

(Through the Bible) Matthew 5

by Chuck Smith

The Sermon on the Mount describes the characteristics of a child of God, including poverty of spirit, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and persecution for righteousness' sake.

Duration: 1:25:45

Scripture: Matthew 5:16-17, Matthew 5:19, Matthew 5:21-22, Matthew 5:48, Matthew 7:12, Matthew 22:37-39

Topics: "Loving God", "Christian Witness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our hearts and loving our neighbors as ourselves, summarizing the law and the prophets. The preacher also highlights the need for self-reflection and recognition of our own weaknesses, as seen in the example of Paul the Apostle in Romans chapter 7. The sermon emphasizes the mission of the church to bring people out of darkness and into the kingdom of light, as described by Paul in his commission to deliver relief to the Gentiles. The preacher also references Jesus' teaching that believers are the light of the world and should not hide their faith but let it shine for all to see.

Transcript

Tonight we have the Sermon on the Mount. What a fantastic portion of scripture. Matthew 5, And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain.

And when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth, and he taught them, saying, The first thing to notice is that this Sermon on the Mount is not for everybody. This Sermon on the Mount was not for the multitudes. Jesus is not here talking to the multitudes.

He is talking to his disciples. And unless a person is a disciple of Jesus Christ, they're going to have an extremely difficult time with the Sermon on the Mount. Because it really doesn't have application to them.

It has application only to his disciples. So, seeing the multitudes, he left the multitudes. He went up into a mountain.

And when his disciples had come unto him, he opened his mouth and taught them. Jesus was sitting down. This is the posture of a teacher.

In those days, the teachers would sit, the students would stand. Somehow, things have become all twisted. When they would stand, it would be to herald or to proclaim, as a herald, a truth.

Now, Jesus, when he was on the Temple Mount in John chapter 5, stood and cried, saying, If any man thirsts, he's heralding a glorious truth to all people. The proclaiming of the truth. The preaching of the truth.

That, they would stand. But in teaching, they would sit. Now, Jesus, in the beginning of this message, is describing the people that he is addressing the message to.

For he is describing the child of God. Later on, he says that you might be the children of your Father. And he talks about your Father.

But here is the description. And it is in the form of what are known as Beatitudes. Or the pronounced blessings.

Now, the word blessed literally means, oh, how happy. And because that is the literal meaning of the word blessed, it seems paradoxical immediately to say, oh, how happy are the poor in spirit. Somehow, we don't think of the poor in spirit as being very happy people.

And yet, Jesus, in beginning his description of the child of God, declares, oh, how happy are the poor in spirit. Now, notice, and there have been some moderns who have sought to translate this or interpret this, because it isn't a translation, but an interpretation. Blessed in spirit are the poor.

But that is not necessarily a truth. I know many poor people who have a very bitter spirit. And poverty does not make for a blessed or a happy spirit, necessarily.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, Jesus said. First of all, he's not talking about physical poverty. Poor in spirit.

This is in opposition to being proud. And this is always the inevitable consequence of a man coming into a personal, real confrontation with God. If you have come into a true confrontation with God in your own life, the result immediately, always, is that of poverty of spirit.

You see a person who is proud and haughty, he is a man who has not had a true encounter with God. In Isaiah chapter 6, upon the death of the popular King Uzziah, when the throne of Israel has been emptied of this great popular monarch, Isaiah writes, and in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on the throne, high and lifted up, and his train did fill the temple. Then said I, woe is me, for I am undone.

I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips. That's always the result of a man seeing God in truth. Woe is me, I am undone.

Daniel, when he saw the Lord, said, my beauty was turned into corruption. When Peter had his confrontation, he said, depart from me, for lo, I am a sinful man. The man who truly sees God, sees himself in truth.

Jesus said we do err because we so often are comparing ourselves with others around us. And when I look at you, I don't look near so bad. When I look at your flaws and your faults, I feel, well, I'm not too bad.

Look at them. But when I look at the Lord, that purity, that holiness, that righteousness, I say, oh, God help me. Woe is me, I'm undone.

And that is what poverty of spirit is. It's a true evaluation of myself, not in the light of man, but in the light of God. Where I see the real truth about me, and it brings me to that, oh, God help me, I need help.

The same thing that Paul said, oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? And so that's always the beginning. The beginning consciousness of a man who has a true relationship with God. But Jesus said, really, happy is that man.

Why? Because he has had a true encounter with God. And as a result, the kingdom of heaven belongs to him. He's no longer living in just this temporal, material realm, but he is now transferred into the kingdom of heaven and is a child of God and a citizen of the eternal kingdom.

Blessed are they that mourn. Now that really is even more paradoxical, isn't it? Happy are they that mourn. But having come to a real awareness of myself in the light of God, coming to that poverty of spirit, my heart is broken over my own condition.

I mourn over my failures, over what I see of myself and in myself. But the promise of the Lord is, they shall be comforted. As the Lord begins to minister to me the power of his Holy Spirit and his strength.

And I begin now to experience those victories of Jesus Christ in my life. And that makes me indeed happy. But that doesn't come until I've come to the end of myself in that place of just mourning in the fact that I have no strength, no ability, no power.

