Treasures from
The Sermon
on the Mount
Volume One
Dr. Rod Mattoon
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR READERS ON THE TREASURES FROM SCRIPTURE BOOKS

* Brother Mattoon, I am reading your book Treasures From Judges. I am completely blessed by your writings. Your outlines are excellent and the material is above reproach; the illustrations are well chosen. I do pray that God’s richest blessings will continue upon you and your ministry.

Dr. Lee Roberson, Chancellor, Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga, Tennessee

* Dr. Mattoon has given to the Christian world a very practical, powerful, and prudent filled book. This book will serve as a text in Christian colleges and seminaries. This book is very readable for the common person who has no background in understanding Genesis. This book is a goldmine for Sunday School teachers and Christian workers.

**Dr. J. Arnold Fair, Pastor, Faith Baptist Church, Angola, Indiana**

* This book is filled with what the title suggests, "Treasures". It’s not only a good commentary on Genesis, but also a great reference book on Old Testament customs and people. A great book for topical seed sermons. The quality of the book is excellent. Treasures From Judges is beautifully done. It is practical, straight forward and even tackling some of today’s more difficult issues. Well done, Rod.

** Dr. Greg McLaughlin, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama**

* Treasures From Genesis by Dr. Rod Mattoon should be in the library of every young preacher. The outlines are excellent and provide a valuable source for sermon material.

** Dr. Sylvester Matthews*

* The pages of this book are packed with research and information that will feed any pastor’s people. It is not hard to use and is very readable and useable. It is first class in its publishing and layout. It's structure is well thought out and the result is a book that invites your attention. The features most helpful to me are the illustrative charts, the alliterated outlines and the subject index in the back of the book.

** Pastor Mark Thrift, Parkwood Baptist Church, Houston, Texas**

* After perusing this volume of Genesis, I was made aware of the fact that this book is not just a book about Genesis and how to interpret it, but it is a book filled with a treasure of knowledge rarely found in one volume. The tools you have provided will allow anyone studying this book to find information at his or her fingertips that will enrich his knowledge of God’s Word and the subject at hand. The index information you printed in the book is also easy to find and especially helpful when looking for a specific topic in the book.

** Dr. Ron Allen**

* The books are some of the best material I’ve read and studied. They fed me. It has been a joy and blessing to study these books. Thanks.

*Pastor Mike Oldham, Sanford, North Carolina*
This book is lovingly dedicated to the life and memory of my grandparents Clifford and Mabel Roderick. Their love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for all their children and grandchildren has never been forgotten and still continues to have an impact on my own life today.
Thank You
Lincoln Land Baptist Church

It has been again a wonderful delight and joy to be able to bring these studies to you. They were preached at Lincoln Land Baptist Church in 2006. I want to express my gratitude and love to my wonderful church family for their love, encouragement, spiritual maturity, sacrifice, and vision in allowing me to have this ministry and letting the world share in the pulpit ministry of Lincoln Land Baptist Church and in the hours of research and preparation that go behind each message. Thousands of dollars have been spent to produce this ministry for preachers all over the world. If you ever get the chance, come and meet these wonderful Christians. They are precious people that want our church to be used of God for His glory!

Lincoln Land Baptist Church is an Independent, Fundamental Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois, which is the capital of the great state of Illinois. This church has had a rich heritage of pastors that have fed the church on evangelistic, expository Bible preaching since it was begun in 1965. In August of 2005, we celebrated our 40th birthday.

The book ministry of this church has grown beyond whatever we dreamed as over 5600 preachers are now using these books in their studies and 200 Bible colleges or institutes are using them in their curriculums or by their students in their private studies. The books are also being sent to prison libraries across the country to assist inmates with their walk with the Lord while they serve their time. We are also providing the books for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan who have been saved and desire to learn more about the Bible. What a blessing, but what a responsibility too. For this reason, we strive to be as accurate, thorough, and practical in our research and presentation of Scripture and Christian history.

Since August of 1971, I have had a thirst to learn the Word and preach its truths. What a wonderful journey it has been to dig for delightful diamonds of truth in the Scriptures these past 35 years. I hope this 20th book on Treasures from the Sermon on the Mount will enlighten, encourage, energize and enrich you and bring you closer to our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
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Chapter 1
The Delight from Depending on God
Matthew 5:1-3

We now begin a wonderful adventure in the chapters of the New Testament entitled as “The Sermon on the Mount.” How fitting is the title because the truths found within these chapters are not easily learned, they must be climbed like a mountain cliff with the help of the Lord. Yet, as we apply and grow in the areas where Jesus challenged us, we find joy and satisfaction, like the mountain climber who reaches the crown of the mountain. The title is also fitting because the truths contained in this message from Christ elevate us to mountain levels in spiritual growth. They challenge us to a higher standard, a higher level of godly living in our lives. They are patterns of the life of Jesus Christ Himself.

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most misunderstood messages that Jesus ever gave. One group says it is God’s plan of salvation, that if we ever hope to go to Heaven, we must obey these rules. This sermon, however, does not tell us how to be saved, it tells saved people how to live. It is a sermon for Christians today and tomorrow. It teaches us how to behave day by day. The message of this sermon is important to us because of several reasons.

1. The Essentials of the new birth are revealed in its message. Its standards are much too high and demanding to be met by human effort. Only those individuals who partake of God’s own nature through the person of Jesus Christ can fulfill the demands in this sermon. The standards of the Sermon on the Mount go far beyond those of Moses in the Law, demanding not only righteous actions but righteous attitudes. It demands that men not only do that which is right, but that they be right. No part of the Bible more clearly shows man’s desperate situation
without the Lord in his life.

2. **The Expectation or hope of our salvation and saintly living is found only in Christ.** The Lord is the only one who can help us reach God’s spiritual standards. If man cannot live up to the divine standard, he needs a supernatural power to enable him. The proper response to the sermon points to Christ.

3. **God’s Example for happiness and success are found in the sermon.** It reveals the standards, the objectives, and the motivations that, with God’s help, will fulfill what God has designed man to be. Here we find the way of joy, peace, and contentment.

4. **It is a great Evangelistic resource for telling others about Christ.** A Christian who personifies these principles of Jesus will be a spiritual magnet, attracting others to the Lord Jesus Christ who empowers the believer to live as he does. The life that is obedient and surrendered to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount is the church’s greatest tool for evangelism.

5. **The Elements of how to please the Lord with our life are found in this message.** That is the believer’s highest reason for following Jesus’ teaching. It pleases God.

In the late 1860’s, the science of bacteriology was still in its infancy. Sir Joseph Lister was a pioneer British surgeon that campaigned for sanitary operating room procedures. The medical hygiene of surgeons in that time was terrible and filthy. Hands were not scrubbed, street clothes were worn during surgeries that were attended by spectators that gathered around the operating table to watch. Surgical dressings were made from pressed sawdust pads made from the floors of log mills. Instruments were washed in soapy water, but not sterilized.

In some hospitals, as many as 90% of the patients died after their surgery from infections. Yet, the majority of doctors thought Lister was a nut and scoffed at his ideas for cleanliness which were known as “Listerism.” The doctors, however, that implemented Lister’s ideas and procedures reported fewer post-operative infections and higher survival rates. It was obvious that Dr. Lister was on target even though he was greatly opposed by many. To honor Dr. Lister, a Missouri physician, Joseph Lawrence, invented a mouth wash that killed germs and bad breath on contact. He named it *Listerine* and millions purchased the mouth wash and continue to do so even today, 125 years later. Lister’s message of his life was cleanliness and such is the message of the Sermon of the Mount.
The main theme is true righteousness and godliness. The issue with God is the issue of righteousness or clean, godly living. Righteousness sets us apart as converted. It means right living and living in obedience to God's Word. The profession of faith in Christ means nothing without obedience, holiness, and departing from sin. Some proclaim today, "Come to Jesus as you are and you don't have to change anything." The Bible, however, speaks of transformation when we are saved. We are a new creature in Christ.

* 2 Corinthians 5:17- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

If we come away from conversion just as we were, then how can we call it conversion? The religious leaders in Jesus' day had an artificial, external, righteousness based on the Law, but the righteousness Jesus described is a true and vital righteousness that begins internally, in the heart. The Pharisees were concerned about the minute details of conduct, but they neglected the major matter of character.

Beloved, conduct flows out of the character of a person. When a person is born again, there is a change in the character and behavior of the person. If there is no change and if there is not a hatred for sin in your life, perhaps you have never been born again. We must realize that when we do not live like Christians we create confusion in the minds of others that watch our lives.

At the beginning of the Civil War, there was a lot of confusion created on the battlefield by the uniforms of the soldiers. The gray uniforms, known as the "Rebel color" were not worn only by soldiers of the South. Units from the First Wisconsin, First Iowa, Fifth Maine, 21st New York, and the Twelfth Illinois infantry drilled in gray uniforms which were not well received. At the first battle of Manassas, the uniforms created confusion and a catastrophe as men accidentally fired at their own troops. It was difficult for them to tell who was on what side.

Because of a shortage of cloth, the Second Texas infantry went into battle with pure white uniforms which invited shots from both sides not familiar with this infantry. A southern unit known as the Orleans Guard had stylish blue uniforms which caused them to be mistaken for Yankees. They were fired upon by their own army. All of these problems were created by a failure to clearly identify the side the soldiers represented. The lack of a clear-cut message in their outward appearance created confusion. The same thing happens when we claim to be Christians, but
live like the Devil. People are confused and wonder where we really stand, what we really believe, and whose side we are really on. What side are you on and can people tell it? Are you a new creature in Christ?

The very first sermon recorded of the preaching of Christ begins with the theme of great happiness and joy. Being a master Teacher, our Lord did not begin this important sermon with a negative criticism of the scribes and Pharisees. He began with a positive emphasis on righteous character and the blessings that it brings to the life of the Christian. The Pharisees taught that righteousness was an external thing, a matter of obeying rules and regulations. They believed righteousness could be measured by praying, giving, fasting, etc. Christ, however, focused on our attitudes and inward life.

We call this first section of this sermon the “Beatitudes.” There are nine beatitudes. The first seven deal with principles of godly conduct. The last two deal with persecution for godly living. In the Beatitudes, Jesus described Christian character that flowed from within. These beatitudes call for full, thorough, frequent self-examination of our lives. They are progressive steps in spiritual growth. Each attitude leads to the next attitude or level of growth in logical succession, and are not in a random or haphazard order. So let the adventure begin!

I. THE AWE & ASTONISHMENT OF THE MESSAGE 5:1-3

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: [2] And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, [3] Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This mountain, or hill, was somewhere in the vicinity of Capernaum, but where precisely is not mentioned. He ascended the hill, doubtless, because it was more convenient to address the multitude from an elevated position than if He were on the same level with them. In this area, the observer has a view of the Sea of Galilee, which has a tendency to change in appearance almost hourly because of the weather conditions. The most pleasant feature of the landscape in this area is the diversified appearance of the fields. The different plots of land exhibit various colors, according to the condition of their cultivation. Some of the fields are red, where the land has been newly plowed up. Red is the natural appearance of the soil. Other plots
are yellow or white, where the harvest is beginning to ripen, or is already ripe. Some of the acreage is green, being covered with grass or sprouting grain. As the different plots are connected to each other, or intermixed, these multi-colored plots present at some distance an appearance of joyful, checkered work, which is absolutely beautiful. This was the setting for this historical event.

Multitudes gathered to hear the Lord. It must have been quite a site. What will He say? What inspiring thing will this man tell us? Jesus does not preach a fiery sermon. Instead, He sits down and He teaches them like a father that mentors his family in his home. For those who mock teaching in this day and age, may they take note of what is happening here. There is nothing wrong or sissy about “teaching!” One of the requirements of a pastor is the ability to teach.

Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount addressing the issue of happiness and joy in the life of the Christian, perhaps, because this is what He wants us to have in our lives.

*John 15:11 - These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

What He says about happiness is astonishing and amazing as we will see. First, let’s take a look at the word “blessed.” What is this word all about? It comes from the Greek word *makarios* {mak-ar'-ee-os}. This Greek word is derived from the root *mak*, which means “large” or “lengthy.” *Makarios* means “fortunate” or “happy.” The Greek word was used in Greek literature, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), and in the New Testament, to describe the kind of happiness that comes from receiving divine favor. Homer used the word to describe a wealthy man, and Plato used it of one who was successful in business. Both Homer and Hesiod spoke of false Greek gods as being happy (*makarios*) within themselves, because they were unaffected by the world of men who were subject to poverty, disease, weakness, misfortune, and death.

The meaning of *makarios* can best be seen from one particular usage of it. The Greeks always called Cyprus *makaria* (the feminine form of the adjective), which means “The Happy Isle,” and they did so because they believed that the island of Cyprus was so lovely, so rich, and so fertile an island that a man would never need to go beyond its coastline to find the perfectly happy life. It had such a climate, such flowers and fruits and trees, such minerals, such natural resources that it contained within itself all the materials for perfect happiness.
The word for “blessed” is a much deeper, richer word than “happiness.” The New Testament has rescued the word from this mistaken application, and filled it with a high and holy meaning. Short-sighted and unwise, people call men “happy” when life goes well with them, when they are prosperous, cheerful, good-natured, or loved by relations and friends. People with these kinds of circumstances, however, may not necessarily be blessed. Watching the news and seeing the turmoil in the lives of wealthy athletes or movie stars proves this point.

