

Matthew 5 • The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1)

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Chapter 5, verse 1. *“Seeing the crowds, he (and that's of course, Jesus) went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.” (ESV)*

And the reason that it says here, or I guess I should say, it says here that He sat down as He went up on the mountain, and for that reason we call this and what comes and follows in this chapter, chapter 6, and chapter 7, is the Sermon on the Mount.

And this is not the kind of a sermon that you would normally hear when you pop into a church. Usually a sermon that someone preaches is thematic. It usually has a theme that is, there's usually like one theme that goes with it. This is like, I don't know, a hundred, I mean, it's just incredible. Through these 3 chapters.

Jesus covers a ton of material. I can imagine somebody coming up to Him afterwards and saying, how would you like to title that Lord? I don't know, pick one because there's just a lot of things we go through in these chapters.

But one thing that I do want to say as we get started here with the Sermon on the Mount, this sermon is for believers. There's really nothing terribly evangelistic about this sermon. This sermon is for believers.

And one of the ways we know that is because the standard of morality and the things that Jesus says in this sermon, cannot be done without someone who is indwelt by, and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

In other words, Jesus is going to talk about morality that just is virtually impossible for anyone to keep, or to accomplish, apart from the Holy Spirit. You got to have the Holy Spirit to do this. And you'll see that as we go through these chapters and here today, chapter 5.

It begins famously with the Beatitudes and that begins in verse 2. *“And (it says) he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:*

³ *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

⁵ *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

⁶ *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

⁷ *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

⁸ *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

⁹ *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

¹⁰ *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

These are, the Beatitudes. The reason we call them, the Beatitudes is because of the very first word that appears in all of the verses, *“Blessed.”* And frankly, even though this is written in Greek if you take the Latin version of the word, Blessed, you get Beatus, which is where we get the word, Beatitudes.

And these are pronouncements of blessing that the Lord is giving, but they are far more than that. Because what we see here in the Beatitudes is a sequential development of the life of the believer from their very first understanding that they are a sinner and hopeless and in need of salvation, to the point where they are eventually persecuted for their faith.

I want you to think of the Beatitudes like stair steps that you step onto, and these describe our Christian life.

And you'll notice that it begins in verse 3 by saying, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of (God) ...”* And this is where we all have to start off. We have to begin understanding that we are poor in spirit, but the word that is translated, poor here in the Greek doesn't mean dirt poor.

If you're dirt poor, you're not sure where you're going to get enough money to pay your bills. That's not what this word means. This word means, destitute. And that means you've got nothing. And you've got your hand out. And if somebody doesn't put something in your hand, you will not eat that day. That's what this word means.

Jesus pronounces a blessed condition upon those who are destitute of what? He says, “*poor in spirit.*” And that word, “*in spirit*” means, simply of who you are, yourself. Think about that. This is the beginning. This is where we all have to begin in our journey to come to Christ.

Blessed are those who are destitute of themselves. Why? Because “*theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” What that essentially means is that you have come to a place of understanding that you got nothing. You are hopeless apart from God. And there's no way that you can be saved on your own. There's no way.

You know that you're a sinner. You know that sin has not only conquered you, but it has defeated you in every way so that you can't get up and do anything about it. There's nothing you can do. You destitute of yourself. Paul describes this in his letter to the Ephesians up on the screen from chapter 2. He says,

Ephesians 2:12 (ESV)

...remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

...remember that you were at that time (and he's talking about before they came to Christ, you were) separated from Christ, (you were) alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and (you were) strangers to the covenants of promise, (and you) ... (had) no hope... (because you had not) God (you didn't have anything, you had no hope, you didn't have God, you had nothing) in... (this) world.

And that is the condition that we all have to grapple with at some point in our lives. And, I got to tell you something. I love it when somebody comes down front, or starts talking to me, or whatever about after a service, about their life, and I can tell they're not a believer yet.

But if they say to me something like, I just, I know that I'm a sinner and I'm separated from God. I'm like, oh, praise the Lord. We're just a couple of steps away here from coming to the Lord.