I feel that helplessness. I cry out from helplessness. And then I begin to experience the glorious power of God doing in my life what I could not possibly do for myself.

And that leads me then to a true evaluation of myself and Jesus. Blessed are the meek. Now that is seeing myself in truth.

No longer am I puffed up. No longer am I deceiving myself about myself. And that's an easy thing for people to do.

The word meek can probably best be defined by putting a hyphen in the middle of it. Meek. It is again looking at myself in the light of the Lord and realizing that I am nothing.

Now it is interesting that these are not characteristics that are really admired by the world. The world admires the aggressor. You see, if this were being written by man, the blessings would be given to completely different kind of attributes within a man.

But because Jesus is describing the child of God, he's describing those characteristics that are admirable by heaven. The meek, they shall inherit the earth. This earth is not the earth that God created.

This earth has been spoiled by rebellion against God. But God is going to restore this earth to his original divine intention. Wars are going to cease.

Man is going to dwell together in righteousness, in true justice, in peace. And God's kingdom will come to earth. And those who are the children of God will inherit the earth.

Jesus said, and I will say to them in that day, come ye blessed of the father, inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundations of the earth. Revelation tells us concerning the body of Christ and they shall live and reign with him a thousand years on the earth. Blessed are the meek.

They shall inherit the earth. What a glorious place this earth could be if it weren't for the pollutions that man has brought. If it weren't for the wars, the hatred, the greed, but we will see the earth as God intended it.

We will inherit the earth as God intended it. Now these are more or less what we might call negative characteristics. Now we get into more or less, well, the fourth of the Beatitudes is the benchmark.

It's the sort of the center, the top of the shed, seeing myself in the light of God, recognizing the truth of my own weakness, having a true evaluation now of myself, I begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness. As Paul, the apostle expresses, I saw the ideal, Romans chapter seven. I consent to the law that it is good, but how to perform it.

I can't discover for the good that I would do. I'm not doing and that which I would not allow. That is the thing I'm doing.

Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? And in there is that cry. Oh God help. I hunger.

I thirst after the ideal, but I haven't been able to attain it. Who will help me to find the ideal? And Jesus said, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after the ideal, where they shall be filled. If you're hungering and thirsting after righteousness, surely God will answer that hunger and thirst of your heart and you will be filled with the righteousness of God.

Now we come into more positive kind of characteristics. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Now Jesus actually declares that our having been forgiven so much should be the incentive for our forgiving.

Having obtained the mercy of God, then we indeed should be merciful. But here he puts it the other way. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

Well, we have obtained mercy and that's really what makes us merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart where they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.

Now, this basically ends the description of that child of God. Now in the next beatitude, he more or less declares what will be the response and the reaction toward that kind of person from the world. Now reading these characteristics, you'd say, hell, that guy ought to be, you know, just well accepted anywhere he goes.

Well, he would be in any church, but when he gets out in the world, it's another story. Jesus said, don't be surprised that men hate you. They hated me.

Don't be surprised if they don't receive you. They didn't receive me. Now, each of these characteristics were surely manifested in the life of Jesus Christ and the world crucified him.

And he said, this will be the response of the world towards that kind of person. So he said, blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake. If you are this kind of a righteous person, you'll be persecuted for being that kind of person.

People will take advantage of you. People will run all over you and people will resent you because you will make them uncomfortable when you're around them, because you are doing the right thing and they're

wanting to do the wrong thing. Thus, they'll begin to project against you, their feelings of guilt.

Now, notice Jesus didn't say, blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely because you're doing something weird. And unfortunately, there are some people who take the name of Christian and then in the name of Christianity do weird things. And because of the weird things they are doing, they come into a certain amount of persecution.

When I was going to Bible college in Los Angeles, I was working downtown in the title insurance and trust company. I had to ride the streetcar back to my apartment in the evening. Now, we had one gal in a class in Bible school who was a real problem to me.

She was extremely loud and weird. You know, the kind that wore the long skirt with the dark cotton hose and the hair pulled back straight and no makeup. And she had sung at one time in opera and had a voice for opera.

She was loud. I mean, there was nothing moderate about her. When she laughed, she laughed louder than anybody else.

When she talked, she talked louder than anybody else. And she was just purely obnoxious as far as I was concerned. And every once in a while, she evidently worked downtown LA someplace too.

And she got on the streetcar after I did, but she get on the streetcar and she looked back and spot me. And in that loud operatic voice, she would say, praise the Lord brother. And here's this weird looking gal, you know, and everybody turns to look who she's exhorting.

And I would turn and look too, you know, and just sort of to the people around me, sort of sad, isn't it? So I went up to her because of the embarrassment she was causing me. And I told her that I didn't appreciate her loud exhortations on the streetcar and in the classroom also, because she was very loud in the classroom. And I showed her the scripture, let the women keep silent in the church.

And she walked away saying, thank you, Lord, for the persecution, you know. Well, the Lord doesn't say that you're blessed when you're persecuted for being an oddball, but for righteousness and for his namesake. And so check out in that persecution that's coming your way.

