

THE GREATEST SERMON EVER PREACHED...

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Synopsis for “*Sermon on the Mount*” - Matthew 5

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GOD'S SECRET TO TRUE HAPPINESS!

The 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of Matthew has long been recognized as the model for Christian living. While it is perhaps the most quoted portion of Scripture, most people just skim the surface in understanding and appropriating its truth to their lives.

The importance of Christ's sermon cannot be exaggerated. It is the "**KEY TO THE WHOLE BIBLE**," for here Christ opens the sum of the Old and New Testaments. He begins His ministry by insisting upon repentance and then He enlarges upon this vitally important subject in a variety of ways, showing us what true repentance really is and what are its fruits. You will find the Sermon on the Mount intensely practical to your daily living!

In this series of message the Sermon on the Mount will take on new dimensions of ethical importance and daily reality as it is carefully analyzed and illustrated. These lessons will give insight into "**APPLIED CHRISTIANITY**," drawing seldom understood truth from Christ's sermon, as we investigate it verse-by-verse, answering every question raised as to the meaning of each portion of **THE GREATEST SERMON EVER PREACHED!**

Study in detail these practical "**KEYS TO EXUBERANT LIVING**" given to us by Christ Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

I will earnestly and prayerfully seek to bring out the *practical* teaching of Sermon on the Mount and show how, when correctly understood, pertinently and pointedly applies to every are of our daily living.

This series of lessons will take a fresh look at Christian concepts which have lost their original meaning for modern man.

What Did Christ Mean When He said:

- The Meek shall inherit the earth
- If thy eye be evil pluck it out
- Whosoever shall say "*thou fool*" shall be in danger of hell fire
- The *beam* in thine eye and the *mote* in thy brother's eye
- ...turn your cheek
- Let your "*yea be yea*" and your "*nay be nay*"
- Give unto him that asks

What do these colloquialisms say to us today?

THESE LESSONS ARE THE RESULT OF A LIFETIME OF STUDY AND RESEARCH!

PREFACE TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Before I get into what I believe are the most important passages of Scripture that pertain to what Christian character really is from God's point of view, I would like to share some preliminary thoughts:

Because many Christians fail to take the Bible seriously, and fail to apply Biblical principles to the basics of everyday living, their lives are lived only superficially.

The thing that, perhaps, most influences Christian living is the way that one approaches the Bible...the way one reads the Bible...and the way that one applies Biblical principles to his life.

The Bible is our only textbook...and our only source of authority...that tells us how to live. We know *nothing* about Christian living apart from the Bible.

One can, of course, draw certain deductions from nature and can arrive at a belief in a Supreme Creator, but the only means of real authority that he has is the **Bible**. The Bible [and the Bible alone] is our only source that is the infallible Word of God and **His** instructions to us on how we are to live.

HOWEVER, AS WE APPROACH THE BIBLE, WE MUST DO SO IN THE RIGHT MANNER

Merely "*reading*" the Bible is not enough. It is possible for one to read the Bible in a mechanical manner and not derive the blessings that God desires to give him. Merely reading the Bible, just for the sake of one being able to say that he has done so, will do little good in changing his life.

2 Peter 3:16 states, "*There are things [in Scripture] in themselves hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest [distort]...unto their own destruction.*"

One must always bear in mind that it is possible to read the Bible and draw conclusions that are *false*!

Heretics are, usually, not dishonest men, but, rather, they are *mistaken* men! They do not deliberately set out to go wrong, but they went wrong because they evolved a theory and then went to the Bible to try and justify that theory! By taking half a verse here...half a verse there...and by over-emphasizing other verses...they seemed able to find their theory everywhere, thereby, "*proving*" their theory by the Bible!

One must not go to the Bible with *preconceived* ideas!

There have been those in the process of church history who have turned the gospel of Christ - with its glorious liberty - into nothing but a collection of moral maxims, or legalities - by their overemphasis on law and, in the process, have made the Christian life into some- thing that

one "does" rather than something that one "is."

Others have overemphasized God's *grace*" and ignored Christ's teachings on the keeping - and living - of God's law, saying, "*God's law has nothing to do with me because I'm under His grace.*"

We should keep God's law but we should keep it as Christ's free men. This concept is the very emphasis of Christ's message to us in His Sermon on the Mount and, as we endeavor to study the content of this message, some of the questions we should ask ourselves are:

- *What does the Sermon on the Mount mean to me personally?*
- *Where do the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount fit into my life?*
[Where is their place in my thinking and in my outlook on life?]
- *Since the Sermon on the Mount has such a prominent place in the Bible, what is my relationship to it?* [What is the purpose, or the relevance, of the Sermon on the Mount to what God expects of me?]
- *Do the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount take a place of authority in my life?*

The religious leaders of Jesus' day [the Scribes and the Pharisees] were teaching a misinterpretation of God's law. Jesus, however, gives a higher spiritual content of God's law as He gives **God's** point of view of the law in the Sermon on the Mount.

THE BEATITUDES IMMEDIATELY TAKE US INTO - BEYOND ANYTHING UNDERSTOOD UP TO THIS TIME - THE REAL MEANING OF GOD'S LAW!

If we were to make a list of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount...and then were to read the Epistles...we would find this same sermon is presented throughout the Epistles because, the Sermon on the Mount is the "*seed*" of the whole Gospel message!

Christ said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, love one another.*" and the Sermon on the Mount is a grand elaboration of the concept of how we are to love one another.

The Jews had a false, materialistic, concept of God's coming kingdom. They thought that His kingdom would mean "*political emancipation*" because they were looking for a Messiah who would deliver them from Roman rule. They thought of God's kingdom in an *external* sense only. The great purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is to give an exposition of God's kingdom and to show us that His kingdom is essentially a "*spiritual*" kingdom and is primarily something "*within*" man's heart.

JESUS DOES NOT SAY THAT IF ONE LIVES A CERTAIN WAY THEN HE WILL BECOME A CHRISTIAN BUT, RATHER, HE SAYS, THAT BECAUSE ONE IS A CHRISTIAN HE SHOULD, THEREFORE, LIVE A CERTAIN WAY.

As you read and studies the Sermon on the Mount, you will begin to realize the absolute need of the Holy Spirit working within you to govern and control your heart and mind.

These beatitudes will crush you to the ground and show you how helpless you are and, were it not for the help that God gives through the power of the Holy Spirit, one would never be able to live the beatitudes!

The problem with much of the teaching on the subject of "*holiness*" is that God's promised blessings...that come as a result of a holy life...are often omitted. Too many Christians seek some *mystic* blessing and too much do they rush to meetings in the hope of getting *blessed*! Jesus tells us, however, that if we want to be blessed [**happy**] and if we want *power* in our lives what we need to do is to face the implication and demands of the Sermon on the Mount because if we do...*if we live...practice...and give ourselves to...*these injunctions then God's promised blessings will come because these injunctions lead to holiness and God's promised blessings come, as stated before, as a result...as an end-product ...of holiness...living a holy life!

Many seem to have the idea that what we need to do for evangelism is to organize some campaign to attract people and, while there is some truth in this, what the world really needs...more than anything else...is, not more exposure to *preaching*, but, rather, true, Bible-living Christians who will demonstrate to the world true, Christian - Christ-like - living!

Carnal Christians, who are not living the principles of Christian character found in the Sermon on the Mount, are keeping unbelievers away from God.

If we, Christians, lived by God's guidelines found in the Sermon on the Mount, men and women would be crowding into our church buildings, saying, "*What is the secret of your lives?*"

Christ came to earth to die for our sins in order to set man free from his sinful nature. He rose from the dead in order to provide us with His divine life and to give us a quality of life like His own life so that we might live the principles found in the Sermon on the Mount!

If we take the Sermon on the Mount seriously...and face ourselves in the light of it...those around us will see the *dynamic* of the Gospel and they will not only know that Christianity is a *living* thing but they will also be drawn...and attracted...to Jesus Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount not only points to God's demands, but it also provides the power for us to live it in our daily lives.

GOD HELP US TO FACE THIS SERMON SERIOUSLY, HONESTLY, AND PRAYERFULLY, UNTIL WE BECOME LIVING EXAMPLES OF ITS MESSAGE!

We cannot afford to be interested only in the Sermon on the Mount in an objective, intellectual sense and we must not attempt to analyze it in a mechanical manner...like one would analyze Shakespeare, for example...because we must realize that God is speaking directly to us in this sermon!

Another important point to make is that we must take the Sermon on the Mount as a *whole* because there is a danger of fixing our attention on certain particular statements...concentrating on them...and, thereby, missing the message that Christ is giving to us. No one part

of the Sermon on the Mount can really be understood except in the light of the whole!

Much like a musical composition, the whole is greater than any collection of its parts and, unless one grasps the meaning of the whole, one can never properly understand any one of its particular injunctions.

For instance...the whole Sermon on the Mount is built upon the beatitudes. Christ gives a very logical sequence...God's spiritual order...in this sermon and He does not state any passage at random or accidentally but, rather, He is very deliberate about the order of His statements. In this way He is able to lay down certain foundational truths and then, on the basis of these foundational truths, certain other truths follow.

For one to attempt to confront someone...who is not already living the beatitudes...with a particular injunction of this sermon, would be futile because one cannot take some particular point of this sermon and isolate it from the rest of the sermon without it losing the meaning that Christ intended it to have within the context of His whole message.

The whole of the Sermon on the Mount must be treated *rightly* in order for one to derive all the benefits that Christ intended for him to derive. Each teaching must be taken in its context and in the order in which it is found in Scripture.

ONE MUST BE A CHRISTIAN

No one can live the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount unless he is a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. God is not appealing to one on the basis of his conduct, ethics, or morality but, rather, He is making the assumption that one is a Christian.

A BIRD-EYE VIEW OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5

1. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER - Verses 3 to 10

2. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER PROVEN BY REACTION - Verses 11 and 12

Note that Christian character is described first *positively* and then *negatively*.

First we are told what sort of a man a true Christian is and then we are told that, because he is this sort of a man, certain things will happen.

3. THE FUNCTION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN ITS SOCIETY - Verses 13 to 16

First, in verses 3 to 16, we have broad statements regarding Christian character and, then, in verses 13 to 16 we come to particular examples of how this character is to be expressed in the world

4. CHRISTIAN CHARACTER FACING GOD'S LAW AND ITS DEMANDS - Vs.17-48

After a general description of what Christian character is [followed by two illustrations] we now see its relationship to murder, adultery and divorce and we see how this character should speak...what its attitude should be

toward retaliation...and how it should treat one's neighbors.

Matthew 6

1. THE CHRISTIAN LIVING HIS LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The Christian must be in active submission to...and have entire dependence upon... God. The Christian must be one who knows he is always in God's presence and he must be one who is interested...not in making an impression on men but, rather...in his relationship to God.

(A) WHEN HE GIVES ALMS [SERVICE] - Verses 1 to 4

(B) WHEN HE PRAYS - Verses 5 to 15

(C) WHEN HE FASTS - Verses 16-18

As the Christian meets problems in life...such as the need for food and clothing... these problems must be viewed in the light of his relationship to God -Vs.19-34

Matthew 7

1. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS TO BE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE AWARENESS OF THE **FEAR** OF GOD

The Christian is building a house by the life he lives and, because that house is going to be tested, he must always build his house with the awareness of the judgment of God!

THESE THREE CHAPTERS SHOW THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN

Chapter 5 - A Christian must be concerned about keeping God's law. The Christian is not "under law" but he still must "keep" the law and the Sermon on the Mount tell him **how** he is to keep the law and what will enable him to do so.

Romans 8:3-4 state, "*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*"

Chapter 6 - A Christian must live, always with the realization that he is in the presence of God.

The big difference between the *world* and the Christian is that every action of the Christian is performed in the light of an intimate relationship with God...or it **ought** to be!

The Christian is not a "*free agent*" to do as he pleases, but, rather, everything that he does he is to be done from the standpoint of how it pleases God.

The Christian views everything that happens to him differently than the world views it. The Christians does not worry about food, drink, housing, or clothing. It isn't that

he feels that these things don't matter, it's just that they are not his main concern. In other words, he does not live *for* these things.

A Christian does not live *out* of the world...like a monk or a hermit...but, rather, he lives out his Christianity *in* the world.

A Christian's attitude is one of utter dependence upon God and, because of his relationship with God, he never worries about life's circumstances.

Chapter 7 - A Christian always lives in the "*fear of God*." The "*fear of God*" is not a craven fear but, rather, a deep **reverence** for God.

God tells us that we are building a house which is going to be judged and, therefore, we should live our lives with the constant awareness **of** that judgment.

Jesus is telling us that the test of our lives is going to come and, when it does, we are not going to be able to rely upon our involvement in "*religious activities*" to speak on our behalf because God sees...and judges on the basis of...the **heart**. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus deals with superficialities and "*external*" religion. Scripture tells us, "*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*" and, therefore, we should live our lives with this in mind...that, one day, we will all have to appear before God and be judged by Him.

DON'T EVER BE GUILTY OF ARGUING OVER THE PARTICULARS IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND, IN THE PROCESS OF DOING SO, MISSING THE "PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING" THAT CHRIST GIVES US!

Like a proficient musician, who can mechanically sing or play all the right notes with great musical expertise...and yet miss the "*soul*" of the musical composition...we, too, can mechanically adhere to all the rules of *right* Christian conduct [or, at least, *attempt* to] and, yet, miss the "*spirit*" of what Christ is telling us about Christian behavior. Of course, the musician must not neglect the "*rules*" and techniques of the musical composition, however, it is not the technically correct execution of these rules that determines whether or not he can be classified as "*great*" because what makes him "*great*" is that "*something extra*"...that expression of the real "*spirit*" of the musical composition that the composer had in mind when he composed the piece.

We, too...as conscientious Christians, who desire to live out the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount...must not neglect the "*letter*" of those injunctions, but we must, however, put the emphasis on the "*spirit*" of those injunctions, as Christ intended that we do. It takes our adherence to both the "*letter of the law*" and the "*spirit of the law*" for us to be the kind of Christians that Christ desires us to be.

TRUE HAPPINESS

The whole world is pursuing happiness, but it is tragic to observe the ways in which people seek it because these ways are bound to produce misery! At best, the world's ways of seeking happiness offer only a temporary happiness.

The deceitfulness of sin is that it is always offering a kind of happiness that eventually leads to misery.

Jesus tells us that the only kind of person who will be blessed...truly happy...is the person who chooses to live by the principles...*God's principles*...that He gives us in the Sermon on the Mount.

JESUS CONSIDERS THE CHRISTIAN'S CHARACTER BEFORE HE CONSIDERS HIS CONDUCT

As we look at the *Beatitudes*, note the following lessons to be learned:

1. "ALL" CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE LIKE THE KIND OF CHRISTIAN THAT CHRIST DESCRIBES IN THE BEATITUDES!

The beatitudes are a description of what a Christian is meant to "*be*." It is not a description of the "*exceptional*" Christian, but is, rather, a description of what every Christian ought to be!

A fatal tendency of the Church is to divide Christians into two categories: the *clergy* and the *laity*. God never makes this distinction, so, this division is not only unscriptural but it is also destructive to true Christian living.

There are, of course, *offices* within the Church, but the beatitudes are not a description of "*offices*"...they are a description of what ALL Christians ought to be.

God calls ALL Christians "*saints*"...therefore, we are all canonized!

The idea that the height of Christian life...as described in the Sermon on the Mount...is for only a few Christians, while the rest of the Christians are meant to live on some dull plane, is NOT what God's Word teaches!

2. "ALL" CHRISTIANS ARE MEANT TO MANIFEST ALL OF THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE DESCRIBED IN THE BEATITUDES!

Not only are "*all*" Christians meant to manifest the characteristics described in the beatitudes, but also they are meant to manifest "all" of these characteristics.

Once again, Christ never intended that *some* Christians are to manifest *some* of the characteristics given in the beatitudes while other Christians are to manifest other of the characteristics, but, rather, He meant for **all** Christians to manifest **all** of these characteristics listed in the beatitudes...and to manifest them fully!

These beatitudes describe...in entirety...the whole of Christian character and this description cannot be divided up or segmented.

3. NOT ONE OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS IN THE BEATITUDES REFER TO, WHAT IS CALLED, "*NATURAL TENDENCY*!"

These characteristics of the beatitudes are produced by God's grace alone and they are an operation of the Holy Spirit.

These characteristics are **NOT** natural abilities, but, rather, they are *spiritual qualities* which can be produced in our spirits only by God Himself.

Certainly it is true that we all know some wonderful people who are nice and polite and who would never say a harsh word, however, when we begin to face the **beatitudes**...and see what Christ has to say about true Christian character...we realize that Christian character can be produced by God's grace alone!

WE CANNOT DETERMINE OUR NATURAL TEMPERAMENTS

Some of us are aggressive while others of us are quiet...some of us are quick to learn while others of us are slow to learn. Some of us are *nice* because of some biological reason, however, this has nothing to do with one's spirituality or his relationship with God.

Just as people differ, physically...in appearance...so do they differ in their temperaments...however, whatever the nature of one's temperament may be, no one of us is capable of living out...of "*being*"...the beatitudes without God's help which is why we must never confuse the beatitudes with "*natural dispositions*" because the beatitudes are characteristics that only God can produce.

4. THE "CHARACTER" DESCRIPTIONS GIVEN IN THE BEATITUDES DEFINE THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND THE NON-CHRISTIAN.

The beatitudes are not just a description of what a Christian "*does*," but they are also a description of what a Christian "*is*."

There is a great need today for a clear understanding of this difference because the distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian has become blurred...the lines of differentiation are not clearly drawn. In the past, the Church's greatest glory was when Christians were absolutely different from the world...and it is only when Christians are absolutely different from the world...when they live out the glory of the Gospel message in their lives...that men and women are attracted to Jesus Christ!

We are told that we are to be "*like Jesus*" and, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us...in detail...how this is to be accomplished in our lives.

The world speaks of "*self-expression*"..."*self-confidence*"...and the "*mastery of life*" while Jesus, on the other hand, speaks of our being "*poor in spirit*"... of being "*mourners*"...and of being "*meek*."

WHAT DO WE SEEK AFTER?

The world seeks after wealth, status and pleasures, however, Jesus tells us to seek after God and His righteousness...that is "*being right with God*."

1 Peter 2:11-12 states, "*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against*

your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us."

The world is confident in its own capacity, while the Christian is to be poignantly aware of his limitations. As we read and study the beatitudes, we realize what we are called to "**be**" as Christians...disciples of Jesus Christ...and we likewise realize that we cannot be all that we are called to be by our own efforts so...unlike the world...we place no confidence in our own capacity...or ability...to "**become**" all that God would have us to "**be**," but, rather, we rely on God's grace and Holy Spirit working within us to *achieve*" God's goals for us.

Truly we must seek after God and His kingdom [*reign*] in our lives if we ever hope to find happiness - **real** happiness!

We belong to a different world because we belong to God's kingdom!

God's kingdom is the "*reign*" of God in our lives and the realm in which He desires to reign is in our hearts. The Sermon on the Mount shows us how to recognize Christ as Lord [*Master*] of our lives.

Look at verses 9-10 of 1 Peter 2:

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

True Christian Character

- 1.** **Matthew 5:3**, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

All of us are, by nature, full of pride, self-righteousness, independence and self-centeredness, therefore, poverty of spirit is **unnatural** to us.

To be "*poor in spirit*" does **not** mean to be retiring...weak...or lacking in courage - neither does it mean to be timid...soft of character...or backward.

"*Poverty of spirit*" is not the "*I am nobody*" attitude, nor is it the "*I don't count*" disposition.

There is a big difference between saying, "*I don't count*" and saying, "*I, in my own ability, am unable to live out the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount.*"

"*Poverty of spirit*" is not a matter of *suppressing* one's personality, but is, rather, a matter of *re-pressing*...*remolding*...one's true personality.

The word "**poor**," as found in Matthew 5:3, has, in the original Greek language, the meaning of *emptying*, therefore, while the other beatitudes are a manifestation of *filling*, this first beatitude is a manifestation of *emptying*.

One cannot fill a vessel with "new wine" as long as there is "old wine" within. The old wine must be poured out first before the new wine can be poured in!

ONE MUST BE EMPTIED OF HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-IMPORTANCE AND SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD CAN FILL HIM WITH HIS CHARACTER!

The world places great emphasis upon self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-expression. This spirit controls much of our lives because we are told: "*Express yourself... believe in yourself...and realize the power innate within yourself...if you ever want to succeed in life.*"

Here, in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gives us an absolute contrast to this philosophy because He tells us that the first principle of Christian character is to be "*poor in spirit*"...to realize that, in one's self, he can do nothing when it comes to his spiritual ability to live a Godly life. Christ tells us that, in order for one to live a Godly life, he must be conscious of emptying his life of his independent, defiant, attitude!

One must realize that his best efforts, to live a Godly life, are unacceptable with God and that "*his righteousness is as filthy rags*" [Isaiah 64:6].

A scene from the book of Isaiah will help us to understand the attitude we must have, as Christians:

Isaiah said, "*I saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted*" [Isaiah 6:1] and his attitude was, "*Woe to me! I cried, 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips'*" [verse 5].

Isaiah says in 57:15, "*For this is what the high and lofty One says - He who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite [lowly, crushed and broken] and lowly in spirit, to revive [to give My divine life] the heart of the contrite.*"

The Old Testament gives us endless illustration of the kind of attitude that one must have before God can fill him with His divine character:

- (1) Gideon said, "*I am lowly*," and he shrank from greatness and honor.
- (2) Moses felt unworthy and was conscious of his inadequacy.
- (3) David said, "*Lord, who am I that Thou shouldst come to me?*"

This attitude of being "*poor in spirit*" is seen throughout the Old Testament in the lives of those whom God used. When we come to the New Testament and we see Peter, who was naturally aggressive and self-confident. Peter believed in himself, but, before God could use him,

Peter had to come to the point where he came to Christ and said, "*I am sinful, depart from me!*" [Note: Peter never ceased to be a *bold* man, and his personality remained the same, however, now he was *poor in spirit*.] Peter realized that in himself he could do nothing, that, when it came to spiritual ability, he was *spiritually* bankrupt.

Paul tells of his fight with pride in 2 Corinthians 12:5-10 and calls it "*boasting*."

2 Corinthians 12:5-10 state, "*I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*"

Paul also says in Philippians 3:4-8,

"Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

One thing that we can be certain of is that Paul, despite the tremendous powers of his own ability, became "*poor in spirit*."

Even Jesus, when He became a man said...and He said it **as** a man..."*I can do nothing of myself, what I do is the Father Who dwells in Me!*"

TO BE "POOR IN SPIRIT" IS TO HAVE TOTAL RELIANCE UPON GOD! When one is *poor in spirit* one does not rely upon his own morality, conduct, or good behavior... or any other "*ability*" he might have, for that matter. For one to live the Christian life, he must look to God, in total submission to Him, for all of his ability to live as Christ would have him live.

To be "*poor*" [completely bankrupt] means to be dependent upon someone else. When one is "*poor in spirit*" he relies entirely upon Christ's preeminence in his life, becoming a spiritual "*beggar*" in order to enjoy God's fullness.

To be "*poor in spirit*" means to, voluntarily, make Christ the object...the inspiration ...the motive...of everything that one does.

"PRIDE" IS SELF CONTROLLING...AND RULING...ONE'S OWN LIFE

- while -

"HUMILITY" IS GOD CONTROLLING...AND RULING...ONE'S LIFE

One must ask himself the question, "*Who is ruling in my life?*"

James 4:10, "*Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up!*"

1 Peter 5:6, "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.*"

Matthew 23:10, "*One is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*"

Christ, exemplifying true humility, "*Humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" [Philippians 2:8].

In the parable in Luke 18:9-14, Jesus compares the proud, haughty spirit of the publican with the humble spirit of the sinner who cried, "*God, be merciful to me a sinner.*" Christ uses this parable to illustrate what it means to exalt oneself and what it means to humble oneself.

When Christ's disciples were arguing about who is the greatest in the kingdom of God, Jesus said to them, "*He that is greatest, let him serve.*"

When Jesus took the small children [children who were in subjection to their parents] and said, "*for of such [as these] is the kingdom of heaven composed,*" He was showing His disciples what true humility is...what true "*poverty of spirit*" is...because...to be *poor in spirit* is to be truly humble!

2 *Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted!*

- Matthew 5:4

Just as "*poverty of spirit*" has nothing to do with our finances, "*mourning*" has nothing to do with the natural life but, rather...like *poverty of spirit*...refers to our *spiritual* condition.

There are three kinds of "*mourning*" referred to in Scripture:

(1) Natural mourning - a natural reaction to sorrow

(2) Sinful mourning - a hopeless remorse or an inordinate grief.

[Such as Judas' mourning over having betrayed Christ]

(3) Spiritual mourning - a Godly sorrow...a gracious mourning...
of which the Holy Spirit is the Author.

When Christ speaks of mourning in the beatitudes He is referring to "*spiritual*

mourning"...an agonizing realization of one's sinfulness. As the first beatitude speaks of poverty of "*spirit*," the second beatitude speaks of "*spiritual mourning*!"

- DO OUR SINS CAUSE US TO MOURN?
 - DO WE MOURN OVER OUR DESTITUTE SPIRITUAL STATE?

One of the most touching scenes in the Bible is when we hear Paul cry out, "*O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" God wants us to be disturbed over our sin like Paul was disturbed over his sin. Paul said, "*In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,*" and then he goes on to describe his condition by stating, "*For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing.*"

Are we that conscious of the conflict within us and does it cause us to be disturbed... to mourn?

First, one must recognize his spiritual poverty and, then, because of this poverty, he should sincerely grieve over his condition!

One of the greatest problems in the Christian world today is that there is a lack of a sense of sin! There is no real deep conviction over sinfulness. Once again the question is asked...do our sins cause us to mourn?

When we realize the things we have done...or said...or thought...which we should not have done, said, or thought and when we realize the things we are not done which we should have done...are we smitten with Godly grief? Do we mourn?

Paul said, "*What is it in me that makes me behave like this?*"

When we are irritable, bad-tempered, unkind, or envious, does it cause us to mourn?

We instinctively shrink from our sinful nature and will do anything to keep from facing it. Our very nature turns it back on sinfulness...seeks to forget it...and...in the process of forgetting it...attempts to seek for happiness. However, Jesus tells us that Christian character comes from one facing...realizing...our sinful nature and, then, letting that realization cause us to be grieved over the reality of our sin. It is after we have grieved over the sinfulness of our nature that we experience God's comfort.

