



Matthew 5

Matthew 5
Tape #8004
By Chuck Smith

Tonight we begin this important teaching of Jesus Christ generally called the Sermon on the Mount. The first thing we notice is that this message is not a general message for the general public. This is a message for the disciples. It isn't applicable to the world. Jesus isn't establishing a new kind of a world order, but He is talking to His disciples as to what Christianity is to be. And so notice,

Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he taught them, saying, (5:1,2)

He had left the multitudes, went up into a mountain with just his disciples, and there He sat down and began to teach them a message specifically for His disciples. And He begins with the description of what constitutes a disciple, the characteristics of a disciple. And the first one is "poor in spirit."

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (5:3)

That's the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Now poverty of spirit comes as an inevitable natural consequence of seeing the Lord and the truth of the Lord. You really do not see yourself until you see the Lord and then when you see yourself in the light of the Lord, the effect on you is poverty of spirit. You see a man who is proud, a man who is pompous, a man who really thinks he is something, he is a man who has not yet really seen the Lord. You cannot see the Lord without that feeling of "Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people with unclean lips."

Daniel said that his beauty was turned into ugliness, it's a very humbling experience to get a true vision of God, the result of it is always poverty of spirit, never proud, never boastful, it just brings you down to poverty of spirit because I see now the truth about me because I see myself in the light of His holiness, the light of His purity.

Peter said, "Depart from me, Lord, I am a sinful man." (Luke 5:8) And when you really see the Lord, that's the consciousness that you have, poverty of spirit. But blessed are the poor in spirit, they are the ones who are entering into the kingdom of heaven; they are the ones who are discovering the truth about themselves and the ones who will be seeking help.

The second follows in natural progression.

Blessed are they that mourn: (5:4)

Seeing the truth about myself brings me to tears. I'm worse than I thought I was. When I see myself in the light of the Lord, it creates that brokenness in my heart and that weeping over my sinfulness. But blessed are they that mourn, see the truth about themselves, are repentant because,

they will be comforted. (5:4)

The Lord will minister to them and comfort them. And then the next follows in progressive order,

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (5:5)

Now, I think it was my son, Chuck Jr., that suggested that the best way to understand the word "meek" is to hyphenate the middle of it, "me-ek!" That's sort of the poverty of spirit, it is the absence of boastfulness or pride, seeing myself in the light of the Lord. Poverty of spirit, weeping over what I see and what I realize of myself. I have now the proper estimate of myself, woe is me! But they shall inherit the earth.

Now how far this is from the worldly philosophy today. A meek person is really not admired by the world. A meek person is looked down upon by the world and sort of run over by the world. We say, "He'll never get anywhere, You've got to get out there, You got to be aggressive, You got to push." Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, they are the ones that are going to inherit the earth." (5:5)

Now in the light of the recognition of the truth about me as I see myself in the light of the Lord, true revelation of God brings a true revelation of self, it creates within me a hunger and a thirst after righteousness. And so the next again follows in a progressive logical order.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: (5:6)

I realize that my righteousness is as filthy rags because I see myself as God sees me. I realize that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. I realize that in my flesh I cannot please God. But in seeing Him I see the ideal and I long for the ideal, I hunger and thirst after righteousness, His righteousness. And blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for we have that assurance and that promise, *they shall be filled. (5:6)*

This is the watershed, the first three are what might be considered negative characteristics: poverty of spirit, mourning, meek; brings me to the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And now the next characteristics are positive kind of things.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (5:7)

The Lord, a little further on in the sermon, we'll get to it next lesson, He talks about how we are not to judge, for in whatever measure we meet--the standard of judgment that we have and hold for other people--that's the standard of judgment by which we will be judged. And thus, it pays to be merciful. Blessed are the merciful. Now, in showing mercy, in showing kindness and forgiveness, it is quite possible that you are showing mercy to a person who really doesn't deserve mercy. There isn't a true repentance; but you see, that's not mine to judge. And it's possible that you are in error in showing mercy to some people. But if I am going to err, I want to err on the side of mercy rather than the side of judgment. I would rather be merciful and be wrong, than be judgmental and condemning and be wrong. You see, there may be a true repentance and if I don't show mercy but I continue to hold my bitterness or my anger, unforgiveness, and really... and the problem, of course, is that I have done this in the past. I have misjudged people.