Make sure that it is for the sake of Jesus Christ that the persecution is coming, not just because of some weird characteristic. And Jesus said, rejoice. Now that's a difficult thing to do when you are being reviled and persecuted for the sake of Jesus Christ.

It's awfully hard to rejoice. In fact, our natural tendency is to mope. Well, Lord, all right, if that's the way you're going to let people treat me, I'm just going to keep quiet, you know, and just to sort of sulk, because we don't like to be reviled.

We don't like to be persecuted. But Jesus said, rejoice. Can you? Peter and John in the book of Acts, when they were going into the temple and through the faith of Jesus Christ brought healing to the lame man, and as the result were arrested and brought to trial.

Those men that were trying them beat them and warned them not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus Christ. And it said, and they went their way rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer persecution for Jesus Christ. Classic example of this text being fulfilled in the life of the disciples.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Why? Well, first of all, great is your reward in heaven. And secondly, you're in good company for so persecuted they, the prophets that were before you.

As Stephen, when he was standing before the council said, which of the prophets have you not slain? You talk about your father's being so great. Our father's this, our father's that, but your father's killed those prophets that God sent into them. In fact, which of the prophets did they not kill? And you are even worse than your father's because you killed the one that the prophets were all telling was going to come.

Now, Stephen points out that the prophets of God were not really accepted. So rejoice, be exceedingly glad you're in good company. They persecuted all of those true prophets of God, false prophets.

Oh, they were lifted up. They were heralded. Oh, they had it comfortable and nice.

But the true prophets of God ran into real problems because people just don't want to hear God's truth. They would rather be lulled into a false sense of security. Oh, everything's fine.

God wants you to all be prosperous. God wants you to all drive Mercedes. So who wouldn't like that doctrine? That sounds great.

Hooray, hooray. Go out and order my Mercedes. But the true prophets of God do not sit in such a popular seat.

Now, Jesus next of all declares the influence of the child of God in the earth by declaring you are the salt of the earth. Now, salt in those days was used basically as a preservative because they lacked vacuum seal packing and because they lacked refrigeration. Whenever they butchered their meat, that portion that they did not roast immediately would have to be salted well.

And the salt killed the surface bacteria on the meat and had a preserving effect. It kept the meat from rotting or putrefying. And Jesus is saying to his disciples, ye are the preserving influence in a world in which you live.

You're the preserving influence. You are the salt of the earth, that preserving influence. And surely, true Christianity, wherever it has gone, has been a preserving influence in that society.

Wherever there is a strong Christian emphasis and a strong Christian voice, that society is being preserved and maintained. But whenever the Christian voice begins to wane, that society begins to deteriorate and ultimately be destroyed. And take a look at history and notice the preserving influence of Christianity as long as it remained strong and a dynamic influence within the community.

The community was strong and powerful. Look at the United States. We were formed on Christian principles, tremendously heavy Christian influence in the forming of this nation.

And thus, written into our very constitution, those safeguards to protect that religious freedom of worship and assembly and all, because the Christian influence was strong. And we weren't afraid to say one nation under God. But through the years, the Christian voice has been weakened in its influence upon our society.

And we can see those rotting forces that are beginning to erode away the very foundations of our democracy as we see children being exploited for sexual purposes, as we see child pornography being produced and purchased. Now, there's an interesting thing about child pornography and about many of

these other horrible things that are happening, and you should know it. A man in our church who is the head of the Los Angeles Police Department in the Division of Child Exploitation told me personally that whenever they make a raid on any of these child pornography places where they're taking the pictures or where they're publishing the material, he said, whenever they make a raid, they always find an abundance of satanic literature and the aspects of satanic worship there.

And he said, it is also true in the homicides, in those vicious homicides. He said, we so often discover satanic literature and evidence of satanic worship. He said, Chuck, it is a spiritual battle that we are in.

It's just not men who have given themselves over to perverted thinking, but it is satanic in its origin. And we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. And if we don't become aware of that, we're not going to be properly equipped for the battle.

We're going to be making the mistake of trying to fight the spiritual battle with carnal weapons, writing our congressmen and things of this nature. What we need to do is get on our knees before God and begin to pray and seek God's power and seek a spiritual revival that will turn this nation right side up once again, because it is a tremendous spiritual battle that we are in. And the forces that we are fighting are actually demonic in nature.

And the weapons of our warfare cannot be carnal, but they are spiritual and they are mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of the enemy. But that's prayer. And we need to be doing it more and more and more.

You're the salt of the earth. You're the preserving influence. But if the salt has lost its savor, it is if it's no longer doing its job, then it's good for nothing.

If the church is not being a purifying influence within the community, then it's good for nothing. Those churches that seek to exist as social centers are good for nothing. The church needs to be a dynamic spiritual influence within the community and seeking to bring a spiritual, godly influence within the community.

The salt has lost its savor, it is good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of man. When the salt became unusable, old, unusable, they would throw it out on the pathway so that the rain would dissolve it and the sodium chloride would kill the vegetation. And so they used it to kill the vegetation to keep the pathways clear from weeds and grass.