But if somebody, we start talking about sin and somebody says, well, I'm not that bad of a person. I don't think I'm any worse than anybody else, or something like that. I say, okay, we got some work to do. Or the Holy Spirit's got some work to do on this person's heart, because they're not there yet. They have not come to the place of being poor in spirit.

You see, if you never recognize that you're poor in spirit, you're never going to get down the road and you're never going to accept Jesus as your Savior because you don't think you need one.

We come to Christ because we need Him and it begins with understanding and recognizing our need. Well, then what happens? Verse 4, we move on in that progression. It says, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" And this is the next step on our journey.

And it's a response to the first step because having come to the realization of our depravity, our hopeless condition, we then begin to sorrow over the, all the wasted, ridiculously stupid, foolish things we've done in this life. We know that we were just living because we thought this was all there was. And we were going for all of the pleasure and all the things that this world has to offer. And all we did was we just, we ruined things.

We ruined our life. We ruined relationships. We, we made so many mistakes along the way and our sin begins to weigh upon us to the point where we begin to sorrow over all of those lost opportunities and so forth. Paul writes about this to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 7. And he says,

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV84)

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret...

Godly sorrow brings repentance (a turning around, and that eventually is going) *... leads to salvation* (he says) *and* (ultimately it) *leaves no regret...*

But what's interesting here is notice on this passage, Paul says, it "*leads to salvation.*" We're not there yet on our journey. We've recognized our sinful condition, and we've begun to sorrow over all of those wasted times, and so forth, but we're still moving in the direction. We haven't yet found the answer.

Can you guys relate to this? Does it sound familiar? Well, next comes verse number 5, "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*" And some of us may not really understand what meekness truly is.

But meekness is a work of the Spirit in the life of even an individual who has not yet come to the Lord, to help them to see themselves as they truly are. That's what meekness is. To be meek. It doesn't mean you sit around and cower in the face of danger or something like that. No. No.

Meekness is simply a proper understanding of who you are. You don't think of yourself more highly than you ought. You don't think of yourself more lowly as you ought. You really stop thinking about yourself, period. And it is a proper understanding of who you are. And it creates an appreciation in my heart for all that God has given me. And I realized I don't deserve anything.

Meekness is that understanding that I don't deserve anything good. And I'm literally ripe to receive Jesus now because I've seen my sin. I've mourned over it, and it has given me the perspective of myself that I so desperately needed.

And now, verse 6, is the next step in that progression that says, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, (and Jesus says there's a promise that goes with that) for they shall be satisfied.*”

What is a hunger for righteousness? Well, what is righteousness? In this sense, it is a right relationship with God. This person now begins to ask, you begin to ask, how can I be right with God? I know that I'm a sinner. I know that I'm hopeless to do anything about my sin. And I see myself now finally, as I truly am. But how can a person like me be right with God?

And now this person is at that place where they are ready to receive the hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ, but they had to get hopeless to do it. They had to get personally hopeless in order to do it.

And then they begin to read through the Scriptures and they begin to learn that the only way we can have a right relationship with God is by accepting what Jesus Christ, His Son, did on the cross for us. And that's what Paul writes about. First in Romans chapter 3, we'll revisit this passage again later. But he says,

Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested (notice how it has been manifest) apart from the law, (that means apart from keeping of rules, he says,) although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of

God (how does it come to us? It comes) *through faith in Jesus Christ for all who* (work really hard to be a good person. It's not what it says, does it? It says, *for all who*) *believe*.

Right? Suddenly I'm learning that to be right with God, I simply have to put my faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Paul talks about this in 2 Corinthians. We've been reading this verse a lot lately.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is that overwhelming hunger that a person has now to know, how can I be righteous before God? How can I be in right relationship with God? It's through Jesus and what He did on the cross, and I embrace that. And this is that place where that they get saved. This is the place of salvation. This is the place where they recognize it all happens through Jesus by embracing what He did for me on the cross. I'm now a believer. You're now a believer here. This is where we are on the steps, right?

You're now are a born again Christian because you've accepted the fact that there is no righteousness outside of Jesus Christ and your faith in Him.