When Jesus tells us about Christian character, He is not speaking of "*pious appearance*." To look at some Christians, one would think that the purpose of Christianity is to make one miserable! On the other hand, there are other Christians who...after rejecting this idea of being forlorn...have attempted to replace this woebegone attitude with a *joyful glibness* [a kind of superficial euphoria that almost borders on giddiness] as if the "*joy of the Lord*" is something that can be manufactured by human endeavor.

When one loses a sense of sorrow over his sin a "*break*" occurs in his fellowship with Christ and true Godly character is impossible!

As one learns to mourn over sin [sins of omission as well as sins of commission] his sense of right and wrong is sharpened...the end result of which is the development of Christian

character and growth in Christlikeness.

The Greek word for "*mourn*" is in the continuing present tense ...meaning past, present and future. It is an ever, ongoing, thing. The second beatitude should read: '*Blessed are those who once mourned, and is now mourning, and will continue to mourn.*' Mourning is timeless!

One's spiritual progress is determined by what it takes to make him mourn. When Christ speaks of "*mourning*" He is not necessarily referring to shedding tears, but, rather, He is speaking of possessing deep spiritual concern.

The only time Scripture mentions that Christ actually "*wept*" were those occasions when He was disturbed over sin and man's sinfulness:

1. In Luke 1: 41-44, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because Israel was rejecting Him. It was their sinfulness that brought their separation from Him.
2. In John 11:35, Jesus cries at Lazarus' tomb, not because Lazarus had died [for Jesus knew at that time that Lazarus would be raised from the dead] but, rather, because people doubted Him, failing to realize who He was.
3. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ cried out and "*began to be exceeding sorrowful*" because it was at this time that He was bearing the sins of the entire world on His own soul.

A CHRISTIAN SHOULD "*MOURN*," NOT ONLY OVER HIS OWN SIN AND SINFULNESS, BUT HE SHOULD ALSO "*MOURN*" OVER THE SIN OF THE WORLD AROUND HIM!

What does it take to cause us to mourn?

Jesus, while He had no personal sin, groaned in His spirit as He realized that those around Him were rejecting God and bringing damnation upon themselves.

Man, today, so often, when hears of, for instance, a cute little girl, who is struck down by a car...or, some other tragedy happens...he is touched and deeply grieved and, yet, he can hear of unfaithfulness toward God, of those around him, and he just yawns, looks at his watch, and remains undisturbed.

Romans 8:23 speaks of "*groaning in one's spirit, looking for one's full sonship in Christ to be realized, and his bodily redemption.*" Essentially what this Scripture passage is saying is that, until the full development of Christlikeness within us is completed at our resurrection, we are to mourn in our spirit over our sinful, flesh nature and we should be greatly disturbed...and deeply concerned...over *anything* within our self nature that causes us to sin, or keeps us from true Christian character!

". . . FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED!"

In this second beatitude, Christ is not saying that He will bestow a blessing [happiness] on someone just because he "*mourns*," but, rather, what Christ is saying is that because one

mourns over his sinfulness he, then, is driven to Him...[that is, Christ]...to be comforted ... thereby, experiencing the blessing [happiness] of knowing Christ's comfort.

1 John 1:8-9 state, "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*"

The "*comfort*" that Christ promises does not come from one looking at his weaknesses and wounds, but, rather, comes from one finding consolation from the Comforter, Jesus Christ.

The Psalms show the way of escape from life's sorrows. In Psalm 55, David says, "*My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest*" [Verses 4-8].

But then David says in verse 16, "***I will call upon God, and the Lord will save me!***" The solution of his mourning over his soul's dilemma was to turn to God.

He says in verse 22, "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved* [totter]."

Jesus tells us in this second beatitude that blessedness comes to the one who allows the sin that breaks God's heart to break **his** heart and...after mourning over sin...turns to Christ for comfort and strength.

To **not** mourn is to not care about the things that God cares about...it is to be unconcerned and light-hearted about the true values...and meaning in life...and to essentially be a pleasure seeker. To mourn, on the other hand, is to allow God's compassion to grip us with conviction over our sinfulness.

In the first beatitude, Christ asks us to realize our own spiritual inability to live the Christian life and, upon realizing this, to likewise realize our need to rely totally upon God to "**be**" all that He would have us to be. In other words, because we are "*poor in spirit*," helpless and unable to accomplish anything in our own ability in "*spirit*" development, we must put God first and uppermost in our lives.

Then, in the second beatitude, Christ states that, as we gain God's value and see sin from **His** point of view, we are deeply grieved in our spirit.

THESE ARE THE FIRST TWO STEPS
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

These first two beatitudes are about the relationship between us and God, however, in the following beatitudes, Christ begins to deal with our relationship with others.

3.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

As, was mentioned earlier, those to whom Christ spoke that day had the idea of a *materialistic* kingdom and they thought that the coming Messiah would lead them to military victory. since they were thinking in terms of conquest and fighting, what a shock it must have been to them to hear Jesus speak of "*meekness*."

The Greek word that Jesus uses for the word "*meek*," is the Greek word, "*praus*," which means "*domesticated*." The word *domesticate* means to tame a wild animal, so, when it is said of an animal that it is *domesticated*, it means that a wild animal, that once knew no restraints and did as it pleased, now must learn to accept the control of a master and learn to obey him.

"*Meekness*" does **not** mean "spiritlessness," weakness, indolence, cowardice, timidity, lack of firmness, or quietness. To be meek is not synonymous with being a *door-mat*...nor is it synonymous with being *passive*. [Many people are passive just in order to avoid discomfort or unpopularity].

Meekness is not lack of anger, but, rather, it is controlled anger!

Jesus was the epitome of what it means to be truly "*meek*" so, if we are desirous of understanding what meekness is, we must not only listen to what Jesus **said** about meekness, but we must also observe His **deeds** because, while we can argue about what He said, we cannot argue about what He **did**!

In Matthew 12:10-14, the Scribes and Pharisees were watching Jesus as a man "*with a withered hand*" came to Him because they wanted to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath day.

Jesus would not allow a false sense of *meekness* to make Him passive or to hinder Him from doing what was right before God so He declared boldly, "*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?*" Mark 3:5, speaking of this same incident, states, "*He [Jesus] looked around at them [the Scribes and Pharisees] in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.*

It would have been a lot easier for Jesus to refrain from action because He knew that His healing the withered hand would arouse the Pharisees "*to take counsel how they might destroy Him*," however, His "*meekness*" would not let the man with the withered hand suffer without His offering to help him.

***Meekness was Jesus' determination to do God's will
- no matter what the Pharisees would think or do!***

Again, *meekness* is not passive...it is **active**!

Matthew 21:12-14 state, "*Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He over-turned the tables of the money*

changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' He said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.' The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them."

Jesus overthrew the tables of the money changers and, with real feeling and passion, cried, "***It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves***" [King James' Translation].

The kind of *meekness* that Jesus speaks of is not afraid to upset established evils. This daring *meekness* calls sin by its name, no matter who may be offended in the process of doing it!

In Matthew 16:23, Peter attempted to prevent Jesus from doing His Father's will by suggesting to Him that He be "*passively*" meek. Peter suggested to Jesus that He hide...that He not speak out and just keep quiet this time, however, Jesus' kind of *meekness* could **not** keep quiet about evil so, despite Peter's wishes to the contrary, Jesus spoke out about evil and declared His deity and purpose for coming into the world, even though it meant He would be put to death for it.

In John 18:23, when one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand...when He was being examined by the high priest...Jesus said, "*If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike Me?*"

Is this the same Jesus Who said in Matthew 5:39, "*If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*"?

What Jesus "*said*" must be interpreted by what He "*did*"!

John 18:23 is in full agreement with Matthew 5:39!

When one is "*meek*" one does **not** just "*give in*" without declaring what is right, but, rather, one passionately declares the truth and leaves the results in God's hands.

Matthew 5:39 speaks of retaliation for personal injury, while John 18:23 illustrates Christ's indignation at an attack upon what He represented and the fact that He was the Son of God!

TRUE "***MEEKNESS***" NEVER PERMITS ONE TO RETALIATE FOR **PERSONAL** INJURIES, BUT IT DOES DEMAND THAT ONE PROTEST WHEN THE DOCTRINE AND PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST IS ATTACKED.

The end-product of one demanding his right is **anger**, while the end-product of one surrendering all his rights to God is **meekness**.

We see Jesus as our example of meekness in Philippians 2:5-8, which states,

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even the death on a cross!"

Christ Jesus was willing to "give up all His rights" and surrender His life to do His Father's will...this is true **meekness**. Jesus was never on the defensive because He had no desire to watch out for His own interest.

Perhaps one of the greatest results of the fall...man's first sin...was the sensitivity that man received about "**self**." A meek man, however, does not worry about self...he does not seek to protect self...and he does not feel for self...because he has surrendered everything ...including self...to God!

Meekness bears patiently all insults and injuries and it endures provocations without being inflamed.

Meekness is finished with "**self**" which is why no one can really **hurt** a meek person. One can "*smite him on the cheek*"..."*compel him to go a mile*"...or "*take his coat*"...and...because he has committed everything to God...he will have a complete absence of the spirit of retaliation.

John Bunyan said, '**He that is already down, need fear no falling.**'

1 Peter 2:21-23 state, "*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*" *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*"

Verses 20-21 state, *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. **To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.***

Much of Jesus' teaching on "meekness" can be found in Psalm 37. To better understand meekness as a principle of Christian character, look at this text in its context.

Psalms 37:1-13 state, "*Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no*

more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace. The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming."

According to Psalm 37, the meek are those who: "*trust in the Lord*" [verse 3], "*commit their way to the Lord*" [verse 5], "*rest in the Lord*" [verse 7] and "*cease from anger*" [verse 8]. Note that verse 11 uses the words Jesus quoted from, "*the meek shall inherit the earth.*" In this psalm, we find a man who neither fights his enemies back nor defends himself against his accusers, but, rather, simply turns his whole life over to God!

Moses is called, "*meek above all men who were on the face of the earth*" [Numbers 12:3], but his meekness, however, was not a passivist because Moses was a man who could walk up to the mighty leader of Egypt...put his finger in his face...and tell him to let God's people go!

The twelfth chapter of Numbers is about the rebellion...led by Miriam and Aaron... against Moses. In this situation...when Moses' personal rights were at stake...he would not fight back and he would not defend himself, but, rather, he turned the situation over to God and let **Him** work it out. As was true of the above mentioned psalmist. Moses' attitude and *posture* was one that exemplified true meekness.

MEEKNESS IS TO SO COMPLETELY SURRENDER ONE'S WILL THAT GOD'S WILL BECOMES **YOUR** WILL...and...the one who is willing to do this cannot be stopped because..."*the meek shall inherit the earth!*"

When Jesus said that, "*the meek shall inherit the earth*" He was not talking about an inheritance that involves "*earthly*" blessings such as oil wells, real estate, orchards, etc., but He **was** talking about an inheritance that involves *spiritual* blessings...which is why the person who is meek is always satisfied and content.

Paul said to Timothy, "*Don't worry about suffering, if you are meek, you will reign with Christ*" [2 Timothy 2:12].

1 Corinthians 3:21 tells us not to be concerned about things because all things are our's and we are Christ's.

In 2 Corinthians 6:10, Paul speaks of "*Having nothing, yet possessing all things.*"

What Jesus is telling us in this third beatitude is that...because the meek person is completely satisfied and already content...he doesn't want anything and, therefore, he has "*inherited the earth.*"

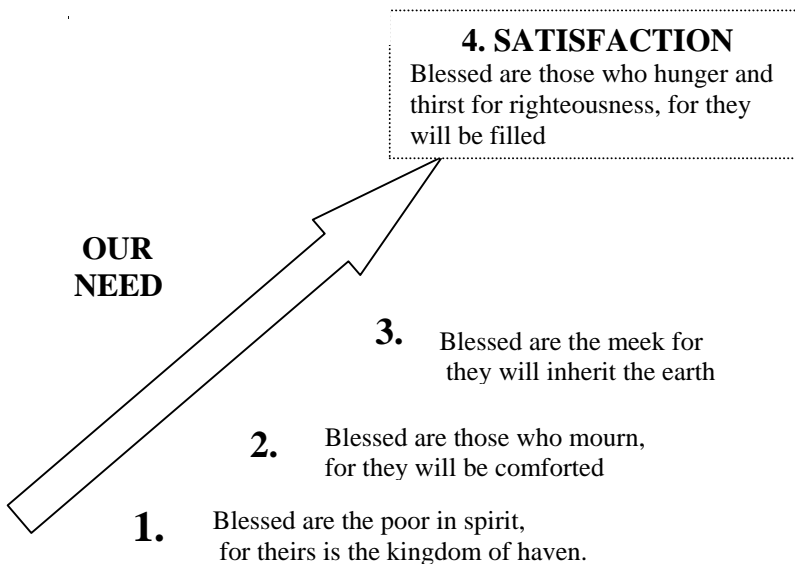
Of course, this kind of meekness...and subsequent "*inheritance*"...is impossible in the natural, so Christ is speaking of the supernatural working of God's grace in one's life and, because of the Holy Spirit at work in one's life, what is impossible in the *natural* is possible in the *supernatural*...the spiritual realm.

We have covered the first three beatitudes which Jesus gave us as the first steps in developing true Christian character. These beatitudes present our real, basic needs and nothing is more important than that we realize these needs.

The fourth beatitude brings us to a new level -

4. *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled*

The first three beatitudes lead to this fourth one! In the first beatitude, we see man's utter spiritual helplessness...in the second beatitude, we see how it is the sin *within* man that mars God's perfect creation...and in the third beatitude, we see the importance of one surrendering all his rights to God if he ever hopes to attain true happiness [*blessedness*] because it is man's *self-reliance*" which leads to most of his misery and heartache!



This diagram will help us to understand the order and the sequence Jesus gives in His description of what true Christian character is.

This fourth beatitude is Christ's outstanding declaration to those who are unhappy with themselves and their spiritual state...to those who long for a quality of life they have not yet enjoyed.

Christ tells us that the only truly people are those who *hunger and thirst* after God's righteousness!

"Righteousness" does not mean just being *decent*...or even *moral*...but, rather, it means being like Jesus Christ...being absolutely perfect!

Righteousness is **"the right acts of God."** It is doing and being what **God** would do and be.

Righteousness is Christlikeness!

A manifestation of this life of righteousness is given to us in the "*Fruit of the Spirit*" in Galatians 5:22-23...namely...**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

The Holy Spirit is at work within every born-again Christian and desires to "*fill*"...or control...every one of us so that we might manifest these fruits...these characteristics of Jesus Christ.

WE ARE TO "**HUNGER AND THIRST**" AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS...CHRISTLIKENESS! The literal Greek translation of the fourth beatitude states: "*Constantly evidencing hunger and thirst after*

righteousness"...and here is an important point...the blessing is not promised to the "*filled*," but, rather, to those who are presently, and constantly, *hungering* and *thirsting* after righteousness. Therefore, it is the **unsatisfied** who are blessed!

Semiyearly, the bodily appetites of hunger and thirst produce an unpleasant experience if they go unsatisfied. In the physical realm...as in the spiritual realm...hunger and thirst are prerequisite to satisfaction because hunger leads to food and thirst leads to water. The ultimate value of appetites lies in their *satisfaction* and not in the appetites themselves.

When one is born into the kingdom of God he should possess an appetite for spiritual things. Spiritual hunger is a demonstration of spiritual health, and the absence of spiritual hunger is an indication of spiritual illness!

GOD DESIRES TO PLACE WITHIN US A DEEP, GENUINE, DESIRE FOR HIS INWARD, VITAL, JOYOUS RIGHTEOUSNESS...OR "*CHRISTLIKENESS*!"

Like a man starving for food...or like a parched man craving water...one must hunger and thirst for God's righteousness to the point of pain because there should be something within each and every Christian that keeps seeking until it is satisfied!

Christ speaks of a desperate feeling...an urgent appetite...that...as its life ebbs out...**must** be satisfied!

As food is the only one thing that can satisfy hunger...and air is the only thing that can satisfy the need of our lungs...so, too, is the righteousness of Jesus Christ the only thing that can satisfy the craving within our spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:21 states, "*God made Him [Christ Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*"

**"RIGHTEOUSNESS" IS THE DESIRE TO BE FREE FROM SIN
- AND - THE DESIRE TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD**

It is **sin** that separates from God!

There is a longing within every child of God to get back into the relationship which Adam originally had with God...before he lost it through his sinning.

"*Righteousness*" is the desire to be free...not only from the bondage of sin...but also, from the bondage of the desire for sin!

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" [Psalm 42:1].

This desire within...this "*thirsting after God*"...is the longing for God's holiness within one's life...it is the hungering to exemplify the beatitudes in one's daily life...it is the zeal within one to show forth the Fruit of the Spirit in every situation of life...it is that spiritual obsession within us **to be like Jesus**...and it is that supreme desire to be in fellowship with God and to please Him in everything that one does!

In a nutshell: **THIRSTING AFTER GOD IS HUNGER-
ING AND THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS!!**

What a paradox it is to, on the one hand, hunger and thirst and, on the other hand, to be *filled!*

The fact that one has to eat again does not mean that he is not satisfied at a particular meal...in other words, the fact that one eats at noon does not steal pleasure from his eating dinner...or breakfast, for that matter.

EACH MEAL CAN BE FILLING AND COMPLETE IN ITSELF.

Life would be no better if we could just eat all we needed for a lifetime at one meal because, in fact, after we've completed one meal, we look forward to the next one...our having eaten one meal does not detract from our anticipation of the next one.

The Lord's Supper is to remind us that God is constantly preparing spiritual food for us because it is Christ's life within us that feeds our spiritual life and...in the process...His righteousness becomes our righteousness.

"*Happiness*" is **not** the result of hungering after happiness, but, rather, *happiness* is the result...the end-product...of seeking after "**righteousness**"...or...a Christ-like life!

This is what Christ meant when He said: "*Blessed [happy] are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled [satisfied].*"

HOW CAN ONE CREATE WITHIN HIS LIFE A "*HUNGERING AND THIRSTING*" AFTER GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS?

1. ONE MUST SEE THROUGH HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

One will never hunger and thirst after God's righteousness as long as he holds any sense of *self-satisfaction* in his own ability to live the Christian life, rather, one must say, as Paul said, "*In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.*" Scripture tells us that one's own righteousness is "*as filthy rags.*" In Philippians 3:8, Paul says that he counted his own righteousness as "*dung*" [refuse, rubbish]. As long as one is prone to defend himself, he is not really hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness.

2. ONE MUST HAVE A DEEP AWARENESS OF HIS NEED FOR THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

One must see his real need for total dependence upon Jesus Christ for the formation of his Christian character. Many, like Balaam in the Old Testament, want to "*die the death of the righteous*" but, also like Balaam, they do not want to **live** like the righteous. One must have a deep, overwhelming, continuous, supreme desire to be in fellowship with God!

3. ONE MUST REALIZE THAT "*HUNGERING*" IS NOT PASSIVE...IT IS NOT WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN...IT IS **ACTIVE!**

If one was starving, he would not just sit down and "*passively*" wait for something to come along, but, rather, he would **do** something about it.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

(A) AVOID ANYTHING THAT OPPOSES GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is true that one cannot obtain God's righteousness by his own efforts, nevertheless, he **can** refrain from doing things which are opposed to it.

(B) AVOID ANYTHING THAT WOULD "*DULL*"...OR TAKE AWAY FROM...ONE'S SPIRITUAL APPETITE

One needs to avoid things that may seem quite harmless in themselves... even if these things are not "*sinful*" ...if one finds that they take away from ...or diminish...his hungering after God's righteousness.

Jesus uses the analogy of "*hungering*" in speaking of man's search after God's righteousness. Appetite, however, is a very delicate thing and can be spoiled very easily...for instance, a candy bar before dinner can "*dull*" one's appetite.

There are things which, in and of themselves, may not be condemned in Scripture, but which, nevertheless, take the edge off of one's spiritual appetite and, therefore, should be avoided!

4. REALIZING THAT "*HUNGERING*" IS ACTIVE, ONE MUST DISCIPLINE HIS LIFE TO KEEP THIS HUNGER CONSTANTLY...AND CONTINUOUSLY...BEFORE HIM

One must, on a daily basis...voluntarily and deliberately...remind himself of his need to actively seek God's righteousness and, if he does **not** do this then he is not really "*hungering*" for God's righteousness. If one can say, "*Just look at my agenda...I'm too busy...I just don't have the time for God*" then, obviously, he is not hungering after God because...when one is hungering after God, he makes the time...it is a matter of priority!

Where there is a will there is a way! We all have this...and the other things ...that we must do, but we must not neglect the most important things in this life. It's amazing how we find the time to do the things that we really *want* to do!

5. ONE MUST PUT HIMSELF IN THE WAY OF RECEIVING THIS "*HUNGERING AND THIRSTING*" AFTER GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

True, one cannot produce this righteousness, but one **can** get in the way to receive it.

Like blind Bartimaeus who, through he could not heal himself, could...and **did**...put himself in the way of Christ...the One Who **could** heal him

HOW DOES ONE "PUT HIMSELF IN THE WAY"?

(A) NEVER MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE

Haphazard attendance at church certainly shows that one is not really hungering after God.

(B) READ GOD'S WORD

One must spend as much time as possible with the Book that is the textbook on this matter.

(C) PRAY

Ask God for this hunger!

**(D) READ ABOUT THE LIVES OF OTHERS WHO HAVE HAD A
REAL HUNGERING AND THIRSTING AFTER GOD**

When one reads...or hears...of the lives of those who have hungered and thirsted after God...and the "*glory of God*" that was the result of that hungering and thirsting...one will desire nothing else more than to acquire this same kind of blessing of God in one's own life.

When one sees...in the lives of others...how life could...and should...be lived...how one can manifest Christ's love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control...how God can mold...into the image of His Son...one who really hungers and thirsts after Him...nothing in one's life will become as important as "*hungering and thirsting after God?*"

And the promise of Christ to those who do "*hunger and thirst after God*" is that they **shall be filled**...filled with all the fullness of God!

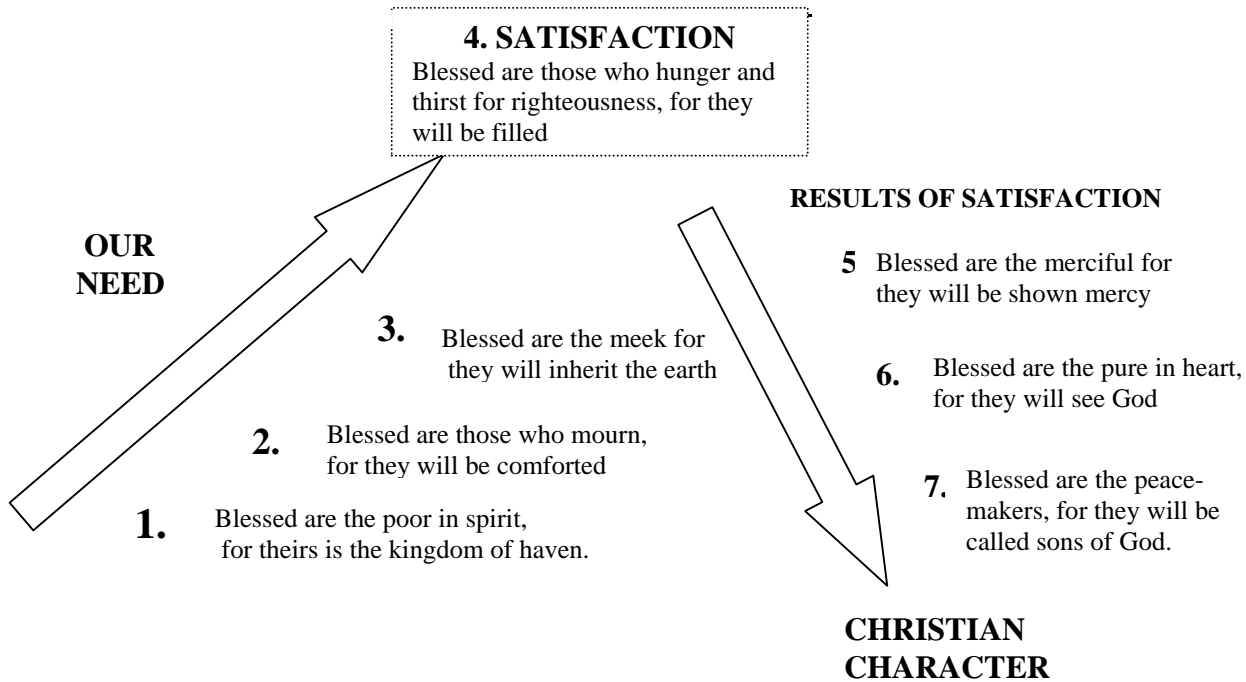
There is a distinct turning point in Christ's Sermon on the Mount in the fourth beatitude! The first three beatitudes look at man's basic need while now...in the fourth beatitude...attention is turned toward the result of realizing that need and seeking after God's righteousness.

The first three beatitudes:

- (1) being "*poor in spirit*" [realizing one's helplessness without God...]
- (2) being "*mournful*" ...or sorrowful because of one's helplessness and *sin*...
- (3) being "*meek*" [being willing to be under the complete control of God]... leads one to submissiveness to the will of God.

The fourth beatitude leads one to the experience of the blessing of hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness. Beatitudes five, six and seven are the three virtues that God desires to develop in one's life!

- 1. To be merciful**
- 2. To be pure**
- 3. To be a peacemaker**



The first three beatitudes are prerequisites for God to be able to fill one with His life. Much like emptying a vessel, one has to be *emptied* of **self** so that he can be *filled* with God! Then, after one is filled, his life is to manifest the Godly graces of: **MERCY...PURITY... and PEACE.**

***5. Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.***

WHAT IS MERCY?

"Mercy" is not the opposite of justice, something that softens the hard lines in the judge's face, nor is it leniency when sentence is pronounced.

If mercy were less than justice, people would probably count on mercy and become morally lax!

Mercy is not condoning the faults of others...it is not minimizing sin...and it is not "*letting the sinner off.*" If mercy was all of these things it would make God less than just because it would be taking a light view of sin!

Mercy is that grace of God that cleanses us from all grudges and the poison of hatred, anger, jealousy and bitterness.

MERCY IS GOD'S FORGIVENESS OPERATING THROUGH US!

Mercy has to do with my personal relationships with others.

For example, if you killed a member of my family, I cannot

"pardon" because it is not within my power to do so, however I must "forgive" you!