Years ago when Kay and I were in Tucson; Tucson is a good day's journey out of Los Angeles, going either way it's a good last stop before you come into LA or it's a good first stop going out of LA going east toward Texas. And thus, there were always a lot of transients that were passing through Tucson. And they always look for churches and they come and they just broke down out of town and their car was towed in and they're on their way to Los Angeles and they don't have money to fix... I mean, I heard that story so many times. And there are people who just go around preying upon churches. And they're just con artists. And we received a letter from the headquarters of our denomination warning us about this couple who were traveling across the United States ripping off the churches. It described them, in their mid-fifties, and they dropped names, and they were smooth operators and they had ripped off several churches for good amounts. And so it was a warning to just be on the lookout for these people.

So there was a knock on our door and there was this fellow and his wife, the description fit, and he started telling all about... he knew this person and that person, dropping all these names, and I, *ha-ha, yeah, now tell me your car broke down.* And sure enough, "our car broke down, it's in the garage, we like to see the church, we actually were here in this church and we pastored this church years ago and we like to see it." And we went out into the auditorium and it was a new facility that we had there and they said, "Oh, look at this, it's worth it all." *You big phony, you know.* I mean, I was just as cool and cold to this guy as could be. And I didn't offer him a glass of cold water, nothing. And just so cold and all and... "When are your services? We like to come back to service." They always say that when they want the money, "We like to become a part of this church." They have so many stories.

So we said, "Well, we have a service tonight, Wednesday night." "Oh, we like to come." Sure enough they showed up that night, and one of the ladies who had been in the church for a long time let out sort of a "Oooh!" and went up and began to hug them and say, "Oh, how are you, how wonderful..."

Man, did I blow that one! And I had to apologize, I showed them the letter that I got and I said, "I'm at fault here, I really thought that you were this couple." And I misjudged that person and I prayed, "God, help me not to be guilty of judging someone wrongly." I would rather be, when I'm going to err and I'm going to err, I'm not perfect, but when I err, I want to err on the side of mercy. I want to err on the side of grace. "Blessed are the merciful [you'll never be wrong showing mercy], for they shall obtain mercy." (5:7)

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (5:8)

Now the Lord said that man looks on the outward appearance and God looks on the heart. David said, "Thou hast searched me and known me, O Lord." (Psalm 139:1) And then he said, "Search me, O Lord, know my heart," (Psalm 139:23) and "God searches the hearts of man," (ref?) the scripture says. "Blessed

are the pure in heart,” glorious reward, “they shall see God.” (5:8) And it is in that purity of heart, in that simplicity and purity of heart that a person really comes into a real recognition and consciousness of God. You begin to really see God. It’s that purity of heart. And then,

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. (5:9)

The Bible tells us that we are to “live peaceably with all men as much as is possible, as much as lieth in you.” (Romans 12:18) As a Christian, I am to be a peacemaker. You see, all of these characteristics are characteristics that I should possess as a Christian. These are characteristics that were manifested in the life of Jesus Christ. And the word “Christian” literally means Christ-like. And if I am like Christ, these will be the characteristics that will be manifested in my life.

Now, if you have a person who possessed these characteristics; he’s poor in spirit, he mourns over his own sin, he is a meek person, but he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, he’s merciful, he’s pure in heart, he’s a peacemaker; what do you think the attitude of the world will be towards this man? Will they admire him? Will they say, “Now there goes a real man?” No, the world doesn’t admire such a person, the world persecutes such a person because that kind of a person makes the worldly person feel very uncomfortable. A person who is living in sin is very uncomfortable around a person who is pure in heart. He’s very uncomfortable with a person that doesn’t see the humor in his filthy jokes. And so they begin subtle persecution of that person, and then it becomes more overt.

Jesus possessed these characteristics and what did they do to him? You see, this is not a way to win friends and influence people. You won’t find these characteristics encouraged in the Dale Carnegie course because these characteristics really don’t draw you a lot of friends in the world. What it does draw is persecution. Jesus said, “If they did not receive Me, they’re not going to receive you.” And having manifested these characteristics, He was too straight for them. They said, “We’ve got to get rid of this fellow.” And so,

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: (5:10)

Now note that, “persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” Some people are obnoxious. They’re always going around being obnoxious, almost deliberately obnoxious to people who are living in sin. And there are people that are weird. It doesn’t say, “Blessed are ye when you are persecuted for being obnoxious,” or “Blessed are you when you are persecuted for being weird,” but “Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (5:10)

You got a reward.