The word “blessed” implies heavenly affections, a deep, inward abiding joy. Outward prosperity cannot give it, nor can adversity, affliction, suffering, pain, trials, trouble, or even the death of loved-ones take it away. It is like the depths of the ocean where the surface is changeful. Sometimes it is calm and waveless, and at other times, it is tossed back and forth by the restless winds, while far and deep below there is a continual, consistent, changeless rest, peace, and silence.

The English word “happiness” gives its own case away. It contains the root hap which means “chance.” Human happiness is something which is dependent on the chances and the changes of life, something which life may give and also destroy. Good fortune is not blessedness; blessedness is the gift of God. He is our source of joy, happiness, and blessing. What He gives cannot be taken away by the chances and changes of our lives.

Blessedness is not an outward ornament of life. It is a man’s own gift, for God has given it to him. It resides in his heart and cannot be taken away. The fullest meaning of makarios, therefore, had to do with an inward contentedness that is not affected by circumstances. That is the kind of happiness God desires for His children. He gives us a state of joy and well-being that does not depend on physical, temporary circumstances.

Because blessedness is fundamentally an element of the character of God, when men partake of His nature through Jesus Christ, they partake of His blessedness. So it becomes clear at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus is speaking of a reality that is only for believers who have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit living within them.

The Beatitudes reveal that Jesus’ criteria for happiness is not the same as the world’s standard. In fact, the Beatitudes seem paradoxical. The conditions and their corresponding blessings do not seem to match. By normal human standards such things as humility,
mourning, suffering, desire for righteousness, mercy, and persecution are not the stuff of which happiness is made. To the natural man, and to the immature or carnal Christian, such happiness sounds like misery with another name. The world can win its joys, and the world can equally well lose its joys. A change in fortune, a collapse in health, the failure of a plan, the disappointment of an ambition, even a change in the weather, can take away the fickle joy the world can give. The Christian, however, has the serene and untouchable joy which comes from walking forever in the company and in the presence of Jesus Christ.

**In a way, happiness is misery with another name.** Jesus teaches that misery, endured for the right purpose and in the right way, is the key to happiness. That basic principle summarizes the Beatitudes. The world says, “Happy are the rich, the noble, the successful, the glamorous, the popular, the famous, and the aggressive. Happy is the go-getter, the one who gets what he wants when he wants it, being number one, being macho, acquiring, and doing your own thing.” In fact, in Jesus’ day, the religious groups believed that happiness was found in a variety of ways.

1. The Pharisees believed happiness was found in tradition or legalism. They focused on the past and felt that happiness came through traditions of their fathers. Go “back” for joy was their belief.
2. The Sadducees believed happiness was found in the present. They had a “Live For Now” attitude. They were liberal in their lifestyles. Go “ahead” for joy, was their belief.
3. The Essenes believed happiness was found in separating from the world. Their belief was go “out” for joy.
4. The Zealots believed happiness was found in revolution, in knocking off Rome. Go “against” for joy was their philosophy.

Jesus, however, said that joy is not found in any of these things. The message from the King does not fit the world’s standards, because Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world, but of Heaven. His way to happiness, which is the only way to true happiness, is by a much different route. For this reason, many find that the Sermon on the Mount is a difficult message to put into practice, understand, or accept.

**As we study the Beatitudes, we will find that they are progressive, step by step.** As will be seen as each one is discussed in detail, they are not in a random or haphazard order. Each attitude leads to the other in logical succession. Being poor in spirit reflects the right attitude we should have to our sinful, helpless condition, which then should lead us to mourn, to be meek and gentle, to hunger and thirst for
righteousness, to be merciful, pure in heart, and have a peacemaking spirit. A Christian who has all those qualities will be so far above the level of the world that his life will rebuke the world, which will bring conviction to others and persecution from this world. Let's get our spiritual shovels out and dig in to find wonderful treasures in these chapters.

II. THE ATTITUDE ABOUT POVERTY 5:3
Blessed are the poor in spirit:

Before we study each of the Beatitudes in detail there are general facts which we must note. First, it can be seen that every one of the Beatitudes has precisely the same form. As they are commonly printed in our Bibles, each one of them in the King James translation has the word “are” printed in italic. When a word appears in italics in the King James Version, it means that in the Greek, or in the Hebrew, there is no equivalent word, and that word has been added to help bring out the meaning of the sentence. This is to say that in the Beatitudes there is no verb, there is no word “are.” Why not? The answer is Jesus did not speak the Beatitudes in Greek; He spoke them in Aramaic, which was the kind of Hebrew people spoke in His day.

Aramaic and Hebrew have for the word “blessed” a very common kind of expression, which is in fact, an exclamation. The expression means, "O the blessedness of . . . " That expression, which comes from the Hebrew word 'esher {eh'-sher}, is very common in the Old Testament. For example, the first Psalm begins in the Hebrew language: "O the blessedness of the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Ps 1:1). This is the same form in which Jesus first spoke the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are not simple statements; they are enthusiastic exclamations: "O the blessedness of the poor in spirit!" They are exclamations of reality.

This truth is very important, for it means that the Beatitudes are not pious hopes of what shall be. They are not prophecies of some future bliss. They are congratulations on what is. The blessedness which belongs to the Christian is not a blessedness which is postponed to some future world of glory. It is a blessedness which exists here and now. It is not something into which the Christian will enter. It is something into which he has entered now. You can have God’s blessings, joy, happiness, and peace NOW! The Beatitudes in effect say, "O the bliss of
being a Christian! O the joy of following Christ! O the sheer happiness of knowing Jesus Christ as Master, Savior and Lord!"

Jesus begins by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." What does this mean? Let's deal with what it doesn't mean first. It does NOT mean:

1. *You are blessed because you are spiritually weak.* This would glorify a lack of spiritual growth and those who were backslidden and living in sin. Spiritual weakness and deadness is not a blessing, but a burden.

2. *You are blessed because you are poor.* You can be poor and still be wicked. We must be careful not to think that this Beatitude calls actual material poverty a good thing. Poverty is not a good thing. Jesus would never have called "blessed," a state where people live in slums, have not enough to eat, and where health rots because conditions are all against it. Poverty is not a guarantee of spiritual conduct. Poor in spirit is not poverty of the purse, but of the heart. You can be rich and still be poor in spirit, like Abraham.

3. *A false humility which says, "I am nothing and nobody and cannot serve the Lord at all."*

**So what does Jesus mean by "poor in spirit?"** In Greek there are two words for "poor." There is the word *penes {pen'-ace}*. *Penes* describes a man who has to work for his living. It is defined by the Greeks as describing the man who serves his own needs with his own hands. *Penes* describes the working man, the man who has nothing extravagant, the man who is not rich, but who is not destitute either.

It is not *penes* that is used in this Beatitude, it is another word, *ptochos {pto-khos'}*, which describes absolute and abject poverty. It is connected with the Greek root *ptossein*, which means to crouch or to cower. It describes the poverty which is beaten to its knees. As it has been said, *penes* describes the man who has nothing extravagant or excessive; *ptochos* describes the man who has nothing at all. So this Beatitude becomes even more surprising. Blessed is the man who is abjectly and completely poverty-stricken. Blessed is the man who is absolutely destitute.

The Aramaic or Hebrew word for "poor" adds further insights to what is being taught here. In Hebrew, the word for "poor" is *'anîy {aw-nee'}* or *'ebashion {eb-yone'}*. These words came to describe the person who, because he has no earthly resources whatever, puts his entire trust and dependence in God as illustrated in verses like Psalm 34:6 or 72:4.

*Psalm 34:6 - This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved*
him out of all his troubles.

*Psalm 72:4- He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.*

The person who is poor in spirit realizes his own utter helplessness without the Lord and puts his whole trust in God. If a man has realized his own utter helplessness, and has put his whole trust in God, there will enter into his life two things which are opposite sides of the same thing. He will become completely detached from things, for he will know that things have nothing in them that will bring happiness or security. He will also become completely attached to God, for he will know that God alone can bring him help, hope, and strength.

The man who is poor in spirit is the man who has realized that things mean nothing, and that God means everything. Being poor in spirit is to realize we are utterly destitute apart from God. It realizes I have nothing, am nothing, can do nothing without the Lord and have need of all things. It means “a complete absence of pride and self reliance.” It is a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. The poverty which is blessed is the poverty of spirit, when a man realizes his own utter lack of resources to meet life, and finds his help and strength in God.

Being poor in spirit also means knowing yourself, accepting yourself, and being yourself to the glory of God. It means knowing your strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, abilities, and limitations. Accepting yourself means you do not go through life pretending to be something you are not. Being yourself involves yielding to Holy Spirit and permitting Him to fulfill God’s will in your life. In ourselves, we are bankrupt, but in the Lord we are rich. Poor in spirit realizes every place of God’s choosing is an important place. Humility is not thinking meanly of yourself. It is not thinking of yourself at all. Until we admit our need, we can never receive what God has for us. Poor in spirit yields to God to make us all that He wants us to be.

When you are poor in spirit, you accept others because you accept yourself. You may not always agree but you accept them. You accept their backgrounds, their strengths, and weaknesses. You do not, however, have to accept their sin. David was a man that was poor in spirit.

*I Samuel 18:18- And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?*
When you are poor in spirit you also accept your circumstances. Paul stated this truth in Philippians.

* Philippians 4:11- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

The person who is poor in spirit has a right attitude toward things, fame, and toward the will of God in his life. When you live to promote yourself, you are bound to become a slave of people, things, or circumstances. You are never free to be yourself. If you go through life living to promote yourself, you must always get something from others to inflate your ego or advertise your importance. Humility means you look to God for everything you need. It sets you free from the praise of people, the quest for prestige, from circumstances, and things. If you need nothing but God, no one can be a threat to you. You are free! There is a poverty in riches and riches in poverty.

* Proverbs 13:7- There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

* 2 Corinthians 8:9- For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

If you are a preacher that plays the pastoral politics game, always trying to impress people to try to become famous, my heart goes out to you. You do not have to be a slave to the opinions of others. Stop worrying about being famous or being recognized. Love the Lord, love your family, and love the people in your church. Don’t get caught up in the game of playing “preacher politics.” It will rob you of your joy. My dear friend and professor, Dr. J. Arnold Fair, warned me many years ago when I was in Bible college about “preacher politics” and to stay away from it. That counsel was worth its weight in gold! You become poor in spirit by focusing on the Lord and His Word, not by comparing yourself or your ministry with others.

* 2 Corinthians 10:12- For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

When we look through the Bible, we find a number of other examples of people who demonstrated the trait of being poor in spirit.

1. The Publican- Luke 18:13- And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
2. The Prophet Isaiah- Isaiah 6:5- Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.


4. The Pauper Gideon- Judges 6:15- And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

5. Peter- Luke 5:8- When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

6. Paul- Romans 7:18-24... For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. [19] For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [21] I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. [22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [23] But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

How do you become poor in Spirit? Here are six things you can put into practice.

* Self efforts such as going off to a monastery, selling all you have, and living like a hermit, are futile.

* Starve the flesh of sinful desires. Resist temptations and be weaned from selfish desires.

* James 4:7-8... Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

* The Situations and state of your life are to be accepted. Like Paul, we need to learn to be content no matter what ups and downs have come our way.

* Philippians 4:11- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

* Surrender to God's will and plan for your life. The Lord is the one you are serving and trying to please.

* Romans 12:1-2 ... I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of
Chapter 1... The Delight from Depending Upon God... 5:1-3

God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

* Spend time in prayer and in applying the Scriptures.
* 2 Timothy 2:15- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
* 1 Thessalonians 5:17- Pray without ceasing.
* Isaiah 66:2- For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.
* Set the focus of your life upon the Lord and serving Him. Realize that you are nothing and can do nothing without Him. Live your life by faith and dependence upon Him instead of relying on yourself. To be poor in spirit is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy. It confesses one's unworthiness before God and utter dependence on Him.
* John 15:5- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
* Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
* Psalm 34:18- The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
* Psalm 51:7- Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

III. THE AWARD FOR BEING POOR IN SPIRIT 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When a person is dependent upon the Lord, he is dependent upon Him for everything, but most of all, his salvation. When we put our faith in Christ and trust only in Him for our salvation, we have eternal life and we will enjoy the kingdom of Heaven. In giving up their own kingdom and desires, the poor in spirit inherit God’s kingdom. Our inheritance is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

* 1 Peter 1:3-4... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. [4]
To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

God makes it very clear that those who come to the Lord with broken hearts do not leave with broken hearts.

* Isaiah 57:15- For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. God wants us to recognize our poverty so that He can make us rich. He wants us to recognize our lowliness and helplessness so that He can raise us up.