The Greek word that Jesus used here in the fifth beatitude which is translated as "mercy" in our modern Bibles is very difficult to translate into English. It is not merely *sympathy*, that is, feeling sorry for someone, but, rather, it is more akin to "*empathy*," that is the ability to get inside the other person's feelings and see through his eyes.

The *mercy* which Jesus speaks of is not an emotional outburst of pity, without identification with the person concerning the situation in question, but, rather, it is seeing and feeling as that person sees and feels.

Christ, while He never sinned, identified with sinners.

The intention of this fifth beatitude is not to teach that, *only* as one shows mercy, will he receives mercy. If that were true, it would cancel the doctrine of the grace of God and none of us would be able to accept Christ as our Savior because none of us had this kind of mercy of which Christ speaks of. It must come from God!

One must never interpret any Scripture in such a manner as to contradict any other Scripture!

What Jesus *is* saying in this fifth beatitude is that, if one is truly desirous of seeking God's righteousness, then he will, of necessity, show mercy toward others.

Each beatitude follows the previous ones for a specific reason. First, it is only as one sees his spiritual bankruptcy and cries out, "*Oh, wretched man that I am,*" that he can turn all of his personal rights over to God and, thus, hungers and thirsts after God's righteousness. When one does experience this, it follows, inevitably, that his attitude toward others changes completely and he *is* *merciful* toward others!

As this process takes place in one's life, he begins to see those who wrong him as victims of Satan...slaves to his ways.

When people spitefully use us, or malign us, and are bitter, or angry, toward us, we should see the difference between the sinner and his *sin* and, therefore, we should be able to show mercy toward them.

As Jesus on the cross said, "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do...do not lay this sin to their charge,*" we, too...when others do us wrong...should go to God on our knees and forgive them realizing that, if we do not forgive them, we have no confidence in prayer!

When one realizes his position with God, he must, of necessity, be forgiving of...[and *merciful* to]...others.

Remember that the fourth beatitude is the watershed of Christ's description of Christian character.

The first three beatitudes deal with one's *need* and give us an understanding of the nature

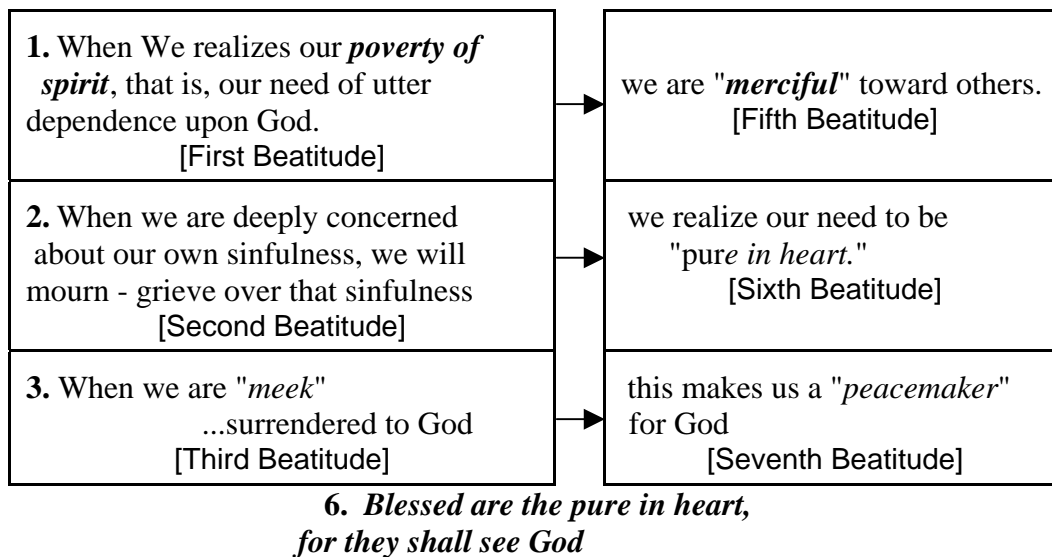
of "self" - that terrible things that is ruining our life.

The fourth beatitude is a statement of the satisfaction of the need that is expressed in the previous three beatitudes...and the satisfaction of this need is God's provision of His righteousness.

The beatitudes that follow the fourth beatitude are statements of the result of this satisfaction...the result of being filled with God's righteousness...which is that His righteousness enables one to be *merciful...pure in heart...and a peacemaker*.

The outcome of living the beatitudes [*being the beatitudes* is a more accurate, Scriptural, way to state it] is that one is able to face suffering *rejoicing* [verses 10-12].

There is definite correspondence between the first three beatitudes and the last three beatitudes:



This is one of the most magnificent, solemnizing, searching statements in the entire 5th chapter of Matthew. This beatitude, like all the other beatitudes, is more concerned about man's state than it is his outward circumstances.

The Pharisees were concerned about *external* character. They felt that as long as something was right in the sight of man...and, as long as their *outer* conduct was correct... they were all right in the sight of God...in other words, they felt that as long as they kept the "*letter*" of the law it didn't matter whether or not the "*spirit*" of the law was violated.

Jesus, on the other hand...[unlike the Pharisees]...deals with man's "*heart*" and throughout the Gospels, we find that He is constantly speaking about man's heart.

Jesus did not come to earth merely to make the thief stop his stealing...the adulterer cease from his adultery...or the drunkard abstain from his liquor...but, rather, He came to earth to bring

a remedy for the *root problem* of stealing, adultery and drunkenness.

If a stream is impure, it is foolish to try and purify each impure pail of water that one gets from that stream. Instead, one must go right to the *source* of the stream...find the cause of the impurity...and, then, purify that cause.

A man can act like a Christian and, yet, not be one!

Christ admonishes us to have a pure heart, but He does not give us specific instructions on what we can do to accomplish this.

The reason that Christ does not give us a "*list*" of the do's and don'ts that are necessary for one to have a pure heart is because man has the ability to be "*pure*" by all outward appearances...by not having any overt expression of sin in his life...even though he may not, in fact, truly have a "*pure heart*."

ONLY TWO PEOPLE KNOW YOUR HEART - YOU AND GOD!

Are you pure in your thoughts...in your imaginations...and in your motives?

WHAT DOES THE WORD "PURE" MEAN?

The word "*pure*" does not mean "*sinlessness*," that is possessing a *sinless* life.

The whole teaching of the beatitudes is that we are weak and sinful...we are spiritually bankrupt and conscious of the impurity in our lives that cause us to mourn.

The word "*pure*" comes from the same word as the word "*single*" does. The word "*pure*" is a word that was used to mean a piece of cloth *without folds*...or...something that was *open*...something that was *not hidden*. The word "*pure*" originated with the selling of cloth and it meant that the cloth was "*open to inspection*"...there were no defects hidden in the folds and, therefore, the cloth was "*pure*."

Our basic problem is that we, often, desire to have our "*folds*"...our defects...kept hidden...there is a part of us that desires to serve God, however, there is another part of us that desires something else...something other than serving God.

Paul says, "*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of which is in my members*" [Romans 7:22-23].

The word "*purity*" was also used to mean "*cleansed*" [more literally, "*cleansed from debt*"].

We owed the wages of sin, which was eternal death, but Christ intervened for us and died in our place so that we could be "*debt free*." To be "*pure*," then, means **TO BE OPEN ...TO BE WITHOUT "FOLDS"**...freed from all hypocrisy and double-mindedness. To be pure means to be sincere and genuine!

PURITY OF HEART IS A WALK

When one desires to be "*pure in heart*" he must hate sin...love the things of God... and, as he becomes more and more conscious of the sin in his life, he must grieve over the indwelling filth...realize his shortcomings and allow the Holy Spirit to deal with those shortcomings.

2 Corinthians 7:1, "*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*"

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

WHAT IS MEANT BY "...SHALL SEE GOD?"

John 1:18 says, "*No man hath seen God at any time.*"

Interestingly, in the Greek language, there is a difference between the word "*God*" in John 1:18 and the word "*God*" found here in Matthew 5:8.

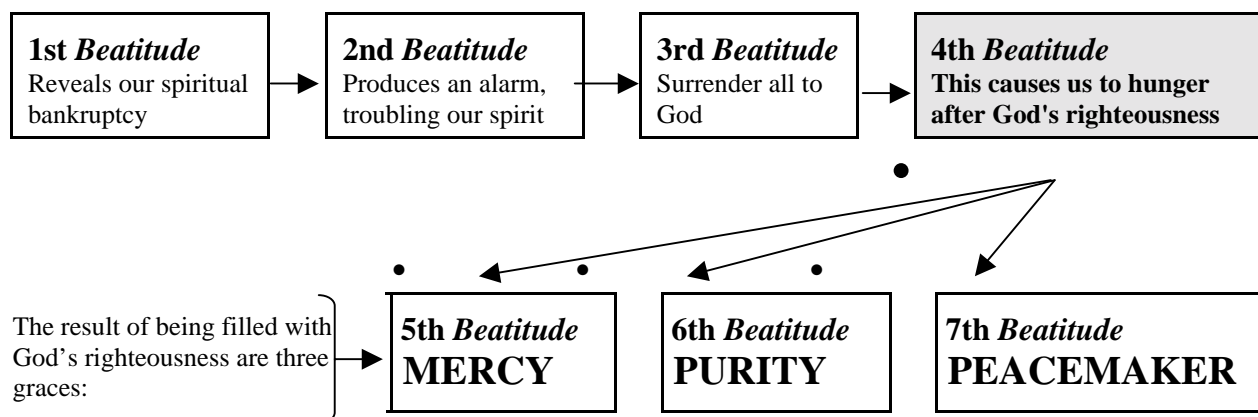
In Matthew 5:8, there is a "*definite article*" with the word God and the difference that this makes is that John 1:18 is referring to God in His infinity...His totality...and this is what cannot be seen by anyone. However, in Matthew 5:8 the word "*God*" is referring to...not the *substance* of God, but, rather, the *quality* of God...His attributes as they are manifested in and through the things He has made.

We can see God in events...in our experiences...and in His dealings with us!

It is only as one allows the cleansing power of Christ to work in his life that he can see God at work in his life!

Two people looking at the same experience can make two very different observations. The one with a *pure heart* will see God at work in the experience while the one who does not have a pure heart will not see God at work in the experiences.

In order to adequately understand the message that Jesus is presenting in these beatitudes, we must keep their order in mind:



**7. Blessed are the peacemakers
for they shall be called the
children of God**

Peace is not the avoidance of trouble and a "peacemaker" is not someone who makes peace between those who are fighting each other.

When Jesus, in Luke 12:13-14, was asked to settle a dispute between two brothers who were quarreling over the division of an inheritance, He dismissed it by saying, "*Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?*"

Today, when we think of the meaning of *peace*, we do not really think of the same meaning of peace that Christ was speaking about.

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| THE PEACE THAT JESUS WAS REFERRING TO IS ONE OF THE MOST POTENT, FORCEFUL REALITIES IN THE WORLD. THE PEACE WHICH JESUS SPOKE OF IS A PEACE THAT IS INFINITELY ALIVE AND IT IS LIFE AT ITS HIGHEST AND BEST! |
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"Peace," as it is used in Scripture, refers to **God's acceptance of man!** The kind of peace spoken of in God's Word is the resultant reality of man's reconciliation to God!

- The "peace" Jesus spoke of in the beatitudes is **spiritual equilibrium!**

The Greek word which is translated as "peace" here in Matthew 5:9, has the meaning of "harmony." When Jesus spoke of "peace" He was referring to the "*balance of the soul*" being in perfect harmony with the laws of God.

The *peace* of the sea, or the *peace* of the air, is when the vast forces of nature are balanced and coordinated. We say that these forces are at *peace* when they have equilibrium.

THIS HARMONY, OR PEACE, WITHIN MAN IS ONLY
POSSIBLE AS HE LIVES OUT THE BEATITUDES!

This Greek word for *peace* [also translated *harmony*] means, "*fitting forces together in order to balance them.*"

WHAT KIND OF BALANCE WAS JESUS REFERRING TO?

When Jesus spoke of *balance* He was speaking of the cooperation, or balance, between man's spirit, soul and body with the laws of God. To cultivate one of these areas of man's being, to the neglect of the others, would create an **UNBALANCE**. The word *peace* refers to being perfectly poised and balanced...or *adjusted*.

When man was created by God, he was at *peace* with his Creator and, as long as he did not seek independence from God, he was in **harmony** with God and His laws. Satan's object, however, was to persuade man to declare his independence from God and, when Satan succeeded

in persuading man to do that, man's peace with God was broken. And it has been this way ever since because there has been a *war* going on between man and God's law.

SEPARATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN - WHICH IS CAUSED BY MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAWS - BRINGS ABSENCE OF *PEACE*. IT IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAWS, THEN, THAT BRINGS *PEACE*!

It is important to remember that *peace* does NOT mean the absence of trials or conflicts. Jesus' life on earth was in intense turmoil and, yet, He had constant *peace*.

Also, the Holy Spirit has been at work bringing *peace* in the world for almost 2000 years to those who will let Him, and, yet, there are more wars and fighting today than ever.

No, *peace* does not mean the absence of conflict!

Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled*" [John 14:27]. Jesus also said, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" [John 16:33].

REMEMBER: **LACK OF PEACE COMES WHEN ONE FAILS TO SUBMIT TO GOD**

People seem to have the strange idea that *peace* is the result of living by the full scope of one's ego, however, that just isn't true because, in reality, *peace* is the result of living in balance with the laws of God.

It is also important to keep in mind the context of this beatitude and the fact that it follows "*Blessed are the pure in heart,*" which, in turn, follows "*Blessed are the merciful.*" In other words, "*peace*" is the result of our hearts not condemning us after we've received God's forgiveness and, then, forgiven others!

It is this idea of "*sharing this peace*" that Christ is referring to in this seventh beatitude. The "*filling*" that God promises to give us only comes to us as we "*give out*." In other words, **WE GAIN BY GIVING AND WE LOSE BY KEEPING!**

One's goal must never be to just have enough for his own life because, if one's goal begins and ends with "*self-satisfaction*," one will lack the abundant, overflowing life which Christ came to give us. Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly*" [John 10:10].

JESUS WANTS TO SHARE HIS LIFE...**[HIS MERCY
- HIS PURITY - HIS PEACE]...THROUGH US**

If one lacks *mercy...purity of heart...* and the *peacemaking nature...* that Christ desire to give to us it is because one is thinking only of himself and his own needs.

The enjoyment of *peace* is sharing it with others!

James 3:15-18 state, "*This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish* [That

is, the **wisdom** spoken of in verse 14, which is bitter envying and strife in one's heart] *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of that that make peace."*

Philip's Translation of verse 18 states, "*The wise and peacemakers who go on quietly sowing for a harvest of righteousness - in other people and in themselves*"

When one lacks peace in his life it is due to his failure to submit to God's higher wisdom.

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| <p>The difference between oilcloth and linoleum...though both look bright and shiny at first...is that, under the stress of daily wear, the cheap oilcloth will wear out while the linoleum will <u>not</u> and will give service for years.</p> |
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The stresses of life soon show up the *shoddy material* that constitutes the **world's** kind of peace, however, the kind of peace that **Christ** gives will continue to shine more brilliantly as time goes on!

GOD NEVER PROMISED US IMMUNITY FROM PAIN, SORROW, OR MISFORTUNE,
HOWEVER, GOD'S PEACE DOES NOT COME FROM *THINGS*, OR THE
CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE GOING OUR WAY.

If you give your child any and every thing that he wants...and you allow him to do whatever he wishes to do...he will not be a contented, peaceable child, but, rather, he will be a fretful, unhappy little tyrant!

WHAT WE WANT IS NOT ALWAYS WHAT GOD CHOOSES FOR US!

God never promised us immunity from injustice, slander, hatred, and inflicted wrongs, but He did promise to give us His peace if we allow the Holy Spirit to form within us the attitudes of the beatitudes...because when our attitudes are truly those of the beatitudes we are like a man secure within the comfort of his home while the storm rages outside...this is the kind of peace that Christ desires to give us!

The ultimate victory over human life...that God promises to give us...is that...by the power of His Holy Spirit...one's inner spirit will triumph over...be in control of...his outward life.

Jesus promised, "*Peace I live with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled.*"

Applying the Beatitudes!

When we come to verse 10 to 12 in the fifth chapter of Matthew, Christ begins to teach on how one applies the beatitudes He has just spoken of. He states in these verses,

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of

heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

In the beatitudes, Christ tells us what Christian character really is and, then, in verses 10-12, He goes on to tell us what kind of character the beatitudes will accomplish when they are applied them to the way we live.

The world cannot be indifferent to a Christian who is living the "**abundant life**." True Christians...living out the beatitudes in their daily lives...bring an entirely different way of life to the world. Because Christians have a different way of thinking...a different set of values...and a different standard of righteousness...than the world has...they are from a different *world*...the Kingdom of Heaven...and, as a result, the world looks at Christians as if they were subversive agents...or dangerous enemies...which must not be tolerated.

Jesus tells us that the natural consequence of exhibiting true Christian character is that we will know persecution...men reviling us and saying all manner of evil against us falsely. Jesus knew...from personal experience...that Godly character would meet with resistance.

1 Peter 3:14 states, "*But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.*"

1 Peter 4:14 states, "*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*" Verses 12-13 state, "*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*"

2 Timothy 3:12 states, "*In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*"

Philippians 1:29 states, "*For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him.*"

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 state, "*So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.*"

A Christian's attitude should not be one of, "*Let's go out and get persecuted*"...or... "*Your not a **real** Christians until you are persecuted.*" No! that kind of an attitude would be nothing more than a *martyr complex* and self-pity. When Christ speaks of *persecution*, He is not speaking of "*self-inflicted*" persecution. It is this *spirit* of self-inflicted pain that has caused some to sleep on spikes...or to walk on hot coals, but this is never the Christian's way...because it is not Christ's way.

In Matthew 5:11, when Jesus says, "**when** men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you," the Greek word "when" is more accurately translated **whenever**. Therefore this verse reads, "*Blessed are ye **WHENEVER** men shall...*" The word *whenever* refers to some recurring experience, so, what this verse is really saying is that the Christian will not be persecuted **all** the time, but, **at times**, persecution **may** be unavoidable.

Persecution today [?]

Persecution, though in a much milder form today than it has been in other ages, is, nonetheless, just as real. Christians are not thrown to the lions...or burned at the stake... however, they do know the *persecution* of being the brunt of the office jokes...being ostracized at social gatherings...etc. while it is true that our country has adopted many Christian values ...and has a tolerance of them...it is also true that Christianity has sunk to a level where it is hardly noticed as being different from the ways of the world!

As Christians we should ask ourselves if our Christian characteristics are visible and if we are any different than we would be if we were not a Christian. We should also ask ourselves why...when it come to persecution...we do get off so easily.

*Could it be that our "light" is so dim that the world cannot see it
...or...that we don't do anything that is worth persecuting?*

Another point that is worth mentioning is that it takes as much grace for one to spend forty years of his life at the same desk...watching others being promoted while he is not because he will not do some things which go against Biblical principles...as it did for those of the first century to be burned at the stake!

FOR WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN PERSECUTED?

Jesus said, "*persecuted for righteousness sake!*"

To be persecuted "*for righteousness sake*" does not mean to be persecuted for being a nuisance! Many Christians are persecuted simply because they are difficult, insulting, objectionable, and even foolish.

In verse 10, the word "*persecuted*", in the Greek, has the definite article "**the**" before the word "*persecuted*," meaning, "*the persecuted ones*" and it refers to, not all persecuted people, but, rather, only to those who are persecuted "**FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE.**"

Many Christians bring persecution upon themselves because of selfish living...because they are hardheaded and determined to have their own way...or just because they are, in other words, unwise!

Some Christians attempt to place themselves on a pedestal [like the Pharisees who vaunted their own righteousness] and, upon doing so, become obnoxious. Christ rebuked the Pharisees for their self-righteousness because their self-righteousness was such an offense to Him and, likewise, Christians who are self-righteous become an offense to others and, so often, this is what Christians are persecuted for...not "*for righteousness sake*," but, rather, because...on account...of their own "*self-righteousness.*"

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| Christians can be like the little girl who was praying and said, "God, please bless Harry and make him as good as <u>I</u> am!" |
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A MAN'S GREATEST FAULT IS TO BE CONSCIOUS OF NONE!

A man, who was attacked by two thieves, put up a terrific fight until he was finally subdued. When, upon searching him and discovering that he only had one dime, the thieves said to him, "*Do you mean to tell us that you put up such a fight over a measly dime? Why, we almost killed you!*" To which the man replied, "*The truth is, I did not want my financial condition exposed!*" **THAT IS OFTEN OUR PROBLEM...WE DO NOT WANT OUR "SPIRITUAL" POVERTY EXPOSED!**

We must be careful that we do not misconstrue...or misunderstand...this vital statement that Jesus makes concerning "*persecution*," because the true meaning of this statement is an essential, integral part of the teaching of the New Testament. Jesus did not say that all those who were persecuted would be blessed, but, rather, those who were persecuted for righteousness sake would be blessed!

- If someone is objectionable...or difficult to get along with...because of his lack of wisdom and he is "*persecuted*" for these faults [or other flaws in his character such as bad temper, etc.] this promise of blessing is not to him.
- If someone becomes fanatical...even over-zealous...and he is "*persecuted*" for this fanaticism or zeal, this promise of blessing is also not to him.
- If someone is "*persecuted*" because of a difference of opinion...or some "*cause*" or political persuasion...this beatitude does not apply to him either!

Jesus did not say, "*See if you can make a storm* [that is, bring persecution upon yourself]"...nor did He say that there would be no storm, but what He did say was, "*The world will persecute you if you live righteously, but don't let them scare you...rejoice that you are counted worthy to be on God's side, for I am with you!*"

1 Peter 4:14-16 state, "*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*"

This beatitude refers to being persecuted for "*praising God's righteousness*"...for being like Jesus Christ [identifying with the Lord Jesus Christ, willing to submit to God and letting His righteousness, or character, rule one's life]...and for adjusting one's life to God ...every day, every place, and in and under all conditions.

IN OTHER WORDS...BECAUSE "*RIGHTEOUSNESS*" MEANS "*CHRIST-LIKENESS*,"
A CHRISTIAN WILL BE PERSECUTED
SIMPLY BECAUSE HE IS LIKE JESUS CHRIST,
HOWEVER,
WHEN ONE IS PERSECUTED, HE WILL KNOW THE BLESSING OF GOD!

2 Timothy 3:12 states, "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" To "*live godly*" means to depend upon God for all the grace one needs to live as God would have him live and, then, to give God the glory for that grace.

Jesus said in John 15:18-20, "*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me*"

*first. If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. This is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also." And Jesus goes on in the next verses to state **how persecution can bring blessing**. He says, "They will treat you this way because of My name, for they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father as well."*

Persecution is evidence that one is united to Jesus Christ...that the Holy Spirit is at work in one's heart...and that one is making progress in God's molding him into the image of Christ.

When persecution comes as a result of Godly righteousness . . .

- because one has taken the honest path
 - because one has refused to compromise
 - because one has remained pure while others have been promiscuous
- . . . then this promised blessing is for him.

One does not have to be affected in his innermost being by "*circumstances*." Even when persecution is directed at one he does not have to respond with a spirit of retaliation. To respond to persecution with a spirit of love...rather than retaliation...is not only a real test of one's Christian faith, but it is also sure proof that one is God indwelt.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11 state, "*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed - perplexed, but not in despair - persecuted, but not abandoned - struck down, but not destroyed! We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*"

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 state, "*But He [God] said to me [Paul], 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*"

WHATEVER GOD PERMITS IN OUR LIVES
...EVEN PERSECUTION...
IS NEVER WITHOUT PURPOSE!

Jesus said in these beatitudes, "*Blessed are the merciful, the pure, and the peace-makers for they shall be persecuted...men shall revile them, persecute them, and say all manner of evil against them falsely.*"

IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT SEEM THAT *PERSECUTION*
SHOULD FOLLOW...IN LOGICAL ORDER
...BEING A *PEACEMAKER*.

Hated...persecuted...just for doing right?

The answer is "yes " because THE VALUE OF ANY EXPERIENCE DEPENDS UPON ONE'S **ATTITUDE** TOWARD THE EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN THE EXPERIENCE ITSELF!

One can mar what God is trying to accomplish in his life by complaining when persecution...or trials...come. To respond to persecution by complaining about it is to learn nothing of dependence upon God. God's blessing is not upon the persecution, but, rather, upon one's attitude toward the persecution.

Blessed is the one who is not affected in his inner being by circumstances!

Jesus says in the verses following this statement on persecution in Matthew 5 [verses 13-16] **if, in persecution, one does not show this inner quality**...his lamp is hidden and his salt has lost its flavor.

The beatitudes present a composite picture of what true Christian character is from God's point of view.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO EVALUATE A CHRISTIAN:

1. The first way to evaluate a Christian is to look at that which is within him
...Jesus shares this in Matthew 5:3-9
2. The second way to evaluate a Christian is to look at his reaction to the things that happen to him and his behavior toward other...Jesus shares this in Matthew 5:10-12.

NOTE: **THREE PRINCIPLES IN REGARD TO CHRISTIAN CHARACTER:**

1. **A Christian's life should be different**

To be "*persecuted*" is very different from being the "*persecutor*" and it is a profound test of the Christian's character when he is being persecuted to be able to respond to his persecutors in a spirit of Christ-like love!

2. **A Christian's life should be controlled and dominated by Jesus Christ**

The Christian does everything *for Christ's sake* - [verse 11]

The Christian is one who is always controlled by Jesus Christ and his attitude should be; "*I am not my own, I am bought with a price...the blood of Jesus Christ ...I, therefore, belong to Him.*"

3. **A Christian's life should be controlled by thoughts of heaven and the world to come**

Verse 12 says, "*...for great is your reward in heaven.*"

The heroes of faith, mentioned in Hebrews 11, said, "*Here we have no continuing city, but we*

seek the one to come." The secret of their great faith was that they were looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God!

THESE THREE PRINCIPLES ARE ILLUSTRATED
IN THE WAY A CHRISTIAN FACES PERSECUTION
HOW IS A CHRISTIAN SUPPOSED TO FACE PERSECUTION?

A Christian can know many different kinds of persecution: He may be put in prison or a concentration camp...he may be shot at or even murdered...or...it may be the kind of persecution where he is sneered at on the job or, perhaps, becomes the object of a whispering campaign where he is jarred...and laughed...at! The way one is persecuted is not what is important...what is important is how one faces persecution!

Jesus says:

1. **ONE MUST NOT RETALIATE**

It is most difficult not to retaliate when one is the object of persecution because there is within each one of us a *self* nature....an instinct toward self-preservation...that desires to "*get back*"...desires to protect one's ego!