And thus the salt was trodden under the foot of man. And Jesus is saying, look, the church is to be the salt of the earth. If it is not the salt of the earth, it's good for nothing and it will be trampled under the foot of fallen man.

And so when Jesus said, yeah, the salt of the earth is not just a challenge, it is an ultimatum to the church. You either be what God intends you to be or you're not going to be. You'll be trodden under the foot of man.

Then he said, ye are the light of the world. Now here are those disciples, Peter and John and James, and they were fishermen. They didn't have much of an elaborate background.

And Jesus is sitting there in the Galilee, which is far away from metropolitan Rome and all of the powers of Rome and the Grecian culture centered around Athens. And there on the hillside above the Sea of Galilee

to this sort of motley little crew, Jesus says to them, hey, you are the light of the world. Marvelous.

I love it. Oh, the influence that the church should be having in this dark world today. You're the only light.

You're the only hope. Paul, when he is describing his commission before Agrippa and talking about his conversion on the road to Damascus, declares that the Lord called him to deliver, really, the Gentiles from the power of darkness and to bring them into the kingdom of light. And so that is constantly the mission of the church, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of their sins and an inheritance among them that are set apart.

And so the mission of the church, to turn them from darkness to light. You are the light of the world. Probably referring to Soffit, up on the hills above the Galilee there, Jesus said a city set on a hill cannot be hid.

And neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on the candlestick that it might give light unto all that are in the house. A little fellow had just accepted the Lord and was heading off for a summer camp that did not have a religious base, and he went in to talk to his pastor about it. And they prayed together that his life might really be strong for Jesus while he was there in in the camp with all of these other kids.

And so after he'd come back from his camping experience, the pastor said, well, how did it go, Johnny? He said, it went great. He said, oh, that's good. He said, yep, nobody found out.

But the Lord said, you don't light a candle to put it under a bushel, but on the candlestick that it might give light to all that are in the house. The one purpose of light is to give light. Therefore, the one purpose that God has for you is that you might give light to the dark world.

Now, there is a way in which you are to let your light shine. There are many ways by which you can let your light shine, but the way you are to let your light shine, let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they will glorify your Father, which is in heaven. Now, it is possible for a person to so let their light shine that when people see their good works, they glorify them.

Oh, isn't he wonderful? Oh, did you see that? Oh, isn't that marvelous? Did you hear what he did? And there is a way by which we can do our good works before men to draw attention to ourself and to bring honor to ourselves. And there is something very perverse in our flesh that wants to bring attention and honor to ourselves. It's much easier to be a hero before a lot of people than it is to be all by yourself, but nobody knows it, you see.

It's very easy to do good and magnanimous deeds when everybody is watching. Oh, did you see what he did? My, isn't that marvelous? But when there's no one watching and no one knows that you did it, that's just a different story. When we lived in Huntington Beach years ago, we lived right across from the Edison plant where the guys would come who did all of the repair work for Edison and so forth.

And of course, there were often foggy mornings where you turned your lights on not to see, but just to let other people see you. And whenever you're driving in those conditions, it's very easy to forget that your lights are on and just to walk away and leave your lights on. And so on those foggy mornings, I would go over to the Edison plant and I would go around and turn off the lights of all of these cars.

Because, you know, I figured, man, if they come back this evening, then they're going to have dead batteries and everything else. So I would go around and turn off the lights in all of these cars. But I always thought, how sad it is that they don't know how nice a fellow I am.

You know, when they get back, they're going to fire up their cars and drive off, and they'll never know that if it weren't for my kindness and my goodness, they would have had dead batteries when they got out here. I was almost tempted to write little cards and say, did you know you left your lights on this morning and you would have had a dead battery tonight, but I came over and turned them off for you. I live right across the street.

Somehow we want recognition from man for our good deeds. But Jesus said, let your light so shine that when men see your good works, they will glorify your father in heaven. Now, as we move through the gospels and we studied the ministry of Jesus Christ, so often we are going to be reading where the multitudes came to him and he touched them and he healed them.

And it said, and they went away, glorifying God. You see, he did it in such a way that God was glorified as the people saw the good works that he did. So the Christian life is a fine balance.

You're the light of the world, but you are to let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they won't be praising and glorifying you, but they will be praising and glorifying your father, which is in heaven. Now, Jesus moves into the next section of the sermon on the mount as he talks to them concerning the Christian's relationship to the law. And he declares, do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets.

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Now, the law required death for disobedience. Jesus came to fulfill the law by dying for our disobedience.

He came to fulfill the prophets where Isaiah said, all we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned every one of us to our own way. And God laid on him the iniquities of us all.

He came to fulfill the law and the prophets. I haven't come to destroy it. I've come to fulfill it.

And that is why Paul, the apostle wrote, Christ is the end of the law to those that believe because he has brought us into a new relationship with God that involves our faith in Jesus Christ as the basis for our righteous standing before God for he fulfilled the law. He did not come to bring an end to it, but to fulfill it. And he fulfilled the requirements of the law for us dying in our place.

