

The Sermon on the Mount

Part I: Mt. 5:1-6:8

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is probably the greatest source of Wisdom Literature that has ever been spoken and written. When we speak of Wisdom Literature, we must go back to the book of Proverbs, Chapter 8, where the description of Wisdom is seen as being synonymous with the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ (Prov. 8:22-31). Thus, the wisdom expressed in the Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew 5-7 is that “eternal wisdom” that is the very nature and essence of who God is. Therefore, the truths expressed in these chapters are those things that will establish us in everything that we are and do – this is the grid for filtering out the thoughts, feelings, emotions that come into our minds that are narcissistic, enslaving, and destructive in nature, versus the truth of God that sets us free in His love and power.

I. The Beatitudes – 5:1-12

- A. “Blessed” – This word in Greek is μακάριος (*makarios*), and it is the same word used in Psalm 1:1, which in Hebrew is אֲשֶׁרֶתֶ (*'ashrê*), and it means to be in an eternal and divine state of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical well-being, versus the temporal and pseudo state of carnal well-being that deceives, misdirects, and leads to self-destruction.
- B. Thus, in all nine of the “blessed” states that Jesus describes, we see the absolute antithesis of what the world offers and presses upon us.

II. Salt and Light – 5:13-16

- A. Salt is used as a preservative, and that means that Christ in us is the preservative of this world, including not only the spiritual, but also the political, the economic and business, the

educational, the artistic and sport, etc. – thus, we cannot escape, nor hide from our preservative role.

- B. Light illumines the dark places and keeps us from hurting ourselves – thus, Christ in us is the “light of the world” that points people to His saving and redeeming life, versus the self-destructive forms of pseudo-life the world pushes and extols.

III. True Righteousness, Versus False Righteousness – 5:17-20

- A. Jesus came to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets.
 - 1. The word for “fulfill” in Greek is πληρόω (*plēroō*), and it means “to bring to completion and finish something already begun.”
 - 2. In addition, the verb form used for “fulfill” here in Mt. 5:17 implies that it was completely and fully accomplished in Jesus, once and for all!
- B. In verse 20, the phrase, “you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” is the most emphatic construction in the Greek – thus, the righteousness Jesus is speaking of is that of His that is imputed into us when we believe (Rom. 5:17; 10:8-10).

IV. Religious Tradition, Versus Biblical Truth – 5:21-48

- A. Murder (21-26) – Jesus now defines anger as a form of murder in relation to its being expressed in words of deprecation about somebody else (e.g., deprecating someone before others in a scathing manner so as to belittle and demean them, etc.), and on the other side, if we know someone is angry with us over some infraction we have committed against them, we need to first get that right as an expression of genuine worship and following after God, and we also need to do everything we can to settle legal matters with someone outside of court, versus going through a court and all of its entanglements.
- B. Adultery (27-30) – Here too, Jesus takes this sin several steps forward to the beginning of the thought, and this would include everything related to it: from the initial physical attraction, to the very strong pull of the desire of one’s emotional hunger being satisfied with another’s personality, etc.; to the mental

and emotional fantasies engendered in one's mind about another; to the actual physical contact beginning in seemingly so called 'innocent' ways, and this is not just for a man, but for a woman as well.