* James 4:10- Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Being poor in spirit yields future awards in Heaven, but also great and wonderful blessings in the present. Are you poor in spirit? Do you accept God’s plan for your life? Do you recognize your weaknesses and limitations, but also His strengths? Do you comprehend the truth that Paul shared with the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” May the Lord help us all to delight in depending upon Him.
Chapter 2
The Glee from Grieving

Matthew 5:4
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Jesus continues to blow the minds of His listeners as He begins His message on the hillside. He has already told them of the blessedness of those who are poor in spirit, who are spiritually bankrupt, and totally dependent upon God. Now He speaks of the blessedness or deep, inner joy of those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. What is He telling us? What is the meaning behind these words? What does He mean by the word “mourn?” This is what we are going to carefully examine in this study. We will also look at the way that God comforts us and how to deal with grief in our lives.

How did people mourn in the Bible? In Bible times, when someone died, the family members would let out a loud “death wail” that all the neighbors could hear. This would inform them that a death had occurred. Mourners were even hired to weep for the deceased. These were mainly women who made a career out of doing this. They were professional weepers. Family and loved ones would show their grief by wearing itchy, scratchy sackcloth and tearing their clothes. Those in mourning would also take off their shoes and cover their heads. Dirt was thrown over their heads or ashes were set in or rolled in. Silver, gold, jewelry, daggers, costly ornaments were not worn during mourning which could last as long as seven days.

During the seven days, the first three days consisted of weeping. They would weep at the grave because they felt closer to the soul of the departed. During this seven days, shoes were not to be worn, the person was not to wash, study, or engage in business. The last four days were days of mourning.
The fourth day was traumatic. The Jews believed the soul finally departed from the body because of its decay and destruction. Loud wails were made and the breast was beaten because there was no hope of return of the departed.

In the East, men and women did not mourn together but sat apart because both women and men would uncover the breast and beat upon it. Sometimes this beating was so violent that they would develop tumors or diseases. Pagans would cut their bodies to inflict suffering upon themselves. This was forbidden in Jewish law. The men would shave their heads bald or cut their beards. Mustaches were also covered during mourning. The Babylonians, Arabs, and Persians even today will scratch their arms, faces, and hands and the women will cut their long beautiful hair. Those who mourned would fast, up to the time of burial, and then afterwards, a mourner's feast was held where food and wine were offered to comfort those in sorrow and help them forget their grief.

Sometimes the grieving process would start before the death of the person if the person was on their death bed. Tear bottles would be used to gather the tears of those who were weeping. A priest would go to the people at the height of their grief and use a piece of cotton to collect the tears. He then would squeeze them into a bottle. It was believed when all medicines had failed, a teardrop put into the mouth of the dying would revive them. Tears were also considered a charm to ward off evil.

**People mourn for a variety of reasons.** When Jesus says, “Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted,” is He referring to those who mourn or grieve over the death of a loved-one in this verse? Let’s look at this verse carefully and give you an answer.

Mourning is not just shedding tears or inflicting physical harm on ourselves like some people do. Church history tells us of a group of men called the Anchorites who lived in the fourth century. They dwelt in solitude, fasted, and injured their bodies. The nearer they could bring themselves to the level of animals, the more content they were.

One sect of Anchorites actually grazed with the common herds in the fields of Mesopotamia. They were hence called *boskoi*, or "shepherds." This group mistakenly acquired a great reputation for holiness because of their mournful attitude toward life. One of the most famous of these monks was Simeon Stylites (A.D. 395-451), so called from his standing for years on the top of a column sixty feet high until his muscles became rigid. What a waste of a life!

Some of these hermits hung weights on their bodies; others kept
themselves in cages. They all endeavored to make themselves holy through being miserable. Is this what the Lord was referring to in Matthew 5:4? NO! The motive of many of these men may have been truly honorable. They may have had a desire to escape from the sinful traps and vices of the cities. The unsaved, however, will not be reached this way. The greater the corruption of a society, the more need for holy men and women to live in that society and let their light shine for the Lord Jesus Christ. The world can only become darker by the withdrawal of the salty influence of Christians.

People mourn by becoming hermits as we have just discussed. Others mourn because they are frustrated in fulfilling their evil plans, desires, and lusts, or who have misguided loyalties and affection. To those who mourn in that way the Lord offers no help or peace at all. A classic example of this attitude is found in the life of Amnon. He was grieved over his inability to fulfill his lust with Tamar.

* 2 Samuel 13:2- And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

Concern for the spiritual welfare of the Ephesus believers had caused Paul to mourn. The Ephesus leaders grieved and mourned over his departure from them.

* Acts 20:31-Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
* Acts 20:38- Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Are these kinds of mourning what the Lord is referring to in Matthew 5:4? I believe the answer is again, “No.” Nine different Greek words are used in the New Testament to speak of sorrow, reflecting its commonness in man’s life. Of the nine terms used for sorrow, the one used here, 

pentheo (pen-theh'-o), is the strongest, and the most severe. It represents the deepest, most heart-felt grief, and was generally reserved for grieving over the death of a loved one.

Mourning and sorrows are woven into the cloth of humanity. The story of history is the story of tears. In fact, before the earth’s situation gets better, it will get worse. Jesus tells us that before He comes again, “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” There will be great sorrow in the world before the Lord returns again. What is the Lord referring to when He speaks of “mourning” in this passage?
How can we have glee from grieving?

I. THE CONDITION FOR BLESSING  5:4

Blessed are they that mourn: ....

The mourning about which Jesus is talking in the second Beatitude has nothing to do with the types previously discussed. Our Lord is concerned about all of the legitimate pain and sorrow of His children, and He promises to console, comfort, and strengthen us when we turn to Him for help, but those are not the kind of sorrows being addressed here. Jesus is speaking of godly sorrow, godly mourning, mourning that only those who sincerely desire to belong to Him or who already belong to Him can experience.

Jesus is speaking about mourning over our sinfulness. It is the sorrow which one experiences because of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an active sharing of the world’s hurt and sin with Jesus. Therefore, it includes, not only sorrow for one’s own sin, but also sorrow because of the world’s appalling condition, it’s rejection of the Savior, and the doom of those who refuse His mercy.

Godly sorrow grieves over the sin, not the consequences of our sins or the fact we got caught. Repentance involves agreeing with God about your sins. We should mourn not only for what we do, but what we are...sinners and also what sin does in this world. Paul speaks of this godly sorrow in his second letter to Corinth.

*2 Corinthians 7:10- For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Supernatural or godly sorrow leads to repentance. When we see our spiritual bankruptcy, we can respond one of several ways.

a) We can deny we have a problem and put on a front like the Pharisees. Mourning is disdainful and contemptible to most people, especially when it comes to mourning over sin. The world says, “Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag, and smile, smile, smile. Hide your problems and pretend to be happy.” The same philosophy is applied to sin.

Jesus says, “Confess your sins, and mourn.” When we do that, our smiles can be genuine, because our happiness will be genuine. We can find glee from grieving over our sins. Godly mourning brings godly happiness, which no amount of human effort, no amount of positive thinking or possibility thinking, can produce.
b) We can admit our emptiness and weakness and try to change ourselves. Unfortunately, we do not have power to change ourselves. We cannot do this without the Lord’s help.

* John 15:5- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

c) We can admit our condition and give up. This is the sorrow of the world. Judas committed suicide because of this sorrow. If a person is not willing to turn to Christ, he is truly without hope. When people are without hope, they tend to give up sometimes.

d) We can repent of our sins. People respond to their sin in several ways. Some regret what they have done; some have remorse over their past; others repent of their sins. Let me say that there is a difference between repentance, remorse, and regret. When the awareness of my sin rests only in my mind, then it is regret. When my heart, emotions, and mind are affected, it is remorse. When my life and will are affected and I’m willing to turn from sin and obey God, then I have experienced genuine repentance. Repentance is not only a change in feeling and thinking, but in my will.

The prodigal son was an example of these insights. His mind acknowledged that his Dad’s servants were better off than he had been. Had he hated himself for what he had done, then he would have had remorse for his actions. If he sat in the pigpen and thought how foolish he was and asking, “What in the world was I thinking?” this would be regret. When he said, “I’m going back home to Dad and make things right!” that decision was repentance. His sorrow was a godly sorrow that motivated him to get his life straightened out with God and men.

The sorrow that brings spiritual life and growth is godly sorrow, a sorrow over sin that leads to repentance and a changed life. The word “mourn” in Matthew 5:4, is a present participle, indicating continuous action. In other words, those who are continually grieved and concerned about their sin are those who will be continually comforted. True mourning or grief over our sin does not focus on ourselves. It focuses on God who is grieved by our sin, who alone can forgive and remove them. God’s forgiveness gives the glee from our grieving. This is what Paul expressed in Romans 7.

* Romans 7:18-25... For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. [19] For the good that I would I do not: but the
evil which I would not, that I do. [20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [21] I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. [22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [23] But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [25] I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul wrote those words at the height of his ministry. Yet righteousness and sin were still fighting a battle in his life. As he acknowledges in verse 25, the way of victory is “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” but the rest of the verse makes clear that, at that time, the victory was not yet complete. He knew where the victory was, and he had tasted the victory over his flesh many times, but he knew that, in this life, it is never a permanent victory. The presence of the flesh sees to that. Permanent victory is assured to us now, but it is not given to us now. Our struggle with our flesh will continue until we are dead or raptured.

After his great sin involving Bathsheba and Uriah, David repented and expressed his godly sorrow in Psalm 51.

* Psalm 51:3-4... For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. [4] Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

God loves and honors a humble, contrite heart.

* Isaiah 66:2 - For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Happiness, or blessedness, does not come in the mourning itself. The joy comes with what God does in response to our sorrow over our sin, with His forgiveness that such mourning brings. Godly sorrow brings God’s forgiveness, which brings happiness and joy because you are forgiven! Our grieving over our sin leads to glee and joy that come from the Lord. Mourners over sin are happy because mourners over sin have their sins forgiven.

Sin and happiness are totally incompatible. Where one exists, the other cannot. Until sin is forgiven and removed, happiness is locked out. Mourning over sin brings forgiveness of sin, and forgiveness of sin brings a freedom and a joy that cannot be experienced in any other way. Notice
what James said in James chapter four.

* James 4:8-10.. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. [9] Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. [10] Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The faithful child of God is constantly broken over his sinfulness, and the longer he lives and the more mature he becomes in the Lord, the harder it is for him to be frivolous, flippant, and cocky. He sees more of God’s love and mercy, but he also sees more of his own and the world’s sinfulness. To grow in grace is also to grow in awareness of sin. The mark of the mature life is not sinlessness, which is reserved for Heaven, but a growing awareness of sinfulness in our lives. John addressed this in his epistle. If you go through life thinking there is nothing wrong with you and you have no faults, you are deceived and living a lie.

* 1 John 1:8-9... If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If our mourning is godly, we will not only grieve for our sins, but the sins of fellow believers and for the sins of the world. The closer you walk with God, the more you are aware of your weaknesses, faults, sins and the sins of society. Notice these verses in Isaiah and Psalms.

* Isaiah 6:5- Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

* Jeremiah 9:1- Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Anguished concern about the sins of Israel and God’s coming judgment on His people caused Jeremiah to mourn.

* Psalm 119:136- Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. It is interesting to note that there is no record of Jesus laughing in the New Testament. In fact, Isaiah said that He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Jesus had a great burden for mankind.

* Matthew 23:37- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! The love of Christ caused Him to
mourn over the sins of Jerusalem.

How do we develop a sorrow for sin in our life? How do we develop an attitude of mourning that Jesus spoke about here in this sermon? That’s a great question. There are some things we need to remove from our lives and some habits we need to add.

* **How to Develop Godly Sorrow In Your Life**

1. **Prohibitions Must be Purged from Our Lives**

   Remove the hindrances that keep us from mourning, make us content with ourselves, harden our hearts, that make us resist God’s Spirit and doubt His Word. A heart that is bitter, cold, and hard will not have godly sorrow because it is insensitive to God. The Holy Spirit is grieved and His Spirit is hindered in working in our life.

   *Ephesians 4:30* - And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

2. **A Passion for the Pleasures of Sin Must Be Conquered**

   Our love for our sin is the primary hindrance to godly sorrow. Holding on to it will freeze and petrify your heart.

   *Matthew 24:12* - And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

3. **Pride or a Presumptuous Spirit must be Removed**

   Presumption and pride have a tendency to create many problems and embarrassments for people. The story behind the Confederate flag, known as the Stars and Bars, illustrates this truth. Pierre Beauregard re-designed this flag after leading the victory at Manassas on July 21, 1861. The original one looked like the Stars and Stripes and created confusion on the battlefield.

   The new Stars and Bars had a blue X on a red background with thirteen stars, each star representing a state that had succeeded from the Union. There was one problem with the flag though. There were only eleven states that succeeded from the Union which included: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Beauregard presumed that the border states of Kentucky and Missouri would join their cause, so two more stars were added. He counted his chickens before they were hatched.

   The Blue Grass legislature of Kentucky voted for neutrality, but not without dissension. About 25,000 Blue Grass Rebels fought for the South, but those who fought for the North were about 75,000 men. The
rebels were outnumbered three to one.

In Missouri, Governor Jackson tried to steer the state in the Southern fold. His legislators passed an ordinance of secession, but it was too little, too late. Missouri claimed to send 40,000 men into Rebel outfits, but 110,000 fought for the Union. The two extra stars of presumption were never removed from the Rebel flag. Presumption can be embarrassing and when it comes to our Christian growth, it can hinder us.