Now we move on verse 7, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*" And because we have been, and we understand that we are the recipients of God's mercy, we now begin to express that mercy to others. And that's probably one of the most beautiful things about a brand new believer.

Mercy is different from grace and I hope you guys know the definition. Mercy is deserving punishment, but not getting it. In other words, you didn't get what you did deserve. We, all of us, deserved the hottest spot in hell, but we didn't get it. We got mercy because Jesus took our punishment on Himself. Right? And He gave us His mercy. When we begin to recognize that, I begin to become just overwhelmed with the reality of that realization.

And as a believer, I start seeing other people differently as well. I see other people just as lost as I was, and in need of that mercy. And I begin to show that mercy to others, because you see, I recognize, that He poured out His mercy

when I didn't deserve any, I deserved punishment. And so you see, I begin to do that for others. *"Blessed are the merciful,..."* we begin to actually show that.

Verse 8 moves on in our walk with the Lord saying, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* And this is the cry of the believer as they begin to recognize after a period, there's that honeymoon period. If you guys remember that after you got saved?

You had that honeymoon period where you're floating on a cloud and then you messed up like majorly. I mean, you had a total flesh out of some area of sin in your life. And you're like, oh Lord, I know that You saved me. I know that I'm a child of God, but I still got this heart. I still got this heart in me that can go wayward. It can just go absolutely the opposite direction of You. And you begin to cry out for God to redo your heart, to remake your heart, to transform your heart.

You say, Lord, I want to be pure like You. I want to live like You. And the cry of the heart of the believer, is transformation. Lord, search me and know me and see if there be any wicked way in me, as the cry of David was in the Psalms. (Psalm 139:23-24)

And then we move on to verse 9 in the Beatitudes. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."* And this is where we begin to share our faith with other people.

We know that we have now received peace with God through Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. And we want to start sharing that with other people. So we go to them and we say, let me tell you what Jesus did for me. It is awesome. And we begin to become literally peacemakers as we go out and share the Gospel.

Problem is, not everybody wants to hear what we have to say. Imagine that. And so we begin to incur the wrath of various individuals, which is basically what is expressed in verses 10 through 12.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

As the apostle Paul said, anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, right? (2 Timothy 3:12)

So you have these Beatitudes. This is our growth. From recognizing that we're sinners all the way to the point of being persecuted because we're just sharing the life of Christ with other people. We'll put all the steps on the screen up for you. Again, there they are.

- Recognizing the hopelessness of my sinful condition.
- Enduring godly sorrow over our sin and consequences
- Seeing who I am now in Christ
- Hungering for a righteous standing with God
- Showing mercy towards others
- Desiring purity of heart
- Helping others to make peace with God
- Sharing in the sufferings of Jesus

Recognizing our hopeless and sinful condition. Enduring a time of godly sorrow over our sin and its consequences. Seeing who I am now in Christ. Recognizing and seeing myself properly. Hungering for a righteous standing with God.

Beginning to show mercy toward others, because I am a recipient of mercy. Desiring the purity of a heart after God. Helping others to make peace with God as I share my faith and try to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus. But also incurring the wrath of others and sharing in that way in the sufferings of Jesus.

You see the Christian life all in this one scope, right. From beginning to present day and so forth.

Well, Jesus goes on to talk about the Christian life by saying to you and me in verse 13, "*You are the salt of the earth...*" You guys know what salt does, right? We just use salt today to make our soup taste better or something like that.

But salt in the days of the Bible was used to retard the growth of bacteria and to keep meat from spoiling. It literally hindered the decomposition of biological matter. How's that for a scientific statement for somebody who flunked science? You understand what I'm saying? That's what salt was used for.

Jesus says to you and me, "*You are the salt of the earth.*" What does that mean? We're here in the world to slow down the decomposition of what's happening all

around us. The decay that comes naturally from sin, right? That's what sin does. It brings the decay of societies. We've seen it. We recognize it.

But Jesus says here that along with the gift of being the salt of the earth, there's a warning that goes along with it. He says, what if salt loses its saltiness? What if it loses its ability to even be salty? He says, how's that going to *"be restored?"* He says, *"It is no longer good for anything except to be ... (just) trampled"* underfoot. Right? You throw it in the ground, you just walk on it because it's not good for anything anymore.