And then He goes on to say,

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. (5:11)

“My sake,” qualifying “for my sake.”

And then He tells us,

Rejoice, be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: (5:12)

Earlier, yours is the kingdom of heaven, but now great is your reward in heaven, because

they persecuted the prophets that were before you [like them]. (5:12)

Now Jesus speaks of that influence that we are to have in the world in which we live. And first of all, He declares to His disciples:

You are the salt of the earth: (5:13)

Now in those days, salt was used as a preservative. They did not have refrigeration, so that when they butchered meat they would salt the meat heavily because salt would kill the surface bacteria of the meat and would prevent it from rotting. Used as a preservative. Used also as a seasoning, as we use it today, but used as a preservative to prevent the spoilage of the meat, the rotting of the meat when they butchered it. And even to the present day, there’s salt pork and so forth, and the purpose of it is just to kill the surface bacteria to prevent the rotting of the meat.

Now Jesus when He said, “Ye are the salt of the earth” was probably referring to this preserving quality of salt, that retarding of the rottenness or putrefying of the meat. And you are to have that kind of an

influence in the world. The world is a rotten place. But the church, the Christian in the world, should have a preserving influence, a preventing of that rottenness. And thus when Jesus said,

if the salt has lost its savour, [its saltiness, its effectiveness] wherewith shall it be salted? it is really good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. (5:13)

They would take the salt that had already been used or lost its effectiveness and they would throw it in the pathways, because salt would kill the vegetation. And thus it was common to salt the pathways killing the vegetation. And thus, it is trodden under the foot of men. In this, Jesus is really saying, in effect, that either be a purifying effect or you're going to find yourself crushed by a rotten world. When the church of Jesus Christ no longer has that influence of righteousness and goodness, preventing the putrefying effect, then the church will end up being trodden under the foot of this fallen earth.

Samson was the saving salt for the nation of Israel against the Philistines as long as he kept his commitment to God. But when he broke that commitment, he was trodden under the foot of the fallen Philistines. You're the salt of the earth. Salt is supposed to be salty. It's supposed to have an influence to prevent rottenness. And as I look at our society, and as I look at the world in which we live today, I must conclude as we see the creeping rottenness in our nation, that somehow the salt has lost its savour. The church has not and is not now a purifying influence or an influence that prevents the rottenness; and gradually, the church will be trodden under the foot of man, fallen society.

We have already been targeted, you as a fundamental believer in Jesus Christ, are targeted by the world as one of the major problems that is preventing the new world order. You're on the target list. And gradually, there's going to be more and more legislation that is directed against fundamental Christian faith. In these gay rights amendments and gay right legislation, ultimately they are going to come and they are going to require that we in the church not speak against the gay lifestyle. This is their purpose and goal, they've announced it, to make it illegal because it is a hate crime and we are fostering hate towards this minority group when we speak against it.

"You are the salt of the earth." And then He said,

You are the light of the world. (5:14)

One other thing I should say about salt is that it does make one thirsty. And your life should be creating a thirst in others for Jesus Christ. You're really doing your job, you'll create a thirst in the hearts of others. "You are the light of the world," can you imagine, here are these disciples there in this little portion of Palestine and Jesus is looking at them there on the hillside, and He's saying, "You are the light of the world." The world doesn't even know we exist.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. (5:15)

You can't really hide effectively your relationship with God. Nor are you to hide or try to hide it.

For men don't light a candle and then put it under a bushel, but they put it on a candlestick that it might give light. (5:15)

The purpose of light is to give light. And thus, as the light of the world, the purpose of your life is to bring light, to give light in this darkened world in which we live. And then He said,

Let your light so shine before men (5:16),

You can't hide it, a city on a hill can't be hid, it's supposed to shine, you don't put it under a bushel. But "Let your light so shine..."

that when men see your good works (5:16),

And that's where your light shines is in your good works; they don't glorify you, they don't say how wonderful you are, how great you are, how marvelous you are,

but they glorify your Father which is in heaven. (5:16)

Now you can let your light so shine in such a way as you attract a lot of attention to yourself. A lot of glory, a lot of plaudit, but that's not the right way. Let your light so shine that when men see your good works... The interesting thing to me in the life of Jesus, we read so many times, as He would work His miracles, the people would go away glorifying God that we've been able to see such things. That's the way your light is to shine. When people see the works, they go away and they glorify God. They say, "Oh, isn't God wonderful?"