Pride says, “There is nothing wrong with me. What sin are you talking about?” Presumption hinders mourning because it is really a form of pride. It recognizes the need for grace, but not much grace because I’m not that bad or as bad as someone else. It has the attitude that my faults are not bad enough to be confessed, repented of, and forsaken. There is no need to mourn over my sins. Those who presume to think this have presumed wrong! Notice what Isaiah said about this kind of attitude.

* Isaiah 55:7- Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. No pardon is offered to the unrepentant, presumptuous person who refuses to forsake his sin.

David hid his sin and it had devastating consequences on his health.

* Psalm 32:3-4... When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. [4] For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

When David stopped to humble himself, stopped hiding his sin, began mourning over it and confessed it, he found blessing and joy.

* Psalm 32:5- I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

* Psalm 32:1-2....Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. [2] Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

4. Procrastination Must be Rejected in Our Attitude

A farm boy accidentally overturned his wagon-load of corn in the road. The farmer who lived nearby came to investigate. “Hey, Willis,” he called out, “forget your troubles for a spell and come on in and have dinner with us. Then I’ll help you get the wagon up.” “That’s mighty nice of you,” Willis answered, “But I don’t think Pa would like me to.” “Aw, come on, son!” the farmer insisted. “Well, okay,” the boy finally agreed.
"But Pa won’t like it." After a hearty dinner, Willis thanked his host. "I feel a lot better now, but I just know Pa is going to be real upset." "Don’t be foolish!" exclaimed the neighbor. "By the way, where is your Pa?" "Under the wagon." Beloved, procrastination can get us into big trouble!

**Procrastination hinders godly mourning simply by putting it off.**
It says, "One of these days I’ll get right with God when things are just right. I’ll take a hard look at my sins, confess them, and ask God’s forgiveness and cleansing." This attitude is like playing Russian Roulette with your life. It is foolish and dangerous, because we do not know what our life will be like tomorrow.

*James 4:14-* **Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.** The sooner sin is dealt with in our lives, the sooner comfort will come. If it is not dealt with, we have no assurance that comfort will ever come, because we have no assurance we will have time to confess it later.

5. **Perplexity or Despair has to be Discarded from Our Heart**

Despair hinders mourning because despair is giving up on God, refusing to believe that He can save and help us. Despair is putting our life outside God’s grace. The one who is perplexed believes he is destined to sin. Because he believes God has given up on him, he gives up on God. Despair excuses sin by choosing to believe that there is no choice. It hides God’s mercy behind a self-made cloud of doubt. Jeremiah referred to people who used this excuse to do their own thing and live their own way.

*Jeremiah 18:12-* **And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.**

6. **The Perception of the Holiness of God will Develop Godly Sorrow**

The most important step we can take in getting rid of hindrances to mourning, whatever they are, is to look at the holiness of God and the great sacrifice of sin-bearing at the cross. If seeing Christ die for our sins does not thaw a cold heart or break up a hardened heart, it is beyond melting or breaking. If we are insensitive to our sin, laugh at it, take it lightly, or enjoy it, we can be sure we are not mourning over it and are outside the sphere of God’s blessing.

David experienced and expressed many kinds of common human sorrow, both proper and improper. He mourned over being lonely, over being rejected, over being discouraged and disappointed, and over losing
an infant child. He also mourned inordinately over the death of Absalom, whom God had removed to protect Israel and the messianic throne of David. Nothing, however, broke the heart of David like his own sin. No anguish was as deep as the anguish he felt when he finally saw the awfulness of his offenses against the Lord. That is when David became happy, when he became truly sad over his transgressions.

7. Praying Develops a Tender Heart
   Our times of prayer will keep up close to the Lord, which in turn, will make us aware of our sinfulness. We are to pray for contriteness of heart, which only God can give and which He never refuses to give those who ask.
   *Psalm 51:10- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
   *Psalm 51:17 - The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

8. Ponder or Study God’s Word
   Do a study of sin in Scripture. Learn what an evil and repulsive thing it is to God and what a destructive and damming thing it is to the lives and souls of people. The godly mourner will have true sorrow for his sins. His first concern is for the harm his sin does to God’s glory, not the harm its exposure might bring to his own reputation or welfare. We should learn from David and others to keep our sin ever before us.
   *Psalm 51:3 - For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.
   *Isaiah 6:5- Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.
   *Luke 5:8 - When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.
   *1 Timothy 1:15- This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. As we hear those great men of God talking about their sin, we are forced to face the reality and the depth of our own.

II. THE COMFORT OF GOD  5:4

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that mourn. The word “they” is from the Greek word autoi, which means “they alone.” God is not in
the business of comforting people who do not view their sin with a broken, sorrowful heart. We mourn, then we are comforted. The comfort comes after the mourning of the sinner. That is why he is blessed. It is not the mourning that blesses, but the comfort God gives to those who mourn in a godly way.

The word “comforted” comes from the Greek word parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o} which means “to call to one’s side, to encourage, strengthen, instruct, teach, or comfort.” What or whom does the Lord use to comfort us? The Bible provides us with the answers.

* The Channels of Comfort for the Christian

1. The Son of God comforts us.
* 2 Corinthians 1:3- Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
* Psalm 86:17- Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

2. The Sovereign Father comforts us.
* Isaiah 51:12 - I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;

3. The Spirit of God comforts us.

A little lad, whose mother was prevented from going with him to church because of illness, asked her little son about the sermon which he had heard. “What did the preacher preach about?” she asked him, and he gave the surprising answer, “The preacher said God was going to send us an extra ‘bed quilt.’” Surprised, the poor mother asked if he remembered the text and he replied, “The preacher said ‘He shall give you another comforter.’”
* John 14:16- And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Jesus was the first comforter. When He ascended He gave us another Comforter.

The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter or our Parakletos. It comes from the Greek word parakaleo, a verb which means “to encourage.” This verb, parakaleo was used several ways in Greek literature which reveals the work of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

a) It was used to call an advocate into court.

The Greek word for advocate is parakletos. The word “para”
means "along side" and "kaleo" means "to call." John was the only one who used this term in the New Testament. The "parakletos" was the one called alongside to assist, help, defend, or intercede on the behalf of another or to give counsel. The advocate counseled, coached, and championed the cause of another in court. He was a helper, supporter, and a witness giving favorable testimony. In Rome, boys of good families replaced their toga with a purple stripe at the age of seventeen and put on a white toga of a man. They were then presented as speakers or advocates in the courts.

The parakletos was also one who lent his presence to his friends. In a military court martial, the officer who defended the accused soldier was called the prisoner's friend. The parakletos was also called in to help in a situation with which a man by himself could not cope alone. The Lord is our friend too. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother and helps us to cope with conflicts, concerns, and when we are crushed.

b) It was used to call in a coach to train a team at his own expense. He counsels and gives advice to the team. The Holy Spirit is our trainer and teacher too.

* John 16:13- Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

* John 14:26- But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

c) It was used to call in the Greek gods as helpers. The Holy Spirit is our helper (Hebrews 13:6).

* Hebrews 13:6- So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

d) It was the word of the rallying cry. It was used of speeches of the leaders and soldiers who urged or encouraged each other in battle. Parakaleo meant to challenge the timid soldiers to fight on courageously. This is what the soldiers who were fighting for the independence of Texas did when they shouted "Remember the Alamo!" The Holy Spirit gives us boldness to live for Christ and do His will (Acts 4:31).

The parakletos then, is an encourager. He is one who puts courage into the faint-hearted and makes an ordinary man cope with dangerous, difficult situations. He is a helper, counselor, and the One who stands by you. He puts courage into the faint hearted. He keeps a man on his feet when, if left to himself, he would collapse. He encourages a man to pass
the breaking point. Such is what the Holy Spirit and Jesus do for us. The Lord is our encourager and comforter.

In 1858, Scottish missionary John G. Paton and his wife sailed for the New Hebrides (now called Vanuatu). Three months after arriving on the island of Tanna, his wife died. One week later his infant son also died. Paton was plunged into sorrow. Feeling terribly alone, and surrounded by savage people who showed him no sympathy, he wrote, "Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me. As for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows... but for Jesus, and His fellowship, I would have gone mad and died."

4. Our Siblings can comfort us.
* Proverbs 29:17- Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. The word "rest" can be translated "comfort."

5. Sureness or Faith in the Lord can give us comfort.
* Matthew 9:22- But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

6. The Sympathy and Sweet Kindness of God gives us comfort.
* Psalm 119:76- Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

7. The Saints of God can comfort us.

The English word "comfort" comes from two Latin words that mean "with strength." The words fortify and fortress carry the same meaning. When we comfort someone, we strengthen or encourage them.

* 2 Corinthians 7:5-6... For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. [6] Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;
* 2 Corinthians 7:13- Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.
* 1 Thessalonians 5:11- Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
* 1 Thessalonians 4:18- Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

8. The Scriptures can comfort us.
* Romans 15:4- For whatsoever things were written aforetime were
written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.
* Psalm 119:50-52 ... This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. [51] The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law. [52] I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.
* 1 Thessalonians 4:18- Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

III. CONFRONTING GRIEF IN OUR LIVES

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Even though this passage is referring to mourning over our sinfulness, we do mourn over other matters, as we have seen, especially the death of loved ones. When those times come, the Lord is there for us and comforts us in our sorrow.

In this section, I wanted to go ahead and deal with the issue of "grief" and how to grapple with it. The world's way and God's way are two different roads when it comes to the issue of dealing with grief. You may not be grieving now, but you may have a friend that is or you may grieve in the future. Hopefully, some of the things we share in this section will be helpful to you and others that you help.

What is grief? Author Edgar Jackson poignantly describes grief in a number of ways that some of us understand very well.
1. Grief is a young widow trying to raise her three children, alone.
2. Grief is the man so filled with shocked uncertainty and confusion that he strikes out at the nearest person.
3. Grief is a mother walking daily to a nearby cemetery to stand quietly and alone a few minutes before going about the tasks of the day. She knows that a part of her is in the cemetery, just as a part of her is in her daily work.
4. Grief is the silent, knife-like terror and sadness that come a hundred times a day, when you start to speak to someone who is no longer there.
5. Grief is the emptiness that comes when you eat alone after eating with another for many years.
6. Grief is teaching yourself to go to bed without saying good night to the one who had died.
7. Grief is the helpless wish that things were different in your life, when you know they are not and never will be again.
8. Grief is a whole cluster of adjustments, apprehensions, and
uncertainties that strike life in its forward progress and make it difficult to redirect the energies of life.

**How we deal with grief will determine whether we drown in despair or move forward with our lives with courage and joy.** In early Christian history, Christians dealt with the death of believers with an interesting perspective. Their perspective of birthdays was much different than today’s. The history of celebrating birthdays has an interesting background. In fact, in the beginning, children’s birthdays were not celebrated. In Egypt, 3000 B.C., the birthday of the Pharaoh was celebrated with feasts and the release of prisoners from the royal prison. In Greece, the birthdays of Greek gods were celebrated monthly, each god hailed with twelve elaborate parties a year. The Romans made the birthdays of important leaders national holidays.

With the rise of Christianity, however, the tradition of celebrating birthdays ceased altogether. Why? To the early followers of Jesus Christ, who were oppressed, persecuted, and martyred by the Jews and pagans, they felt the world was a harsh, cruel place. There was no reason to celebrate one’s birth, but since death was true deliverance and the passage into eternal life in Heaven, every Christian’s death day merited prayerful observance.

Contrary to popular belief, it was the death days, not the birthdays of Christians that were celebrated and became their feast days. The day of death of the believer was considered the birthday. They were celebrating the birth of the person into the afterlife. Their whole outlook on the death of a Christian was different than today’s beliefs. In the fourth century, it was the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ that caused Christians in the Western world to return to the celebration of birthdays. We can confront the death of Christians today with hope and peace because we know we will be re-united again one day with our saved loved ones.

*1 Thessalonians 4:13- But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.* We are not to be full of sorrow like those without Christ who have no hope at all.

**The way the world deals with grief is much different than the way God wants us to deal with it.** Bill Hybels shares in his book, "A Better Kind of Grieving," the approach of society today toward grief management. He tells us the story about a boy named Johnny.

John James and Frank Cherry, in their book on grief recovery, trace
Chapter 2...The Glee from Grieving...5:4

the story of a boy named Johnny. When five-year-old Johnny's dog dies, Johnny is stunned, and he bursts out crying. His dog was his constant companion; it slept at the foot of his bed. Now the dog is gone, and little Johnny is a basket case. Johnny's dad stammers a bit and says, "Uh, don't feel bad, Johnny, we'll get you a new dog Saturday." In that one sentence, Johnny's dad is really offering the first two steps in society's grief management program:

Step 1: Bury your feelings
Step 2: Replace your losses with a substitute. Once you have the new dog you won't even think about the old dog any more.