What's the message to you and me? Don't let your saltiness go away. Don't allow that ability that God has gifted you with, to bring a cessation of the decay of society, to be frittered away by us compromising with the world. And that's by the way, how it happens. If we compromise and we stop being different from the world, the salt loses its saltiness.

It's the same thing with the gift of being light. Look at verse 14 in your Bible. *"You are the light of the world. (Jesus says, He says, the) ...city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, ... (that'd be stupid. He's no, they put it) on a stand, ... (so) it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

Right? So what's the purpose of turning the light on? To illuminate the room. Nobody turns on a lamp and then throws a blanket over it. That'd be dumb.

In the same way, as Christians, we can actually extinguish the light that we've been given through the Holy Spirit by compromising our faith, living like the world, and just refusing to share the hope that we have with others.

I love how Jesus not only announces the gifts that you and I have been given. The gift of being salt, the gift of being light, but He also shares with us the responsibility of having those gifts. And maintaining the efficacy, and power, and ability, that those gifts have to make a difference on society. And boy, isn't that a message two days before the end of the election, right? All right.

Now versus 17 and following, Jesus is going to talk about the relationship of Himself to the Law of Moses. This is important for us to hear. Verse 17.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; (and that speaks really of the whole Old Testament) I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

You might want to consider underlining those words in your Bible, highlighting them, tattoo them on your forehead. I mean, those are such important words to understand. Jesus came to fulfill the law.

He says, *“¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Jesus is telling you and me that He personally came to fulfill the law. He says, I didn't come to abolish it. And this is what's beautiful about our Christian faith. Christianity didn't start when Jesus came. This is a continuation of what God has always been doing.

God gave the law to the nation of Israel, but Jesus came to fulfill it. To fulfill the law. And so all of what you read in the Old Testament and particularly things like, the sacrificial system.

We've been dealing with that on Wednesday nights, as we're going through the Book of Leviticus and all of the complex sacrifices that went on under the Old Covenant. Jesus says, He's the fulfillment of it. Jesus is the final sacrifice. He is the lamb of God that was sacrificed for you and me.

Why don't we anymore? The final sacrifice has taken place. It's done. It's finished. And that's, you remember, that's what we're talking about. It is finished, paid in full. Jesus did it. He fulfilled it. Right?

You remember when Jesus was, He appeared to those two disciples on resurrection day, who were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus? And He suddenly appeared to them, and they didn't recognize Him because they were kept from recognizing Him. And He started talking to them. You guys look all crestfallen. What's going on? They're like, well, you've been living under a rock? Don't you know what happened here in Jerusalem over the last few days? No, tell me.

So they start telling Him all about His own ministry, life, death, burial, and stuff like that. And they're saying, and the crazy thing is some of the women who were hanging with us, they said that they went to the tomb this morning and it was empty. And now we don't even know what to think. Jesus begins to speak to them. You remember what He said? It's recorded for us in Luke 24 up on the screen.

Luke 24:25-27 (ESV)

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (and look at this, look at this) And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures (meaning the Old Testament) the things concerning himself.

In other words, Jesus had a little Bible study with these two guys as they're walking down the road, and what is He telling them? He's showing them all the areas where the Messiah fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, types, and shadows. Right?

He says, don't you realize this? And how foolish you guys are, how slow you are to get it. I, the Messiah fulfilled all these things. And this is essentially, here's the point of all this. Because Jesus fulfilled the law, right? What is left to keep in the law in order for us to be right with God?

Well, nothing because we have a different relationship now to the law. We keep the law by faith in Jesus Christ. You with me? So it doesn't matter what the law says. Whatever it said, whatever commands it gives. And Sabbath, food laws, feast, celebration, whatever. They are all fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and so we keep them. In other words, uphold them by faith. This is a very difficult concept for some Christians to lay hold of, but I want to show you how Paul confirms this in Romans chapter 3 up on the screen. He says, he asked the question,

Romans 3:31 (ESV)

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith (that we're talking about)? (he says, no,) By no means! On the contrary, (look at this) we uphold the law.