No, it's not easy to hold back angry words...or to refrain from hitting back...when one has been hurt...but...Jesus, our example, only spoke out when it was His Father's work that was being challenged. He never retaliated when it was only His personal rights that were at stake.

2. **ONE MUST NOT ONLY - NOT RETALIATE - BUT ALSO**
- HE MUST NOT EVEN "FEEL" RESENTMENT

If it is difficult to not *retaliate*, it is even more difficult to not *feel* resentment toward those who would persecute us!

One may be able to control his actions...and not strike back when he is being persecuted...but God is not content with our just not retaliating when we're persecuted because He desire that we not even resent the persecution!

If one loses his temper...when he is persecuted...he dishonors the Lord, even if he gets the victory, in that he is able to control his temper, but still *feels* inwardly angry...still feels inwardly hurt and is bitterly resentful *inwardly* toward the persecution...he is not living by God's principle concerning what his heart attitude should be toward persecution.

As one reads Paul's letter to the Philippians [especially chapter one], the Corinthians, or the Galatians, one realizes that, even through Paul was indeed a very sensitive man who could be grievously hurt and wounded, he was, nevertheless, no longer affected by the hurtful things that were done to him.

ONE MUST NOT EVEN **RESENT** WHAT IS DONE TO HIM

That is a hard saying! However, there is more, Jesus is not through with His message

concerning the Christian's attitude toward persecution yet!

3. ONE MUST NOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO GET DEPRESSED BY PERSECUTION

During times of persecution, one may feel himself feeling just generally unhappy and experiencing a sense of depression covering his soul and spirit.

Since he does not *feel* any resentment toward any particular person...or persons...involved in the persecution, he may feel perplexed as to the "why" of his depressing...the "why" behind his lack of "rejoicing" and feeling "exceeding glad."

It is during times of persecution that one begins to realize just how **impossible** it is to live...and to *be*...all that God expects us to live and be! One sees how foolish it is to even imagine that one could even *begin* to make himself a Christian by his own efforts.

If one is honest with himself he will admit that...when he is being persecuted and people are saying all manner of evil against him falsely...he does not rejoice nor is he "exceeding glad" . . . THIS IS AN UTTER IMPOSSIBILITY WITHIN HIMSELF!

When man is being persecuted, he cannot control his spirit of retaliation much less get rid of his sense of resentment...so to ask him to "rejoice and be exceeding glad" when he is being persecuted is something that he...in and of himself...could never, never, do!

WHY AND HOW IS A CHRISTIAN TO REJOICE IN PERSECUTION?

One is not to rejoice at the mere persecution itself because, in fact, the persecution should cause one to grieve simply because those who are persecuting him are being dominated by Satan since it is the effect of **sin** within them that makes them do the persecuting and, because of this, they are to be pitied and prayed for.

WHY THEN SHOULD ONE "REJOICE" AND "BE EXCEEDING GLAD"?

Persecution is proof of *who* a Christian is and *what* he is. Jesus said, "...**FOR** so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" [Matthew 5:12]. When one is persecuted, if he only realizes that he is with *great* company...numbered among the prophets (God's servants) who were, also, persecuted...**THAT IS SOMETHING TO REJOICE ABOUT!**

If one's attitude is right, God can turn *anything* in his life into victory!

The Devil, through his agencies, is persecuting the Christian in order to make him "unhappy," but, if one learns to react to persecution the right way, he can rejoice when he is persecuted and be able to say, "Thank you, God, for giving me proof that I am your child?"

Jesus said in John 15:18-20, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also." Jesus said that persecution proves that one is identified with Him!

Jesus also said that persecution is proof of where one is going when He said, "*for great is your reward in heaven.*"

When one is persecuted for Christ's sake, it means that he is destined for heaven! By allowing persecution, God is just telling the Christian that he doesn't belong down here...he belongs to *another* world!

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO US SHOULD BE GOVERNED BY THESE THREE THINGS:

1. My realization of who I am,
2. My consciousness of what I am going, and
3. My knowledge of what awaits me when I get there!

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 state, "*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*"

WHAT ABOUT THIS IDEA OF "REWARDS?"

Should a Christian be governed by his motives by rewards?

Some would reply, "*I don't think the idea of rewards...and fear of punishment... should be a part of one's motivation to live a Christian because one should be motivated to live a Christian life just because of its own merit and value.*"

Sounds good, but that reasoning is **not** what Scripture teaches!

Jesus said, "*When you are persecuted, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.*"

Jesus endured the cross, "*for the joy that was set before Him*" [Hebrews 12:2]. It was looking beyond...to what was coming...that caused Jesus to rejoice!

Paul says that what controlled his life was the fact that a day was coming when every man's work would be tried. He says that, because of this fact, we are to build carefully on the foundation of our salvation [1 Corinthians 3:10-17].

2 Corinthians 5:10-11 state, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.*"

Paul told the young minister, Timothy, "*There is a crown laid up for you, live so that you will receive it*" [2 Timothy 4:8].

God's Word is filled with the whole idea of rewards...but, then...someone might ask,

"What is `grace' then?"

WHAT IS GRACE?

Philippians 2:13 states, "*For it is God Himself whose power creates within you the DESIRE and the POWER to execute His gracious will*" [Weymouth Translation].

This verse states that it is God's *grace* which gives one the *desire* and the *power* to execute His gracious will! It is God's *grace* which first leads us to salvation and His grace should continue to give us the *desire*...and the *power*...to respond correctly to life's situations.

We can resist God's grace as He leads us to respond properly to the circumstances we face in life, but we are exhorted to "*use oversight lest we fail of the grace of God*" [Hebrews 12:15].

There is an interesting verse in 1 Peter 3:7 which helps us to get a handle on understanding what "*the grace of God*" is. We are told that a husband and wife are "*heirs together of the grace of life*"...that is...they have God-given *desire* and *power* to reproduce *physical* life while the "*grace of God*" is the *desire* and *power* to reproduce *God's life!*

We are to "*grow in grace*"...that is...we are to allow this new life in Christ...(this *desire* and *power* to do things God's way)...to increase" [2 Peter 3:18].

To illustrate what the difference between "*grace*" and "*rewards*" is:

A child has nothing to do with the fact that he is his father's son. He is his father's son simply because of his father's "*grace of life*"...his father's desire and ability to reproduce physical life.

Let's say that the father asks his son to do certain things and tells him that he will reward him if he does these things

The rewards have nothing to do with the fact that he is his father's son because he is his father's son whether he does what his father has asked him to do or not...but...if he does what his father has asked him to do, he will receive the rewards.

GOD WILL REWARD HIS CHILDREN WHO ARE FAITHFUL!

Hebrews 11:24-25 state, "*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.*"

How is it that Moses could make this choice? What was it that persuaded him to "*choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season?*" Verse 26 continues by saying, "*Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.*"

"Respect," as it is used here, means "*to look always from everything else and to give one's full attention to one thing*" and the phrase, "*recompense of reward*" means "*the coming pay day.*" So what Hebrews 11:26 is saying is that, "*To make the decision to choose to be mistreated with*

the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a shot time, Moses turned his attention away from everything else and gave his full attention to the coming pay day of the Lord!"

When people are unkind, cruel, or spiteful because of my Christlikeness, it proves that I belong to Christ and that I will be with Him in eternity and share in His joy. Therefore, far from feeling resentment...wanting to retaliate...or being depressed...when I am ill treated..."persecuted"...it should make me realize all the more what is waiting for me in heaven...and it is this realization that enables me to "rejoice" and be "exceedingly glad" when I am persecuted!

Yes! when one is persecuted, he **can** have true joy unspeakable and **can** be full of glory because it worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...which is **why**...and **how**...ONE CAN REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDINGLY GLAD WHEN HE IS PERSECUTED...because...*great is his reward in heaven!*

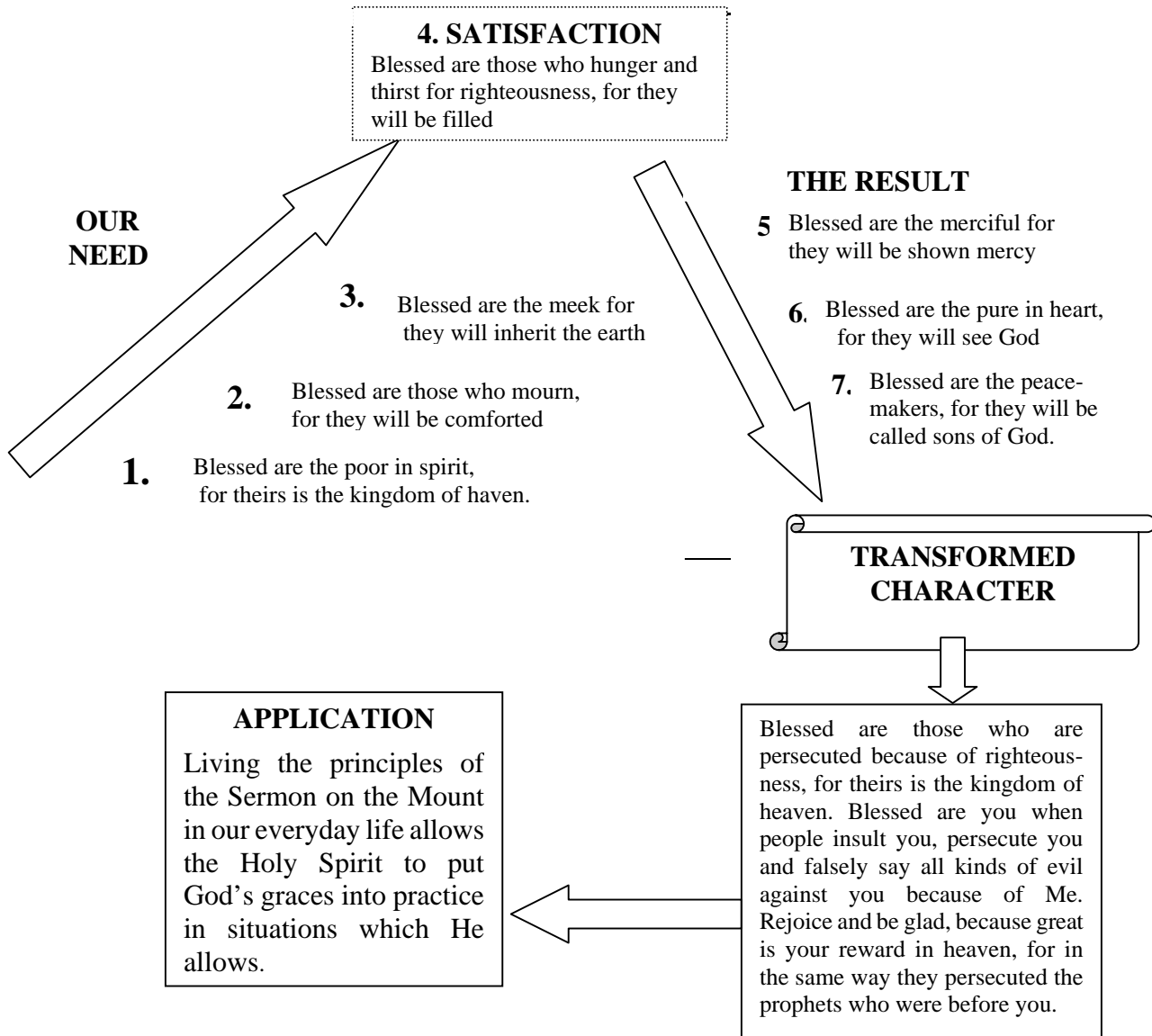
SUMMARIZING THE BEATITUDES

The beatitudes are all about Christian character - What Christian character really is, as **God** intends it to be!

THE FORMATION...THE DEVELOPMENT...OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS A STEP BY STEP PROCESS!

1. First, the believer must realize his spiritual bankruptcy
2. Then, the realization of his spiritual bankruptcy produces a feeling of alarm within him...he is troubled...and feels unrest in his spirit. He mourns his sinfulness!
3. As a result of this realization and sorrow, he surrenders all his rights to God!
4. This causes him to hunger and thirst after God's righteousness,
5. Which causes him to be merciful toward others [forgiving],
6. pure in heart [having a clear conscience]
7. and he is a peacemaker...sharing and spreading his new found *life!*

Following is a diagram illustrating the beatitudes: How Christ presented man's needs, the satisfaction that is accomplished when the first three are fulfilled, showing the result of that achievement – "A *transformed Character*" – and finally, the application of living the Beatitudes.



A Christian is not to be these beatitudes in **isolation**, but, rather, he is to manifest them in the world around him.

Christ's teaching in the beatitudes focused around what a Christian is to "**be**," but now...as Christ goes on teaching in the Sermon on the Mount...He focuses in on how a Christian is to *apply*...and manifest...his Christianity...his Christian *attitudes*...in the world in which he lives.

Christians are not "**of**" the world...but they are to live "**in**" the world; Christians are the salt of the earth...not of heaven.

Through the centuries, many have withdrawn into isolation. Like David, they cry, "*Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest - or - like Jeremiah, say, "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them."*

But Christ does not give us this option of *flight*. After He shows us what Christian

character *is*, He then shows us **how** this *character* is to function in the world.

One of the most important questions we can ask is, "What is our relationship...as Christians...as disciples of Jesus Christ...to society in the world around us?"

Matthew 5:13 gives us the answer to this question:

"Ye are the salt of the earth but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and be trodden under foot of men."

"YE ARE THE `SALT' OF THE EARTH!"

By this verse, Jesus implies the rotteness of the world!

In Christ's day, and up until modern times, salt was the most common of all preservatives, therefore, when Jesus uses this analysis of "salt," He is speaking in reference to societies' tendency toward rottenness, decay, and pollution...its tendency to become foul and offensive!

If we are to ever understand what is happening in the world, we must bear in mind this reality about the world's tendency toward putrefaction! Christ is saying that humanity is "fallen" from the place God originally created it...it is sinful...and has a tendency toward evil!

Humanity...apart from God...tends to get putrid. It does **NOT** have a tendency upward toward *good*!

The world is as good as it is now - *only because of the Church!*

THE CHRISTIAN'S FUNCTION IS TO BE "SALT" IN HIS WORLD!

1. **Salt prevents putrefaction**

Meat has certain germs on its surface which create a danger of the meat becoming putrid, therefore, salt is rubbed into the meat to preserve it against these agencies that tend to make it putrid.

2. **Salt provides "savor"** [*tastiness*]

Life without Christ is tasteless, dull and boring! Just as salt give flavor, true Christianity gives brightness and joy to life!

Because life apart from Christ is so utterly tasteless, many have turned to drugs, or other stimulants, in their endeavor to add "savor" to their lives.

Our Christian living should provide "flavor" in the world around us!

We, Christians, are to function as salt in our world by putting the beatitudes into action...that is...by being Christ-like in every sphere in which we find ourselves. And, if we are Christ-like, then, our very presence *should* have an effect like unto salt in our world!

Some Christians feel that we should not get involved in the things of this world... [some even feel that Christians should not even vote]...while other Christians become **so** active in the world that they forget the true purpose of the Church in the world.

Both of these views are the extreme and, therefore, are erroneous!

THE PRIMARY TASK OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD IS TO EVANGELIZE!

We must never get so involved in political and social matters that we are hampered... or hindered...in our God-appointed task of evangelism.

Yes, we must play our part as citizens, but, while we are meeting social needs...and denouncing evil...we must also remember that our true purpose is to reach souls with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Church history will show that...after every great spiritual awakening and reformation within the Church...society reaped the benefits...not, necessarily, because the Church denounced social evils...but, rather, it mainly because of the influence on society as a result of Christian *individuals* living the principles of the beatitudes, as they are taught by Christ.

In the past, when the Church has given attention more to politics...and social or economic issues... than to the task of a spiritual renewal and evangelism, the result has been that society became more immoral and lawless!

CHRISTIANS ARE NOT INFLUENCING THE WORLD AROUND THEM - SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT "BEING" THE SAINTS THEY ARE CALLED TO "BE."

It is not the Church making great pronouncements about politics...or other major issues...that will affect the average man, but, rather Christians, living in their world, displaying true Christ-like character...[those whose lives have been *transformed* by the Holy Spirit and who are living the beatitudes]...who will influence others and the world around them!

Christ was warning us in Matthew 5:13 that we could lose our power to be *salt* and, if this does happen, men will no longer bother to persecute us. Not only will they no longer bother to persecute us, but, even worse, they will discard us and go about their business uninfluenced by "*who*"...or "*what*" we are...and Who we represent.

If we water down...or compromise...our Christian character, we will lose our influence in the world and be discarded!

The world today, jokes about the sanctities of life and only the presence of an increasing number of individual Christians - living the beatitudes - will change this world-attitude.

As someone has said, "*Salt is not of any value if it stays in the shaker, so get out of your 'salt shaker' and be salt.*"

Yes, Jesus said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth,*" but He also said, "*Ye are the light of the world*" [verse 14], so, our function as Christians is not only to be *salt*, but also, to be "*light*."

One of the great characteristics of the teachings of Jesus was His ability to "*compress!*" He could take the whole content of an entire truth and compress it into **one single living statement!**

Matthew 5:14 is one of the most astounding, extraordinary statements that Jesus ever made about Christians!

Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world*"

The people to whom Jesus spoke these words were *simple* people who were entirely "*unimportant*" from the world's standpoint and, yet, Jesus said to them, "**Ye are the light of the world.**"

What an effect these words must have had on them as they began to lift their heads up and realize what a remarkable and glorious thing it was to be a follower of Jesus Christ!

Christianity **is** a *remarkable* and *glorious* thing and it is God's desire that we, too... like the people of whom Jesus spoke that day...have a realization of this fact!

When Jesus says, "*ye are the light of the word,*" the "*ye*" refers to **every** Christian...it refers to **YOU!**

1.

This statement implies that the world is in a state of darkness

This statement brings into contrast the Christian's point of view versus the world's point of view.

The world speaks about "*enlightenment.*"

The 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries were called the "*Renaissance*"...the watershed of civilization. The 18th century was called "*The Age of Enlightenment*" and we were told that "*knowledge brings light.*"

It **is** true that there was a great increase in knowledge concerning the processes of nature and physical illnesses and diseases...and knowledge **has** thrown a certain amount of "*light*" on these things...however, God says that, "*the world is in darkness!*"

The tragedy is that man has concentrated solely on **one** aspect of knowledge ... namely, "*things*"...mechanical, scientific, biological **things**.

AND - THIS IS A TRAGEDY...BECAUSE...MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE REAL FACTOR OF LIFE...AND WHAT MAKES LIFE TRULY MEANINGFUL AND WORTH LIVING...HAS **NOT** INCREASED!

Despite having discovered all this great knowledge, man has failed to discover the most important fact of all...which is...WHAT TO **DO** WITH ALL THIS KNOWLEDGE!

There is nothing wrong with discovery, however, the tragedy is that man does not yet have sufficient knowledge of *himself* to be able to know what to do with the knowledge he has.

Man has knowledge... *knowledge in mechanical, scientific, biological and technological things*...but...when it comes to the great, basic, fundamental problems of *living* it becomes obvious that Christ's statement, implying that the world is in darkness, is true...in fact, the world is in a state of *terrible* darkness!

- When we think of the personal life, conduct and behavior of the average person...
- when we remember that men of great knowledge in their fields were tragic failures in their own personal lives...
- when we see that those who boast of enlightenment and understanding break down in their person to person relationship...

we begin to realize that the major problem of society is how to live...how to live a clean, straight, pure and wholesome life, enabled to avoid conflicts, evil, and sin.

YES, THE WORLD **IS** IN GROSS DARKNESS!

2.

Christ's statement, "Ye are the light of the world,"
implies that Christians are the **ONLY** ones who can truly advise
...and instruct...others on how to live
because Christians are the **only** ones who have the **answer** to life's questions.

The greatest thinkers and philosophers of our day are completely baffled by the questions concerning the solution to life's problems.

The controlling theory that these thinkers and philosophers have followed is that all man needed...to solve all his problems...is more "*knowledge*." These thinkers and philosophers do **not** understand the **real** problems of man and, therefore, they are not able to tell us what is responsible for our present condition.

One well-known teacher of philosophy...reviewing a book which was supposed to deal with the problems of man...said, "*This book, regarding the analysis of man's problems, is very good, but since it does not go beyond analysis, it is of no help. We can all analyze the problems of mankind, but the vital question that we want answered is, 'What is the source of man's troubles and what can be done about it?'*"

The world offers no light!

Jesus looked at a band of ordinary, insignificant people and said to them, "*You... and you alone...are the light of the world.*"

People have laughed at the Gospel message, but that laughter has begun to cease as

history is proving what Jesus has to say is, indeed, true. The darkness of the world has never been more evident than it is now!

True child of God, *Ye are the light of the world!*"

3.

This statement...that it is the Christians who are the *light of the world* ...implies that the Christian...though he may never have read...or studied ...anything about philosophy...knows...and understands...more about life...and living ... than the greatest philosophical "*expert*" who is not a Christian!

One of the great themes of the New Testament is that "*the world...by wisdom... knew not God*" and, that "*it pleases God...by the foolishness of preaching...to save them that believe.*"

The words of Jesus may appear to be ridiculous to the world, however, they are **pure wisdom** and they call upon us to do something very positive in the world. This "*call*"...to be a "*light*"...is not just to a certain kind of Christian...but to each and **every** "*ordinary*," "*average*," Christian.

YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!

Jesus says in John 8:12...and also in other places in Scripture..."***I*** am the Light of the world." How can we take the statement in Matthew 5:14, which states, "***Ye*** are the light of the world" together with this statement in John 8:12, and understand them both?

The answer is, simply, that a **Christian can only be the light of the world because of his relationship with Jesus Christ...Who is the Light of the world!**

When we receive the "**Light**" of the world, we become transmitters of light! The very nature of Jesus Christ enters into our spirits and He lives **through** us!

We are *reflectors* of Christ's Light! His "*light*" is in us and, therefore, the result of being the kind of Christian described in the beatitudes is that we show forth Christ's light in our world.

As our attitudes begin to take on the spirit of the beatitudes...[Living the beatitudes] ...those around us will begin to realize that something is different about us and they will begin to ask the "*why*" behind that difference. People will watch our conduct and our behavior because this is where the element of "*light*" shines out.

Some reverse Christ's order...they may even speak in an enlightened manner...however, they do not **live** as the "*salt*" of the earth. Jesus warns us of the tragedy of those who would "*speak*" the Gospel in "*words*," but they do not "*live*" the Gospel in "**deeds**!"

IF OUR LIPS **SPEAK** THE GOSPEL MORE THAN OUR LIVES "**LIVE**" THE GOSPEL, IT WILL AVAIL LITTLE. WE MUST BE "**SALT**" BEFORE WE CAN BE LIGHT!

HOW ARE WE THE "*LIGHT*" OF THE WORLD?

Matthew 5:14-16, "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"

2 Corinthians 3:2 states, "*Ye are epistles known and read of all men.*" This verse helps us to more fully understand how we are the light of the world because what this verse essentially says is that we are God's Word in our world for anyone to inspect and read!

2 Corinthians 3:7 tells us that, when Moses was with God on the mountain, his face shone with transferred glory as a result of his being in the presence of God. This glory was so bright that, when Moses came down from the mountain, he had to cover his face with a veil so that the light would not dazzle the people.

In the verses that follow, Paul builds on this theme and argues that we, **too**, should shine with the same glory that Moses did as a result of our spending time with Jesus. Others should be able to see Him as He is reflected in our lives:

2 Corinthians 3:13-18, "*Not as Moses, which put a veil over His face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished; but their minds were blinded, for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it [Israel] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. **But we all**, with open face [no veil over our faces] beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, **are changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"

2 Corinthians 4:6 states, "*God, Who first ordered light to shine in darkness, **has flooded our hearts with His light. We now can enlighten men only because we can give them knowledge of the glory of God**, as we see it in the face of Jesus Christ.*"

1 Peter 2:9 states, "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased] people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness **unto His marvelous light.***"

Philippians 2:14-16 state, "*In all that you do, avoid discontent and dissension, that ye be blameless and harmless [sincere], the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation [twisted and foolish generation] among whom **ye shine as lights in the world;** holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.*"

GOD'S WORD MAKES CONSTANT USE OF THE COMPARISON BETWEEN "LIGHT" AND "DARKNESS" IN ORDER TO SHOW US HOW THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD FUNCTION IN HIS WORLD!

Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world...*"

1. A CITY THAT IS SET ON AN HILL CANNOT BE HID

If we are what we ought to be we cannot be hid! There should be a contrast between our lives and the lives of others...a contrast that is quite evident and obvious...as obvious and conspicuous as a "*city on an hill.*"

**2. NEITHER DO MEN LIGHT A CANDLE, AND PUT IT UNDER A BUSHEL,
BUT ON A CANDLESTICK; AND IT GIVETH LIGHT
UNTO ALL THAT ARE IN THE HOUSE**

The whole purpose of a "*light*" is to give light...**it has no other purpose**...and this is **our** purpose as lights...to give light!

Essentially what Jesus is telling us is that He has made us a "*light*" and we are not to deliberately try and conceal that light **BECAUSE**:

**IF WE ARE CONCEALING OUR LIGHT,
WE ARE RENDERING THAT LIGHT UTTERLY USELESS**

Jesus said, "*Salt without its savor is useless*"

Why did Jesus use the illustration of "*salt*"?

The answer is because **salt's only usefulness is to be salty.**

Some things are useful for several things, but this is not true of salt. There are also some things that do not become useless simply because their primary function ceases to operate, but this is also not true of salt. The moment salt loses its saltiness it has no use at all! "*It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.*"

Once we lose the essential quality...the purpose...for which we have been made new ... **we have no value to Jesus Christ!**

IN OTHER WORDS...One who is a Christian in name only...*without the quality of the beatitudes in his life*...is useless to Jesus Christ!

ANY CHRISTIAN WHO IS TRULY LIVING THE BEATITUDES
WILL STAND OUT LIKE A CITY ON A HILL
...OR LIKE A CANDLE IN A DARK ROOM...HE CANNOT BE HID!

Our ultimate purpose...and goal...as Christians...is to function in this way... manifesting the essential quality for which God made us...which is to ***be like Jesus!***

The devil is always ready to hand us a "*bushel*" for us to put our light under, but Jesus said, "***Let it shine, let it shine!***"

HOW DO WE "LET OUR LIGHT SHINE?"

In this day of electricity, perhaps it is difficult for us to really understand some of the analogies Jesus made in reference to light. When Jesus speaks of a "*candle*," He is primarily making reference to its method of giving light. The word "*candle*" is more correctly translated

"*lamp*" and the word "*candlestick*" is more correctly translated "*lampstand*."