Later in his life, when Johnny falls in love with a high school freshman girl, the world never looked brighter, until she dumps him. Suddenly a curtain covers the sun. Johnny's heart is broken, and this time it's big-time hurt. It's not just a dog. This is a person his heart was fixed upon. John is a wreck, but his mother comes to the rescue this time and says with great sensitivity, "Don't feel bad, John, there are other fish in the sea." Bury the pain, replace the loss. Johnny has steps one and two down pat now. He'll use them the rest of his life.

Much later, John's grandfather dies—the one he fished with every summer and felt close too. A note was slipped to him in math class. He read the note and couldn't fight off the tears. He broke down sobbing on his desk. The teacher felt uncomfortable about it and sent him off to the school office to grieve alone. When John's father brought him home from school, John saw his mother weeping in the living room, and he wanted to embrace her and cry with her, but his dad said, "Don't disturb her, John, she needs to be alone. She'll be all right in a little while. Then the two of you can talk." The third step in the grieving puzzle was now making sense to John.

Step 3: Grieve alone. So Johnny went to his room to cry alone, and he felt a deep sense of loneliness.

Let's review Johnny’s life in dealing with grief: Bury your feelings; replace your losses; grieve alone; but also, let time heal; live with regret; never trust again. How does that sound? It sounds familiar. It's been the world’s approach for years.

Grief may be called a life-shaking sorrow over a loss of a loved one. During times of grief, emotions of anger, guilt, and fear are often involved and have to be dealt with. Some folks become bitter at people who caused a death or bitter at God for allowing the tragedy to occur. Others feel guilty, especially if they survived a tragedy or if they feel they
could have done something to prevent a death. People also respond to
grief by carrying legitimate sorrow to illegitimate extremes. When a
person grieves so hard and so long over the loss of a loved one that he
cannot function normally, his grief becomes sinful and destructive.

Unnatural grieving and sorrow can be caused by selfishness, especially when we grieve because the person who died catered to our
needs and now those needs will be diminished. Instead of missing the
person, the selfish pampering is missed.

Fear also causes unnatural sorrow including fear of the future, of
change, and the fear of death. Excessive tears are to protect the person
like a shield from the difficulties and hardships that lurk in the future.
The person uses the tears to feel sorry for himself. His attitude is, "Don’t
expect anything of me. Don’t make any demands. I have enough to bear
already."

The greatest cause of unnatural grief is guilt. Some grieve
excessively to atone for their behavior or treatment of the person while
they were alive. They feel guilty for what they did to the person. To ease
their guilt, they grieve excessively. For a Christian, excessive grief is a
mark of unfaithfulness and lack of trust in God. God instructed us to not
be in despair.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:13- But I would not have you to be ignorant, 
brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as
others which have no hope.

How do we grapple with grief? How do we deal with it in a
mature, godly manner? You need to realize there are three key stages in
the grief process.

1. The Shock Stage- This is when you find out about the death. It will
last about one to two hours. You may experience numbness, hysteria, or
bewilderment. Some folks try to deaden their pain with alcohol or drugs
in this stage. When the ark of God was stolen in 1 Samuel chapter four,
the shock killed Eli and caused his daughter-n-law to go into labor. She
gave birth to a boy and named him Ichabod.

2. The Scramble Stage- In this stage you may undergo some
disorganization. It may last anywhere from seven to ten days. Waves of
physical distress may come deep from within you. You may experience
tight feelings in the throat or a feeling of suffocation. This stage is also
characterized by deep sighing, limp limbs, emptiness, a loss of spirit,
 zest, joy or motivation. Some folks may become cold, stiff, and formal
toward close friends, even lashing out at them in anger. A lot of blaming
is done in this stage. God, others, or self are blamed. Common statements made by the grieving are “What am I going to do?”

3. The Settled Stage- This stage usually follows the scrambled stage. It is the period where you are most neglected and have the greatest need of support. Many have forgotten your hurt and pain. Depression sets in sometimes and there is a tendency to hide in an emotional shell, cutting yourself off from those around you that do love you. Don’t be afraid to share your grief with those who do care. It is also a time of many decisions. It is very difficult to be alone in this period. Drastic changes will be taking place in your life. You may face great confusion and fear.

So how do we confront our grief? Should we bury our feelings, replace our losses with substitutes, and grieve alone? The Bible offers a better way to deal with your grief.

1. Trust the Lord with your life-
* Proverbs 3:5-6 ... Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. The word “trust” carries the idea of relying on someone for security.

When missionary John Paton was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe, he discovered that they had no word for trust or faith. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary's house, flopped himself in a large chair and said, "It's good to rest my whole weight on this chair." "That's it," said Paton. "I'll translate faith as 'resting one's whole weight on God.'"

God's call is for a trust that is characterized by total commitment—"with all your heart" (v.5), "in all thy ways" (v.6). When we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct or make our paths straight compared to the crooked and perverse path of the wicked. What does Solomon mean by “straight path?” Let me illustrate with a story.

The snow covered the ground where three lads were playing. A man came along and said to them, "Would you like to try a race and the winner receive a prize?" The boys agreed and the man told them that his race was to be different. "I will go to the other side of the field," he said, "and when I give you the signal, you will start to run. The one whose footsteps are the straightest in the snow will be the winner."

The race commenced and the first boy kept looking at his feet to see if his steps were straight. The second lad kept looking at his companions to see what they were doing, but the third boy just ran on with his eyes steadfastly fixed on the man on the other side of the field. The third lad
was the winner, for his footsteps were straight in the snow. He had kept his eyes on the goal ahead of him.

When we keep our focus and trust in the Lord, He will help us walk a straight path and not be distracted by companions. The straight path is the shortest distance and the one with the least amount of waste. When you trust the Lord with your life and live for Him, you will not waste your life away. Trust the Lord that He will care for several areas of your life.

**a. Your Family**

Gladys Aylward, missionary to China more than fifty years ago, was forced to flee when the Japanese invaded Yangcheng, but she could not leave her work behind. With only one assistant, she led more than a hundred orphans over the mountains toward Free China. She loved these children dearly like her own family. In their book *The Hidden Price of Greatness*, Ray Besson and Ranelda Mack Hunsicker tell what happened.

They shared that during Gladys's harrowing journey out of war-torn Yangcheng ... she grappled with despair as never before. After passing a sleepless night, she faced the morning with no hope of reaching safety. A 13-year-old teenage girl in the group reminded her of their much-loved story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. “But I am not Moses,” Gladys cried in desperation. The teenager responded, “Of course you aren't, but Jehovah is still God!” When Gladys and the orphans made it through, they proved once again that no matter how inadequate we feel, God is still God, and we can trust in Him. We can trust Him with our loved ones.

**b. Our Finances**

*Philippians 4:19- But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* God supplies all of our needs. The word “supply” means “to fill or satisfy to the full.” Notice several things about God’s supply.

1/ **The Sovereign of the Supply- “My God”**

When you can’t see a solution, my God shall supply. When men ignore or don’t recognize your need, my God shall supply. When there is no other source, my God shall supply. When you are alone and unknown, my God shall supply. You may wonder, “Is the Lord personally involved in my life? Is He available to me right now? Does God just know about my needs or will He meet them?” The answers to all these questions are “Yes!” He is alive and well!
2) The Security and Sureness of the Supply- “shall supply”

David said in Psalm 23, “I shall not want.” When others do not come to your aid, He shall. When you cannot meet your need, He shall. When there is no way or solution to solve your need, He shall. He supplied deliverance for the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, for Daniel in the lion’s den, for David from Goliath’s might, and for Gideon when he battled the Midianites against overwhelming odds. He provided for His people as they wandered through the wilderness for forty years.

God supplied the need of Abraham when he offered up Isaac in Genesis 22. Abraham called this place of testing and provision, Jehovah-jireh, which means “the Lord sees.” God’s provision of the ram demonstrated the truth that God provides the right things that we precisely need because He sees and knows what our needs are. God also provides for us in the right places. God provided the ram on top of the mountain where Abraham needed it.

Sometimes we miss out on God’s blessings because we are not in the right place at the right time. We are not where we are supposed to be. How many miss out on the blessings in church because they are absent from the service? God’s provision for Abraham demonstrated the fact that God always provides the right things for us in the right place at the right time. God is always on time. He is never late.

3) The Sum and Sufficiency of the Supply- “all your need”

God can care for all your needs, whatever that need may be. Dr. F. B. Meyer learned the secret of appropriation when he was addressing a large group of children who became very unruly. On the verge of losing his temper, he prayed in his heart, "Thy patience, Lord!" Immediately all anger and annoyance died. From then on he used the same formula for every difficult situation. When he felt lonely, he said, "Thy companionship, Lord!" When he was afraid, "Thy serenity, Lord!" When he felt critical of others, "Thy love, Lord!" He found the Savior sufficient for his every need when he appropriated by faith the promises of God!

Many times we fail to distinguish between needs and desires. God will supply all your need, not all your greed; not all your wishes and desires, but all your needs; not all of what you think you need, but all your need. He wants and will care for us if we will let Him.

J. Wilbur Chapman often told of the testimony given by a certain man in one of his meetings: "I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, "Hey, mister, can you give me
a dime?" As soon as I saw his face I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said, "Father, Father, do you know me?" Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Oh my son, at last I've found you! I've found you. You want a dime? Everything I have is yours." Think of it. I was a tramp. I stood begging my own father for ten cents, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he had." What a wonderful illustration of the way God longs to treat us, if we will only let Him.

4] The Standard and Source of Supply—"according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"

We have a wealthy Heavenly Father. His wealth is immeasurable. He is the One who created diamonds, rubies, gold, silver, and oil. No one can come close to comparison in the wealth of God. He can supply any need we have now and in the future. In Christ we have a wonderful inheritance waiting for us.

At one time J. Wilbur Chapman experienced a great sorrow that nearly shook his faith. In addition, his finances were almost depleted just when it was necessary for him to take a long trip to the western United States. One of the men of his church who was a wealthy banker, came to his home to offer a word of comfort and encouragement. As he left, he slipped a piece of paper into Pastor Chapman’s hand. Chapman looked at it and was surprised to find that it was a check made out to him and signed by this rich friend, but the figures to indicate the amount of the gift were missing.

Chapman asked, "Did you really mean to give me a signed blank check?" The Christian friend replied, "Yes, I didn't know how much you'd need, and I wanted to be sure you would have enough." Later Pastor Chapman commented, "While I never had to use that check, it gave me a secure feeling to know that thousands of dollars were literally at my disposal." Someone has said, "God too has given us a signed check in Philippians 4:19 to provide for every genuine need that arises in our lives." God can take care of our family, our finances, and next, our future.

c. Our Future

* Psalm 37:23- The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

On July 6, 1415, John Huss was taken to the place where he would be a martyr for the truth in which he believed. As he went to the stake, he was heard quoting Psalm 31:1, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me
never be ashamed." Huss put his entire life and future in the hands of the Lord. We are to do the same thing.

d. Our Feelings

* Isaiah 26:3- Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

A miserable looking woman recognized F. B. Meyer on the train and ventured to share her burden with him. For years she had cared for a crippled daughter who brought great joy to her life. She made tea for her each morning, then left for work, knowing that in the evening the daughter would be there when she arrived home, but the daughter had died, and the grieving mother was alone and miserable. Home was not "home" anymore.

Meyer gave her wise counsel. "When you get home and put the key in the door," he said, "say aloud, 'Jesus, I know You are here!' and be ready to greet Him directly when you open the door. As you light the fire tell Him what has happened during the day; if anybody has been kind, tell Him; if anybody has been unkind, tell Him, just as you would have told your daughter. At night stretch out your hand in the darkness and say, 'Jesus, I know You are here!'

Some months later, Meyer was back in that neighborhood and met the woman again, but he did not recognize her. Her face radiated joy instead of announcing misery. "I did as you told me," she said, "and it has made all the difference in my life, and now I feel I know Him."

2. Tackle Bitterness that may begin to surface in your heart-

Do not allow yourself to become bitter at God or others. Take your burdens to the Lord. Ask God to take away any anger in your life.

* Ephesians 4:31- Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: All malicious behavior should be shunned.

3. Talk to a Friend-

Telling a friend about your problems and feelings can help ease the burden. Don’t be afraid to do this. Go to church and fellowship with other believers. Listen to the preaching of God’s Word. Let me say that when people come to you to express their grief, you can help them in a big way by being a mourning partner with them.

A mourning partner weeps with those who weep. Your tears are salve for their wounds. A mourning partner stands with the person in
their time of grief, being close enough to feel their pain, hurt, and desperation and willing to get involved in their hurt. Elijah did this with the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17).

A mourning partner patiently accepts the grieving person wherever they are in their grief. If the person is bitter or angry, he is patient as they work through their anger, bitterness, or sorrow. He gives that person room to grieve and helps them work through the stages of grief. A mourning-partner comforts others by letting the person know they are hurting and that they care they are hurting.

4. Take Care of Your Health-
Be sure not to neglect your health. Keep your strength up by eating properly and getting plenty of rest. A lack of rest and nourishment can lead to deeper despair. Keep up your strength.

5. Thumb Through God’s Word-
Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States said, "There are a good many problems before the American people today, and before me as President, but I expect to find the solution of those problems just in the proportion that I am faithful in the study of the Word of God. I ask every man and woman... that from this day on they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this great book.”