How do we uphold the law? By faith, by putting our faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross, we uphold the law. So if somebody comes up to

you, and that's the reason I'm sharing this with you. Is somebody will, if they haven't already come up to you and they'll tell you that in order for you to be truly right with God, you got to go to church on a special day. You got to wear special clothes. You got to eat only special food. You got to do this. You got to do it. And they're going to lay out all these rules that are basically echoed from the Old Covenant.

And I want you to be able to know. And be able to respond to them and say, my Bible says in Romans chapter 3, that I uphold the law by faith because my faith is in Jesus Christ who fulfilled the law. And that is the response to the legalist who wants to try to get you to conform to his rules so he feels better about you. Big deal. Anyway, we move on.

And then Jesus says something here that must have blown their minds. Verse 20. *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Now I can imagine some people hearing Jesus saying this and just going, that's it, I'm going home. I'm out because you see the way that the Jews thought of the scribes and the Pharisees was, these are the righteous of God. These are the people who, I mean, they got it down. They got every, they keep every rule, every law. I mean, these guys are nit pickers from the word go. They do everything just right.

And Jesus comes along and says, you see the righteousness that is portrayed in the scribes and Pharisees. Yeah, yours has to be better. What do you mean, Lord? How is it even possible that I could exceed what these people do? Right? They didn't get it. I'm sure they didn't get it. And that's why we go back to this passage we've already read, but we're going to look at it again from Romans chapter 3. This is so important guys. He says,

Romans 3:20-22 (ESV)

...by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

...by works of the law (which is what the scribes and Pharisees did) *no human being will be justified in his sight*, (that's God's sight okay) *since through the law* (we just become aware) *... of (our) sin*. (he says, what comes from the law? We just gain a knowledge of just how wretched we really are, so he goes on and

says this) *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law* (we already read this, although the Law) *and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through* (how does it come to us? By) *faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*

See that's the point of this whole thing. You don't get righteous before God by being a good person or by keeping rules. You do it by putting your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. That is how your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Because you see, their righteousness was based on law keeping. Yours is imputed to you by Jesus.

Do you guys understand that when the Father looks at you, He says, that one's Mine. You know how I know? Because that one has the righteousness of My Son. It's not your righteousness that God sees. He doesn't look at you and go, whoa, I'm impressed. In fact, quite the opposite.

God's not impressed with us. But when He sees you and me, He sees the righteousness of His Son, which has been imputed to us. And can I tell you something about that righteousness? It exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, because it's the very righteousness of God Himself.

See, that's the cool thing about Christians. We are accused all the time of being self-righteous. Self-righteousness doesn't even come into the equation. We are not self-righteous. We are self-condemned, but we are righteous before God, but it's not ours. It's His. I'm just borrowing His, right? He gave it to me because I put my faith in Him. So you see, it's not my righteousness.

It is impossible for a true Christian to be self-righteous. It is impossible because we've gone through the steps of the Beatitudes. We've understood that we are destitute of self. And we know now there is no such thing as self-righteousness. It's a fallacy. It's fake. It doesn't exist. The only righteousness that we can have is His righteousness, right? Given to us by faith.

Verse 21. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old,..."* I'm going to have you stop right there. The reason is because where we are now in the Sermon on the Mount and we're going to take these last sections together.

Jesus starts every section with that very phrase, *"You have heard that it was said."* In other words, He's saying, here's what you guys all know about these various topics, but I'm going to tell you what's really true. And here's where the Son of God begins to speak with His unique authority to say, here's what you've been taught, but you haven't been told the whole thing. Let Me give you the

whole truth. And He's going to cover a lot of different topics that are pretty hot button topics today. Let me put them up on the screen before we even get to them. He's going to talk about,

- Murder
- Lust/adultery
- Divorce
- Swearing oaths
- Responding to evil
- Responding to enemies

Murder. Lust/adultery. Divorce. The swearing of oaths, which is really all about essentially speaking truth. He's going to talk about how we respond to evil and how we respond then to our enemies.