There were two things which were necessary to keep the lamp burning brightly and keep it giving light:

1. There had to be an adequate supply of oil.

Jesus reminds us of the absolute essential need of oil in the parable of the ten virgins.

The whole point of the beatitudes is to emphasize the fact that we must receive the "*divine life of God*" in order that His light might shine through us.

In some places in Scriptures this reception of the Divine life of God is called "*being filled with the Holy Spirit*" and, in other places in Scripture, it is referred to as being "*controlled by the Spirit of God*."

The "*oil*" is synonymous with being in submissive to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to guide our lives and our motives.

2. The wick had to be trimmed

There was a very delicate process of trimming the wick which had to be given special attention, lest the lamp would begin to smoke and, as a result, not be able to give its light.

Trimming one's "*wick*" is reminding oneself of the injunctions of the beatitudes and asking oneself, "*Do I live according to these injunctions?*" "*Am I like the person who is described in the beatitudes?*" "*Am I poor in spirit...merciful...pure...and a peacemaker?*"

SINCE CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE DIFFERENT FROM NON-CHRISTIANS...[AS DIFFERENT AS LIGHT IS FROM DARKNESS]...HOW ARE WE TO BE DIFFERENT?

Jesus gives us the answer to this question in the Sermon on the Mount:

He tells us how we are to react if someone takes us to court...treats us unjustly...steals our coat...etc. Jesus teaches us...in depth...the truth of what our reactions...and attitudes...should be as Christians and how these attitudes should become for us, a way of life...His way of life!

People are watching us very closely to see how we will react to different life situations. They are anxious to know . . .

- whether or not we will flare up when we become angry
- whether or not we will be overly anxious when we are confronted with problems, and
- whether or not we will respond in a loving manner when conflicts (quarrels, disputes, misunderstandings, jealousies, envy, malice, etc.) arise.

Jesus said, "*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your 'lovely ways' and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"

A Christian is to live a different life than the non-Christian. The Christian's life should show the world the true way of living as he begins to take on the characteristics of Jesus Christ...as he begins to take on the attitudes of the beatitudes...he should begin to relate to his world more and more as Christ related to the world thereby becoming...like Christ was...a light that shines in the darkness.

Others see our "*lovely ways*," which do not call attention to ourselves, but rather, glorify our Father which is in heaven...which, in turn, motivates others to want to glorify God in a similar manner.

It is true that the world is baffled, bewildered, and frustrated...(having tried philosophical, psychological, educational, political etc.) "*solutions*," it still doesn't have any answers that help solve...or resolve...all its *ills*.

The only answer for the world's bewilderment is Jesus Christ...and the only answer for anyone...if he desires to not become a part of the bewilderment...the "*darkness*"...is to be *born-again* and receive a new nature...Christ's nature!

We are living in the midst of people in darkness...some of whom will never have any "*light*" except that which comes from **YOU!**

We are, therefore, to live in such a way that people will see that we are different...different from the rest of the world in conduct, behavior, and reactions and, as a result of our difference, they will see God in us!

Jesus continues His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*" Matthew 5:17-18.

While this passage is a continuation of what Jesus has said before, it also marks the beginning of a new section of the Sermon on the Mount.

Christ begins the Sermon on the Mount by describing a Christian...what he "*is*"... and, then He goes on to explain how the Christian's life is to be a manifestation of what he "*is*."

Like a parent sending his child out into the world and saying to him, "*Now remember who you are and behave in such a way as to bring honor to your family*," Jesus, in like manner, says to each Christian, "*You are a child of God and, because of this, manifest the characteristics of such a people.*"

THE QUESTION IS: "**HOW ARE WE TO MANIFEST THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN OF GOD?"**

It is essentially this question that Jesus answers in verses 17-20 of Matthew 5.

The word that Jesus uses throughout the Sermon on the Mount is "*righteousness*" - and it

is essentially this one word that sums up Christian living. Righteousness is the theme of the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount, **BUT . . . WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?**

Matthew 5:17-20 is a general introduction to the subject of "*righteousness*" and what righteousness is.

Before Christ goes into detail about what righteousness is, He lays down certain general principles. Verse 17-20 serve as an introduction to His explanation of what *true* righteousness is.

Christ always starts with the "*principle*" of a truth and then He goes on to give the "*practices*" of that principle. People get into wrong "*practices*" because they are not sure of the underlying "*principles*." Very often the "*principle*" of a truth gets lost in details about the "*practices*" of that truth.

For example, verse 39 of Matthew 5 states, "*but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*" however, one may go through his entire life and never have anyone "*smite him on his right cheek,*" how, then, is he to fulfill the dictates of this verse?

The breakdown of *practices* is due to the fact that basic *principles* have been forgotten. We must keep in mind that Jesus always starts with basic principles and then goes on to deal with the details of the practices **of** these principles. In verse 17-20, Jesus begins answering the question, "*What is righteousness?*"

1. First, Christ tells us that everything that He teaches is in absolute harmony with the entire teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures and that nothing that He teaches is, in **any** way, a contradiction **of** them [Verses 17-18].
2. Secondly, Christ tells us that His teaching, while in harmony with the teaching of the Old Testament, is in complete **dis**harmony with the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees because His teaching **was** an utter contradiction of **their** teaching [Verses 19-20].

These two principles explain the antagonism that the Scribes and Pharisees had toward Jesus and they likewise explain all the troubles He has to endure with these religious leaders of His day.

REMEMBER THIS FACT:

JESUS CRITICIZED THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES

Some folks say, "*Never preach the negative, but always preach the positive!*" However, Jesus very definitely criticized the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees and He exposed...and denounced...that teaching for what it was.

WHY DID JESUS BRING UP THE MATTER OF THE **LAW**
AT THIS POINT OF THE SERMON?

1. The **law** was something these people faced every day.

Interestingly, the Scribes and Pharisees had added to the *law* until, in Jesus' day, there were **613** commandments.

2. Jesus was known as a "*law breaker*" and He wanted to clarify that it was not God's law that He broke.

It seemed to the crowd that Jesus had a complete disregard for the established law of that day. His healing on the Sabbath...His allowing His disciples to pluck corn on the Sabbath...He teachings on fasting and washing...were all so different from the teachings of the Pharisees that the crowd questioned: "*Weren't His teachings supposed to be based on the Old Testament?*" Jesus did not observe the rules and regulations of the Pharisees and He ate and drank with sinners so, again, the crowd questioned, "*Didn't Jesus believe in the Holy Writings?*"

The interest of the crowd heightened as they began to wonder how Jesus would defend Himself.

Jesus wanted to assure the people that, far from being antagonistic toward the Old Testament, He had come to *fulfill it!*

And, Jesus was showing them this in His Sermon on the Mount because He was teaching them, **the true meaning of the law** which had been so corrupted by these Jewish religious leaders.

JESUS MAKES THREE EMPHATIC DECLARATIONS:

1. "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets*" [Verse 17].
Jesus' life venerated the law for His life was regulated **by** it.

The term "*the law and the prophets*" ...[that is...the writings of Moses and the prophets]...was an expression that was used to mean the entire Old Testament.

THE "LAW" INCLUDED:

- (A) **The Moral Law** - The great moral principles of God
 - (B) **The Judicial Law** - The legislative law given for the nation of Israel in its peculiar circumstances at that time. Its purpose was to order their behavior in their relationships with others.
 - (C) **The Ceremonial Law** - The burnt offerings, sacrifices, rituals, ceremonial in connection with their worship in the Tabernacle and Temple.
2. "*I am come, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*" [Verse 17].

The word "*fulfill*" means "*to carry out...to fulfil in the sense of... to give full obedience to.*"

Literally, "*to fulfil the law*" means, "*to carry out every thing that has been said under the law.*"

3. "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" [Verse 18].

The word "For" in the beginning of this verse is a conjunction and means "because"...in other words..."because of verse 17, therefore, verse 18."

JESUS MAKES TWO MORE POINTS:

1. God's law is absolute and can never be charged or modified even to the slightest extent because His laws are eternal.

What does "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law" mean?

The word "**jot**" is a Hebrew word referring to a very small mark...resembling our English comma...at the **top** of a Hebrew letter.

The word "**tittle**" is the tiny protrusion on a Hebrew letter, much like the small curlicue of Old English lettering.

What Jesus was saying is that every **minute detail** of the law would be fulfilled!

2. One of the most stupendous claims that Jesus ever made was that "He had come to **fulfil** all the law" and that...in **HIM**...it would be fulfilled down to the smallest detail!

Jesus confirmed the whole Old Testament and put His seal of authority upon it because, according to Him, the Old Testament **was** the Word of God...He believed it and quoted **from** it.

Essentially - Jesus said of the Old Testament, "*This is the Word of God and I came to carry it out...to fulfil it!*" Jesus came to fulfil...to carry out...what was written by the prophets of the Old Testament.

When Peter wrote the epistle. Second Peter, the church was living in very hard times. Things were difficult and the Christians were experiencing persecution. In the writing of this epistle, Peter, now an old man, was giving a final word of comfort to the church.

In chapter 1 of Second Peter, Peter tells how he and James and John had the privilege of seeing the transfiguration of Jesus and how they heard God's voice saying, "*This is My beloved Son.*" However, Peter goes on to say that he has something even better to tell us...and that is that we do not have to place our confidence in his testimony and experience because we can have a more sure word of prophecy by reading the Old Testament and discovering for ourselves how it **verifies Jesus Christ's life**...BECAUSE GOD'S WORD IS THE STRONGEST BUTTRESS OF FAITH THAT MAN CAN OBTAIN!

CHRIST CLAIMS THAT HE FULFILLED WHAT WAS TAUGHT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT!

2 Corinthians 1:20 states, "*For all the promises of God in Him [in Christ Jesus] are yea, and in Him Amen unto the glory of God by us.*" One translation states, "*Yes, He has*

fulfilled them."

ALL THE PROMISES OF GOD WERE FULFILLED IN CHRIST JESUS

Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies is, truly, one of the most astounding, remarkable, things that one will ever encounter!

The exact prophecies concerning Christ's birth...the place of His birth...His life and ministry...were all there in the Old Testament.

It is incredible that the Jews could not see it and the **reason** they could not see it was because they thought of a Messiah as a "*worldly*" king...a political personage...and, blinded by this prejudice, instead of seeing the word that **God** had given them, they looked to their own superimposed ideas!

For those who read the Old Testament, there is an extraordinary accurate description of Jesus Christ's life!

Isaiah 53, for instance, gives an account of what Christ was going to do. [The Gospel is right there in the Old Testament].

Psalms 22 is a prophecy of Christ's death, so, right here in this psalm, we have a literal, accurate, description...in detail...of Calvary.

Christ's resurrection is also found in the Old Testament.

The "*bringing in of the Gentiles*" is also told in God's promise to "*bless the nations.*"

An accurate account of what happened at Pentecost is also given in the Old Testament. when Peter got up on the day of Pentecost, he said, "*Don't be surprised, this is what was told to us by the prophet Joel.*"

We could go on to give endless more examples to show the ways in which Jesus Christ fulfilled the Scriptures of the Old Testament! NEVER DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS and don't ever think that you don't need the Old Testament because the New Testament cannot truly be understood except in the light of the Old Testament!

Galatians 4:4 tells us that Christ was "*made under the law*" ...that is...He was born subject to the law!

One of the essential truths concerning the **incarnation** is that Christ was eternal "*above*," but came down to earth "*below*" and was "*made under the law* to carry out the law.

GOD SHOWED THE ABSOLUTE CHARACTER OF HIS HOLY LAW WHEN HE PLACED HIS SON UNDER IT!

Jesus carefully observed the law and he obeyed it down to the minutest detail. He taught others to love the law, and His discourse in the Sermon on the Mount is an explanation **of** the law!

Jesus could claim at the end of His a life that no one could find any wrong in Him and that there could be no charge brought against Him for breaking the law in any way...and Christ defied anyone to so charge Him because He knew He had lived the law so fully and had obeyed it so perfectly that no one could accuse Him of breaking it.

THE CROSS

The cross is the center of our faith, but, if we do not understand the law, we can never understand the cross and what it means.

Some speak of the cross merely in a *sentimental* manner to arouse pity, but the cross was not about a martyr dying...nor was it just a display of God's love. The cross can only be understood in terms of the law!

THE CROSS WAS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST...THE SON OF GOD...ENDURING IN HIS OWN BODY...THE PENALTY PRESCRIBED BY LAW FOR THE SIN OF MANKIND!

The law condemns sin and pronounces the death sentence upon it. God stated, "*The wages of sin is death*" and the law stated, "*Death must pass upon all men, for all have sinned.*"

JESUS CAME...NOT TO DESTROY ...BUT TO FULFILL!

The punishment for sin must be carried out

- That punishment is death!

-

THAT IS WHY CHRIST DIED!

- The law must be fulfilled!

God, in forgiving man, could not just put aside the law which He had decreed because, if He did, it would be a contradiction of His holy nature.

Mankind could not be forgiven until punishment had been enacted for his sin. At Calvary, *Christ was paying the penalty for man's sin* and this is what makes the cross so precious...and...unless we interpret the cross from this perspective, we will never have a Scriptural view of it!

Christ fulfilled all the Old Testament types...the burnt offerings...the sacrifices...the Tabernacle and Temple ceremonial...the brazen altar...the laver of washing - He fulfilled them all!

We ask...as we read the books of Leviticus or Numbers..."*What do all these things... the shewbread...the high priest...the vessels...mean?*" The answer to that question is that they were types and prophecies that were going to be fulfilled!

Jesus Christ fulfilled all these types...He is our High Priest...our Sacrifice...and He has fulfilled every ceremonial law!

Romans 8 makes clear the relationship between God's law and God's grace

Romans 8:1-10, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness."

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

CHRIST FULFILLING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW IN US IS WHAT THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IS ALL ABOUT!

Christ gave us the Holy Spirit and the Holy spirit gives us *power* to live the Sermon on the Mount...thereby fulfilling God's law!

VERSE 5

Tells us that those who give attention to their "*lower nature*" live a *carnal* life because their thoughts are shaped by their *lower nature*, but those whose thoughts are controlled by the Spirit, live after the Spirit and are pleasing to God

VERSE 6

Tells us that the "*death*" referred to does not refer to "*eternal death*" but, rather, it refers to "*separation from God*";s *spiritual intent and purpose*."

VERSE 7-8

Tells us that if one does not live after his *lower nature*, but, rather, is controlled by the Spirit, then he is not at enmity with God and is, therefore, subject to the law of God...[does not subject itself to the law of God... refuses to obey God's law]...The natural man cannot please God and is not subject to the law, but the man who is controlled by the Spirit and loves God is subject to the law!

VERSES 9-10

Tells us that one is not to live after his *natural inclination*, but, rather, is to live after the Spirit because the Spirit of God lives within him. If one is not living after the Spirit, then he is not living to please God and, likewise, his a life is not pleasing to Christ. If Christ abides in an individual (that is, if Christ is ruling within him) the body of self is dead and his "*spirit*" is alive because of Christ's righteousness within!

VERSE 13

Tells us that, if one lives under the control of his "*natural inclinations*," he will be separated from God's purpose for him, but, if he, by the power of the Holy Spirit, puts to death these *natural inclinations*, he will live... **really live!**

The message of Romans 8 is that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [that is,

Christ's righteousness applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit]...frees us from the law of sin and death...the demands of the Old Testament law.

God said in Hebrews 8:7-13 that He was going to "*make a new covenant with the house of Israel*" and that the difference between the "NEW" and the "OLD" covenant was that He was going to '*write His law in their minds and on their hearts.*'

No longer was His covenant on tables of stone, but,
rather, they were now on "*fleshly tables*" of the heart!

GOD SAID THAT HE WOULD MAKE US ANXIOUS TO FULFILL HIS
COVENANT AND THAT HE WOULD ENABLE US TO KEEP THAT COVENANT.

And this is what "*grace*" is...God giving us the "*desire*"...and, then, the "*power*"... or the "*ability*"...to perform His will.

1. THE CEREMONIAL LAW

All that the prophets said concerning the *ceremonial law* was completely fulfilled Christ...by His life...His death...and by resurrection.

When Christ died, the veil in the temple was rent in two...opening the way into the Holy of Holies and...not long after that [about 40 years later...the Temple was completely destroyed in A.D. 70.

Jesus claimed that everything contained in the ceremonial law applied to Him. He felt responsible to perform the law and said that He was "*fulfilling the law*" by believing in...and by subjecting Himself to...it!

2. THE JUDICIAL LAW

The *Judicial law* was primarily for the nation of Israel...God's theocracy on earth...however Jesus said to Israel, "*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" [Matthew 21:43].

Peter said to the *Church*, "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*" [1 Peter 2:9-10].

3. THE MORAL LAW

The *Moral law* was something that was permanent and perpetual.

The greatest commandment...the *law* that covers all laws...is, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...with all thy soul...with all thy mind...and with all thy strength.*" That law is not only permanent, but it is also for all of mankind!

And the second greatest commandment is like unto it, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as*

thyself."

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT WAS THE "MORAL LAW AS
JESUS CHRIST INTERPRETED IT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT!

*... and its message stands true as much for our time as it did in
Christ's time...and it will stand true until the end of time!*

WHAT IS SIN?

1 John 3:4 states that, "*Sin is the transgression of the law.*"

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ presents us with the law and then essentially tells us that when we break the law we are sinning!

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW?

The whole argument of the book of Galatians [particularly chapter 3] is that we are **not** under the law in respect to "*works*" and that our salvation is not dependent on keeping the law. Nonetheless, we are not released from the law as far as it being a rule for our lives.

GOD'S LAW IS NOT OPPOSED TO GOD'S GRACE

It is true that there was once a covenant of law and that now there is a covenant of grace, however, the reality of that truth does not mean that the law is destroyed.

The law was never meant to save man because it could not do that. No one can save himself by keeping the law because no one is *able* to keep the law. The law was given to show man his transgression and it was given 430 years after God gave His promise to Abraham. The purpose of the law was to show the character of God's demands and it was given to man to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It was given to show man that he could never justify himself before God.

The law was our *schoolmaster* to bring us to Christ!

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S "GRACE" IS TO ENABLE US TO KEEP THE LAW... THAT IS, TO ENABLE US TO LIVE THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

The law was given to show man God's demands...to show man how sinful and helpless he is...and to show man his need for a Savior to save him from his sinful nature.

God's grace will deliver man from the curse of the law and will enable him to keep the law...to live *righteously*

Matthew 5:19 states, "*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of God.*"

The Greek word, which is translated "*least*" in this verse, literally means, "*lowest place.. least esteemed...or...regarded as small.*" And, the Greek word which is translated as "*great*" in this verse, literally means, "*counted for much...greatly esteemed...or... acknowledged as great.*"

Jesus did not come to make less stringent demands on us than the law makes, but, rather, His purpose for coming was to make plain what God meant by "*the law*" and to enable us to **keep** the law.

The whole purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was to show us how to fulfill...or "*keep the righteousness of*"...the law. Since this is so, we must be clear in our minds as to what the law is...in other words...we must know the answer to the question, "***What does God demand of us?***" The Sermon on the Mount answers that question!

WHAT IS HOLINESS?

Holiness is keeping the law of God and the Sermon on the Mount is given to us to help us to know **what the "law of God" is.**

In Jesus' day, the Scribes and the Pharisees were highly thought of by those who sought to please God. They **appeared** to be the most holy of people! In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows us how the Scribes and the Pharisees were lacking in true holiness and Godly righteousness.

One of the most surprising and shocking statements that Jesus makes in the Sermon on the Mount is when He says...beginning in verse 17 of Matthew 5..."***Do not imagine that I have come to make things easier by reducing the demands of the law. Far from doing that, I am here to tell you that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you have no hope of entering the kingdom of heaven.***"

THE SCRIBES

The Scribes were those who spent their time teaching and expounding God's law. They were supposedly "*authorities*" on the law. They gave their whole life to studying the law and were the interpreters of the law as well as the ones who made exact copies of the law.

THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees were "*separatists*" [as the Hebrew word indicates]. They formed a code of morals that was more rigid than the law and they based this rigid code on the "*traditions of the fathers.*" They were looked upon as those who had attained the very pinnacle of piety because they had drawn up rules and regulations that even went beyond the demands of the law.

For instance, they taught that one should fast twice a week rather than only one day a year, as the law demanded.

Gradually, over the years, the Pharisees elaborated on God's system of law...and what it originally demanded...and they commanded that others do so as well. They formed an excessively stringent code of morals which they thought was the paragon of virtue and the whole

aim and object of their "*religion*" was to be...what they thought was..."*holy*" in their endeavor to please God.

- The *Scribes* were the doctors of the law, and
 - the *Pharisees* claimed to be the purest practices of the law.

JESUS CAME ALONG AND ANNOUNCED TO HIS LISTENERS THAT, "*UNLESS THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEEDED THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES, THEY WOULD IN NO CASE ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.*"

Because the people depended upon the teachings of the Scribes and the Pharisees for their idea of what God's law demanded, Jesus dealt with those teachings and showed His listeners the hollowness of what the Scribes and Pharisees taught.

On one occasion, Jesus tells of a Pharisee and a sinner who went up to the Temple to pray. Standing in a prominent place, the Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men...he was not an extortioner...he was not unjust...he was not an adulterer. Now, it was true that this Pharisee had done none of these things because Jesus accepted his statements and even repeated them. Jesus said that this Pharisee fasted twice a week...tithed all his possessions...and was a highly "*religious*" man because he was punctilious in his observance of what he considered the "*law*" to be...not only "*verbalizing*" the law, but also "*practicing*" it as well.

As one reads the New Testament, one sees that Christ's wrath was aroused more against "*religion*" such as that of the Scribes and the Pharisees than it was around against anything else - [For instance, read Matthew 22!]

This brings us to the serious, important matter of the possibility of one deluding himself. The Pharisees were hypocrites, but they were unconscious hypocrites! One cannot read the Bible without being constantly reminded of this terrible danger...that is, the danger of sincerely relying upon the wrong kind of "*religion*"...trusting in things which appear to be worship to God, rather than trusting in that which is true worship to Him.

CHRIST'S ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGION OF THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES ...AND SOME SPIRITUAL TRUTHS...AND REALITIES...TO BE LEARNED FROM THAT ANALYSIS:

1. Christ's basic charge against the Scribes and the Pharisees was that their religion was entirely external and formal, rather than being a religion of the "*heart*."

An example of this is Luke 16:15 which says, "*And Jesus said unto them [the Pharisees] `Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; [that is, you seek to impress others with your righteousness], but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination [disgusting] in the sight of God.*" Jesus made this statement in love, but, nonetheless, He was denouncing those who were misrepresenting God.

The Pharisees' religion consisted of certain "*outward*" observances of the law... strict abstinence from gross sins such as adultery, theft, murder, or idolatry...how- ever, they had no

conscience about impure thoughts, covetousness, hatred, or coldness of heart toward God.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:25-27, "*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess...[violent behavior and uncontrolled desire]. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*"

The Scribes and the Pharisees **were** very meticulous about the "*outside*"...the outer behavior...but Jesus said that what one is on the "*inside*" is what is important to God.

2. Another charge that Jesus brought against the Pharisees was that they were more concerned about the "*ceremonial*" law than they were the "*moral*" law.

They were very concerned about the "*ritual*" of the law, but they were not so concerned about the "*moral*" aspect of the law.

They felt that as long as the "*did*" this...and "*did*" that...that it didn't really matter what they **were** "*inside*."

3. Yet another charge that Jesus brought against the Pharisees was that their religion was one of "*man-made*" rules and regulations.

Jesus said that their's was a religion that glorified themselves...and not God... because all of their fasting, praying on street corners, and giving of alms, was to enhance their **own** reputation.

Matthew 23:5-7 states, "*But all their works they do for to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries [large prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside which they wore on their arms] and enlarge the borders of their garments. And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets [greetings of honor], and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.*"

The Pharisees had their own standard of how they thought people should "*be*" and they taught that as long as people conformed to their [articular list of "*rights*" and "*wrongs*," they were "*alright*" and could feel self-satisfied.

A religion that teaches that, after one has "*done*" certain things, he can feel that is "**OK**" and that all is well between he and God, is a religion that promotes smugness and self-satisfaction...self-complacency.

4. The ultimate condemnation that Jesus had of the Pharisees' life-style...and way of living... was that there was a complete absence of the "*spirit*" of the law in their lives.

It is the "*spirit*" of the law that is so clearly outlines in the beatitudes and it is here, in the beatitudes, that Jesus sows us the basic difference between the Pharisees' "*religion*" and true Christianity.

The Pharisees followed the "*letter*" of the law, but neglected the **weightier matters of the law** which was to, "*Love God with all your heart and soul, and love your neighbor as you love yourself.*"

THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF "*RELIGION*" IS TO WORSHIP GOD

Attempting to keep the law down to its smallest detail is not holiness! The test of true holiness is one's relationship with God...one's attitude toward Him...and one's love for Him.

Holiness is not just mere avoidance of certain things, but, rather, it is an attitude of the heart toward God!

The Pharisees were interested in the "*details*" of the law rather than the "*principles*" of the law. In other words, they were interested in "*doing*" rather than in "*being*."

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is telling us that it is the "*principle*" of the law that really matters BECAUSE:

WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IS THE "*STATE OF THE HEART*"

It is true that there has been a great deal of time and space taken in discussing verses 17 through 20 of Matthew 5, however, these verses deal with the question of the Christian's relationship to the "*law*" and it is important that we understand this foundational consideration that Christ lays down before He goes on to teach on the meaning of righteousness.

Beginning with verse 21 in chapter 5, a new section is introduced and, in order to understand the relevance of this section to what Christ is teaching us in the Sermon on the Mount, it is essential that we recall what has been said by Christ up to this point:

Up to this point, Christ has been describing the citizens of His kingdom . . .

1. First, He gives a general description of the nature of what a Christian is to "*be*"
[verses 3-12]
2. Secondly, He give the function...or purpose...of a Christian in his world.
[verses 13-16]
3. Thirdly, He deals with the Christian's relationship to the law - [verses 17-20]
4. Now...lastly...beginning with verse 21...Christ demonstrates...in two ways...this relationship of the Christian to God's law:
 - (A) First, He contrasts **His** teachings about the Christian's relationship to the law with the false teachings of the Pharisees - and
 - (B) Secondly, He gives His own positive exposition of what God's intentions were in the giving of His law to us.