Beloved, great comfort and strength can come from spending time in the Bible. Comforting passages include Psalm 23, 37, 27,28, 34; Romans 8. There are individual verses that are like anchors that we can cling to with hope.
* Job 13:15- Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.
* Isaiah 41:10- Fear thou not: for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.
* Psalm 37:5- Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

6. Take Your Burden to the Lord and leave it there-
In Scandinavia, mothers would explain the birth of a baby in the home by telling them the stork brought it and dropped it down the chimney. Why would they use the stork? Scandinavian scientists studied
the stork and their nesting habits on the chimney stacks of homes. The birds, in their long, seventy-year life span, returned to the same chimney year after year. They kept the same mate year after year. Storks are very gentle and caring birds. Young adult birds lavish great attention and care on elderly or sick parent birds, feeding them and offering their extended wings for support. In fact, the ancient Romans, impressed with the stork’s behavior, passed legislation called the Stork’s Law, compelling children to care for their aged parents.

The Greeks were also impressed with the stork. Their term *storge*, the origin of our English word “stork” means “strong natural love and affection.” Thus, the gentleness and the nesting habits on chimneys made it the ideal creature to deliver a baby down the chimney.

Beloved, as caring as the stork is, God cares about us much more than this bird cares for its family. As our loving Heavenly Father, He is gentle and concerned about our needs. He provides strength and encouragement when we are weak. Paul and Peter both spoke of God’s strength and care and how we should trust in Him, especially when we are hurting.

* 2 Corinthians 12:9-10... And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

* 1 Peter 5:7 - Casting all your care upon him; for he careeth for you.

The word “casting” is from the Greek word *epirrhipto* {ep-ir-hript-ō} which means “to throw upon, make responsible for.” This word was used to describe the rider putting a cloth or blanket on a horse or mule that would act as a saddle. God wants us to put our cares, worries, or anxieties upon His back. He wants that responsibility in our lives.

In spite of our grief, we can still have glee and joy in our lives by trusting in Him and rejoicing in His care and forgiveness. Have you found the glee from grieving? Let me ask, “If you were to die today, do you know for sure if you would go to Heaven? You can know it for sure by trusting Jesus Christ to take you to Heaven and asking Him to cleanse and forgive you of all your sins.
Chapter 3
How to Get a Great Inheritance

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

We now look at the third Beatitude which deals with the issue of meekness. As we have already seen, the Beatitudes can be said to be progressively more difficult to put into practice. The first beatitude involves the recognition of our spiritual bankruptcy and the blessing of being poor in spirit. The second beatitude involves remorse or mourning over our spiritual condition of sinfulness. It is a godly sorrow that leads to repentance and a changed life that is yielded to the Lord.

The third beatitude is even more difficult than the first two, because it involves the issue of our relationship with others and having self control. Following Christ and His example is not easy, but is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Living the Christian life without the Lord in your life is impossible, but we can do all things through Christ. It is the Lord who enables us to be meek and will reward those who are meek with a great inheritance when He returns. What does the Lord mean by this word “meek? How do you become meek? How do I know if I am meek?” We will address these issues in this message. Many will be surprised to find that they are not meek at all and have a need for growth in this area of their lives.

I. THE EXAMINATION OF MEEKNESS

The meek are blessed and have great joy, but what does it mean to be meek? First, let’s define what it is NOT. Meekness is not weakness, timidity, cowardice, flabbiness, a wishy-washy lack of conviction, being an introvert or being a sissy. On the contrary, the word has the opposite meaning. If you think meekness is weakness, trying
being meek for a week. Meekness is not vindictive, does not retaliate, is not selfish, does not emphasize its rights, does not exalt itself, and is not cruel and unkind. It is not being a hen-pecked husband or a brow-beaten wife. It is not a "yes-man" on the job. Meekness is not a passive acceptance of all the sinful acts and evil practices which unsaved men may try to enforce upon us in this world. So what is it?

It is difficult to define meekness with just one word. The word is like a rainbow with many colors The word “meekness” comes from the Greek word *praus* (prah-ooce') which means “*not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance, gentle, humble, lowliness, deference, considerate, mild, soft.∗” The word was used to describe soothing medicine or a gentle breeze. In fact, Wycliffe translated Matthew 5:5 as, "Blessed be mild men."

Hebrew scholar Gensenius, says that the meaning of the Old Testament word for “meekness” involves "a lowly, pious, and modest mind, which prefers to bear injuries rather than return them." Meekness is not only the opposite of pride, but of stubbornness, fierceness, and vengefulness. It is the opposite of self-will toward God, and of ill-will toward men.

The meek person will not expect to be always treated with respect and reverence. He will do his duty in the station where God has set him gently and lovingly, seeking not honor from men, ambitious only to be well pleasing unto the Lord. Meekness is also patience in reception of injuries with a belief that God will vindicate us. It believes in Romans 12:19, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," This kind of attitude produces peace. It is proof of true greatness of the soul.

The heart of the meek is too great to be moved by little insults. It looks upon those who offer insults and are offensive with pity. The person that is constantly ruffled, that suffers every little insult or injury to throw him off his guard, and to raise a storm of passion within, is at the mercy of every mortal that chooses to disturb him. He is like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

We may acknowledge our own bankruptcy (v. 3) and mourn (v. 4), but to respond with meekness when others tell us of our spiritual bankruptcy and weaknesses is far harder. Our tendency is to fight back or defend ourselves. Jesus, however, did not defend Himself when He was falsely accused, abused, slandered, and mocked.

*1 Peter 2:23- Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth
righteously:

Meekness is that temper of spirit in which we accept God’s dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. It is closely linked with the word humility. It is the gentleness of strength, not mere effeminacy. The Greek word for meek was also used to describe an animal which has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of a command, which has learned to answer to the reins. It is the word for an animal which has learned to accept control, such as the taming of a wild stallion. Thus, the meek man has self control. He has his passions and anger under control. He knows when it is the proper time to be angry at that which is wrong or unjust, and when not to be angry. Ruling your spirit is meekness. It takes great strength to have self-control and self-discipline.

*Proverbs 16:32- He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

It was the lack of self control which ruined Alexander the Great, who, in a fit of uncontrolled temper in the middle of a drunken debauch, hurled a spear at his best friend and killed him. No man can lead others until he has mastered himself; no man can serve others until he has subjected himself; no man can be in control of others until he has learned to control himself. The man, however, who gives himself into the complete control of God will gain this meekness which will indeed enable him to inherit the earth. Meekness is hard to learn, but it is a necessary lesson for us, for it was characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He declared that those who have this trait are truly blessed.

II. EXAMPLES OF MEEKNESS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible provides for us a number of examples of people that demonstrated meekness in their actions and attitudes. Their lives are living examples of what meekness is all about. May we be challenged by their example and be living examples ourselves of meekness for those who study our lives.

A. Meekness demonstrated in Conflict over Possessions.

*Genesis 13:7-9 ... And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. [8] And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. [9] Is not the whole land*
before thee? separate thyself. I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

Abraham, in humility, yielded to Lot's needs. He entrusted his life to the Lord and His direction. He did not have to do this because he was the leader of the family. His meekness sought to protect the peace and unity of their family. He illustrated the truth of Romans 12:10.

* Romans 12:10 - Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.

Greed destroys meekness. It distorts common sense and pollutes our priorities. For example, several years ago, construction workers were laying a foundation for a building outside the city of Pompeii. They found the corpse of a woman who must have been fleeing from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, but was caught in the rain of hot ashes. The woman's hands clutched jewels, which were preserved in excellent condition. She had the jewels, but death had stolen it all. That's the bottom line in life. Worldly treasure is not a wise investment because you can't take it with you. Jim Elliot, a missionary who was martyred for his faith, understood this reality when he wrote in his journal, "A person is no fool to give up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose." It's not foolish to give up what you cannot keep in order to gain what you cannot lose.

B. Meekness demonstrated when the Call of God was Challenged

* Numbers 12:2-3 ...And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. [3] (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

Moses was challenged about his calling by Aaron and Miriam, his older brother and sister. Rather than railing at Aaron and Miriam, Moses reacted in humility and in deference in what Scripture called "meekness." Moses did something that is not easy to do. Instead of fighting back and defending himself, Moses let the Lord take care of the matter of his calling, and God did indeed take care of it. Miriam was smitten with leprosy and shame. Moses begged the Lord to forgive them and to do something about Miriam's leprosy.

C. Meekness demonstrated over the issue of Command

The eldest son of King Saul was Jonathan. He was in line for the throne when Saul died. Saul lost his throne because of disobedience to God, and the throne was given to David by God. Jonathan, though he lost
out on his being heir to the throne of Israel, did not rebel against the Lord or seek revenge on David, but nobly yielded to God's choice for king. He demonstrated his meekness in several ways. First, after David killed Goliath, Jonathan "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, along with his garments, sword, bow, and girdle" (1 Samuel 18:4). This was a huge act of recognition of David's greatness and his superceding of Jonathan. Then Jonathan worked against his father and helped to protect David from Saul's murderous schemes to kill David. Finally, the last time Jonathan saw David, Jonathan acknowledged the rule of David and said, "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee" (1 Samuel 23:17). Jonathan was graciously submissive to God's demotion of himself and David's promotion to the position of king.

D. Meekness demonstrated in a time of Criticism, Caustic treatment, and Cursing.

* 2 Samuel 16:11-12... And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. [12] It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.

When David was fleeing Jerusalem during Absalom's attempted coup, Shimei, a wicked man, yelled at David, cursed him, and called David names. One of the bodyguards of David asked the king for permission to go and "take off his head" (2 Samuel 16:9). David refused to allow that to be done and said, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Samuel 16:11,12). Here David was humbly pliant to God's will and in a wonderful display of meekness refused to be vindictive and retaliatory. He had surrendered his reputation to God and chose to let the Lord take care of this matter. If you are a Pastor or in leadership, you can understand how difficult it is to respond this way when you are falsely criticized and maligned. God wants us to trust our reputation to Him.

Ken Medema is a Christian musician whose ministry has impacted millions. He was born blind, but his parents never allowed his blindness to exclude him from activities. They taught him to ride a bike, water ski, and do many other things which are normally "off limits" for the visually impaired. One day while on his college campus, Ken accidentally bumped into another blind student. The guy yelled, "Hey, watch it. Don't
you know I'm blind?" Medema didn't rail back or even mention his own disability. He simply said, "I'm sorry. I didn't see you." Meekness remains gracious even when one's rights have been violated.

E. Meekness demonstrated in a time of Corruption and Cruelty at Calvary.

*1 Peter 2:21-23... For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: [22] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: [23] Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Jesus never sinned, and He never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when He was insulted and falsely accused by the corrupt leaders around Him. When He suffered, He did not threaten to get even. He left His case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

Jesus was an outstanding example of meekness, especially when He faced the rigors of the cross which included mocking, slander, beatings, humiliation, and torture. The Lord was totally yielded to the will of God the Father. With humility, unselfishness, and patient endurance of His sufferings, He died for us that He might be our Savior and pay the price for our sins. He was like a lamb that was led to the slaughter, but He was a lion when it came to ruling His will and desires. Understand His self control and discipline. Jesus was the Creator of the universe. He had all power to wipe out His enemies, yet, chose not to do so because the plan of redemption would not have been fulfilled. How could He do this? He was meek.

* Matthew 11:29- Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

A Sunday school superintendent read this text. "Who can tell me what a yoke is?" he asked. "Something they put on the necks of animals," answered a ten-year-old girl. "Then," asked the leader, "what is God's yoke?" There was silence until a four-year-old raised his hand and said, "God, putting His arms around our neck." The Oriental shepherd was always ahead of his sheep. He was down in front. Any attack upon the sheep had to take him into account. Now our Lord is down in front of us. He is in our tomorrow.

F. Meekness demonstrated in Commitment & Concern while facing Contempt and Rejection.

Many years ago, while on a visit to America, a wealthy Chinese businessman was fascinated by a powerful microscope. Looking through
its lens to study crystals and the petals of flowers, he was amazed at their beauty and detail. So he decided to purchase one of these devices and take it back to China. He thoroughly enjoyed using it until one day he examined some rice he was planning to eat for dinner.

Much to his dismay, he discovered that tiny living creatures were crawling in it. Since he was especially fond of this staple food in his daily diet, he wondered what to do. Finally he concluded that there was only one way out of his dilemma, he would destroy the instrument that caused him to discover the distasteful fact! So he smashed the microscope to pieces. "How foolish!" you say, but many people do the same thing with the Word of God. They hate it and would like to get rid of it because it reveals their evil nature and destiny, and they reject the messengers of God's Word. This is what happened to Paul and Stephen, but they responded with meekness.

* 1 Corinthians 4:13- Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.
* 2 Timothy 4:16- At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.
* Acts 7:60 - And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Paul responded gently when evil things were said about him and when he was treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash. He was able to overcome the insults from others because he had a spirit of meekness. He did not seek revenge on those who rejected him, but prayed for them. Stephen had the same attitude when he was being stoned to death. Both men were concerned about those who rejected and harmed them. Can you do this?

G. Meekness demonstrated when in Control and with Capacity to take Revenge.

* Genesis 45:4-8... And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. [5] Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. [6] For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. [7] And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. [8] So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land
of Egypt.