You can see, these are, pretty fluff topics, right? No, these are big deals. Alright, first, murder. ²¹ *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’”*

And what is murder? It's the indiscriminate taking of another life with malice aforethought, using the legal term, right? Okay. And it means killing somebody, snuffing out their life.

²² *“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”*

What's Jesus doing here? This is really interesting. He's raising the bar, isn't He, on what constitutes murder. And He's basically saying to you and me, something that we need to understand. God sees the heart. God sees the heart.

Do you know that it's possible to be guilty of murder when you didn't lay a finger on somebody and they're still even living. But you hated them so much and with such a passion that you defiled your heart. It didn't really matter that you didn't carry through with the physical act because the heart was defiled with thoughts of murder. That's what Jesus is saying here.

He goes on and he says in verse 23 and following. *“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over*

to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”

And what Jesus is doing here is He's saying, don't let disagreements and disputes get to the point where it causes the kind of anger that bubbles over that defiles the heart. Just don't even let it go there.

I think the apostle Paul did such a beautiful job of summarizing what Jesus is saying here in the Sermon on the Mount. He did it in his letter to the Ephesians. Up on the screen from Ephesians 4, it says,

Ephesians 4:26-27 (ESV)

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (and that means don't go to bed still angry) and give no opportunity to the devil.

Because you see, when you go to bed with your anger, still firmly intact, you are now playing with the enemy. You have now entered into the playground of the enemy and believe me, he's just waiting for opportunities for you to give him a foothold.

And so Paul says, hey, if you're angry, okay, fine, but just don't let the sun go down on your... Resolve it. That's what Jesus was saying here when He talked about this whole thing about coming with to your accuser, and somebody who has something against you. And just get it done, get it taken care of. Go to that person and say, let's get this resolved. I don't want to go on with this. And you can even tell them, I'm a believer and the Bible tells me not to let the sun go down on my anger. I'm not to finish this day without resolving this issue. I like that.

Now Jesus, in verse 27, talks about adultery. He says, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”* Which is being married and having sexual relations with a person who is not your spouse. That's the definition of adultery.

“²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Again, Jesus is elevating our understanding, isn't He? By helping us to realize that God sees the heart and you can defile the heart long before you've hopped into somebody's bed. Long before.

In fact, you may never hop into that person's bed and you are still as guilty of adultery as if you had. Doesn't that just make you feel all kinds of hopeful? Yeah, sin can take place in the heart. And so this is a challenging passage and I'll tell you something, I don't mean to diss the women in the room, but this is particularly challenging for men because we are primarily attracted and aroused visually. It is the way it is. It is the way God made us. I don't apologize for it. I just recognize it.

That's the way we men are. We see a woman and we're like, whoa. And, so it can be very, very challenging for men as it relates to this. So what are we supposed to do? He goes on, but I want you to know, as we read these next verses, He's using figures of speech so nobody get out their pocket knife.

Verse 29. *"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members (and that means part of your body) than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."* Stop there.

Is Jesus telling us to maim ourselves physically? No. No. He's using a figure of speech and He's using language that would have been familiar to the people of His day and it has to do with the right something, right. Notice He says, *"If your right eye causes you to sin."* *"And if your right hand causes you to sin."*

It was believed in those days, in biblical days, that the right of a person was the superior, the best. Okay. Your right hand is your best hand. Your right eye is your best eye. It's why, even if you seated someone at a banquet, if the host seated that person at their right, that was the place of the greatest honor. Where is Jesus seated now? At the right hand of the Father, right? So again, that's a biblical term. It doesn't necessarily mean he's on the right. It's speaking of, in that figurative sense, the superior best. Right?

So what is Jesus saying to you and me when He begins to use these figures of speech? Even if your best eye causes you to sin, you're better off without it. Even if your best hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

Now here's the deal. Your eye and your hand don't cause you to sin. It's your heart that causes you to sin. All right. We know that. Again, these are figures of speech. And yet what Jesus is saying to you and me is, do whatever is necessary to keep sin from having the freedom that it might otherwise have to express itself. Even if what you have to do and get rid of, is precious to you. Okay.