From Matthew 5:21 on [throughout the rest of Jesus' message of the Sermon-on-the-

Mount . . . to the end of chapter 7] Christ gives an elaboration of His statement that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

In Matthew 5:21-48, Christ puts forth **six illustrations** as He gives the true exposition of the law in contrast to the Pharisees' false teachings about the law.

These six illustrations include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Murder [verses 21-26] | 4. Oaths [verses 33-37] |
| 2. Adultery [verses 27-30] | 5. Retaliation [verses 38-42] |
| 3. Divorce [verses 31-32] | 6. Love [verses 43-48] |

As we look at these illustrations, we see, at once, certain principles which are common to all six. It is important that we first grasp these principles before we go on to try and understand the meaning behind the illustrations:

1. Each time Christ states, "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,*" He is using this statement to introduce each one of the six illustrations.

When Christ uses this statement He is **NOT** referring to the law of the Old Testament, but, rather, to the *false* teachings of the Pharisees. We must keep in mind that the purpose of Christ's teachings, in the Sermon on the Mount, was to show us the true teachings of the law as opposed to the Pharisees' *false* teachings of it.

Essentially what Christ was saying by this introductory statement was that what one had "*heard*" by the Pharisees was **NOT** the law that God had given, but, rather, was merely a misrepresentation **of** that law because the Pharisees had added so many of their own interpretations to the law that it became almost impossible to tell what was God's law and what was just the Pharisees' own ideas about the law.

There is a tendency within man to add his own interpretations to what God says which is why, for example, the so-called "*sacraments*" of the Church [which, in fact, have been added by men] becloud the simple gospel that was given to us by Jesus Christ.

2. Another extraordinary statement that Jesus makes concerning these six illustrations is, "**I** say unto you."

Jesus presents a contrast between "*they say unto you*" and "*I say unto you*" and He was **not** contrasting Moses' law with what He was teaching, but, rather, He was contrasting the Pharisees' interpretation of the law with what God really meant by the law.

Jesus did not hesitate to claim unique authority because He spoke, not as a mere teacher, or a mere man, or as just an expounder of the law, but, rather, as **God!**

As we listen to the Sermon on the Mount, and are confronted with the stupendous fact that we are listening to the Son of God Himself, we realize that *every word* is important!

And it is important that we know exactly *what* He said. It is important that we understand that Jesus was not just presenting us with a new set of ethical codes to live by, but, rather, He was

telling us about a "*new life*" to be lived!

Jesus tells us that He is founding a kingdom and that those of His kingdom will be of a certain character, of whom He will be their head. He continues to tell us that, because those in His kingdom are to behave in a certain manner, He will give us some illustrations of just what that behavior should entail, how they are to live as "*children of the kingdom.*"

Jesus is more concerned about the "*principles*" of God's law than He is the mere performance of certain rules and regulations and, even in these illustrations which He gives, we must be careful not to turn the illustrations themselves into "*law,*" thereby, negating the very thing that Christ is setting out to accomplish in the Sermon on the Mount.

It is characteristic of human nature to want to have everything cut and dry, to want to be able to draw up some definite list of "*don't's*" and "*don't's*" and then to be able to feel that, if one had conformed to the list, then all is well between them and God.

However, true Christianity is not about observing a list of do's and don'ts and, therefore, we must never think of *holiness* in terms of observing certain "*rules,*" but, rather, we should think of *holiness* as the living of God's principles day by day in the situations that He allows to come into our lives!

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IS NOT ABOUT A CODE OF ETHICS,
BUT, RATHER, IT IS ABOUT A QUALITY OF LIFE
WHICH ONLY JESUS CHRIST CAN ENABLE US TO LIVE!

If we take the Sermon on the Mount as only detailed statements about what we should, or should not, be doing and then say to ourselves, "*According to Jesus, as long as one does not **do** this or that, he will be alright with God,*" we will miss the whole point that Jesus is seeking to make.

We must hold on to the principles that Christ gives to us and not try and turn His *illustrations* into a *law* because Christ is only using these illustrations to show us the kind of life that a Christian should be living.

Again, human nature desires that someone give us all the answers to our questions as to what is right and wrong, a kind of textbook to live by, to reiterate, a list of "*do's*" and "*don't's,*" and church history is cluttered with just such lists!

The Sermon on the Mount does not present "*laws,*" but, rather, it presents a **life** to be lived! Christ lays down certain principles that we are to apply to our lives, that we are to apply to the way we are to respond to life, and others.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a new outlook and understanding of **God's** viewpoint of life and then tells us that we are to adopt this same viewpoint and, with **His** enablement, we are to apply this viewpoint to every detail of our lives and the way we live.

The summarize, the Sermon on the Mount is not about living by "*regulations*" but rather, is about applying Godly "*principles*" to every situation that we face in life, and, as we look at these illustrations that Jesus makes, one will find that He uses exactly the same *principles* in each of them:

1. IT IS, PRIMARILY, THE "*SPIRIT*" OF THE LAW THAT MATTERS RATHER THAN THE "*LETTER*" OF THE LAW!

God said, "*The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*"

Many seem to feel that, as long as they do not commit the "*act*" of sin, they have kept God's law, however, the whole point of God's law . . . God's intent when He gave man His law . . . was not just to keep man from committing some "*act*" of sin, but, rather, was to deal with man's "*attitude*" toward sin.

With this in mind, then, if we rely only on the "*letter*" of the law, we miss the whole point **of** the law!

We must not fall into the trap of taking the "*letter*" of the law literally and denying the "*spirit*" of the law, thereby, at times, making the law ridiculous. Jesus did not say that the "*letter*" of the law was unimportant, but that it must be interpreted according to the "*spirit*" of its meaning.

2. CONFORMITY TO GOD'S LAW MUST NOT BE THOUGHT OF IN TERMS OF "*ACTION*" ONLY.

Christ deals with thoughts, motives, and desires and He is more concerned with what **leads** to the *action of sin* than He is the action of sin itself.

Christ is not saying that the action does not matter, but, since the Pharisees were concerned *only* about the action, Christ emphasized that the desire in the heart to sin is as much of a sin, in **God's** sight, as the actual action of sin - **BECAUSE** - *it is the **heart** that really matters!*

3. THE LAW MUST NOT BE THOUGHT OF AS SOMETHING *NEGATIVE*, BUT, RATHER, AS SOMETHING *POSITIVE*!

The purpose of the law was not just to prevent one from doing certain things that are wrong, but, rather, its real object was to lead one *positively* to do that which is right, and to **love** doing what is right!

Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount that what God is really concerned about is that one be a lover of righteousness, hungering and thirsting after God, **not** that one just think of the law as a negative regulation to avoid doing evil.

Many think of holiness as a quality that belongs to one who is not guilty of

doing certain things. With this kind of reasoning, then, one's heart may be filled with jealousy, envy, or pride, but, as long as he does not "**do**" certain things he is, nonetheless *holy*. This kind of reasoning, unfortunately, makes holiness a negative, rather than a positive, thing.

4. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW WAS NOT TO KEEP ONE IN A STATE OF OBEDIENCE TO OPPRESSIVE RULES, BUT, RATHER, TO PROMOTE THE FREE DEVELOPMENT OF ONE'S SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.

A holy life was never meant to be something hard or grievous, but, rather, was meant to be a glorious reality that was offered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:3 tells us, "*His commandments are not grievous.*" God's commandments should not be something that *cramps* our lives, nor should they be something that narrows, or is restrictive to, our spiritual lives, because, ***the whole purpose of the Sermon on the Mount...[indeed, the whole purpose of the entire Gospel]...is to bring us into the "glorious liberty of the Children of God."***

5. THE LAW MUST NEVER BE REGARDED AS AN END IN ITSELF

The ultimate purpose of the law is that we might come to know God.

The real test of whether or not God's law is truly operative in one's life is not whether or not one is guilty, or not guilty, of "*doing*" wrong, but, rather, whether or not one's life is pleasing God - whether or not God is supreme in one's life - whether or not one is living to the glory and honor of Him - whether or not one's thoughts, imaginations, desires, and impulses have been Christlike, because *the purpose of God's law is to get us to examine ourselves in the light of Jesus Christ and His life within us rather than to get us to just obey a set of rules!*

CHRIST'S FIRST ILLUSTRATION

Matthew 5:21-22, "*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*"

The Pharisees taught that to avoid committing murder was to keep the sixth commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" In other words, if one did not actually commit the act, do the wrong deed itself, one could be perfectly content that he had kept this commandment, ***however***, Jesus comes along and says, "*You have heard that it was said...but I tell you...*"

TRUE CHRISTIAN MORALITY MUST ARISE FROM THE HEART AND, BECAUSE OF THIS, NO ONE BUT GOD, WHO CONTROLS THE HEART, CAN PROVIDE THIS KIND OF MORALITY.

This sixth commandment had been known by Israel ever since Moses received it at

Mount Sinai, but it had come to be defined as nothing more than an "*external*" act. The Pharisees taught that if one commits the act of murder, [this is, if one takes innocent life], he would be punished at the hands of the civil magistrates.

However, this was not at all what God intended this commandment to teach. Jesus deals with the *cause* of murder - anger, murder, and a lack of respect for human beings!

Murder really begins when one loses respect for human personalities!

JUST EXACTLY WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT?

1. "*Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment*"
[Matthew 5:22a King James Translation].

The words, "*...is angry...*" are also translated as, "*harbors malice; continues to be angry, or nurses anger*" in other translations of the Bible.

The words "*with his brother*" means exactly that, being angry with one's brother. We are to be angry with "*situations*," but never with "*people*."

God expects us to be angry at evil, as Jesus was angry when He cleansed the temple. God gives us the ability to feel anger when His kingdom is, in any way, being attacked, however, we are never to be angry at another "*person*." In the natural, people do irritate us, but, with Christ's life within us, we can actually become immune to this feeling of irritation.

One Hindu woman, who had accepted Christ, was greatly persecuted by her husband. The missionary asked her, "*What do you do when your husband gets angry?*" She replied, "*I cook his food better when he complains and I sweep the floor cleaner when he speaks unkindly **because** I try to show him that when I became a Christian I also became a better wife and mother.*"

God **can** enable us to overcome irritations which are the cause of us losing our tempers!

The word "*judgment*," found in Matthew 5:22, referred to the local judgment court, the magistrate. What Jesus was saying is that one would be brought into judgment, not only for the act of murder, but also for being "*angry with his brother*."

The word "*anger*" means "*to swell*" and it comes from a word which refers to internal swelling of plants, as when a fruit swells and the juice flows out. The kind of *anger*, that is referred to here, then, is, "*something boiling inside until it is ready to explode*."

Physicians and psychiatrists agree that to live with anger is like living with a "*growing tumor*" inside and, in time, can prove to be fatal!

**ANGER IS A MOUNTING, GROWING, DISPOSITION.
IT IS AN ATTITUDE OF "NURSING A GRUDGE."**

Jesus is telling us not to harbor anger!

2. Secondly, Jesus said, "*Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council*" - Matthew 5:22b

The word "*raca*" ["*harrika*" in the Greek], is defined as "*an effort to give the sound of a person who is clearing his throat in order to spit.*"

When the Jew wanted to express his utter contempt for someone, he would use this word and, because the usage of this word connotes the desire to "*spit on someone*," its usage was the meanest thing one could do, short of physically striking the person.

When the Jew used the word "*harrka*" it meant that he was looking down upon that person with disdain, with an attitude of "*snobbery*."

Jesus is telling us, by this statement, that not only must we not *feel* anger toward anyone, but we must also not even be guilty of any expression of contempt toward anyone **because** it is this feeling of scorn and derision that leads one to commit the "*act of murder*."

3. Thirdly, Jesus said, "*Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire*"
- Matthew 5:22c

The word "**fool**" that Jesus uses here was a word that meant, "*an immoral, loose living, thoroughly disreputable person*" and, therefore, to call a person a "*fool*" was also an attempt to destroy his good name and reputation.

To destroy a man's reputation, or to shake people's confidence in him by a "*whispering campaign*" against him, is a way that one can destroy a man short of the "*act of actual murder*."

One can "*murder*" a person's spirit just as surely as he can destroy "*physical*" life.

Note that, of the three "*judgments*" just discussed, the severest judgment is upon the tale-bearing gossip who kills a person's reputation. Jesus says, "*They shall be in danger of hell fire.*"

Jesus is dealing with murder *in the making*! He is teaching that, before one actually commits the "*act of murder*," his heart is filled with contempt, insults, and anger, therefore, if one never allows these attitudes to live in his heart, he will never have the remotest chance of hurting anyone.

JESUS CARRIES HIS TEACHING EVEN FURTHER. HE HAS SAID THAT WE ARE NOT TO HARBOR UNKIND THOUGHTS, OR NEGATIVE FEELINGS, WITHIN OUR HEART, HOWEVER, HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT WE ARE NOT TO JUST *REPRESS* THESE FEELINGS, BUT, RATHER, WE MUST TAKE STEPS TO REMOVE THE CAUSE OF THESE FEELINGS!

Matthew 5:23-24, "**Therefore**, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there

remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

In these verses [Matthew 5:23-24] Jesus is dealing with the danger of one trying to atone for moral failure by balancing evil with good, by making certain "ceremonial" sacrifices in an attempt to cover up the moral failure.

The Pharisees were experts at this! They went to the Temple regularly to avoid experiencing any "twinge of conscience" and they would essentially be saying, by their behavior, "I am worshipping God, here is my gift. I am bringing it to the altar."

One may say, "Well, I have confessed, apologized, and done everything that I possibly can do, but the person will not accept any reconciliation!"

This is not the point! The point is that one must rid his heart of any wrong feeling, as well as do everything that he can to restore the broken relationship.

This is so important, so vital, that one must interrupt his praying to take care of it. One cannot harbor ill feelings against someone and then perform great acts of worship to cover these feelings up. Jesus is telling us that there is no value in the act of worship if one harbor hatred in his heart!

Matthew 5:25-26, "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

WHAT POSSIBLE CONNECTION CAN THESE VERSES HAVE WITH WHAT JESUS WAS SAYING ABOUT BEING RECONCILED TO ONE'S BROTHER?

Jesus is saying that the ridding of one's heart of all ill feelings is so important, so urgent and desperate, that one is to do it at once, *without any delay!*

One is to think of his "anger," not in terms of his relationship with the one who has offended him, but, rather, in terms of his own relationship with God.

Jesus was making an illustration by using what was a custom of that day when an "adversary" [an opponent, accuser, or someone who was suing another] would take someone to court and what Jesus was saying is that, if one is being taken to court, he should settle the matter **out** of court because, if one waits until it gets to the court, it just may be a lot harder on him to pay the debt.

Jesus was also teaching that, when it comes to our relationship with God, it is important that we settle these matters "as soon as possible," before God, Who is our *real* Judge, judges us, **because** God has a right to demand the uttermost farthing, every penny of the debt that we owe, however, we *can* come to an agreement with Him, and we should do it as quickly as possible.

Here one is, walking life's road, when suddenly the Judge [God] asks, "What about this,

that you owe?" One is to agree with Him and settle the debt, or the law will make its demands!

The Judge continues to ask, "What about your relationship with your brother? What about the things in your heart, have you given attention to these things?"

What Jesus seems to be saying is, "One may not be here tomorrow, because tomorrow one could be in eternity, so he should take care of these things, and settle his 'accounts' now, while he is still alive.

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, while you are in the way."

"Adversary"? - Could God ever be an adversary?

God is the Judge, His laws are absolute, and He is at controversy with anyone who breaks His laws. We must, therefore, agree with Him and His laws and if we do, now in *this* life, it will go a lot easier for us than if we choose not to agree with Him and His laws and then I have to answer for our disobedience, our "non-agreement," at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:31 states, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged, but if the Lord judges us, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

God's terms now are easy. One should face his shortcoming . . . he should acknowledge them . . . confess them . . . turn from any self-defense, and, if any reconciliation is necessary, he should be reconciled at once.

One should be willing to *humble* himself, and even let the other person gloat if necessary, so that he can rest in the knowledge that he has done all that he knows to do to remove any barrier that would stand in the way of his making reconciliation with his brother.

WHAT DO WE OWE GOD?

WE OWE HIM EVERYTHING BECAUSE
HE SENT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD
TO PAY THE PRICE OF SIN FOR US.

We now come to the second of the six illustrations that Jesus gives to us to answer the question of **how** one's righteousness can "exceed that of the Pharisees," the religious leaders of His day.

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| Matthew 5:27-28, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. |
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WHAT DID CHRIST MEAN BY THESE VERSES - Matthew 5:27-28?

We must not attempt to lessen, or reduce, the true meaning of Christ's teaching here, but, at the same time, neither must we read our own meaning into His statement, thereby, making it say what Christ never intended for it to say.

Christ's purpose in these verses is to show us *God's* intent of giving us the "law," freeing the commandments of God from the false interpretation of the Pharisees and restoring to them the true meanings that God had originally intended them to have.

Christ shows us in these verses that sin is not just an *outward* act of wrong doing, but, rather, that it [**sin**] is about the *heart*. Sin is about the fact that there is something within man's heart that makes him *want* to sin, makes him *want* to do the wrong act.

1 Samuel 16:7 states, "***The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.***"

As we expressed earlier, these six illustrations that Christ gives to us are an enlargement of verse 20 where He tells us that our righteousness must "*exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.*"

In the first illustration, Christ tells us that **murder** is something that begins in the heart because it begins with hatred, disdain, contempt, and the loss of respect for a person as a human being.

Now, in this second illustration, Christ deals with,

"WHERE THE SIN OF ADULTERY REALLY BEGINS!"

The Pharisees had limited their "*definition*" of adultery to the mere outward act of impurity and they taught that, as long as one abstained from the final act, he had met the requirements of the law.

Jesus, however, deals with the *nature of man*, because it is what is in man's nature that leads him to commit the overt deed of adultery. And, because this **is** true, Jesus taught that God's intent in the giving of the law was to go beyond man's *behavior*, and to reach inward to his very *nature*, prohibiting impure thoughts and desires as well as impure *deeds*.

As has been stated a number of times now, the Pharisees taught that, as long as one's external conduct was "*law abiding*," one was "*OK*" before God, **however**, God had taught, even in the Old Testament, "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,*" and. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*"

Jesus, in this second *illustration*, is giving an expression of the seventh commandment and is showing that the height, and depth, and breadth of God's intention, when He gave us His commandments, was not only to forbid unclean acts, but was also to forbid even the *desire* for them!

"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her"

The phrase that Jesus uses here refers to "*looking with continual longing with the mind made up to commit the act of adultery,*" and, since this kind of "*looking with continual longing*" necessitates the full consent of the will, Jesus is not speaking here of some *involuntary* glance.

It is important to remember that *temptation is **NOT** sin!* God has given man a "**WILL**" to

protect his heart and the will can reject or accept temptation.

Temptation becomes sin when we, prompted by a depraved nature, allow evil desires to develop.

The first step to committing sin is to allow *lust* to stir within one's heart. Jesus says that impure, wanton, imaginations, though they may never culminate in the act of adultery, are still sin.

Jesus is teaching that if one allows the desire to remain in his heart, and the only thing that is lacking is an opportunity for the crime, then he is still guilty of breaking God's law.

THE FIRST STEP TO COMMITTING THE SIN OF ADULTERY IS TO ALLOW LUST TO STIR WITHIN THE HEART AND THIS "STIRRING" IS ENCOURAGED BY FEEDING THE EYE WITH FORBIDDEN FRUIT!

When the heart becomes so set on forbidden fruit, the soul is brought into such complete bondage, that no human power can break it. As 2 Peter 2:14 states, "*Having eyes full of adultery they cannot cease from sin.*"

" looks on a woman"

Matthew 6:23, "*If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.*"

Genesis 39:7, ". . . and Potiphar's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me!'"

Genesis 3:6, "*When the woman [Eve] saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.*"

Judges 16:1, "*Samson saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.*"

2 Samuel 11:2, "*And David...saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.*"

Job 31:1, "**I made a covenant with mine eyes.. why than should I think upon a maid?"*

These verses show the importance of guarding one's eyes, which are the "**windows of the soul.**" One must protect his "**eyes**" from anything immodest or indecent, if one is to guard his heart.

Sin is not merely a matter of an **act**, or a deed, but, rather, it is a matter of *something within the heart* and leads to the action. In other words, the act of sin is merely a symptom of an inner disease!

Jesus is dealing here with, not that which one does that is wrong, but, rather, that which makes one do it.

The question is, "*What is it that urges one to sin?*" The answer to that question is where the problem lies, and it is where the problem lies that must be taken care of. **And**, since the problem of sin lies in man's heart, it is the heart that must be taken of!

When it came to the sin of **adultery**, the Pharisees were deluded into feeling quite

content with the knowledge that they had not committed the "act" of adultery, however, Jesus, in His teaching here in the Sermon on the Mount, deals with what makes one want to commit adultery whether one has actually committed the "act" or not.

Matthew 5:29-30, "*If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*"

It has been said that, "*It is always common sense to interpret the Bible in a literal sense, unless interpreting it literally makes nonsense.*" And, if there was ever a time in Scripture where a "*literal sense*" interpretation makes "*nonsense*," it is here in Matthew 5:29-30.

Believe it or not, there have been those at certain times in church history who have literally cut off their hands, thinking that they were carrying out this injunction in the Sermon on the Mount!

It is in Scripture, so what does it mean?

Since Christ's whole argument is that sin is deeper than the *outside*, **BECAUSE SIN IS OF THE HEART**, what good would it do, then, to "*cut off*" the hand?

Jesus said that one should pluck out his "*right*" eye and cut off his "*right*" hand, if they "*cause you to sin*," so, if everyone who sinned decided to pluck out his right eye and cut off his right hand, all we would have, in the end would be "*left-eyed, left-handed sinners!*"

WHAT **DOES** THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE MEAN?

In this passage, Christ is emphasizing the horribleness of sin and the importance of dealing with the very *source* of sin . . . [which is the heart] . . . and getting rid of it there.

To understand what Christ was saying in this passage, it is also important that we have some understanding of the colloquialisms of the east in the day that Jesus used them. In other words, it is important that we "*learn the lingo*" that they used.

For instance, to use the phrase:

"*Cut your eye from my boy*" meant, "Do not envy my boy."

"*Don't cut your eye from my family while I am away*" meant,
"Look after my family's best interests."

"*Cut off your hand from my vineyard*" meant,
"Do not gather fruit from my vineyard."

And, "*Cut your hand*" meant, "Do not steal."

These remarks, which sound so harsh to us, did not puzzle the Galilean [who spoke Aramaic] nor did they need to be explained to them because these remarks, or *terms*, were of current usage and are still currently used in oriental speech in some places today.

The "eye" is considered to be the most precious member of the body and the "hand" is considered to be the most useful member.

The word "offend" [in the King James Translation] which Jesus uses here, does not mean simply "to displease," but, rather, it means "to hinder" and the "hindering" refers to anything that causes one to sin, or "hinders" one from keeping God's law.

Jesus is essentially saying, then, *"If the most precious thing you have causes you to sin, get rid of it, no matter how valuable it may be to you and, if it causes you to stumble, throw it away."*

CHRIST IS DEALING WITH SIN, NOT ONLY AS SOMETHING THAT ONE "DOES," BUT, ALSO, AS SOMETHING THAT IS OF THE HEART, SOMETHING THAT IS A FORCE WITHIN, A POWER THAT IS RESIDENT IN ONE'S HEART.

1. Jesus is dealing with the nature of sin and its consequences

The chief cause for the lack of holiness is sin!

Jesus is saying that, though a man may not "do" anything wrong, he can still be sinful within because sin is something "within" man, within *all* men. Sin is not only the *act* of murder or adultery, but it is also the *desire* to do these acts.

2. Jesus is dealing with the importance of the soul and its eternal destiny

Twice Jesus said, *"For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell."*

Jesus is saying, that one's soul, and its eternal destiny, is so important that, if the thing that is dearest and most cherished by one is the cause of sinning, then one should *"pluck it out and get rid of it."*

The eye, of course, is, in and of itself, very good, right and profitable, however, if it is the means of trapping one into sin, then one is to, in essence, throw it away, or, in the language of our culture, ***not use the eye for that purpose!***

In is important that we understand something about the colloquialisms to Jesus' day!

For instance, take Luke 14:26, where Jesus states, *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciples."*

The word "hate" in this verse does not mean to "dislike," or "to abhor," or "to despise." It is a word that means "by comparison or, "in preference of."

It is the misuse of some things, putting them in wrong priority in one's life, that makes them wrong and, what Jesus is stressing in the Sermon on the Mount is the importance of one's soul and its eternal destiny. Jesus is telling us that everything in life must be subservient to the importance of the eternal destiny of one's soul which is why nothing must be allowed to come between one and the eternal destiny of one's soul, because,

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT ONE HAS TO DO IN
THIS WORLD IS TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR ETERNITY!

Therefore,, rather than have all that is precious and dear to one now, in this life, and lose everything in the next life, it would be better to go through this life maimed.

3. Jesus is saying that one must hate sin and one must do all that he can do to destroy sin, at all cost, within his self!

One must train himself to hate sin. One must study sin to understand its workings. One must read the Biblical description of sin and analyze it in order to learn to hate sin as God hates sin.

4. Jesus is teaching us that a clean and pure heart is one that is free from all lusts

Keep in mind that, verses 29-30 [of Matthew 5] is a continuation, and in the context, of verses 27-28. Jesus is teaching us that we are not only to be free from certain wrong "*actions*," but we must also have a *pure heart within*.

As stated earlier, the Pharisees' idea of godly living was that one adhere to a list of do's and don'ts, however Jesus is making it clear in the Sermon on the Mount, that godly living is about one having a *pure heart*.

Jesus states in Matthew 12:33, "*Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good*," and, in Matthew 23:26, "*First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean*."

5. Jesus is saying that one is to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts

Here, in Matthew 5:29-30, Jesus is teaching us the importance of the mortification of sin in one's life.

Romans 8:13, "*Put to death all the base pursuits of the body*."

1 Corinthians 9:27, "*I keep under my body [make it behave] and bring it into subjection*."

Romans 13:14, "*Put a stop to gratifying the evil desires that lurk in your lower nature*."

Colossians 3:5, "*Put to death your lower, earthly, nature*."

The above verses refer, not to the mortification of the "*physical*" members of one's body, but, rather, to the obtainment of victory over the strong passions of one soul,

and,

to obtain this kind of victory is no easy matter because it is, in fact, a painful discipline. "*Putting to death one's lower, earthly nature*" means sacrificing those things that one delights in and holds most dear and it is as painful as "*plucking out an eye*." Nevertheless, one must choose between this kind of mortification or missing out on God's best purpose for him.

Jesus tells us to make no provision for the flesh, to not *feed* it!