Joseph demonstrated meekness by not taking revenge upon his brothers and killing them. Instead, he saw God’s hand in his life and recognized what the Lord was trying to do for him and his family through the years. He viewed His life from God’s point of view. He looked at the great mistreatment by his brothers from God's standpoint and was able to conclude, "God meant it unto good" (Genesis 50:20).

Difficult circumstances are great opportunities for growing in grace. They afford great opportunities for developing submission to the will of God which is part of meekness. Difficulties afford great opportunities to behave humbly which is part of meekness. They afford great opportunities to react graciously which is also part of meekness.

* 1 Samuel 26:7-11...So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. 8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. {delivered: Heb. shut up} 9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD’S anointed, and be guiltless? 10 David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

When we look at David, we find that he had power to kill Saul, but refused to touch God’s anointed. He delegated the matter of Saul’s punishment to the Lord. Meekness leaves matters of revenge or retaliation up to the Lord. Meekness is a power...the power to feel satisfaction with what God gives to us. It is the satisfaction in knowing that the Lord is in control and He will take care of those who are offensive toward us. It is also the satisfaction that comes from knowing that nothing happens to us without the Lord’s permission, even if our circumstances involve the harsh or unjust treatment from other Christians.

* Titus 2:14- Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
We are a peculiar people. This word “peculiar” comes from the Greek word *periousios* (per-e-o'-o-see-os) which means “to be around.” The idea is we are surrounded by the Lord like a dot in the center of a circle. Nothing can happen to us unless it is cleared or allowed by the Lord. Joseph’s response to his brothers in Genesis 45 is an illustration of this word and truth.

III. THE EVALUATION OF THE WORLD ABOUT MEEKNESS

In view of what the meaning of meekness involves and how it is displayed, it is obvious that the world is not going to honor meekness. Call someone in the world meek and they will consider that an insult. The world thrives on retaliation, insists on its rights and its strikes, and it does not hesitate to put self above others. So the Biblical idea of meekness will not fit the world’s interests at all. Rather, the world considers meekness a weakness, not a strength. They believe that if you are meek, you will not get anywhere in life and will be trampled underfoot. That just may be true in many cases in this life, but meekness and its rewards do not focus just on this life but look beyond this life to eternity—something this world certainly does not do.

Men cannot understand how meekness is going to inherit the earth. Men believe in physical strength. They believe in arms and armies. People believe in craft and cunning. They believe in energy, will, and perseverance. Men believe in things. They believe in influencing their fellow men, working upon them by threats, by pain, or by fear.

In Jesus’ time, a meek Messiah was not in the mind set of the Jewish people who wanted to break the shackles of Roman rule. All Jews hoped for deliverance of some sort, by some means. Many were expecting deliverance to come through their Messiah. The Pharisees, the religious conservatives, expected the Messiah to come with great fanfare and a mighty show of supernatural power. He would be a miraculous Messiah. The Pharisees assumed He would miraculously throw off the yoke of Rome and establish a Jewish state, a revived theocracy and holy commonwealth that would rule the world.

The materialistic, liberal Sadducees, hoped for change through political compromise, for which they were despised by many fellow Jews. They were looking for a materialistic Messiah since they were consumed with money and material possessions.
The monastic Essenes, isolated both physically and philosophically from the rest of Judaism, lived largely as if Rome and the rest of the world did not exist. The Zealots, on the other hand and as their name implies, were the most vocal and active proponents of deliverance. They looked for a military Messiah. Many of them expected the Messiah to come as a powerful, irresistible military leader who would conquer Rome in the same way that Rome had conquered them. They were not, however, waiting passively for their Messiah, but were determined that, whenever and however He might come, they would do their part to make His job easier.

With the sicarii, who were the assassins in their ranks, they would strike at Roman leaders and officials. Their numbers, influence, and power continued to grow until Rome brutally attempted to crush Jewish resistance. In Jesus' day the aggressive, rebellious Zealots were not many in number, but they had the sympathy and moral support of many of the people, who wanted Rome to be overthrown, no matter how it was done. The assassinations by these men, however, brought forth the wrath of Rome. In 70 A.D., General Titus totally destroyed Jerusalem and massacred over a million Jews. The Jewish Temple was totally leveled which was a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy.

* Luke 21:5-6... And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said. [6] As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Three years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Flavius Silva finally succeeded in his long siege against the stronghold at Masada. When Jewish rebelliousness continued to frustrate Rome, Hadrian swept through Palestine during the years 132-35 A.D. and systematically destroyed most of the Jewish cities and slaughtered the Jews living there.

Consequently, in whatever way various groups of people expected the Messiah to come, they did not anticipate Him to be humble and meek. Yet those were the very attitudes that Jesus, the one whom John the Baptist had announced as the Messiah, was both teaching and practicing. The idea of a meek Messiah leading meek people was far from any of their concepts of the messianic kingdom. The Jews understood military power and miracle power. They even understood the power of compromise, unpopular as it was, but they did not understand the power of meekness.

The world today, even many Christians, fail to understand the power
of meekness. Many Christians struggle to have the spirit of meekness in their lives as they combat their feelings of revenge and retaliation and seek recognition, respect, their rights, and the rewards of power, prestige, prominence, and popularity.

IV. THE EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING MEEKNESS

Here we will consider the challenges and exhortations to display meekness in our lives. On our own, it is very difficult to develop meekness because it goes against the grain of our flesh which tends to be very selfish, proud, and arrogant. With the help and power of the Holy Spirit, however, we can grow in the area of meekness which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

* Galatians 5:22-23.. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

1. The Weighty Command to seek meekness

* Zephaniah 2:3- Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Meekness needs to be sought because we tend to not have it in our lives. It is a trait we need to pursue because it tends to not come naturally to us.

There is an ancient tale from India about a young man who was seeking God. He went to a wise old sage for help. "How can I find God?" he asked the old man. The old man took him to a nearby river. Out they waded into the deep water. Soon the water was up just under their chins. Suddenly the old man seized the young man by the neck and pushed him under the water. He held the young man down until the young man was flailing the water in desperation. Another minute and he may well have drowned.

Up out of the water the two of them came. The young man was coughing water from his lungs and still gasping for air. Reaching the bank he asked the man indignantly, "What did that have to do with my finding God?" The old man asked him quietly, "While you were under the water, what did you want more than anything else?" The young man thought for a minute and then answered, "I wanted air. I wanted air more than anything else?" The old man replied, "When you want God as much as you wanted air, you will find him."
2. The Welfare of Wounded Wayward Christians is to be conducted with meekness.
* Galatians 6:1 - Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Wayward believers are to be confronted with meekness. This meekness involves a good deal of humility in recognizing that we, too, could fall into temptation and sin if we are not careful. If we approach the wayward with a proud attitude, they will react to our pride and respond with indifference. On the other hand, when we have an attitude of meekness and compassion, we have a greater chance to help them as we demonstrate our love for them. We are to restore them. This word “restore” is from the Greek verb katarizo which is a medical term used in secular Greek for setting a fractured bone. What is wrong in the life of the fallen Christian is to be set straight. It is not to be neglected.

Meekness is also needed when we confront them because it helps us to be patient and longsuffering, especially when they are unwilling to repent. Meekness helps us to understand the fact that if it were not for the grace of God, we could be in the same situation as the wayward believer. Meekness is also essential because without meekness, we are prone to get defeated or discouraged, to lose our temper or lash out in anger toward the wayward brother or sister if they will not change.

Ben Kopacz shared this story about his mother. He said, “One Sunday morning Mother decided to play a joke on my sister by phone. Dialing the number, she heard someone pick up the receiver, which was her cue to say in a deep voice, ‘This is God speaking. Why aren’t you in church?’ To Mom’s horror, she had dialed the wrong number.” Beloved, let me say that if the Lord is speaking or calling out to you, He doesn’t have the wrong number. Many times the Lord will use a Christian to try to spiritually restore your life.

3. The Word of God is to be received with meekness.
* James 1:21 - Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

We are to strip off all the filth and evil in our lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in our hearts, for it is strong enough to save our souls. We are to accept the Word of God with meekness. This means we do not argue with God’s Word, but instead, we are submissive to its teachings and truths. We are not to pick and choose
like a smorgasbord, what we will obey and not obey. We are not to fuss about its demands or commands, its do's and don'ts, but instead, we are to be yielded, and readily obedient to the Scriptures and the will of God for our lives. Moses is a great example of this truth. After he lost his temper and smote the rock, the Lord told Moses he would not enter into the Promised Land. In meekness, Moses accepted God's plan for his life.

* Numbers 20:11-12... And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. [12] And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

In March of 2000, the small town of Fruita, Colorado, received a unique new sculpture on a downtown corner. Lyle Nichols unveiled his four-foot masterpiece of Mike the headless chicken. It’s a reminder of what happened in Fruita sixty years earlier. Lloyd Olsen, a farmer, lopped off the head of one of his chickens in the 1940s. Wanting to preserve as much of the neck as possible for dinner, he laid his ax at the base of Mike’s skull. Rather than roll over and die, this chicken became a bizarre piece of history.

Olsen not only didn’t eat the bird, he actually started to care for it. Mike could go through the motions of pecking for the food but couldn’t get anything. When he tried to crow, only a gurgle came out. The farmer fed this strange chicken with an eyedropper, and after a week of survival, he took Mike to some scientists at the University of Utah. They theorized the chicken had enough brain stem left to live without his head. Mike made it into Life magazine and the Guinness Book of World Records. He also became quite an attraction until he choked to death on a kernel of corn in an Arizona motel eighteen months after surviving the chopping block.

Mike the headless chicken might describe some Christians who move through the motions of life without the Head of Christ to guide them. They may have movement and life, but not much direction. Their lives may be characterized as going in circles. Does this describe you? If so, you need meekness which yields and accepts the lordship and guidance of God in your life. When the Lord is not the head of your life, you are like a chicken running around with his head cut off!
4. Our daily Walk should be characterized by meekness.

* Ephesians 4:1-3... I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, [2] With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; [3] Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The verb “beseech” is from the Greek word parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o} and can mean either “to entreat or to exhort.” What the apostle urges is that the Ephesians may lead the sort of life that matches their Christian vocation. The word "worthy" is from the Greek word axios and literally means "bringing up the other beam of the scales" and hence, indicates equivalence or balance. Paul is insisting that there should be a balance between the profession and the practice of the Christian. They should not be out-of-balance or unstable. Paul challenges us to have meekness because it is a vital element of having unity among Christians. When meekness is lacking, problems begin to develop unfortunately among God’s people.

* 1 Timothy 6:11- But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

We are to follow meekness. It is to lead our lives. The word “follow” is from the Greek word dioko {dee-o'-ko} which means “to run after with haste for the purpose of catching something.” If you follow something, you set your sights upon it, lest you get lost. We are to set our sights on having meekness in our lives. We are to do this with determination, enthusiasm, and diligence.

* Titus 3:1-2... Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, [2] To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. We are to shew or demonstrate meekness to all men.

* Colossians 3:12- Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

5. The Work of the Lord is to be done with meekness.

* 2 Timothy 2:24-25... And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, [25] In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

Arrogance, pride, and a cocky spirit are traits that should not characterize servants of the Lord, especially those who are pastors,
deacons, and teachers in the church. These traits repulse people and also set a bad example for those who watch our lives. Young men training for the ministry must understand that it is not appropriate or OK for a preacher to be hateful, proud, mean, cocky, and demeaning toward people. Unfortunately, some feel this way because of the poor example of preachers they admire. These young men enter the ministry on the wrong foot and end up hurting others and themselves. They get kicked out of their churches and wonder, “What did I do wrong?” Many of them end up quitting the ministry. Why? They had a bad example.

6. Witnessing to others is to be done with meekness.
* 1 Peter 3:15 - But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Witnessing is not to be done timidly or arrogantly, but with meekness which will include graciousness, but also conviction. If we convey an “I’m better than you” attitude when we tell others about Christ, we will offend them and turn them off.

7. The Wife’s efforts to Win her husband are to be done with meekness.
* 1 Peter 3:1-4... Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; [2] While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. [3] Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; [4] But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Meekness in marriage by both partners will help cement the marriage together permanently. If there is one attitude lacking in couples that are going through a divorce, it is meekness.

V. THE EFFECTS OF MEEKNESS

What are the rewards and blessings of meekness? What are the consequences of meekness? The Bible provides some wonderful answers for us to think about.

1. A Share in the earth

Jesus said, “The meek shall inherit the earth.” The meek will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ during the Millennial Reign of Christ. They will enjoy His kingdom. In learning about who the people
are that receive this reward of the inheritance of the earth, "again we note the presence of the emphatic pronoun autoi, which means "only they—they alone." It is only these meek ones who shall inherit the earth.

What a shock this must have been to those who were hearing this message from the Lord Jesus Christ. That the meek shall inherit the earth is a surprise to the reasoning of natural man. World conquest, possession of the whole universe, given to the meek, of all people! The world does not think of the meek gaining the world. They think that those who will inherit the earth are those who are strong, forceful, aggressive, and pushy. It is great armies and powerful weaponry that conquer and take the world. Jesus, however, said otherwise, "Those who will eventually conquer the world are those who are meek."