He said, for barely I say unto you until heaven and earth shall pass, not one jot or one tittle shall in any wise pass from the law until it is all fulfilled. Now the jot and the tittles were the little punctuation marks and so forth that were placed there just in the Hebrew letters, those little small little marks that give the the vowel pronunciation. Not one jot or tittle will in any wise pass until it is all fulfilled.

Whosoever, he said, therefore shall break one of the least commandments and shall teach men so he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Now, one day Jesus was asked the question, what is the greatest commandment? And Jesus answered correctly. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all their mind.

And Jesus added, and the second is just like it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And he said, in these two are all the law and the prophets.

This is a summary, a very short summary of all the law and the prophets. Love God with all your heart, love your neighbor as yourself. Paul the apostle said, for love is the fulfilling of the law and he who loves has fulfilled the law.

Now, the law was given in negatives. Thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not. Jesus turned it around to the positive.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And therein is the fulfillment.

And if a man would teach others to break the commandments, he will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he who teaches those to keep the commandments shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. But then Jesus said something that must have just absolutely blown their minds.

For he then said, for I say unto you that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. Now that must have been a tremendous shock to his disciples because as far as they were concerned, no one was more righteous than the scribes and the Pharisees because that's all these men lived for. And these men were constantly displaying how righteous they were by the types of robes that they wore, by the types of borders around their garments and all.

And just by their actions, they had special little actions in their prayers and all that really indicated a tremendous depth of righteousness. I mean, these are the guys that Jesus said you strain at a gnat. Why would they strain at a gnat? Because the law said you're not to eat anything with blood.

And so you'd see a Pharisee out on the corner putting his finger down his throat and gagging and straining and pushing and trying to throw up. You say, what's wrong? Oh, I was running along and this gnat, you know, flew in my mouth. You know, he's strained to get rid of the gnat because, of course, he didn't want to eat any meat that wasn't, first of all, thoroughly bled and kosher.

And now Jesus is saying you've got to be more righteous than those guys if you're going to enter the kingdom of heaven. But these guys were practicing righteous constantly, this righteous standard of the law. But then Jesus goes on to illustrate what he meant by that.

For he tells them, now you have heard that it was said by them of old time. You see, the disciples could not read Hebrew. They only knew what the law said by the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees.

The common people did not know the Hebrew language. When they came back from Babylon, they spoke Chaldean. Aramaic was the common language at the time of Christ, Greek.

But Hebrew was only for the scholars. Therefore, they really couldn't read the scriptures in their own languages, in their own language. And so they had to depend upon the scribes and Pharisees teaching them.

And thus, you have heard that it hath been said. You have heard that it was said. It has been said.

And Jesus gives here five of the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees concerning the law as they were interpreting it and as they were teaching it to the people. And Jesus shows, first of all, how they were

teaching it. And then he declares what was intended when God gave it.

And the basic difference between the way they were teaching it and the way God intended it to be was that they were teaching it as purely a physical thing to be fulfilled in a physical way. And Jesus is declaring that God intended it to be a spiritual thing governing the spiritual attitudes of man. And that God is more interested in your attitudes than He is the actions.

Now, there are many people today who are trying to be so careful in their actions, but their attitudes stink. And God is interested in the attitude from which actions spring. And thus, what a person does can be thoroughly disallowed by the attitude in which he's doing it.

A person can be doing all kinds of magnanimous works for God in the church. Just busying himself and doing so many marvelous things around the church. But his attitude can be bad and God totally disregards the things that the man is doing because of the attitude in which he is doing it.

God is far more interested in the attitude in your heart than the actions of your outward life. And they had been interpreting the law to govern the actions of man where God intended the law to be speaking to the attitudes of man. Thus, in the way that they were interpreting the law, they were able to fulfill it.

But in the way that the law was originally intended because it was intended to govern the spirit of man, the law was actually intended to make the whole world guilty before God and to show man's guilt. But rather than their reading the law and feeling guilty before God, seeking the mercy and the grace of God, they were so interpreting the law as having fulfilled the law and thus being very pompous and very righteous and very critical of everybody else. And they were interpreting the law so that they were having this tremendous attitude of self-righteousness and pride looking down then upon everybody else.

And it was manifested, as Jesus said, when the Pharisee went into the temple and said, Oh Father, I thank you I'm not like other men, for I fast and I pray. And you know, he's telling God all of his good things. And Jesus said there was a sinner that went into the temple and he wouldn't even lift his eyes toward heaven, but with head bowed, he just smote on his chest and oh God be merciful to me a sinner.

And Jesus said he went away justified or forgiven. Where the first guy, you know, his prayers meant nothing to God. Now that's because they were interpreting the law in a wrong way, only to govern the outward actions of man and not to deal with the spirit at all.

And as you see Jesus making the contrast, he first of all teaches it as they were teaching or shows how they were teaching it. But then he shows the original intent of the law. And thus, as we see the original intent of the law, we are all made guilty before God.