Sin is like an inner fire and one should not give it any fuel [*food*] because, if one does, it has the same effect as throwing gas on a fire.

EVEN THE MOST VALUED THING MUST BE SACRIFICED IF IT, IN ANY WAY, JEOPARDIZES THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF ONE'S SOUL!

One would consent to the amputation of one of his limbs, no matter how painful the operation, or how heavy the loss of that limb, would be, if this amputation was imperative in order for his life to be preserved! Should, then, one refuse painful mortification which is essential in order for one's soul to be saved?

There are some things which God will not do for us, but which we must do for ourselves, and, what each and every Christ must do is to decide to surrender his will to *God's* will!

6. Jesus teaches us that we must realize the price that was paid to deliver us from sin

Christ's purpose for coming into the world, and for enduring the shame and suffering of the cross, was to deliver [redeem] us from all iniquity, from this present evil world, and to separate us unto Himself a precious [valuable] people.

7. Jesus tells us that there are some sins which we will never be able to overcome by rational reasoning and that we must be frightened by the consequences of these sins.

Simply knowing the "*fear [terror] of the Lord*" makes it easier to fight [argue] against those sins which may seem too hard for one to deny himself of, or those sins that may seem too difficult to crucify the flesh to.

If one says, "*I cannot die to this particular sin,*" and chooses not to mortify the deeds of the flesh, but, rather, chooses to gratify his passions now, he would do well to consider how much harder it will be for him when he has to answer for this sin at the judgment seat of Christ!

"For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

Matthew 5:31-32, "*It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery."*

We now come to a subject which many ministers shy away from because it is fraught with difficulties, however, this subject is in God's Word, and, as we work our way through the Sermon on the Mount, we come face to face with this subject of divorce.

THERE IS REAL VALUE IN A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF GOD'S WORD because it is so easy to slide over certain sections of Scripture, and to not deal with them, in an endeavor to avoid controversial issues.

Anyone who has ever read up on the subject of divorce realizes how various the Scriptural interpretations of this subject can be. However, the myriad difficulties that surround the subject of divorce are mostly the result of man having manipulated statements of Scripture to suit his own theory.

LET'S FACE THE SUBJECT OF DIVORCE HONESTLY

It is important that we remember the background, or context, of Matthew 5:31-32 and we must not seclude it from verses 17 through 30, as it belongs to this same section.

This Scriptural passage is one of the *six illustrations* that Christ uses to show the relationship between His kingdom and the teachings of the law.

Christ is using this Scriptural passage to show the vast superiority of His righteousness over the so-called righteousness of the Pharisees.

Christ's purpose, then, by using this illustration is to correct, and expose, the perversion of God's law as it was being taught by the Pharisees - by comparing this perversion with His superior teaching of God's law.

WHAT DID THE LAW OF MOSES REALLY TEACH?

God's law on divorce is stated in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, and it states, "*If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds some- thing indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.*"

This passage is a summary of all the Old Testament law on the subject of divorcement.

The word "*adultery*" *does not even appear* in this passage for the simple reason that, under the law, the punishment for adultery was *death* [Deuteronomy 22:22]! **THIS BEING TRUE, ONE MIGHT THEN ASK, "IF DEUTERONOMY 24 IS NOT SPEAKING OF ADULTERY, WHAT, THEN, WAS THE PURPOSE FOR THIS LEGISLATION WITH REGARD TO DIVORCE?"**

The world, including Israel, had a very low view of women and it had come to believe that a man could divorce his wife for *any kind of frivolous reason*! If a man wanted to get rid of his wife, he could bring up any "*trumped-up*" charge against her and simply turn her out into the street.

You would never believe me if I told you in my own words . . . [you would think, surely, I was making it all up] . . . therefore, I am going to quote from the Talmud, Josephus, and other historians, records, which state that the prevalent belief was that a man could divorce his wife for reasons such as: • "*going about the house with loose hair • spinning in the street • familiarity talking with other men • ill treating her husband's parents • brawling • speaking to her husband so loudly that the neighbors could hear • burning the biscuits • not seasoning the food just right • poor housekeeping • bad manners • spoiling a dish in cooking.*"

The purpose of this legislation in Deuteronomy 24 was to introduce some regulation and control, to bring some order, into a situation that had not only become chaotic, but was also grossly unfair to women and inflicted untold suffering upon them!

1. **GOD'S LAW PERMITTED DIVORCE ONLY FOR CERTAIN REASONS**

While God's law permitted divorce when there was some *natural, moral, or physical* defect discovered in a wife, however, it **prohibited** all the flimsy excuses they had been using to gain a divorce.

Also, before a divorce could be obtained, it had to be established that there was some very special "*cause*" - described under the title of "*uncleanness*" - before the divorce could be obtained and this "*uncleanness*" must be proved in the sight of, at least, two witnesses.

The word "*uncleanness*" is also translated "*defiled, or disqualified*"

The purpose of this law was to dismiss all the *frivolous, superficial, and unjust* reasons that husbands had been using to obtain a divorce.

2. **GOD'S LAW ALSO REQUIRED THAT ANY MAN DIVORCING HIS WIFE GIVE HER A "BILL OF DIVORCEMENT".**

No longer could a man just decide that he didn't "*like his wife*" anymore and then turn her out of his house to the mercy of the streets.

In order to protect the woman being divorced, God's law stated that, "*a Bill of Divorcement* be given her." This was a printed statement that she had been dismissed because of certain, verified, reasons. This "*Bill of Divorcement*" must be handed her in the presence of two witnesses.

The act of Divorce was a very *formal* and *serious* occasion and God intended it so, because He wanted to impress on His people that divorce **was** a solemn step that it was not to be undertaken lightly in a moment of passion, or for just any old reason.

3. **GOD'S LAW STATED THAT THE DIVORCED WOMAN WAS ENTITLED TO MARRY SOMEONE ELSE**

These statements above were the teachings of God's law, **BUT, NOW**, what were the teachings of the Pharisees?

Remember that Jesus' purpose, in His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, was to refute the Pharisees' corrupted, perverted, interpretations of God's law.

The Pharisees taught that Moses *urged*, even "**commanded**," a man to divorce his wife for **any** *cause*

Deuteronomy 24 says nothing of the kind! God never **commanded** anybody to obtain a divorce, He only said that, *if one does* obtain a divorce, it could only be under certain conditions.

The Pharisees were teaching the very thing that God sought to prohibit, which was that a man could "*put his wife away for just any kind of inadequate reason* - simply because she was unsatisfactory to him.

The Pharisees did not care about the *reasons*, the only thing that they cared about was that a divorce be made "*legal*," by giving the woman, who was being divorced, a "*Bill of Divorcement*."

The Pharisees didn't care about the *reason* for a divorce . . . that isn't what interested them. What **did** interest them was the *way* in which the divorce was carried out . . . this is what was important to them.

According to history, the Pharisees insisted that the "*Bill of Divorcement*" be written in twelve lines, no more, and no less. This is a good example of the folly of "*straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel*."

Jesus said, '*These Pharisees teach, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.*'"

It is true that a "*Bill of Divorcement*" was a part of Moses' law, but it was not the **main** part. The Pharisees, however, **did** make the "*Bill of Divorcement*" the main part in the divorce issue and, in the process of doing so, they failed to see the real meaning of marriage.

The Pharisees had perverted the teaching on divorce and had added their own traditions, until God's real purpose for giving this law on divorcement was nullified.

Denial of remarriage after divorce was unknown to the Jewish mind!

WHAT WERE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS?

Jesus said in Matthew 5:32, "*But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery.*"

In an endeavor to interpret the meaning of what Christ is saying in Matthew 5:32, it is helpful to read what He said in Matthew 19:3-9.

"Some Pharisees came to Him [that is, to Jesus] to test Him. They asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?' 'Haven't you read,' He replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.' 'Why then,' they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.'"

Jesus emphasizes the sanctity of marriage. He goes back, before the law of Moses was ever given, to the very beginning of creation and tells us that when two people are married "*they*

become one flesh."

One reason that God hated divorce is because marriage was intended to be a *type* of the union which exists between Christ and the Church [Ephesians 5:32] and divorce spoils this God-given illustration to the world.

God's original intention for marriage was that it was to be a beautiful union of two people that was blessed of God, "*What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

Since this is so, how can we explain the law that God gave Moses which allowed divorce to take place? Jesus' answer to this question was, "*Because of the hardness of your hearts.*"

Divorce was allowed legislation under the law because of the conditions that prevailed at that time. It was never God's *perfect* will that divorce take place, nevertheless, He did suffer it to happen to prevent a greater evil. God, in His original plan for marriage, did not approve of divorce, and certainly not for *every trifling cause*. God did allow this divorce law, in order to prevent an even greater misery, but it was a deviation from His perfect will.

Jesus taught that the only *legitimate* cause for divorce was ***fornication!*** The word "*fornication*" is a word that is inclusive for all "*moral uncleanness.*"

We are living at a time when our culture is making it easier, and easier, to obtain a divorce, and this was never Christ's intent.

Jesus taught the law of love and forgiveness - [See 1 Corinthians 7:13-16].

My prayer is that God will give us a balanced view of the subject of divorce, a balanced view that is not too lenient, nor too rigid, and one that is understanding, forgiving and loving.

Those who have been divorced are **NOT** second class Christians! It is Satan who would have divorced Christians believe that they have forfeited being able to render effective service for God because they are divorced.

Divorce is never right and divorced people are the first ones to acknowledged that! What divorced Christians must do is reject the past - put it behind them - and begin all over again! God can, and will, use divorced Christians if they will let Him.

Matthew 5:33-37, "*Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all; either by heaven, for it is God's house; or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply*

let your `Yes' by `Yes,' and your `No,' `No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

Christ now gives the fourth illustration of how one's righteousness should 'exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees."

First, Jesus tells us that He came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, and then He proceeds to demonstrate, by giving us specific "illustrations," **how** He will fulfill the law in and through our lives!

By way of illustrations, Christ deals, first, with the subject of *murder*, then with *adultery*, after which He teaches on *divorce*, and now, He deals with the subject of *fore-swearing*, or perjury.

This passage - Matthew 5:33-37 - is a good example of how Christ was contradicting - not the law given by Moses - but, rather, the Pharisees' perversion of that law because the statement, "Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord," is **NOT** found anywhere in the Old Testament and, yet, the Pharisees taught as if it was in the Old Testament.

Remember, Jesus' purpose, in teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, was to correct the Pharisees' false interpretations of God's law and to explain what God's *real intent* of the law was when He gave it.

What had happened was this: The Pharisees had taken the following verses of the Old Testament and had extracted their own perversion of the law, stating "**Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.**"

Exodus 20:7, " You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name."

Leviticus 19:12, "Do not swear falsely by My name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord."

Deuteronomy 6:13, "Fear the Lord your God, serve Him only and take your oaths in His name."

JUST WHAT DID GOD'S LAW SAY ABOUT OATH-TAKING?

The intent of the law on oath-taking was to place a bridle on, what has always been a problem for man, his proneness to lying. The law restricted oath-taking to serious, important matters in order to inhibit man's tendency to take oaths on just any *trivial* matter. The law also reminded man of the seriousness of the whole matter of taking an oath.

To see for yourself what a serious matter oath-taking is with God, take a Bible concordance and look up the words: "oath," "swear," and, "vow."

God gave this law because He wanted to stress that everything that man does is under His

eye . . . *everything* is important . . . and man must realize that God **is** always *looking on*."

WHAT DID THE PHARISEES TEACH ABOUT OATH-TAKING?

Again, since the Pharisees were more concerned about the "*letter*" of the law than they were about the "*spirit*" of the law, they confined the whole purpose of this law to the question of committing perjury. The Pharisees taught that there was no evil in taking any oath, just as long as a man did not forswear [perjure] himself.

The Pharisees did not care about the person's multiple oaths on trivial matters. They had so twisted God's original law, that they felt that, as long as one did not perjure himself, it was all right for him to swear "*lightly*" over small, trivial, matters. These Pharisees had invented the idea of "*swearing by some creature*," instead of by Almighty God, so that one would not be guilty of "*perjury*" when he swore by an oath and, yet, was not really telling the truth. [Their thinking was similar to what some think today, that, if one crosses his fingers, he can lie and it doesn't really count as a lie!]

In other words, the Pharisees taught that some oaths were binding and others were not. They felt that if one forswore by *heaven*, or by *Jerusalem*, or by **anything** other than the name of Almighty God, then he could forswear at any time, in any place, and for any reason, and he would **not** be guilty of breaking God's law.

The Pharisees taught that if one forswore himself by the name of God, and he was lying, he was guilty of sin, however, *if he did **not*** forswear by the name of god, and he was lying, he was **not** guilty of sin!

To further complicate this perversion of God's original intent of the law, the Pharisees drew a distinction between various oaths. For instance, they stated that if one swore by the Temple, his oath was **not** binding, however, if he swore by *the gold* of the Temple, then his oath **would be** binding. If one swore by the altar, his oath would **not** be binding, however, if he swore by *the gift upon the altar*, then his oath would be binding.

Note what Jesus said concerning this in Matthew 23:16-22: "*Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the Temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.'* You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the Temple swears by it and by the One who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the One who sits on it."

Because the Pharisees felt that some oaths were not binding, they taught that these oaths could be used commonly and lightly in everyday conversation.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT OATH-TAKING?

When Jesus said, "*Swear not at all*," He was not putting an absolute ban on oath-taking

under *any* circumstance - I feel I am safe in saying this for the following reasons:

1. If Jesus had been forbidding *all* oath-taking, under any and every circumstance, He would never had gone on to explain what things were prohibitive to swear by, if, in fact, one was never to swear [Matthew 5:35-36].
2. In the Old Testament, God laid down rules as to *how* and *when* oaths should be taken. If it was God's will for men to never take an oath, then why do we have Bible accounts of men like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and David taking oaths? These holy men took oaths, before Almighty God, in a most solemn and serious manner.
3. Jesus, Himself, in Matthew 26:63-64, makes an oath. The high priest said to Jesus, "*I put you on oath by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Messiah . . . the Son of God,*" and, in verse 64 Jesus **gave His oath!**
4. We find that in Romans 9:1, 2 Corinthians 1:23, Hebrews 6:16, Galatians 1:20, and in Philippians 1:8 Paul gives an oath that he is telling the truth!
5. God's heavenly angel gives an oath, in Revelation 10:6, as to the validity of his words, the words that John receives.

Oaths were right and proper because even God made oaths, however, these oaths were restricted to certain solemn, vital occasions and they were never to be taken lightly, rashly, or without a just, sufficient reason, or cause.

What Christ **did** forbid in the Sermon on the Mount was for someone to swear by some "*creature,*" or by heaven, or earth, by Jerusalem, thinking that by swearing by these *creatures.*, instead of using the name of Almighty God, he could escape breaking God's law.

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| The Pharisees reasoned that if one lied, as long as he did not swear by God's name, his oath was not binding and, therefore his lie was not a sin. |
|--|

Since God is the Head of all the '*things*' that the Pharisees said one could swear by, without his oath being binding because he had not sworn by "*the Name of God,*" Christ is showing that these distinctions that the Pharisees had made were utterly ridiculous!

Jesus said, "*Simply let your `Yes' be `Yes', and your `No', `No,'*" because He was telling us that oaths should not be given, for exaggerated avowals, during the course of some argument. In other words, Christ is forbidding all oaths in ordinary conversations and telling us that we should not forswear ourselves, but, rather, that we should simply speak the truth and let it go at that!

When Jesus said, "*Do not swear at all . . . Simply let your `Yes' be `Yes,' and your `No' be `No'; **anything beyond this comes from the evil one,***" He is not speaking of the taking of an oath for justified reasons, otherwise God would never have said in the Old Testament, '*Thou shalt fear the Lord, thy God, Him shalt thou serve and to Him shalt thou cleave and **swear by His name***' [Deuteronomy 6:13].

The word "swear" *sweswear*," that Jesus uses here, is in the passive conjugation and what Jesus is saying "connotatively," by its usage, is: "Swear not at all, unless you are called upon to do so or unless you have a moral obligation to do so."

An "oath" was an appeal to God, Who knows the hearts of men and bears witness to the truthfulness [or the non-truthfulness] of one's testimony, the sincerity [or the lack of sincerity] of one's promise, and Who will punish frauds and falsehoods.

When Jesus said, "Swears not at all," one must also understand this statement within the framework in which it was stated and realize that He meant that there be some limitations placed on His words.

FOR EXAMPLE: When the Apostle Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," he meant that there be limitations placed on these words because he certainly could never mean that he would become a blasphemer to a blasphemer.

In summary, what Jesus meant when He said, "Do not swear at all . . . Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one," is that one should never swear *needlessly*, or swear by some "creature," in an attempt to keep from swearing before God, but, if we **live** the truth, then when we say, "Yes," or "No," that will be all that is necessary for those who know us to have credibility in our words.

Jesus is telling us to simply live a life that is so honest, trustworthy, and dependable that people will know that when we say something we mean exactly what we say and, therefore, there will never be a need for us to have to "swear" that any statement that we make is true!

Matthew 5:38-42, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

This portion of Scripture is one of the most misunderstood passages in the entire Bible and it has caused much confusion in the church world.

- ***Just how far are these injunctions of Matthew 5:38-42 to be carried out?***
 - ***What, if any, are the limitations to these injunctions?***
 - ***Are we to just passively endure all wrongs?***

The statement that Jesus makes, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," quotes the teaching of the Pharisees and is found three times in the Pentateuch . . . [Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; and Deuteronomy 19:21].

It is important to note that Exodus 21 begins with the words, 'Now these are the judgments' [that is the judicial law] and these "judgments" referred to the legislation given to the

judges of Israel, who were to see to it that the judgment of "*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*" would be carried out, not that private individuals would carry out this injunction.

The very reason that God gave this law was because of man's natural tendency to take the law into his own hands. God's law was that execution was not left to *individuals*, each man avenging his own wrongs, but, rather, execution was placed in the hands of the administrator of the law.

One has a natural instinct to strike back, to "*have his vengeance*," when someone injures him, and, it is **because** of man's tendency for retaliation that God gave this law.

This is further borne out in Deuteronomy 19:18 where it is stated, "*The judges must make a thorough investigation.*"

God also gave this law to protect the weak against the strong because it was a warning to all wrong doers that they would be punished for their wrong treatment of others.

This law also prevented judges from inflicting too severe a punishment upon the guilty. If a man knocked out another man's eye, he could not be put to death for that, but, rather, it was "*an eye for an eye*," which meant, simply, that his punishment must fit his crime.

So, then, this law was meant to avoid excess punishment, to keep the punishment in line with the crime, to hold the punishment within certain boundaries.

Remember, that Jesus was not arguing against God's law, but, rather, He was showing how one's righteousness is to "*exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.*" Christ was exposing the Pharisees' error of this law!

The Pharisees had entirely ignored the fact that this law was for the judges to carry out because, instead of confining it to the judges of the court, they gave permission for individuals to take the law into their own hands and to avenge their own wrongs. Thus, the Pharisees perverted this law by making it a matter of "*personal*" application. They taught that: If your neighbor smites you, hit him back . . . if he pokes you in the eye, poke him right back . . . and, if he injures your ear, you have a right to injure his ear! They, not only taught that one had the right to retaliate, they insisted upon retaliation, therefore, turning a negative injunction into a positive one.

But Jesus said, "*I say unto you*," and it was in the light of the above mentioned teaching of the Pharisees, that He gave these words of Matthew 5:39-42. In these verses, Jesus was speaking out against one taking "*private*" vengeance, He was not exhorting one to respond with **absolute passivity** to injury by unreasonable men .

SCRIPTURE NEVER CONTRADICTS ITSELF, God never allows people to take the law into their hands, but, on the other hand, He does teach that soldiers have the right to go to war . . . policemen have the right to prevent crimes . . .and courts have the right to punish criminals.

JUST WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

In verse 39, Jesus said, "*Do not resist an evil person,*" and then He proceeds to give four illustrations of this Biblical, God-given, principle:

1. In verse 39 - Jesus deals with personal, bodily, injuries [words or deeds].
2. In verse 40 - Jesus deals with personal possessions.
3. In verse 41 - Jesus deals with personal injustice.
4. In verse 42 - Jesus deals with the needs of others when one is personally involved.

1. PERSONAL, BODILY, INJURIES - "*Turning the other cheek*"

To strike someone on the "*right cheek,*" one would have to give him the **back of his hand** and, to so strike someone, was considered to be a "*blow of contempt.*" It was used to provoke one to anger or to challenge one for combat, but Jesus teaches that, in response to this "*blow,*" one is not to retaliate.

Note what Jesus teaches in Matthew 18:15-17, "*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Jesus does **NOT** teach that one is to just "*turn the other cheek*" under these circumstances, but, rather, one is to very definitely resist evil and to challenge wrongs done, one is to examine the offense and punish the wrongdoer.

In John 18:22, when one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, Jesus did **not** "*turn the other cheek,*" but, rather, He protested the action of the officer. Jesus was not passive, but resisted, exposed, and rebuked the wrong done.

In John 2:13-17, when Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple, He certainly was not "*turning the other cheek.*"

When the magistrates found out that Paul and Silas were Romans [after they had been thrown into prison, beaten openly and publicly condemned] they sought to set them free *secretly*, but Paul said to them, "*They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us our privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out*" [Acts 16:37]. Paul did not just "*turn the other cheek!*"

WHEN JESUS SAID, "*TURN THE OTHER CHEEK,*" HE CERTAINLY DID NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE TO MEEKLY SUBMIT TO EVERY ABUSE, OR OFFENSE, WITHOUT OFFERING ANY KIND OF RESISTANCE!

When Jesus was smitten before the High Priest, while He did not smite back, He **did** resist against it by registering a protest that the offender be convicted.

Jesus was **not** insisting upon His own "*personal*" rights, but He rebuked them for breaking

the law. His protest, then, was made in order to up-hold the law. In other words, He did not say, "Me," and then proceed to lose His temper, but, rather, what He was essentially saying was, "By striking Me, you are breaking the law."

Paul, in Acts 16:37 did exactly the same thing because what he protested about was the fact that he had been thrown into prison illegally.

THE PRINCIPLE THAT CHRIST WAS TEACHING IS: THAT ONE IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED ABOUT ANY "PERSONAL" INSULTS, BUT, WHEN IT IS A MATTER OF "JUSTICE," AS OPPOSED TO "PERSONAL DEFENSE," THEN ONE IS TO BE CONCERNED, "DISTURBED," AND IS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

In one's "not resisting when injuries are inflicted upon him," he must not be guilty of abating evil.

Christ's purpose in this teaching was to teach one to repress resentment, to abstain from violence, and to rid oneself from the spirit of retaliation and vengeance, one's instinct to "hit back."

When the injury received is a personal, private one, one is to endure it in a spirit of meekness.

However, on the other hand, if a drunken knocks me down and then drives off, it is my duty to take down his license plate number, report him, and then be a witness against him in court. If I see some child in danger from some fiend, I am not to stand by and see the child beaten or injured!

God, Himself, instructed Abraham to arm his servants and "smite" those who had taken his nephew a prisoner!

EVERY TRUTH HAS A 'BALANCING" TRUTH
AND WE MUST HEED BOTH TRUTHS IN
ORDER TO WARD OFF EXTREMES!

When Jesus tells us that one should not retaliate, He is saying that one should not retaliate in the same "wicked" spirit in which the harm was inflicted upon him, but, rather, one is to suffer personal wrongs patiently and one is not to seek revenge or to return the harm done to him. Jesus was condemning the common practice of fighting and quarrelling and He is telling us that, even if someone tries to provoke us to fight, we are not to strike back!

Matthew 5:39

*"If someone strikes you on the right cheek,
turn to him the other also."*

Christ deals with the spirit of self-defense, revenge, and retaliation. He is unveiling and exposing the horrible thing which controls us - which is SELF!

Matthew 5:40

And if someone wants to sue you and take

your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

Christ deals with the problem that one faces when attacks are made upon his "possessions" . . . when something is taken away from "self."

Evil men preying upon our goods is a problem that we *all* face! Jesus is not, in verse 40, condemning the legitimate use of courts because the "*law of the land*" is God's way of preserving order in the community. The courts, therefore, are powers ordained of God [Romans 13:1].

In this verse, Christ is speaking merely of the loss of a garment and one's using the courts for mere trifles. Christ is saying that the "*ruling*" of one's spirit is far more important than the clothes that he wears, is far more important than private revenge.

Certainly one can prosecute if he does so out of love for public justice, but one's main concern should not be temporal goods, but, rather, eternal values.

Christ is dealing, here, with man's tendency to insist upon his "*legal rights*" to personal possessions.

Matthew 5:41, "*If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*"

Christ is speaking, here, of the unjust demands made upon us by the community. Within certain limits, the Roman troops had the power to requisition able-bodied men to work as porters, guides, or whatever the need might be. The tasks that these men were required to do were inconvenient and laborious and, therefore, the men did them with a reluctant, complaining spirit.

Christ is, here, referring to those who were pressed into the service of the state and forced into doing unwelcome tasks. These tasks, therefore, were duties, not of choice, but of necessity and, because of the ruling of the Roman government, the Roman soldiers had the right to compel anyone to carry their load for a mile.

When Christ refers to the abuse of authority, He said that one is to accept this authority *cheerfully* and is to do whatever is asked of him, readily. Christ tells us that one must patiently bear these injustices and not give way to bitter resentment when there is a curtailment of his personal liberties.

BEING "COMPELLED TO GO A MILE" IN OUR DAY AND CULTURE MEANS:

1. Accepting our government's unjust demands upon us.
2. Accepting being overworked by our employers
3. Accepting being forced to perform certain duties
4. Accepting being charged exorbitant prices for necessities.

Jesus said that, when the Romans demanded that one carry their bags "*a mile*," the Christian was to go **beyond** the mile that was demanded of him and go "*two miles*."

In this verse, verse 41, Christ is dealing with one's natural tendency to resent the demands made of him by those in authority over him and one's natural tendency to feel indignation over

some law that he does not like. However, Christ is telling us to do what is demanded of us *willingly*, and then to go "*above and beyond*" what is demanded of us!

In 1 Peter 2:18, God commanded, "*Servants to subject to your masters with the utmost respect; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward [overbearing or cruel].*"

1 Peter 2:13-21 states, "*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.*"

In this day and age, we do not have what is referred to here as "*masters*" over us, however, we do have those in authority, namely, our government, our employers, and others, who, in a Scriptural sense, are "*over us*."

