal book of Tobit  
“What you hate, to no man do”
      - c) Confucius – “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others”
    - 4) These expressions go only as far as sinful man can go
      - a) Are essentially expressions of self-interest, but not of love
      - b) Motivation is selfish – doing no harm so they will not harm us
      - c) Motivated by fear & self-preservation not real love

**b. Following this principle can only come by God's power & presence**

- 1) Fallen man is basically selfish – preoccupied with self
  - a) Root of all sin is self
  - b) We sin because we are devoted to ourselves rather than God
- 2) Only God's Spirit can empower us to keep this principle
  - a) Gal.5:23 – fruit of Spirit is love
  - b) Rom.5:5 – poured out His love into our hearts
  - c) 1 Jn.4:19 – we love because He 1<sup>st</sup> loved us
- 3) Selfless love does not serve to prevent its own harm or to insure its own welfare
  - a) It serves for the sake of the one served & also serves in the way it likes to be served whether it receives such service or not.
  - b) That's the level of love God has & such a level can only be achieved by His help. Only through the help of God's Spirit can God's children have such a relationship with others.

## Making The Right Choices

### Introduction

Our lives are filled with decisions – many are trivial & insignificant while some are essential & life changing. The most critical of all decisions concerns our decision about Jesus. This choice ultimately determines our eternal destiny. God has always allowed man to choose whether he would follow God or reject Him & bring about his own destruction. In addition God has continuously pleaded with man, even bent over backwards to provide & show the way to salvation. Nothing has been left for man to do except to make the choice to accept God's provision. In these last passages of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus again pleads for those listening to make the right choice.

### Matthew 7:13,14

#### 1. Man must choose God's way

##### a. OT

- 1) Deut.30:19,20 – set before you life & death
- 2) Joshua 24:13-15 – choose you this day whom you will serve
- 3) 1 Kings 18:21 – how long will you hesitate between two opinions
- 4) Jer.21:8 – set before you the way of life or the way of death

##### b. Jesus can't just be admired or praised – must be obeyed

- 1) **Rest of sermon** – Jesus repeatedly points out two things
  - a) The necessity to choose God or not
  - b) Choices are two & only two
- 2) **The choices are God's way or man's way**
  - a) Two gates – two ways & two destinies
  - b) Two groups – two trees – two fruits
  - c) Two kinds of people, two builders; two foundations, two houses

#### 2. The text

##### a. **Enter** – aorist imperative = demands a definite & specific activity

- 1) Command is not to admire or ponder, but to enter
  - a) Many admire Jesus' words but never follow His principles
  - b) Openly respect & praise Him, never make Him Lord
- 2) Enter the narrow gate
  - a) Everyone enters some gate – wide or narrow
  - b) Only the narrow gate leads to life
  - c) Narrow – can bring no one else or nothing with you
    - (1) Don't come through in groups
      - (a) Being in right church not sufficient
      - (b) Being descendant of Abraham insufficient
      - (3) Is no security in numbers
    - (2) Can't carry with you the baggage of sin or self-will
    - (3) Rich young ruler – sell all have & give away
    - (4) Lk.14:24-33 – renounce all have

- 3) Only choice that blesses is the choice to make Jesus Lord
  - a) Jn.14:6 – I am the way
  - b) Jn.10:9 – I am the door
  - c) Acts 4:12 – only name under heaven whereby man saved
  - d) 1 Tim.2:5 – one mediator between God & man

**b. The broad way**

- 1) Is easy, attractive, inclusive & permissive
- 2) Are few rule, restrictions or requirements
- 3) Just profess Jesus or at least be religious
- 4) Sin is tolerated & truth is modified & not followed
- 5) God's word is admired but not studied or studied but not followed
- 6) Spiritual maturity, commitment or sacrifice is not required

**c. The narrow way**

- 1) Is hard, demanding & filled with self-denial
- 2) Root word means, "to groan from being under pressure"
- 3) Few find it
  - a) Implies it must be diligently sought
  - b) No one stumbles or just wanders in – take conscious, purposeful & intense effort
  - c) Those who want the kingdom at any cost will find it
  - d) God's way to salvation is simple but not easy

**c. Both ways point to life – only one way leads there**

- 1) Both are marked heaven – one gets there
- 2) Destruction = total ruin or loss (not annihilation)
- 3) Lk.13:24-27 – seek to enter & can't
- 4) No limits to numbers that can get in – plenty of room
  - a) Jn.14:1-3 – many mansions
  - b) 2 Pet.3:9 – God desires all men to be saved