First of all, you've been heard, you have heard that it was said by those in the old times that thou shalt not kill. Actually, literally thou shalt not murder and whosoever shall murder shall be in danger of the judgment. Now, doesn't the law say that? Yes, it does.

Thou shalt not murder. That is the law. Then why does Jesus have any controversy with that? You know what God intended when he said that? You know what constitutes the violation of thou shalt not murder? Not just taking a club and beating the guy over the head until he's senseless.

Not just putting a chokehold on until he can't breathe anymore. Not running your sword through his heart. But Jesus said, I say unto you, this is what they've been teaching you, but this is what I say.

This is what the law was intended to say. That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. You see, it is this ungoverned and unreasonable anger that leads to murder.

Now, you may have an ungovernable, unreasonable anger, but you may have been able to control it. But you go around constantly seething, constantly angry, boiling inside. Jesus said, hey, you've violated that law already in your heart, in your spirit.

But because you've never taken a 45 and blown a guy's brains out, you think, oh man, I've never murdered. No, I feel pretty righteous, you know. And yet, all of this horrible anger can be boiling inside of you.

Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raka, that is you vain fellow, shall be in danger of the counsel. But whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if when you are bringing your gift to the altar and you suddenly remember that your brother has ought against you, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way.

First be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift. Now, in geometry, I learned that the shortest distance between two points was a straight line. And that may be true in geometry, but not necessarily true in your getting to God.

Quite often in our approach of God, bringing to the altar our gift. The most direct approach to God is not a straight line, but it is by an offended brother. Go first, be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.

Now he said, agree with your adversary readily, quickly while you are in the way with him. Less than any time, your adversary deliver you to the judge and the judge deliver you to the officer and you'll be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto you, you will not come out until you have paid the uttermost farthing.

Of course, he's referring there to the debtor's prison and all. So get along with people, love people. Now you've heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery.

But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Now the first part, a lot of you can just, you know, square back with self-righteous and say, well, I've never committed adultery. But when Jesus interprets it as God intended, but I say unto you, whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after an art, then suddenly the chest is sucked in and we think, wow, that desire constitutes guilt in the eyes of the Lord.

And you see the difference where the way Jesus was interpreting it, it made us all guilty before God. The way they were interpreting it, it made them very pompous and self-righteous. But the way Jesus was interpreting it, it makes us all guilty.

And that's exactly what the law was intended to do to make the whole world guilty before God so that we would not seek to come before God in our own righteousness, but that we would seek that righteousness that God has provided for us, that we might have that standing before God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So the law was a schoolmaster to drive us to Jesus Christ. Now, Jesus said, if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.

For it is profitable for thee that one of your members should perish rather than that your whole body should be cast into hell. And if your right hand offends you, cut it off, cast it from you. For it is profitable for thee

that one of your members should perish and not that your whole body should be cast into hell.

Now, let me say that interpreting the Sermon on the Mount or the words of Jesus Christ, that we must take care in interpreting because if our interpretation of a passage makes the passage ridiculous, then we have the wrong interpretation. And in noticing this, if your right eye offends thee, pluck it out and cast. He's not speaking literally of just plucking out your eye and throwing it away because through that eye, you looked at a gal and you thought, you know, that'd be nice.

Because even if you plucked out your right eye and cast it from you, you still got your left eye. If you're a thief, pickpocket, use your right hand. It offends you.

Cut it off. If that were literal, you'd develop the skill with the left hand. So he's not talking literally of plucking out your eye or cutting off your hand, but he is just trying to show to you because to every one of us, the thought of plucking out our right eye is a very repugnant, repulsive.

Oh, you know, my eye shudder at that, you know, gives me the chills thing of plucking out my right eye or taking and running my hand through a bandsaw. Whoo. You know, that gives me the chills thing.

You know, my hand lying there on the table of the saw, picking it up and stuffing it in my pocket, you know, and it's repugnant to me. The thought is repugnant, but Jesus by this deliberately speaking of things that are so repugnant to us is just seeking to show the importance of entering the kingdom of heaven. And in reality, the most important thing for any of us, more important than a whole body, more important than having all the members of my body intact is that I enter into the kingdom of heaven and I need to have that kind of a primary emphasis in my life.

The kingdom of heaven is the greatest goal, the greatest desire, and thus should bring into my life the greatest sacrifices. And I should not be concerned with what sacrifice I may make in a temporal way because I'm seeking the eternal kingdom of heaven. Now the third illustration, he said, it hath been said that whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.

But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery. And whosoever shall marry her that is divorce commits adultery. Now the issue of Jesus and divorce is a very interesting issue, and it is one that is very relevant for today because of the high incidence of divorce.

And under the law it said if a man be married to a wife and he finds an uncleanness in her, let him give her a writing of divorcement. In those days, the woman really did not have many rights. If her husband wanted to divorce her, he could divorce her, but she could not divorce him.

There was no provision for a wife getting a divorce from a husband. But the husband could get a divorce, and they began as they do today to interpret the law, you know, how that our laws have been so interpreted now by the courts that they become more liberal all the time. So that if the officer, when he arrests you, does not have a probable cause to search you, but without the probable cause he searches you and finds in your possession a .45 and ballistics tests prove that it was the gun that was used to murder that man just down the street and you have the man's watch and wallet in your pocket and all.