Now to keep the issues straight concerning the relationship to the law, Jesus said,

Don't think that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (5:17)

There are a lot of people today who speak disparagingly concerning the law. And you hear them say, "We're no longer under law, we are under grace." And they look at the law in a negative way. But "The law," we read, "of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." (Psalm 19:7) There's nothing wrong with the law of God, the law is holy, it is righteous, it is good. The only problem with the law is that we can't keep it. But you can't fault the law, you got to fault us and our inability to keep the law. The law is good for the purposes for which God intended the law. And the law was never intended by God to make you righteous. The law was intended by God to show you what is righteous and to make you realize that you're a sinner. It is by the law that we have the knowledge of sin.

Paul said, "I didn't know that to covet was a sin, except the law said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' " And so by the law comes the knowledge of sin, and the law cannot save you, the law cannot make you righteous; all the law can do is condemn you. And it's very good at that. And when you look at your life by the standards that God has set, you realize then that I'm a sinner. Realizing that I'm a sinner, then I'm going to seek God for some help. But if I don't realize I'm a sinner, then I'm never going to seek God.

And so the law was intended by God to be a schoolmaster, to teach you the way that God would have you to live and to help you to see how far short you come so that it would drive you to Jesus Christ. And a proper understanding of the law always brings me to the cross. It drives me to Jesus Christ for that righteousness that can only come by Him, through faith in Him, by His grace and by His mercy unto me. So Jesus said, "I didn't come to destroy the law."

John said, "The law came by Moses and grace and truth by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) But the grace and truth does not negate the law. There was the moral law, there was the judicial law, and there was the ceremonial law. The moral law was the ten commandments. Man's relationship with God, and man's relationship with fellow man. The judicial law was the judgments that were to be made in the various cases that would come before the judges, this is how they are to judge. This is the judgment, this is the penalty for this particular crime. And it was the judicial law that meted out the penalties and the punishments for the various crimes. Ceremonial law was how you were to offer the sacrifices to God, the burnt offerings, the sin offerings, the trespass offerings, and it dealt with the ceremonial ways by which the sacrifices were to be offered unto God to restore man into fellowship with God, the peace offerings and all, and the idea was always to bring alienated man into fellowship with God once again. Ceremonial laws.

And so when Jesus said, "I didn't come to destroy the law," it's the inclusion, it's really the Torah, the books that dealt with the moral, judicial and ceremonial law. "I didn't come to destroy that, but I came to fulfill it." (Matthew 5:17) And as far as the ceremonial law, we find that Jesus was the fulfillment of that ceremonial law. He became the sin offering for us. And He fulfilled it. And that is why we no longer take lambs to a priest and put our hands on them, confess our guilt and transfer it on to the lamb and let the priest kill it, and take the blood in, because Jesus fulfilled it. "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29) And where the priest used to have to offer daily, Jesus once and for all offered Himself for our sins in fulfillment of the law. But Jesus said,

I tell you truly, until the heavens and the earth pass, not one jot [the little marks] or tittle [tell you which vowels] will pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least commandments, and shall teach men so, 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 heaven. (5:18-19)

Now again looking at the moral law of God, I find no fault in the moral law of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind," (Deuteronomy 6:5) you find that idiotic? Have a problem with that? Loving God? I find that very commendable. I want to love God completely.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." (Exodus 20:3) You have a problem with that? Probably. We all of us have those things that are attractive to us, things that we desire, possessions or other things that have a way of crowding in. But yet in my heart, I want nothing to stand in the way of my fellowship with God.

“Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.” (Exodus 20:7) I have no problem with this.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8) I have no problem with that. The law is good.

“Thou shall not steal,” I believe that. It’s wrong. “Thou shall not kill.” I believe that, you’re not to murder people. “Thou shall not commit adultery,” I believe that. (Exodus 20:13-15)

You see, there is nothing really wrong with the law. I don’t know why people... *whoa, the law*, and they speak it in such a disparagingly way. I don’t understand that because the law is really good. And grace is no excuse for not keeping the law.