**Matthew 7:15-20**

**1. Beware of false prophets**

**a. Not all who claim to speak for God do**

- 1) Not a new problem – Deut.13:1-5
- 2) Ass seeking to enter – will be distractions – those who mislead you
  - a) Mt.24:3-5,24
  - b) 2Jn.7 – many deceivers gone into world
  - c) Rom.16:17,18 – cause divisions & hindrances
  - d) 1 Tim.4:1 – deceitful spirits
  - e) 1 Jn.4:1 – test the spirits
  - f) Acts 20:29-31 – from your own number

**b. God allows them to flourish**

- 1) Zech. 11:16 – raise up false shepherd
- 2) 2 Thess.2:9-12 – lawless one deceive many
- 3) Reason – man refuses to accept God's truth

**c. Note false prophets are dangerous**

- 1) When we play with snakes we are going to get bit
- 2) We should not expose our minds to them – deception
- 3) Like wolves – merciless & ferocious; clever & wily – always looking for a victim
- 4) Wolves in sheep's clothing – not what they appear to be
  - a) Like terrorist – blends in
  - b) When enemy seen for what he is – prepared defend self

**d. Know them by their fruit – lifestyle & character**

- 1) Will say right things - even do some right things
- 2) In it for himself not God – greed, ego, prestige, power & recognition
3. No need be deceived if we are looking closely
  - a) If careless about study & obedience to word – easily deceived
  - b) If lazy about prayer & the critical things of God
- 4) Lk.3:8-13 – bring forth fruits of repentance
- 5) James 2:14-26 – faith coupled with works
- 6) 1 Jn.3:4-10 – not continue to live in sin
- 7) Gal.5:16-23 – fruit of the Spirit vs. works of the flesh
- 8) 2 Pet.1:5-11 – growing

**e. Known by their doctrine**

- 1) Incomplete or distorted view of Jesus
  - a) Ignore or pervert God's standards
  - b) Always emphasizes own works not those of Jesus
- 2) No brokenness over sin – no longing for righteousness
  - a) Jer.6:14 – crying peace when there is no peace
  - b) Speak encouraging words but no words of correction
  - c) Speak of the love of God but not our call to holiness
- 3) Attract people that are superficial & self-centered

## Beware Of Personal Deception

### Introduction

As Jesus ends His sermon on the mount, He has been calling for His listeners to seriously consider His words. The way to life is narrow & extremely restrictive & very few find it. Also along the way are false prophets who will seek to deceive us. However deception is not always external, we can deceive ourselves with empty words with no follow through in action. Mere intellectual knowledge & verbal confession of Jesus as lord is insufficient. In these last comments He speaks to those who say but do not do & to those who hear but do not do.

### Matthew 7:21-29

#### 1. Jesus is addressing the religious not unbelievers

- a. Those who are deluding themselves into thinking they are on the road to heaven
  - 1) 2 Tim.3:5 – have a form of godliness
  - 2) Most Americans profess to be born again Christians – few live like it
  - 3) Mt.25:1-12 – foolish virgins sought to enter wedding feast
  - 4) Mt.25::32,33,41-46 – goats surprised Lord reject them
- b. How are people so deceived?
  - 1) **Are holding to a false doctrine of assurance**
    - a) One converting them did not reveal whole truth
    - b) Told to just pray or make a confession but no follow through
    - c) Told to never doubt that what they did was enough
    - d) Never been convicted by the Holy Spirit to truly repent
    - e) Jn.8:30-32 – true disciples abide in His word & word in them
    - f) 2 Pet.1:3-11 – calling & election is secure as we demonstrate genuine salvation (add to your faith)
  - 2) **A failure to examine ourselves – oblivious to our personal sin**
    - a) Hold to a presumptuous view of grace
      - (1) Think grace allows us to continue in sin
      - (2) 1 Jn.1:8-10 – say we have no sin
    - b) Admonished to continually examine selves
      - (1) 1 Cor.11:28 – regularly as take Lord's Supper
      - (2) 2 Cor.13:5 – to see if you are walking in the faith
      - (3) Look at your heart – inner motives & desires
      - (4) Paul understood the necessity of self-examination  
1 Cor.9:24-27
    - c) People who habitually practice sin & say they follow Jesus are self-deceived
      - (1) 1 Cor.6:9,10 – unrighteous not inherit kingdom
      - (2) Eph.5:5,6 – the immoral & impure have no inheritance
      - (3) 1 Jn.3:6-10 – believer - continues in known sin – a liar