1. The word for "looks" in this instance in the Greek is βλέπων (*blepōn*), and it literally means "to continually look on in one's mind, by thinking of, meditating upon, fantasizing, etc."
 2. The phrase "to lust" implies a deep emotional hunger that transcends the physical, and it is an all consuming emotional hunger from the beginning and inception of the attraction.
 3. Thus, this is not talking about simply noticing the attractiveness of one's physical appearance and personality traits, but rather of being pulled and drawn toward someone because of the deep emotional hungers that are satisfied in one's life by that person's physical and personality traits
 4. Consequently, this is one of those areas where Luke 9:23-24 must be walked in continuously in putting to death self-pity, anger, and bitterness, which can all stem from covetousness, the tenth commandment that Jesus came to fulfill (Ex. 20:17; Dt. 5:21).
- C. Divorce (31-32) – Once again, Jesus brings to a different level the lifestyle of Judaism of His day by contrasting the 'tradition' associated with marriage to the biblical truth of marriage.
1. The phrase, "cause of unchastity" in the NAS is made up two Greek words, λόγου πορνείας (*logou porneias*), which literally may be translated, "of the matter of sexual immorality," and in particular, this would be talking about an ongoing, unrepentant lifestyle of "sexual immorality," versus someone who has fallen, either the wife or the husband, and has returned to their mate in brokenness and repentance.
 2. This would include all forms of "sexual immorality" that would be characterized as an ongoing, unrepentant 'lifestyle', from marital infidelity with another adult of the opposite sex, or a homosexual relationship with an adult of the same sex, to pornography, to paedophilia, to incest, to bestiality.
3. This is the only grounds that Jesus gives for divorce, and the reason is that the marriage bond has been broken, and there is no genuine and real brokenness over that failure, but rather an utter disregard for the seriousness of the sin and a continuous pursuit and involvement in that particular 'lifestyle of sexual immorality'.
- D. Vows (33-37) – With regard to "vows," Jesus makes it clear that we need to be 'people of our word' – that is, our 'yes is yes', and our 'no is no' – beyond this, we tend to prevaricate.
- E. Retaliation (38-42) – This is a form of 'divine retaliation' in which we trust in the Lord to bring about His 'perfect and complete grace and mercy' and His 'perfect and complete wrath and vengeance' (Rom. 12:19; Psalm 5:8-10; 35:1-8).
- F. Forgiveness (43-48) – This passage and the above are intrinsically linked, and verse 44 in the NKJ includes the totality of our response to those who have deeply or slightly hurt us: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."
1. The idea of "blessing" is important because it is the opposite of "cursing" and living in an ongoing state of hate and anger, which is an internal form of emotional poison that will eventually kill the person who embraces it.
 2. Thus, walking in Mt. 5:44, Rom. 12:19, Ps. 5:8-10, and 35:1-8 have been and are a form of real victory in my life.
 3. In addition, in verse 45 we are told to walk in verse 44 "in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven."
 - a. The phrase, "you may be," literally means that you may be in a constant state of 'becoming' and 'being conformed to the image of His Son' as stated in

Romans 8:29, which comes on the heel of Romans 8:28: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

- b. Thus, forgiveness and blessing of our enemies is the *very cornerstone* of our growing in Christ and experiencing His victory in our lives (Hebrews 12:14-15).
4. The word “perfect” in verse 48 does not mean that we are to be ‘sinless’ as our ‘heavenly Father’ because that would be impossible in our carnal state, but it means that we are to be “complete and whole” in our relationship with our “heavenly Father” as He is with us in His mercy, forgiveness, and discipline (Hebrews 12:4-11).

V. Unto God Versus Unto Men – 6:1-8

- A. This section is one of the most important in the Bible because it focuses on the essence of our source of identity as individuals.
- B. What is at stake is freedom in Christ versus enslavement to our insecurities and fears, and thus, for the latter, a false sense of identity that never fulfills and liberates, but rather that becomes a self-destructive emotional addiction that actually takes life from us.
 1. “reward in full” in verse 3 is stating that in truth, we have nothing but empty air and meaninglessness.
 2. The word for “secret” in verse 4 is κρυπτός (*kruptos*), and this is where we get the word ‘crypt’ from, which is a ‘grave’. Thus, we need to do what we do as though we were in a grave, and “your Father who sees what is done in the grave will reward you openly.”
- C. The importance of prayer cannot be overstated, but the purpose of prayer in our lives is what is at stake here – it is for God to hear us, not men. Thus, as we pray, we need to understand that “your Father knows what you need before you ask Him,” and he, not men, is our source!