And guys, that's one of the reasons, those of us who know our areas of sin, one of the reason that we keep falling to those areas of sin is because we're not willing to do what it takes. We know that we sin, we know that it's wrong, and when we do it, we cry, and we go to the Lord, and we ask for forgiveness and He forgives us, but we keep messing up.

And one of the reasons is, we're not willing to put a stranglehold on whatever freedom that area of sin has in our life and snuff it out. And that's what Jesus is talking about. Snuffing out whatever right, whatever freedom sin has in your life to exist. We're just not willing. We're not willing to do the hard thing.

Notice the hard..., again, the hard thing was gouging out your right eye and cutting off your right hand. Remember, this is your best. And it would be a bloody, painful mess. And Jesus is acknowledging that. Even if it's a bloody, painful mess, you're better off without those things, right? And if that means your computer, or your cell phone, or whatever is creating this freedom for sin to take hold of your life, you're better off without it. That's essentially what He's saying.

All right, next comes divorce, simple subject. That was a joke. Verse 31. *"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'"*

And what He's referring to is an option that Moses gave to the people related to their marriages. When indecency was found in a marriage, a certificate of divorce, a divorce could be given and the marriage could be ended. Here's the problem, by the time Jesus came along, the Jews were abusing this technicality if you will, to such a degree, that divorce became easy and common. So Jesus is essentially saying here, here's My word on it.

Verse 32. *"But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, (meaning they've broken the marriage covenant through sexual promiscuity. He says) makes (or causes) her (to) commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman (that has been divorced that way for unbiblical grounds also) commits adultery."*

Because the two people are still essentially married. In other words, Jesus is basically saying that the faithful partner in a marriage is permitted, not required, but permitted to divorce, only when the spouse has already broken the marriage covenant through sexual unfaithfulness. That's what He's saying. And I know that probably some of you have tons of questions about all of the different what ifs that could potentially come up.

And I know that because I've gotten notes over the years from many people and emails from people around the world who want to just ask me, pastor Paul, what about? What about? What about? And they can come up with all these different scenarios. What about if the guy, I cannot possibly give you enough information to cover all of the potential what ifs.

And it used to be years ago when I was a younger man, I used to try to answer those questions. I used to try to, because I thought, I'm a teacher, that's my bent to just give people an answer. And I've realized as I've gotten older and hopefully a little wiser that I don't have an answer for everything, but the Holy Spirit does.

I've really learned to respect Him a lot. And now my response to people when they come up with things. Scenarios related to marriage, divorce, and remarriage, that just aren't frankly covered in the Word. It's not there. I tell them, well, you got the Holy Spirit living in you. Pray about it. Do what He tells you to do. Whatever He tells you to do, be obedient. Even if it's hard, do what He tells you to do. Goodbye. And that's where the conversation ultimately has to end. to end.

I know a lot of people have a lot of questions and I'll tell you right now that people don't like the fact that Jesus only made the grounds of divorce sexual unfaithfulness. They don't like it. They wanted Him to add a lot of other things to that list. And the number one, can you guess it? The number one, in fact, this is even above sexual immorality. Yep. Emotional, physical abuse. I get that question almost on a weekly basis. What about emotional and physical abuse?

Bible doesn't say it. I'm not going to go where the Bible doesn't speak. That's not to say that I think it's okay. In fact, I think emotional and physical abuse is the bane of our society. It's horrible. And don't ask me what I think ought to happen to a man who does it. Because it's not pretty. But I'm not going to talk where the Bible doesn't. That's not my job. Neither is it yours. Let's not go beyond what is written. Amen? I know that's tough.

The next section deals with speaking truthfully, and He simply says, ³³ *“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’”* ³⁴ *But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,* ³⁵ *or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.* ³⁶ *And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.* (that’s all written into your DNA. He says) ³⁷ *Let what you say*

be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." And some Bibles say, *"from the evil one."*

Here's the point for you and me, we don't really get into oaths today. What He's saying to His people is, you are purveyors of truth, okay? I have given you My truth. Now, when you speak, speak the truth. Just say it. Just speak what is true. And don't get into all kinds of punctuating things to try to get somebody to believe you. It is not your responsibility to get someone to believe what you say. It is simply to speak the truth in love so don't worry about it. Just say it. I want my people to be truth speakers. So speak the truth and don't require further validation related to that.