But the officer didn't inform you of your rights or he didn't have probable cause of searching you, you can get off free because we've, you know, so interpreted the law. In fact, I saw the other day where they let a guy off free because he wore jail clothes when he was on trial and it gave a presupposition of guilty. And

though he was guilty, and they had all the proof to prove that he was guilty, because they did not let him wear a business suit when he stood before the jury, but he was in jail attire, they set him free.

The liberalizing of the law through interpretation. Now, this law of divorce had been extremely liberalized through interpretation. What did the law constitute if he finds an uncleanness in her? And there was one school of rabbis under Hillel who interpreted that very strictly as being, he found that she wasn't a virgin when he married her.

But the other school of rabbis had begun to liberalize that law to the extent that if you found an uncleanness in your wife could constitute that she just didn't fix your eggs the way you liked them in the morning. And that would be an uncleanness in her. I don't like the way she cooks.

Here, you're through, woman. Writing of divorcement. And they just write out the divorcement and hand it to her.

And she had no, she had no alternative. I mean, he did that, she was gone. She had no recourse.

She was out. That's why this custom of dowry became popular. For dowry was actually alimony in advance.

It was paid to the girl's father and he would keep it for her in case her husband ever put her out. Then she's got her alimony already set. He paid it before they got married.

And dowry is really alimony in advance. Not such a bad deal when divorce is so easy and so liberalized. So this is the background.

A very easy divorce. Just give her a writing of a bill of divorcement. Any excuse, you know, any uncleanness.

And that could mean anything. Didn't like the way she combed her hair. Didn't like the way she looked in the morning when she first woke up.

And so they had so liberalized the divorce laws. And so Jesus is going back more towards the original. But we'll get more into this when we get to the 17th chapter or the 19th chapter.

And we look at the law of Jesus and divorce there. Because Jesus does then begin to amplify it there a bit. And we'll not cover it tonight fully, but we'll wait till chapter 19.

Again, you have heard that it hath been said by those of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, don't swear at all. Neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is God's footstool.

Neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. That was before Clairol.

But let your yes be a yes. Let your no be a no. And whatever is more than this is deceitful.

Now Jesus is talking about that deceitfulness of being able to say no, though it sounds like yes. Or saying yes, when you really don't mean yes. Basically, Jesus is saying you should be a person of your word.

You should not have to take an oath. You should not have to swear to the truth that you are declaring. I swear in the Bible, I'm telling you the truth, man.

Well, you only have to do that if you are basically an untruthful person and nobody trusts you. But you should be a person of your word. And when you say yes, you should mean yes.

And when you say no, you should mean no. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. And don't get into these long, deceitful kind of, well, I would be very happy to do it.

And I'll tell you what, I'll pray about it, brother. But you're really saying no. I really don't want to do it.

I have no intention of doing it, but I don't want to tell you no, because it may offend you. But Jesus said, be a person of your word. If you say yes, mean yes.

If you say no, mean no. Anything that is more than this is just deceitful to cover up the truth. Now you've heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But let me explain the way they were teaching this law. First of all, this law was not given to the common people. This came under the law when God was instructing the judges concerning their judgment in the cases that were brought before them.

And there should be equity meted out from the judges. And He uses the eye for an eye, tooth for tooth to show that when you judge, make the judgment equitable. Make the judgment fitting the crime.

Let the judgment be fitting the crime that was committed. Let it be an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth. So He's just talking about equitable judgment, but it is addressed to the judges, not to individuals.

In that portion of the law, He is instructing judges how they are to judge when they are sitting in the judgment seat. But they had begun to interpret it in a personal way and they had liberalized it. So it was, you know, now to you, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But not only were they teaching an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth as the possible judgment, but they were saying that it is an obligation. Now, even today in many of those families, you have these feudal things going on. The eye for an eye, tooth for tooth thing.

And these family feuds go on for generations. You know, they killed a member of our clan. We're going to kill a member of their clan.

They beat up a member of our clan. We're going to beat up a member of our, and we're duty bound. We're honor bound.

And they looked at it as something of which you were duty bound and honor bound to do. And it was a violation of honor if you didn't take the eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. And they were really, you know, go at it, go get it.

You're honor bound to do it. But Jesus said, oh, not so. First of all, it doesn't have a personal vindictive within it, but it is something that the judges were to meet out equitable judgment.

But Jesus said, I stand to you, don't resist those that are evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Now there are those who take this resist not evil as a case against police

departments, but that is a ridiculous, foolish interpretation. And thus it is not the correct interpretation because Jesus didn't say anything that was ridiculous and foolish.

Again, he's talking to us and just saying that we aren't to be seeking vengeance for ourselves. Whosoever smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him too. In those days, the Roman soldiers could compel you to carry their backpacks a mile. Under Roman law, you could be walking down the road and a Roman soldier come to you and he had his backpack on and all he could say, carry this thing for a mile.