- 3) **Trusting in our religious activity**
  - a) Faithful in attendance, bible reading, prayers etc
  - b) Thinking this is sufficient to earn us heaven – all God desires
  - c) Lk.18:9-14 – thank God not like rest of men
- 4) **Thinking the good one does outweighs the bad**
  - a) Do enough good things – bad be cancelled out
  - b) Rom.3:10-19 – none good – no not one
  - c) Sin separates us from God – not just the excess sin – Rom.6:23
  - d) Isa.64:6 – our best deeds are still filthy rags
- 5) **Superficial believers**
  - a) Think because baptized are saved
  - b) Because believe in Jesus OK even though not obeying
  - c) Refuses to confess & forsake sin
  - d) Because they feel saved or have had an experience all is OK
  - e) Concern is what they can get from God not living in holiness

## 2. Empty words – vs.21-23

### a. Lord, Lord

- 1) Lord - simply refers to a title of honor or respect
- 2) Lord, Lord implies much more than respect (see context)  
(Prophesied, cast out demons & performed miracles in His name)
- 3) **Idea** - saying they are devoted to Him as their Lord

### b. Only those who do the will of The Father enter kingdom

- 1) What one says only has validity if they are doing as they say
- 2) **At issue is obedience**
  - a) Col.1:22,23 – if you continue in the faith
  - b) 1 Tim.4:16 – perseverance leads to salvation
  - c) Heb.3:14 – share in Christ if hold firmly to the end
  - d) Heb.10:38,39 – God not pleased with those who shrink back
  - e) 1 Jn.2:19 – if belonged with us would remain with us
- 3) **Salvation & obedience to God's word are inseparable**
  - a) Heb.5:9 – Jesus is source of salvation to those who obey Him
  - b) 1 Pet.1:22 – purify selves through obeying truth
- 4) **Empty words of devotion are worthless**
  - a) James 1:22-27 – merely listening is not enough
  - b) James 2:14-26 – faith without works is dead

### c. I never knew you

- 1) **Know** = Hebrew idiom meaning intimacy
- 2) To professes Jesus but not live in righteousness = have no part in Him
- 3) **Evil-doers** (practice lawlessness) = Present participle
  - a) Indicates continuous regular action
  - b) Continually & habitually sin
  - c) Everyone sins – these are habitual sinners (lifestyle)

**d. What about the claims of these believers? (The source of their power?)**

- 1) **God allowed them to do these works**
  - a) Put His words in their mouth
  - b) Num.23:5 (Balaam)
  - c) Jn.11:51 – Caiaphas prophesied Jesus would die
- 2) **Satan was behind these works**
  - a) Acts 19:13,14 – demon possessed girl foretold future
  - b) 2 Thess.2:8-10 – able do lying wonders
- 3) **Were false claims** – faked or contrived

**3. Empty lives – vs.24-27**

- a. **Hear the words of Jesus but do not act on them**
  - 1) Think knowing (recognizing) word is enough to please God
  - 2) Live as they please not as God pleases
- b. **Refuse to build their life on the right foundation – the rock**
  - 1) Builds life on opinions – like sand - always shifting & unstable
  - 2) Looking for the quick & easy way
    - a) Looking to please self not God
    - b) Wants quick & easy solutions to problems
    - c) Wants easy discipleship
  - 3) Always has excuses for not building on the rock – Lk.9:57-62
- c. The wise build carefully
  - 1) Not satisfied with the superficial – looks for the rock
  - 2) Desires to utilize maximum effort

**4. Response to Jesus' words – amazement – vs.28,29**

- a. **Crowd was astounded, totally dumbfounded**
  - 1) Never heard anything like it
  - 2) Totally unlike anything religious leaders did when they taught
- b. **Jesus quoted God's word not tradition**
  - 1) God's word was the final authority
  - 2) Spoke truth without hesitation or consultation

# A People of the Book

*Where Truth and Love Abound*



## Our Service Schedule

Sunday:	10:00 a.m.	Bible Study (classes for all ages)
	11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.	Worship
Wednesday:	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study (classes for all ages)

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