Verse 38, *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* ³⁹ *But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.* ⁴⁰ *And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, (which was a big deal back in those days) let him have your cloak as well.* ⁴¹ *And if anyone forces you to go one mile, (which the Romans had the right to do for Jews) go with him two miles.* ⁴² *Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you."*

The term, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is an Old Testament term, but people misunderstand it today. They think it means I'm okay to exact vengeance against my enemy. It's like, hey, you hurt me, I hurt you. An eye for an eye, right? And they consider it God's permission to hurt back when they've been hurt. Well, that wasn't the intention in the beginning at all.

The eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth thing was all about keeping the punishment of certain offenses consistent with the crime. In other words, if somebody burned down your wheat field, you couldn't go and burn down his house and kill his family. Okay. That punishment doesn't fit the crime.

God said, listen, if somebody knocks out your tooth, the most you can do to that guy is knock out his tooth. Okay. You're with me. The point is balance and fairness and equity. The punishment must meet the crime. All right, that's essentially what He's saying.

So He begins to speak to believers here about patiently bearing with those who insult us and even try to hurt us. And that's cool. Hard, but cool. And Jesus modeled it for us. They hurt Him. They slapped Him. They slugged Him. They beat Him over the head, but He didn't retaliate. And that's where He was walking out what He was talking about to you and me. For some reason, some people read this passage and they think it means that if somebody breaks into

your home and starts attacking your family, you should just stand by and watch. That is the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life. Men have a responsibility to protect their families and if anybody came into my home we're going to do that.

Can I tell on you, Sue? We were, I was sitting in the den the other night, in my den reading. And Sue's in the living room. And we have this door that you can open the door and we have a storm door, which you can see through. It's glass. And our lights on the outside of the house hadn't come on yet, even though it was dark. And all of a sudden, Sue comes busting into the room. She goes, there's a man with a flashlight looking in our house. And so I ran out there. It was the Amazon guy taking a picture of the package on this porch with his phone. And it was so dark, the light on his phone came on by default. But she like sees this man with a flashlight. So of course, being the man I jump out of the chair, I'm going to get my stick, and I'm going to make this guy sorry that he did that. It's the Amazon guy. Anyway, sorry, honey.

I love how the apostle Paul summarize this whole idea of turning the other cheek this way in Romans chapter 12 on the screen. He simply said,

Romans 12:21 (ESV)

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

And I think that's a perfect clarification and summary of what Jesus is saying.

Finally, last section. ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” And by the way, that's what the Pharisees said, taught.

“⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (that means who hurt you) ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

We're going to stand together and I'm going to explain what that means. Yeah, I meant stand up. Yeah, because we're basically done. But here's the deal.

When God says to you and me through His Word, be perfect as I am perfect, He's not trying to convince you that somehow you can be without sin because He knows that's not possible. You and I will struggle with sin until the day we depart from our body or Jesus comes for us. One of the two.

But what He's saying to you and me there is, when you go out into the world and when you deal with people at home, at work, in the marketplace, or whatever, I want you to reflect My heart. I want you to reflect My heart because if you're going around just being nice to people who are nice to you, what's the big deal there?

He says, that's not the way I treat people. I send rain, I send sunshine, even on people who hate My guts. I want you to go and do the same. I want you to reflect My heart in this world. Not your heart, not the world's heart, My heart. That's My challenge to you. That is our responsibility. As born again, believers, amen?

Father, I thank You so much for everybody here today, and I pray a blessing upon them. And I pray my Father that you would speak to them throughout the week from the Word that we've looked at here today in Matthew 5.

And I pray Father God that You would just strengthen and encourage them and bless them and help them to be strong in their faith Father. To look to You, to trust in You, to hope in You.

And I pray my Father God that You would give us all the ability through Your Spirit to reflect the heart of the Father to this very angry and very dark world that we live in. But in so doing, Father God, may we fulfill our purpose as salt and light.

We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and all God's people said together, amen.