Peter warns about using the grace of God as a cloak to cover your lasciviousness. You say, “Well, I’m under grace... so I can do it, it doesn’t matter, I’m under grace, brother.” But you are misusing, you’re wresting the scripture to your own destruction because you’re using grace as a cloak for your righteousness. Grace doesn’t excuse us from the law. It’s not a pass. It’s not an indulgence, *Here’s my indulgence grace card*.

And then Jesus gave the shocker, talking about the law you immediately think about the Pharisees because these guys spent their whole lives trying to keep the law. And Jesus said,

Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (5:20)

Now in another place, Jesus said that the publicans who were pronounced sinners, avowed sinners, and the prostitutes would go into the kingdom of heaven before the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus didn’t have much use for the scribes and the Pharisees. And “Except your righteousness...” What’s wrong with their righteousness? It was all outward, it was all a show. Their attitudes were rotten, they were filthy inside but the outward was all polished and clean. It was just an outward righteousness but it wasn’t something in their heart, it wasn’t something of their heart and life. It was a show.

Now Jesus is going to give us six things where He’s going to compare the teaching of the law as was taught by the scribes and the Pharisees, and He’s going to compare it with what God intended when He gave the law. So the contrast is between the way they have been taught what the law said, and the true intent of the law when it was given by God. Six contrasts.

In those days, the common people did not have the scriptures. The scriptures were written in Hebrew. The Septuagint was used and there were those that could read the Septuagint, but there weren’t that many copies. And thus the law was really something that only the scribes and the Pharisees could read because only they could read Hebrew. And the scribes were the ones who were copying the scriptures. And the Pharisees were studying the scriptures, the Hebrew scriptures. And thus, it was up to them to teach the people what the law says. And they were teaching the law to the people. So that’s why Jesus said, “You have heard that it has been said...” This is what they’re telling you the law says. You didn’t read it for yourselves, you can’t. But this is what they are telling you the law says. And in contrast to what they are telling you what the law says, this is what I said when I gave the law. This is what I was talking about. This is what the intent of the law was.

You have heard that it was said by those of old time, Thou shalt not kill [or murder]; and whosoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment: (5:21)

If you murder someone, you are going to be in danger of the judgment of God.

But I say unto you,

In contrast, this is what you’ve been taught now. Doesn’t the law teach that? Yes, the law says “Thou shall not murder.” But Jesus said, “I say unto you,”

That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:

It is anger towards a person that leads to murder. When you’re angry and upset and you feel like I like to hit them, it’s already there in your heart.

...whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,

Now that was a word that was a disdainful word, “You feign, worthless person.” And it’s that attitude of just looking upon another person and not regarding their rights. To say, “Raca,”

will be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, [Look with total disdain and say,

“He’s worthless, he’s a fool.”] *He will be in danger of hell fire. (5:22)*

So it isn’t just clubbing someone to death. It’s having anger, it’s having an attitude of disdain towards a person, not respecting them at all. He’s a fool, and those are the seedbeds of murder. Those are the attitudes from which murders spring, not having a high regard for life, or in other person’s life. These are the things from which murder springs and so Jesus said, if you have these attitudes, you’re guilty of violating the law.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and you remember that there’s an unresolved issue between you and your brother; [Here is when the closest distance between two points is not a straight line,] Go first and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. [Make things right with your fellowman. And then you can make things right with God.] Agree with thine adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time your adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge delivers you to the officer, and you are cast into prison. I tell you the truth, you’re not going to get out of there until you’ve paid the uttermost farthing. (5:23–26)

Make peace, seek to make peace. Don’t hold issues in abeyance against others. Settle them.

Now you have heard [second issue], that it hath been said of those of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: (5:27)

Isn’t that what the law says? Oh yes, it definitely does.

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (5:28)

You can be guilty of committing adultery without ever having a physical contact with another person. It can be something that is going on in your heart. Sin begins in the heart. The outward action is only the fruition of that which is in the heart. “Let no man say when he is tempted, he’s tempted of God: God doesn’t tempt man with evil. But a man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.” (James 1:13,14) There’s where it begins, it’s in your heart, it’s in your mind to do these things. And when it’s in your heart and in your mind and you’re playing with it, you cuddle it, you entertain it, you begin to fantasize; it’s only a matter of time until it will be fulfilled outwardly. You’ve already taken the step within your heart.