We are here turning our attention to verse 41, and here, Christ is saying that, when unjust demands are made upon us, we should not get upset about it, nor should we lose our temper, **AND**, not only should we do what is demanded of us, *cheerfully*, but, we, also, should go *beyond* what is demanded of us, and we should "*go the second mile*."

Matthew 5:42

"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

Christ is here, in verse 42, dealing with one's tendency, because of man's self-centeredness, to be indifferent to those around him who are in real need. Christ is speaking of the attitude, and spirit, of self that is always considering self first and, essentially says, "*What is mine, is mine and I will not listen to requests when anyone asks for what is mine.*"

1 John 3:17-18 teaches, "*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*"

When Christ, in Matthew 5:42, encourages us to help others, He is **NOT** encouraging us to help *professional* beggars, drunkards, or con men, who spend a lifetime, and life style, asking for help, those who will not work, but, rather, Christ is encouraging us to help those around us who have a real need, for reasons beyond their control.

VERSE 42 VERSES, MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IN ITS CONTEXT

Christ has just dealt with the spirit of selfishness which seeks *personal revenge* [verse 39] and that same spirit which seeks to protect its *possessions* [verse 40]. Then, Christ deals with

one's attitude when *unjust demands* are made upon him [verse 41] and, now, He deals with the question of those who would borrow from him.

In this whole passage, verses 39-42, Christ shows us what He meant by the statement in verse 30, "*Do not resist an evil person.*"

THIS WHOLE SECTION, VERSES 39-42,
DEALS WITH THE QUESTION OF "*SELF.*"

Christ is, here, unveiling and exposing "*self*," and what "*self*" feels are its *rights*.

1. One is not to retaliate when *personal* injury is done to him - **verse 39**
2. One's attitude toward his *personal possessions* is not be one of "*clinging*" on to them to satisfy "*self*." - **verse 40**
3. One is not to react selfishly when *injustices* are inflicted upon him by those in positions of authority over him - **verse 41**
4. One is not to selfishly say, "*Why should I part with MY goods, when there is someone in need who wants to borrow from me?*"

In Matthew 5:39-42, Jesus is telling us that, Christians are to *die to self, to take up their cross and follow Him,*" and then, He shows us how we are to do this.

Christ did not begin His Sermon on the Mount with this "*message*," but, rather, He began it with the beatitudes - [telling us that one must be poor in spirit; one must mourn; one must be meek; one must hunger and thirst after God; etc.] and, then, after He has told us all that we are to "*be*," He goes on and makes the above declarations, because, it is *impossible* for anyone who does not radiate the Christ-like qualities of the beatitudes to "*die to self*."

Of course, one cannot, of his *own* effort, die to himself, because, in order for one to be able to die to self he must be "*born-again*," letting Christ's life enter into his life and flow through his life!

In Matthew 5:39-42, Christ is dealing with the various *rights of self*, man's prideful attitude, and constant tendency, to watch out for his *ego*, always wanting to protect it from insult, attack, or injury. Christ is saying that one's concern, and protection, of his ego . . . for the *rights of self* . . . must disappear!

George Muller said, "*There was a day when I died . . . utterly died . . . to George Muller . . . and to his opinions . . . his preferences . . . his tastes . . . and his will. There was a day when I died to the world and all its approval . . . the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends . . . and . . . since that day . . . I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.*"

The tendency within man is to fight for his honor and his name and it used to be that he fought for these things "*by way of the duel*" and, while different methods of *fighting* are used today, the world still admires the *aggressive* person, the person who is always ready to defend himself, and his *rights*. However, Christ's way, [*the way that Christians are to live*] is for one to, rather than *defend* his rights, surrender, die to, his rights, as he, "*dies to self*," and, for one to be able to actually do this [die to self, his *rights* and his *needs*] is not only impossible for the unsaved man, but, is also very difficult for the born-again believer! It sound so good in study, but

seems, so often, to fail in practice!

HOW CAN THIS PRINCIPLE OF "*DYING TO SELF*" BE LIVED?

One must face his problems in an honest manner and he must not make excuses for himself.

One must hold this teaching of Christ before him and he must examine himself in its light, asking himself, "*Do I react in self-defense when I'm annoyed . . . when I'm grieved . . . when I feel that I've been hurt or wronged . . . or when I have suffered an injustice?*"

One must realize that the true *cause* of his self-defensiveness is that horrible, foul, thing called SELF-CENTEREDNESS!

If one thinks over his life and recall all the moments of strain, irritability, and bad temper when something disturbed him, he would find that, in every situation, it was self that was the main cause of all his unhappiness.

One will also find that the person who is sold out to God, who indeed has Jesus Christ as his Lord, is a truly *happy* person!

One's *circumstances* have nothing to do with his *happiness*. There have been Christians who have been thrown into dungeons, who have had their feet fastened in stocks, who have been burned at the stake, and yet, they were still . . . in the true sense of happiness . . . "*happy*."

If one is unhappy, it means that, in some way or another, he is living for *self* . . . looking out for *self* . . . thinking only of self.

Jesus is telling us that any desire to glorify *self* . . . or to safeguard the interests of self . . . is sin!

HOLINESS IS DELIVERANCE FROM A SELF-CENTERED LIFE!

In Philippians 2:5-11, let's look at the *selfless life*, which was so perfectly lived in Christ Jesus, Who never considered Himself.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

While the entire second chapter of Philippians should be read, these verses specifically show that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God . . . Who was equal with God the Father in heaven . . . **did not cling to His rights** . . . but humbled Himself . . . denied Himself . . . took upon Himself the form of man . . . and came to die for mankind!

Christ deliberately made Himself dependent upon God, the Father. He said, while on earth, "*I have come to do Thy will, O God!*" Christ **was** wholly dependent upon His Heavenly Father for everything!

2 Corinthians 5:15 states, "*And He [Jesus Christ] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.*"

The New English Bible Translation of this verse is, "*Christ's purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in this life, should cease to live for self and live for Him Who, for their sake, died and was raised to life.*"

At this point in our study, I want to return to the second chapter of 1 Peter, [I shared verses 13 through 21 back on page 109], I share verses 22-25: "*He [Jesus Christ] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.*" *When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, **He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.** He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*"

IN SUMMARY OF MATTHEW 5:39-42

A Christian's life is not to be one of self-defense, nor is it to be one of *self-sensitivity* because, even:

- if the Christian is insulted, he is not to retaliate,
- if he receives a blow, [physically, or verbally, he is not to strike back,
- if someone sues him and takes his coat, he is to give him his cloak also,
- if someone, who is in need, asks for something that is his, he is not to respond by saying, "*It is mine, and I will not share it!*"

Jesus Christ died for our "*sin nature*" in order that **it** . . . *man's sin nature* . . . might die . . . **AND** . . . He rose from the dead in order that His "*resurrection life*" might make it possible for man to live, **really live!**

Matthew 5:43-48, "*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"

We have now come to the last of the six illustrations that Jesus gives us to teach us the true meaning of the law (as compared to the perverted meaning given it by the false teachings of the Pharisees . . . **AND** . . . to show us how our righteousness is to "*exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.*"

In the first five illustrations, Jesus deals with the **NEGATIVE** attitudes one must not have

and, now in this sixth illustration, He deals with the **POSITIVE** attitude a child of God must have.

Not only is the child of God to be "*dead to self*," and self interests, but he is also called to show forth **love**!

Jesus tells us that, not only is the child of God not to strike back when someone strikes him, but he must also have a positive attitude toward him because we, as Christians, are called to love even our "*enemies*."

The Pharisees actually taught that one was to *love* his neighbor and the *hate* his enemies! Where can this teaching be found in the law of the Old Testament? Can *any* statement be found in Moses' law that, in any way, could be so misconstrued?

The answer is simply "**No!**" There is no statement found anywhere in the Old Testament that even remotely suggests that one should "*hate his enemies*." How, then, did the Pharisees arrive at such a teaching?

The Pharisees interpreted the word, "*neighbor*" to mean an "*Israel-ite*," so they taught that they, as Jews, were to love the Jews and, since everyone else was an alien, and, therefore, an "*enemy*," they were to hate their enemies.

The Pharisees taught that, not only was it all right for one to *hate* his enemies, but it was their *duty* to do so. The Pharisees regarded everyone, except the Jews, as "*dogs*," and, of course, the Gentiles despised the Jews as well!

The Pharisees taught that they were honoring God by despising everyone who was not a Jew.

Nowhere, but nowhere, in Scripture will one find God teaching that we are to love our neighbors and the *hate our enemies*! One can, however, find statements that may have encouraged the Pharisees to come to the conclusion that they *were* to hate their enemies.

What Scripture could that be?

- Had not God commanded Israel to "*exterminate*" the Canaanites?
- Were not the Israelites to *not* treat the Amorites, the Moabites, the Midianites with any kindness?
- Had not God said that the Amalekites were to be blotted off the face of the earth?
- What about when David prayed in Psalms 69:23-25? "*Let their (that is David's enemies) eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out Thine indignation upon them, and let Thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.*"
- And, what about Psalms 139:21-22, which states, "*Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.*" ?

How can we reconcile the "*Love of God*" with His ordering the utter extermination of a nation?

This certainly *does* sound appalling, however, there is something which is even *more* appalling, and that is the sins of a people which has come to the full, when their rebellion against God is so strong and they are so morally corrupt, so utterly perverted, as to make this act of God absolutely necessary in the interest of God's dealings with humanity!

Scripture and history reveal the unfathomable depth of the moral pollution of the nations that God destroyed. These nations were a moral cancer in humanity, threatening the very life of the whole human race!

A Surgeon must shrink from the task of cutting the fiber of cancer out of a body, but he *does* it, not out of his hatred for the person, but, rather, out of his *love* for him, because, under the circumstances, it is the kindest thing that he can do for the cancer victim.

IF THESE NATIONS HAD NOT BEEN ELIMINATED,
ISRAEL WOULD HAVE BEEN EXTERMINATED BY THESE NATIONS' SIN!

Now, what about the imprecator Psalms of 69 and 139?

Psalms 69 and Psalm 139 are called "*imprecator*" Psalms because "*imprecate*" means "*to call down, or invoke evil*" . . . "*to curse*."

In these Psalms, David is referring to "*judgment*," and "*revenge*," in terms of the "*Judicial Law*," rather than in terms of *individual* action (an *individual* act of revenge) because, he was not speaking of the things which had been done to him *personally*, but, rather, he was speaking of that which had been done to *God's people*. David spoke as he did because it was *God's honor* that was at stake. Note that David said that it was the "*zeal of the house of God*" that moved him.

And, what about, in Matthew 23, where Jesus is pronouncing those "*woes*," or "*curses*," upon the Pharisees? Was Christ showing them *LOVE* when He pronounced these curses upon them?

SCRIPTURE MUST NEVER CONTRADICT ITSELF, THEREFORE, WHAT CHRIST SAID IN MATTHEW 23 MUST AGREE WITH WHAT HE SAID IN MATTHEW 5:44 WHEN HE SAID, "*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*"

In Matthew 5:45, Jesus goes on to say, "*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*"

YES, God *does* cause His sun to shine on the evil and the good, He *does* bless those who hate Him, and He *does* send rain on those who defy Him, however, He also announces to them that, unless they repent, they will be destroyed!

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| In Matthew 5:44-48, in Christ's continuing endeavor to contrast the original intent of God's law with the Pharisees' perverted interpretation of that law, He shows us how the Pharisees had taken the <i>Judicial</i> principles |
|---|

and reduced them to *individual* principles.

When verse 45 states, "*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,*" it means, simply, that we . . . as Christians . . . are to be "*like our Father,*" we are to "*behave as God behaves.*"

In the Greek language, there is more than just one word that means "*love.*" One of the Greek words for love means, "*to have esteem for,*" while another Greek word for love means, "*to have a warm, instinctive affection . . . an emotional feeling . . . for.*"

We are never commanded to "*love*" our enemies if, by "*love,*" one means to have "*a warm, instinctive affection . . . an emotional feeling . . . for*" because this kind of love is a matter of the emotions, rather than a matter of the will!

EMOTIONS CANNOT BE COMMANDED

To "*love*" one's enemy does not mean that one has to "*like*" him, or his ways!

One can "*love*" those whom one does not particularly "*like,*" because, one can have a sustained, unbreakable attitude of "*good will*" toward one's enemies and yet, at the same time, not have a "*warm emotional affection*" for them.

The kind of "*love*" that Jesus speaks of, in the Sermon on the Mount, is not a "*feeling,*" but, rather, it is an "*act of the will*" and it is always possible to have this kind of God-given love toward one's enemies.

We are commanded to "*love*" others even when we may not "*like*" them and, in verse 44, when Christ commands us to "*love our enemies,*" the kind of "*love*" that He is speaking of is the "*love*" that, "*blesses,*" "*does good to,*" and "*prays for,*" one's enemies.

C.S Lewis of Cambridge, England, said, "*Do not waste your time worrying about whether or not you love your neighbor, just act as if you do and, when you act as if you love him, you will find that you do love him. If you dislike someone and, yet, nevertheless, do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less and less.*"

The difference between a Christian and a worldly man is that the worldly man treats certain people kindly because he likes them, whereas the Christian treats all people kindly and finds himself liking them more and more, even though, in the beginning, there are certain individuals that he couldn't even imagine himself liking."

When loving one's enemies, one must make a clear distinction between the "*person*" and the person's "*actions.*"

BEHAVIOR and PERSON HOOD are not the same thing!

ONE'S TREATMENT OF OTHERS MUST NEVER
DEPEND UPON WHAT THEY DO TO HIM

Some people that you meet will be evil, foul, and unjust, however, if you are to be the

Christian God desires you to you, you must be like your Father which is in heaven, "*for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*" [verse 45].

God is governed by His own love, and His love is indiscriminate!

It is only when we live for "*self*" that we, becomes sensitive to self, watchful, jealous, envious and, react negatively to what others do to us.

According to this passage [Matthew 5:38-42], that the principles by which we are governed are also the principles which enable us to detach ourself from ourself. Because we are a "*new creature in Christ Jesus*," we now see things differently and, therefore, we react to others differently. We now have something within us that determines our conduct and behavior.

GOD SEES ALL THE SIN AND SHAME IN THE WORLD

Sin is a result of Satan's activity, and God sees it as such! Those who curse us, spitefully use us, and persecute us, are dupes of Satan. They are, therefore, governed by the "*god of this world*," Satan! They, not we, are the *victims* and, because of this, we are not to be annoyed at what they do to us, but, rather, we are to realize that they are hell-bound sinners.

God looked at the world and, in spite of its sin and shame, He "*so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" [John 3:16].

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1. Our purpose, as Christians, is **not** to attempt to make everyone our "*friend*." While it is true that most times, when we are *nice* to people they will be nice in return. However, this does not necessarily mean, because we are *nice*, that we are living a Christian, Sermon-on-the-Mount, life-style. There are many *non*-Christians who are *nice*!
 2. We, as Christians, are called to love people *as they are*, for **who** they are, rather than for **what they may become**! Jesus teaches that we are to "*bless them*," "*do good to them*," or "*pray for them*," **NOT** out of a desire to somehow change them, or to turn them into what we want them to be, **BUT, RATHER, OUT OF A DESIRE TO SIMPLY "LOVE" THEM, TO SHOW THEM GOD'S LOVE!**

WE CANNOT REDEEM PEOPLE BY THE THINGS WE "DO" FOR THEM, WE CAN ONLY DISPLAY TO THEM, THE LOVE OF GOD!

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| HOW ARE WE TO LOVE PEOPLE? HOW ARE WE TO <u>SHOW</u> THEM THE "LOVE OF GOD"? |
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1. We are to "*bless them that curse us*"

We are to reply to bitter words with words of kindness!

When we return "like for like," and tell someone off, we are putting our self on the same level as the one who has offended us.

2. We are to "***do good to them that hate us***"

When someone is spiteful and cruel to us, we must not return that same kind of treatment because, regardless of how we are treated. Jesus taught that we must, like our heavenly Father, treat all people alike. God sends rain and sun on the farmer who rebels against Him just the same as He sends rain and sun on the farmer who lives righteously [vs. 45].

3. We are to "***pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us***"

When we are cruelly persecuted, we must pray for those who are persecuting us, getting down on our knees and talking to God about our persecutors, rather than becoming bitter and harsh and reacting in such a way as to please, or *satisfy*, **self** - assuaging the pain of our hurt ego!

When we are being cursed, hated or persecuted, we need to ask ourself some questions. He need to ask ourself, "***Why*** is this person behaving this way toward ? Is there something within ***me*** that causes this person to treat me unkindly? ***Why*** is this person persecuting me?"

- ***Do we pray for those who persecute us, or despitefully uses us?***
- ***Do we ask God to have mercy upon them?***

Visualize Jesus as He is falsely condemned, beaten, and nailed to a cruel cross, and then, listen to He is saying: "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they are doing?*"

Everywhere throughout God's Word, one will find this principle: "***If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink.***" When Stephen was stoned to death, he said, "*God, lay not this sin to their charge.*"

ARE **WE** THIS LOVING, AND FORGIVING, TOWARD **OUR** ENEMIES?

"*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" [Matthew 5:48]

To be "*perfect*" is to be complete in righteousness!

When we make God's "***LOVE***" the law, the principle of, our life, we fulfill the whole law!

Before leaving Matthew 5, and going on to Matthew 6, we need to take another look at verses 47 and 48, which state: "*If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"

Before making the above statement, Christ had just given a detailed exposition on how one is to treat his enemies and how one is to behave toward those who treat him wrongly. Now, in verse 48, He goes on to tell us that one must understand ***who he is!***

This 48th verse should explode, once and forever, any false idea that anyone might have that the Sermon on the Mount is just a set of ethical rules!

The essential truth that runs throughout this sermon message is that **it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to live this sermon message!**

One must keep before him the *order* in which Christ delivers this sermon because, it is only after the "*deliverance*" of the beatitudes and the detailed illustrations on how one's righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, that Jesus *then* says, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*"

The Ten Commandments are difficult enough to live, but, when we look at the Sermon on the Mount and see that, NOT ONLY ARE WE NOT TO COMMIT ADULTERY, BUT ALSO ARE WE NOT EVEN TO "*LOOK WITH LUST*;" NOT ONLY ARE WE TO DO WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US, BUT WE ARE ALSO TO GO **BEYOND** WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US AND "*GO THE SECOND MILE*;" AND WHEN SOMEONE SUES US, NOT ONLY ARE WE "*TO GIVE HIM OUR COAT*," BUT WE ARE TO "*GIVE HIM OUR CLOAK ALSO.*," We can begin to feel pretty discouraged because, in fact, it is utterly impossible for us to live our these "*injunctions*" in our own power and ability!

However, the thing about these "*injunctions*" that should make us feel encouraged is the fact that God's commanding us to do these things implies that it *is* possible, by His ennoblement, to do them, AND, there can be no greater compliment paid to us than Christ saying to us, "*this is what you are supposed to be doing and this is what you can, with **My** help, do!*"

Anyone who might feel that living these injunctions is something that he can do on his own, in his own strength, by his own ability, has his theory shattered when Jesus says, "*Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"

WHEN WE COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE ACTUAL DEMANDS OF CHRIST, WE SEE THAT IT IS QUITE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE NATURAL MAN TO LIVE THESE DEMANDS

We will never see the glory, the grandeur, and the uniqueness of Christian *character* until we see, and realize, that we are a "*child of God.*"

If we try to live the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount by making a great effort **to** . . . [in our own strength and ability] . . . we will never understand what it really means to be a Christian!

Verse 47 asks, "*What do ye more than others?*" Moffatt's translation renders this verse, "*If you only salute your friends, what is special about you?*"

Remember that Jesus begins this particular passage with verse 20, when He says "*Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven,*" and then He ends what He is saying with verses 47 and 48.

A CHRISTIAN IS UNIQUE

It can never be emphasized enough that a Christian is to be unusual, he is to be distinct, and he is to be set apart from others!

Jesus said, "*If you love those who love you, what reward have you?*" Anyone can go one mile because the law demands it, but the Christian is to do more than just what the law demands, he is to go "*two miles*."

A Christian is able to do what others cannot do because he is able to go above and beyond what others do. The Christian can, in other words, do more than the best and the highest that the "*natural*" man can do.

The Pharisees were "*moral*" teachers. They lived lives that, for all intents and purposes, were scrupulous, honest, just, and upright and, yet, they were not "*Christians*" because they did not believe in Jesus Christ! The fact that the Pharisees were scrupulous, honest, just, and upright without being "*Christians*" tells us that, in fact, one can be all these things and still not be a true Christian, which is why Christ said that the Christians, the *real* Christian, had to be beyond, and "*exceed*," what the Pharisees were and, what they did."

DON'T MISS THE WORD "BE"

Verse 45, "**Be** the children of your Father which is in heaven."

Verse 48, "**Be** ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

WE, AS CHRISTIANS, ARE TO MANIFEST GOD'S LIFE,
WE ARE TO "**BE**" LIKE CHRIST

We must ask ourself the question, "*What is there about my life that cannot be explained in `normal' terms . . . in terms of the `natural' ?*"

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN DIFFERENT FROM THE "NATURAL" MAN?

1. A Christian's attitude toward the law is different!

The natural man may attempt to "*observe*" the law, but a Christian goes beyond just attempting to observe the law because he is more concerned about the "*spirit*" and essence of the law than he is the "*letter*," the "*observance*," of the law.

2. A Christian's attitude toward morality is different!

The natural man assumes a "*negative*" posture toward morality. In other words, the natural man endeavors to be "*moral*" by just not *doing* certain things, like, being dishonest, unjust, immoral, etc.

The spiritual man assumes a "*positive*" posture toward morality because he actually hungers and thirsts after righteousness [*morality*].

3. A Christian's attitude toward sin is different!

The natural man thinks of sin in terms of his "*actions*."

The spiritual man, knowing that one may be guilty of sinning even when he is not guilty of the outward "*act*" of sin, thinks of sin in terms of his "*heart-attitude*."

4. **A Christian's attitude toward himself is different!**

The natural man's attitude is, "*I'm not perfect, but at least I'm not vile, therefore, I'm as good as most.*"

The spiritual man's attitude is one of being "*poor in spirit . . . mournful . . . and meek.*"

5. **A Christian's attitude toward other people is different!**

The natural man may "*tolerate*" others, but, the spiritual man, realizing that others are often dominated by Satan, goes beyond just "*tolerating*" others and actually "*loves*" them.

6. **A Christian's attitude toward God is different!**

The natural man thinks of God as Someone to be feared and obeyed, however, the spiritual man loves God and has come to know Him *as* a loving Father.

7. **A Christian's attitude toward his own motives is different!**

The natural man may do a great deal of good, however, he always keeps a record, an account, of his good deeds.

The spiritual man, realizing that love is the fulfillment of the law, gives of himself sacrificially, without counting the cost.

8. **A Christian's attitude toward what happens in this life is different!**

The natural man may face trials, tribulations, struggles, and even sickness, with dignity, as a gentleman. He may exercise an iron will and not complain about his tribulation, as he keeps everything "*bottled up inside*," however, the spiritual man *rejoices* in tribulation because he realizes that God's has meaning in everything that happens to him and that "*all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to God's purpose.*"

9. **A Christian's attitude toward injuries inflicted upon him is different, because, his attitude toward his enemies is different!**

The natural man may be calm, he may not "*hit back*" or retaliate, as he merely ignores what injuries are inflicted upon him and as he maintains an attitude of "*indifference*" toward his enemies.

The spiritual man not only does not strike back when someone inflicts injuries upon him, but he also, "*loves his enemies*" . . . "*does good to those who hate him*" . . . "*blesses those who curse him*" . . . and . . . "*prays for those who despitefully use him and persecute him.*"

10. A Christian's attitude toward death is different!

The natural man may die with dignity, he may die on the battlefield without grumbling, or he may meet death with calm resignation, however, the spiritual man says, along with the apostle Paul, "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" because the spiritual man has a desire to depart and be with Christ. The spiritual man is not only not *afraid* to die, but he also looks forward to dying because he knows that, by dying, he will be entering into the presence of God!

In the beatitudes, Christ shows us how utterly hopeless, and guilty, we are before Almighty God, and, He shows us just what a Christian's *attitude* should **BE** toward his hopelessness and guilt.

The Christian is not one who decides that he is going to live by the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount because he happens to feel that these injunctions are a good standard of "*ethics*," but rather, the Christian is one who realizes that, unless he is "*born-again*," he will never be *able* to live the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount.

Verse 45 does **NOT** say, "*that ye therefore may be child of God*." but, rather, it says, "*that ye therefore may be children of your Father which is in heaven*." Verse 48 does **NOT** say, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as God is perfect*," but, rather it says, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*."

- GOD'S DIVINE NATURE IS WITHIN US!
- CHRIST DWELLS IN OUR HEARTS RICHLY THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT!
- GOD IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER!
- IT IS GOD THAT WORKETH IN US, "*BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE!*"

No one, outside of Jesus Christ, has ever *lived* the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount!

As one reads the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount, one is very apt to become discouraged upon realizing what is demanded of him, until, Christ reminds him that he is a "*child of God*," and that God, in heaven, is his Father, which means that, one, therefore, is not left on his own to try and live these injunctions because Christ comes to dwell within him, to take up His abode within his Spirit!

Jesus tells us that He is the vine and that we are the branches, therefore, the power, the life, and the sustenance, that we need to live the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount is right there within us and we are simply to "*bear fruit*" as He gives us **His** life through our lives!

WHAT IS "GOD-LIKE" ABOUT YOU?

The question of how "*God-like*" one is has nothing to do with whether or not he is living a good, moral, upright life, or whether or not he is saying his prayers, or going to church, because, one can "*do*" all these things and still not "*be*" God-like, still not "*be*" the Christian God

expects us to be.

Jesus asks, in verse 47, "*What do ye more than others?*"

We are "*children of God*," our Father, and, therefore, we should resemble Him, and His characteristics!

GOD HELP US TO HAVE A UNIQUENESS AND SEPARATENESS THAT DIVIDES US FROM OTHERS WHO ARE NOT CHRISTIANS. GOD HELP US TO HAVE LIVES THAT PROCLAIM TO OTHERS, "*WE ARE CHILDREN OF OUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN!*"

REVIEW OF MATTHEW 5

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| Verses 3-12 | The <i>BEATITUDES</i> - the attitudes the Christian should " <i>be.</i> " |
| Verses 13-16 | <i>How</i> Christians are to act in the world. They are to be " <i>salt</i> " and " <i>light</i> " to the world. |
| Verses 17-48 | The Christian's relationship to the law. Christ contrasts God's purpose of the law with the Pharisees' perverted interpretation of the law. |

Note that Matthew 5 closes with Christ's statement,

"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."