And you had to carry the thing for a mile. And of course, the Jews hated that yoke of Roman control and government. They were constantly rebelling.

And boy, it used to really gall them to have to carry that load for that Roman soldier for a mile. Jesus said, look, if they compel you to go a mile, go too. Think of what opportunity you'd have to witness to him in the second mile.

He'd wonder, hey, you're different, man. What's going on here? Give to him that ask. And he that would borrow from thee, don't turn away.

Now, you've heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies. Bless those that curse you.

Do good to those that hate you. Pray for those which despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of your father, which is in heaven. For he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

He sends rain on the just and the unjust. God treats all men alike, whether good or bad. Gives rain to the good and bad people.

Causes his sun to shine on good and bad people. God is impartial in these things. So be like your father, which is in heaven.

Bless those that curse you. Pray for those that despitefully use you. Love your enemies.

Now, I say, Jesus said, you know, this they say, this is what I say. Now, as I pointed out in the beginning, the way they were interpreting the law, the people could feel self-righteous because they were keeping the law. But the way Jesus interpreted the law, they were all guilty.

Now, as you look at the way Jesus has interpreted the law, do you feel righteous or guilty? And thus, you see, the true intent of the law was to govern over the attitudes of man. And when your attitude was wrong before God, you were guilty before God. And you should then be seeking God's forgiveness and God's help.

But it's all in the way that they were interpreting the law and the way the law was intended. Intended to govern the attitudes of man. Now, Jesus concludes, if you only love those that love you, so what? It's no big deal.

Don't even the rank sinners do the same? You know, it's no big deal if you just go around loving all those that love you. Oh, I love you people so much. Oh, you know, big deal.

You love me, so it's only natural that I love you. But Jesus said, if you only love those that love you, what are you doing? If you only salute your brothers, you only greet your brothers, what do you more than others? If you're only friendly and kind and helpful for those that you know, those that are your brothers, then what are you doing more than anybody else? If you're only loving those that love you, what are you doing more than anybody else? Now, the inference here is that as a Christian, you should be doing more than anybody else. And if you're not doing more than anybody else, then how can you really boast of being a Christian? The whole question is, what are you doing more than the person who is not a Christian? You should be doing more.

And if you only love those that love you, you're not doing any more than anybody else. If you're only greeting those that greet you, or only greeting your brothers, you're not doing any more than anybody else. If you're only friendly to those that you know, you're not doing any more than anybody else.

And then comes the capper. And if you haven't felt like a sinner yet, Jesus said, be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. So, strike one.

I didn't make it. I've come far from making it. Therefore, I need help.

And thank God He has provided that help that I needed through forgiveness, through Jesus Christ, through His shed blood for me. We'll wait until the next session to go on with six and seven, because we'll never make it. There's so much to be said.

And if the Lord comes before we get there, I'll wave at you across the room as we're sitting at the feet of the Master, learning more and more of God's love. For God, through the endless ages to come, shall be revealing unto us the exceeding richness of His love and grace towards us in Christ Jesus our Lord. And what a glorious day that will be when we all stand before Him complete in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless. That's perfect. That's just the way He's going to present me before the Father.

Isn't that neat? Not because I am perfect, but because I am perfect in Him. The Bible says, the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Christ and you are perfect in Him. It's the same Greek word that is used here, be therefore perfect.

Same Greek word. You are complete or you are perfect in Him to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. That's just how He's going to present you when you stand before God, complete in Jesus Christ.

Only the grace of God could do that for us. You see, the law of God condemns us all to death. But Jesus said, I came to fulfill the law.

Thus He died for us. You see the whole section here now as Jesus is speaking about the law. I didn't come to destroy.

I came to fulfill the law and the prophets. And that He did in His death for us who are guilty because the law is spiritual and I am carnal and thus the law condemned me. Paul said, when the law came, sin was revealed and I died.

It destroyed me. It condemned me to death because I was guilty. So if you are reading the law in such a way as you feel very smug and self-righteous and say, well, I'm glad I'm not like other men.

I've never done those horrible things. Look again. What has been the attitude of your heart? That's what God is looking upon.

For man may look on the outward appearance, but God is looking upon your heart and that's what God is interested in tonight. A heart that is broken before Him. A heart that grieves over its own sin and iniquity.

A heart that hungers and thirsts after God. For they will then be filled with that mercy of God and they will become pure. The pure desire of their heart for God and for the things of God.

Praise the Lord. Father, we just thank you for the guide to life, the lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path that we might walk in thy path of righteousness for thy name's sake. Thank you, Father, again for this privilege of being here tonight and sharing in thy word.

And now, Lord, may thy Holy Spirit be with us as we go. Watching over, keeping. And Father, we know not what the day is going to bring forth, but in the midst of the turmoil that is now engulfing the Middle East, midst of the bombs and the artillery, rockets, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Oh God, we pray more that thy kingdom will come and thy will shall be done here on the earth even as it is in heaven where men will no longer be killing and destroying men through hatred, greed, and war. But where you might all sit down beneath our own vine and big tree and live in peace in thy kingdom, in the world that you've desired for us. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

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