Now these issues are so vital that Jesus suggests very severe measures and He doesn’t intend that they be taken literally but it’s just to give force to what He is saying. It’s for shock value. It’s to help you realize just how important it is that you keep your heart and mind pure because you can be destroyed eternally and your eternal salvation is far more important than any momentary pleasure on this earth. Therefore,

If your right eye offends thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (5:29)

We are repulsed by the idea, and as I said, Jesus didn’t mean that literally because you could still be looking through your left eye. But He’s just seeking to emphasize how important it is that we not open the gate through the eye to lustful, arousing passions. Be careful what you see.

If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, cast it from thee: it’s profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (5:30)

And again, it’s just a shocking thing but Jesus is emphasizing you don’t want to be cast into hell. And it would be better to be mutilated than to be cast into hell. But again, you still have your left hand. So it’s not a literal kind of a thing, He’s just giving strong, strong contrasts.

Now you’ve heard that it hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: (5:31)

Sticky issue. Under the law, God declared that if a man found uncleanness in his wife, he could give her a writing of divorcement. And divorce for the man was very easy. All he had to do is write it on a piece of paper, “I divorce you” and hand it to her. With the Bedouins it’s even easier yet. He doesn’t have to write it, he can just say “I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you.” Three times, it’s final, out of the tent. Women don’t really have any rights in that society. That’s why the dowry before marriage, that was alimony in advance. They kick you out, you can go home to daddy and he has kept the dowry and he can take care of you.

And so if you find an uncleanness... but you see, it didn’t define the uncleanness, and so they began to define what uncleanness meant. And there were two basic schools; one that said, moral uncleanness. When

you marry her, you discover that she wasn't a virgin, then you could divorce her. And that was one school of thought. The other was, uncleanness is she doesn't fix you breakfast like you like. She doesn't bake the bread like you like it. Or any little trivial thing. You can say, "Oh, I'm just tired of you." I find in you an uncleanness and he'd write her. The main thing, write her that bill of divorcement. You had to do that. Write the bill of divorcement. They were very exacting on that.

Now Jesus said,

I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, [He does make that exception,] He causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery. (5:32)

When we get further on in Matthew, Jesus will amplify the teaching on divorce and we will, at that point, amplify it and we will have a lesson on Jesus and divorce. The time constraints tonight do not allow us to go into the subject more fully, but we will in a few weeks.

Again, you have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: (5:33)

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his 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 communication be, Yea, yea; and Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (5:34-37)

What Jesus is basically saying is you shouldn't have to take an oath to affirm what you're saying is true. It is only because you probably are not a person of your word that people want you to take an oath. Now taking oaths, swearing by God, I'll do it or whatever, was a common thing, or I swear by the gold in the temple or I swear by Jerusalem or I swear by heaven, I swear by my boy scouts' honor, or by my grandmother, or whatever, and they would take oaths, my mother's honor I will do it... they were great for that kind of stuff. But the only reason why a person would feel it necessary to say "I swear by the Bible" is that he really isn't a person of his word. And Jesus said, be a person of your word, don't have to take oaths, don't confirm what you say, just when you say yes, mean yes; when you say no, mean no. Be a person of your word.

Now you have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (5:38)

And under the judicial law, that's the way it was. You break someone's arm deliberately, your arm would be broken. You knock out somebody's eye deliberately, your eye would be knocked out. Knock out a tooth, they would knock out your tooth. That was the judicial law. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. You've heard that that's what it has been said, and they were teaching that that was an obligation. You had to do it. Someone knock out your tooth, you had to knock out their tooth. Someone break your arm, you had to break their arm.

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man sues thee at the law, and takes away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him that asks thee, and from him that would borrow, turn not away. (5:39-42)

These scriptures cause a lot of confusion because they are easy to misinterpret so as to make them ridiculous and impractical. And Jesus never said anything ridiculous or impractical and thus, if my interpretation is ridiculous and impractical, I have the wrong interpretation. If I am sued at law for my coat, and I give him my cloak also, or if I give to everyone who asks me for money, I won't have anything. If I loan out everything that I have, I'll have nothing left.

Now that's ridiculous and Jesus didn't say anything ridiculous. But what He is seeking to point out here is my attitude towards my possessions. And so many people are very possessive, they are bound by their possessions. They can't let go of anything. And if they lose something to someone, it so upsets them, it so eats away that it destroys them. Paul the apostle said, "Let your every contact with the world be as light as possible." Don't be so entangled in material things that it destroys you when you lose something.

This business, "Whoever will compel you to go a mile, go two." Israel was under the Roman rule. And a Roman soldier who was walking down the road carrying his duffel bag could order you under Roman law to

carry his bag for a mile. Put a sword on your shoulder and say, "Pick it up and carry it." And you under law had to carry it a mile. That's all the farther you had to carry it. You didn't have to carry it more than a mile but under law, you were forced to carry it a mile. Jesus said if they are compelling you to go a mile, go two. Go the extra mile.

In the extra mile, you'll have the opportunity of witnessing. He'll wonder what in the world are you doing going the extra mile, how come? How often in reaching out to help someone does it open a glorious opportunity to witness. I find this is true in the highway. See someone in distress, stop to help them. That's so unusual, they'll want to know why in the world you stopped. That gives you a chance to witness about your love for Jesus Christ, and your concern for others and your love for others because of your love for Him. Whoever is in trouble, he is your brother, he is the one that you are to reach out and help.

And so my attitude towards my things, my possessions, that's mine, and how early that develops. Little tiny kids, one of the first words they learn, "Mine!" Watch them. It's so a part of the human nature, possessiveness. The Lord says be free of what you have, don't cling to them.

You've heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. (5:43)

Where does it say that? Well, it really doesn't but you've heard that that's what it says. There is in Deuteronomy 23:3, instructions concerning the Moabites, "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation they shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever." So they're your enemies, the Moabites, and you're to hate them. But that isn't what it says. It just said, they are not to enter into the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation. But this is what they were being taught. Love your neighbor, that is, another Jew; but hate every non-Jew. And they were being taught really to hate the Gentiles, the non-Jews. You're to love the Jews, you're to hate the non-Jews. But Jesus said,

I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: [For He loves those that hate Him, He is good to those who spitefully use Him. And thus, when you do that, you are as your Father which is in heaven,] Who makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. [God loves the sinner. And we're to love, love our enemies.] Because if you just love those that love you, that doesn't really prove anything. The publicans do that. If you only greet your brothers, then what do you do more than others? Even the publicans do that. (5:44-47)

You're not proving a thing.

Now at this point, as we are reading Jesus' interpretation of the law, we realize that He is bringing out the spiritual aspects, it's dealing with the inner man, the things of my spirit. And suddenly I realize that I can't do these. It isn't in me to love my enemies. I have failed. I have violated the law.

And this is basically what Paul the apostle said. That he thought he was a great lawkeeper. He was a Pharisee, as far as the righteousness concerning the law, I was blameless. But he said when he came to the realization that the law was spiritual, he said, "I died, it killed me. I was condemned, I thought I was righteous by the law but when I realized the truth of the law that it was spiritual and I'm carnal, I have been keeping it physically but I have violated it spiritually and I came to the understanding, this is something spiritual and I realize I failed, I've fallen short."

And that's exactly what God intends the law to do. To make you realize your failure, you've fallen short, so that you will be forced to seek God and His forgiveness and His mercy and His righteousness that He imputes to you through your faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, if it hasn't done it thus far, then the next verse should clinch it.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. (5:48)

Now you want to say you don't need any help? I'd like to meet you. In fact, I would find it quite interesting to put you through some tests. I would like to see how a perfect person responds and reacts to certain adversities. No, we all need help. We all need the grace of God. We all need the mercy of God. We all need the forgiveness of God. We all need the Spirit of God and the strength of God and the help of God to be what God wants us to be. So shall you be the children of God. So shall you inherit the kingdom of heaven. I need God's help. I need God's strength. I need God's Spirit.

Let us pray:

Father, we thank You for the challenge. And Lord, we recognize our own failure, our own weakness, the sinfulness of our lives. Lord, wash us and make us clean. Cleanse us, Lord, with your cleansing and Lord, strengthen us and help us. Be merciful to us, Lord, we have failed to live up to Your standards. We've fallen short of what You want us to be. We openly acknowledge and confess our sins, and we ask You Father, be merciful, forgive, for Jesus' sake. Amen.