* Psalm 37:11a - But the meek shall inherit the earth;

2. Satisfaction

The 19th century Bible scholar, G. S. Bowes, pointed out the ultimate futility of ambition that isn't accompanied by dedication to God. Citing four powerful world rulers of the past, he wrote: "Alexander the Great was not satisfied, even when he had completely subdued the nations. He wept because there were no more worlds to conquer, and he died at an early age in a state of debauchery.

Hannibal, who filled three bushels with the gold rings taken from the knights he had slaughtered, committed suicide by swallowing poison. Few noted his passing, and he left this earth completely unmourned. Julius Caesar, 'staining his garments in the blood of one million of his foes,' conquered 800 cities, only to be stabbed by his best friends at the scene of his greatest triumph.

Napoleon, the feared conqueror, after being the scourge of Europe, spent his last years in banishment." All of these men were on a quest for power. They mistakenly believed that it would bring them satisfaction. They were wrong. True satisfaction is not found in power, people, popularity, or prestige, but in the blessings of our Lord. The meek are rewarded with satisfaction from the Lord. Watchman Nee said, "I have never met a soul who has set out to satisfy the Lord and has not been satisfied himself."

* Psalm 22:26a - The meek shall eat and be satisfied;

3. The Steerage and direction of the Lord

A fellow pulled his car over to ask an old woman on the side of the road how far it was to a certain town. The old woman said, "Well, sonny, if you keep going the way you're headed, it's about 25,000 miles, but if
you turn around, it's about three miles." There are times in our lives that we need to turn our lives around. We may have missed the mark or have lost our way because we have neglected God's leading in our lives. When we have a meek spirit that acknowledges faults and mistakes and yields to God's leading, we can get back on the right track and make good decisions that will bring blessing instead of problems to our lives. When we are meek, we are teachable and open to God's guidance.

* Psalm 25:9- The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

4. The Support of the Lord

* Psalm 147:6 -The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. The words “lifteth up” are from the Hebrew word `uwid ood`. This word has the meaning of “supporting, relieving, restoring.” It also means “to surround or go round and round.” God surrounds the meek with His care and supports the meek day by day.

5. Serenity or peace

During the Korean War in the 1950's, Reverend Graham had the opportunity of ministering to American soldiers. While he was there, he learned of an incident that stirred his heart. On Christmas Eve, a young Marine lay dying on Heartbreak Ridge. One of the chaplains climbed up to the young man and whispered, “May I help you, son?” The dying Marine replied, “No, it's all right.” The chaplain was amazed at the soldier's tranquillity, calmness, and peace. When he glanced down at the man's side he understood the source of his peace. He was clutching a small New Testament in his bloody hand and his finger was placed on the calm assurance of John 14:27, “My peace I give to you . . .” Beloved, God gives us peace in the most desperate times. He gives peace to the meek.

* Isaiah 29:19- The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

* Psalm 37:11- But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

6. Salvation

* Psalm 149:4- For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. Meekness is needed if we are going to be saved. We must acknowledge that we are sinners and need Him to save us because we cannot save ourselves. We must submit to God’s Word that Christ is the only way to Heaven.
7. The Sanction and Praise of God
* 1 Peter 3:4- But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. God is pleased by our meek spirit and when we have this attitude, we end up bringing glory to Him.

**Glorifying God is our purpose in life.** This was the purpose of George Atley. Missionary George Atley was killed in 1989, while serving with the Central African Mission. There were no witnesses, but the evidence indicates that Atley was confronted by a band of hostile natives. He was carrying a fully-loaded, 10-chamber Winchester rifle and had to choose either to shoot his attackers and run the risk of negating the work of the mission in that area, or not to defend himself and be killed. When his body was later found in a stream, it was evident that he had chosen to die for Christ. Nearby lay his rifle, all 10 chambers still loaded. He had made the supreme sacrifice, motivated by his burden for lost souls and his unswerving devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. With the apostle Paul, he wanted Christ to be magnified in his body, "whether by life or by death." His spirit of meekness refrained him from defending himself; so that the work of Christ would not be hindered. Let me ask, "Are you meek?" You are going to need it as we approach the return of Christ.

**The hostility toward Christ continues to escalate.** The January 31, 2006, issue of USA TODAY records the story of a priest that was being sued by an atheist because the priest said Jesus existed. The life-long atheist sued the priest because he stated in the church newsletter that Jesus was born in Bethlehem to a couple named Mary and Joseph and that He lived in Nazareth. The atheist stated this was an abuse of popular belief. He was suing the priest because he was profiting from the fable of Christ and that the church was guilty of impersonation by confusing the person of Jesus with another man named John Gamala who lived in Israel around the time of Christ. The atheist claimed that Jesus never existed at all. We, of course, know this is a bunch of bunk! Christ existed and was born of a virgin. God was His Father. He not only existed, but He is also coming back soon. Are you ready?
Chapter 4
A Sweet Tooth for Saintliness
Matthew 5:6

Have you ever been really hungry or thirsty? Have you ever suffered starvation? Most of us in the United States have not had to endure the plight of starvation because we have had access to plenty of food. Starvation does a number on a person’s body. It shrinks the vital organs such as the heart and lungs. Muscle mass is depleted, the body temperature is lowered, and the body swells from fluid under the skin. The person also suffers from chronic diarrhea and irritability.

Dehydration creates intense thirst because of the loss of water and salts that are essential for your body to function normally. Our bodies are comprised of about 60 percent water and they are constantly at work in maintaining that balance. When the balance is low, the brain stimulates the nerve centers to encourage a person to drink more water. God has created the kidneys for maintaining our water balance by eliminating waste products and excess water through our urine. If we become severely dehydrated, we can go into hypovolemic shock. Our skin becomes pale, cool, and clammy. Our breathing becomes shallow and our heart beats rapidly. When we are in dire need of water, we can become nauseated, lose our appetite, and our mouth suffers from inflammation that is caused by sores and infections. The eyes become sunken and have difficulty producing tears. The tongue becomes dry, and when our skin is pinched, it returns slowly to its normal position.

Looking at these symptoms are a reminder of what takes place in the lives of people that are spiritually starving and dehydrating. Their hearts are affected, becoming cold, small, and hard. They are usually irritable and difficult to be around because they are so cranky. Their vision is affected. They have difficulty in seeing the Lord, His blessings in their lives and shedding tears of compassion for others and tears for their sin. Their mouth many times is inflamed with either filthy talk or selfish,
angry, argumentative words. James told us the tongue is inflamed. It is a fire! Physical starvation and dehydration are devastating; spiritual starvation and dehydration are destructive, deadly, and can lead to damnation.

There is said to be a strange plant in South America which finds a moist place and rests there for a while, sending its roots down and becoming green. When this bit of earth dries up, the plant draws itself together and is blown along by the wind until it finds another moist spot, where it repeats the same story. On and on it rolls, stopping wherever it finds a little water and staying until the water is exhausted. After all its journeying, however, it is nothing but a bundle of dead roots and leaves. The life of this plant tells the story of those who drink only at this world's springs. They go on from spring to spring, and at the last, at the end of the longest life, they are nothing but bundles of unsatisfied desires and burning thirsts.

Those without Christ or carnal, backslidden Christians sense their inward hunger, thirst, or emptiness. If you are a Christian and leave the Lord out of your life, you will get hungry and thirsty in your soul. Unfortunately, the wicked or the wayward try to satisfy or quench their hunger or thirst with things that cannot satisfy them. Alcohol, drugs, money, material possessions, fame, power, popularity, people, immorality, and even religion cannot satisfy the longings in their hearts. Religion is no substitute for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

You may experience temporary fulfilment with some of the above-mentioned things, but not lasting happiness. This is what the Lord was trying to get across to us in His sermon on the mount. Joy and blessing come from hungering and thirsting for the right things. They come from hungering and thirsting after righteousness or having a sweet tooth for saintliness. These things bring fulfillment. What does the Lord mean by hungering and thirsting after righteousness? What does it mean to have a sweet tooth for saintliness? This is what we will examine in this message. We will first look at the appetite, then the aim of our appetite, and last of all, the abundance of satisfaction.

I. THE APPETITE 5:6a

_Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst ...._

Jesus says, “Oh the joy of those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” This section of the verse is dealing with the
appetite of the Christian. In the physical realm, a good appetite indicates
good health and a poor appetite is an indication that something is wrong
with a person. The same analogy holds true for our spiritual appetites. A
good appetite for righteousness indicates that spiritually one is in good
spiritual condition. It says that the faith of that person is strong and
healthy. When the spiritual desire is deficient, it reveals spiritual
weakness and lack of spiritual maturity. It reveals that one’s faith is weak
and anemic. So this beatitude exposes the condition of one’s faith. It
reveals our spiritual condition and priorities.

The Christian that is in tune with the Lord has an appetite for
the things of God. He hungers for spiritual matters. You can find out
a lot about a person by asking them what they desire. Their desires are
the focus of their lives. The kind of appetite we have reveals our
character. The man who has a strong appetite for booze, drugs,
pornography, immoral sex and other evils is telling us much about his
character. Likewise, the person who has an appetite for holiness is telling
us much about his character too.

Those who have a hunger and thirst for righteousness have a passion
for righteousness in their own lives. They long to see honesty, integrity,
and justice in society and look for practical holiness in the church. Like
the people of whom Gamaliel Bradford wrote, they have “a thirst no
earthly stream can satisfy, a hunger that must feed on Christ or die.” The
truly born again person has an inner passion for righteousness. He has a
sweet tooth for saintliness. When believers bewail their own and
society’s sinfulness and pray that God will send a revival to clean things
up, they demonstrate a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

The word “hunger” mentioned here comes from the Greek word
peinao {pi-nah’-o} which carries the idea of craving or seeking with
eager, earnest desire or to be needy. It is a very strong and intense word.
The word “thirst” is from the Greek word dipsao {dip-sah’-o} and has
the idea of those who thirst and painfully feel their want of those things
by which the soul is refreshed, supported, strengthened. They eagerly
seek those things. This word is also an intense word. The hunger is that
of a man starving for food and the thirst is that of a man who will die
unless he drinks. An ardent desire for anything is often represented in
Scriptures by the words “hunger and thirst.”

* Isaiah 55:1-2... Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and
he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and
milk without money and without price. [2] Wherefore do ye spend money
for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

* Psalm 42:1-2... As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. [2] My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? The picture in this verse is one of a deer who craves water. The word "panteth" here means to bray and cry out for water. It shows a very fervent desire for water. We are to have this kind of passion and desire to know the Lord and walk with Him.

If you know anything about an appetite, you know that once it is satisfied, it doesn't mean it will never come back again. It does come back again and again when we get hungry. Our hunger and thirst for righteousness is not to be a one-time deal or once in a while, it is to be continual as indicated in the tenses of the two words “hunger and thirst.” These two words are in the present active nominative tense to show that the hungering and thirsting continue, going on and on in this life. It is a desire that ought to constantly characterize the Christian. The Christian should always be fervently desiring to be holy, upright and pure. We are to constantly have a sweet tooth for saintliness. Those who continually hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. Those are the conditions for blessing.

The fact is that very few of us in modern conditions of life know what it is to be really hungry or really thirsty. In Bible times, it was very different matter. A working man's wage was the equivalent of three pence a day, and, even making every allowance for the difference in the purchasing power of money, no man ever got fat on that wage. A working man in the Middle East ate meat only once a week. The working man and the day laborer were never far from the border-line of real hunger and actual starvation.

It was still more so in the case of thirst. Most people did not turn a tap and find clear, cold water pouring into their house. Desert life was very harsh and dangerous. Water was life and sometimes difficult to find. For this reason it was very valuable. Tribes would go to war over wells because of its worth. These folks understood what it was like to crave water. Jesus was talking their language and painting word pictures of truth they could understand. He was saying, “If you want to be blessed and have joy, then hunger and thirst after righteousness.”
II. THE AIM OF OUR APPETITE  5:6b
"after righteousness"

We are to hunger and thirst after "righteousness." The word "righteousness" is from the Greek word dikaiosune {dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay} which means "the condition acceptable to God or approved of God; integrity, virtue, purity of life, righteousness, correctness of thinking feeling, and acting."

Matthew always used the term "righteousness" in the sense of personal fidelity to God and His will. He never used it of imputed righteousness or justification. Therefore, the righteousness that the "blessed" hunger and thirst for is not salvation. It is personal holiness and, extending this desire more broadly, the desire that holiness may prevail among all people. Righteousness means to be right with God and to live right with man. It involves having a clear conscience with God and men as Paul emphasized to us.

* Acts 24:16-  And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

The desire for righteousness means ultimately the desire to be free from sin in all its forms and in its every manifestation. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is nothing but the longing to be positively holy and godly. We are to have a sweet tooth for saintliness or godliness.

In the Greek language, a noun followed by a verb can take what is called a genitive case which is expressed by the word "OF." This is very common place. For example, if the Greek text said, "I hunger for of bread," then it was some bread he desired, a part of the bread, not the whole loaf of the bread. If the Greek said, "I thirst for of water," then it was some water he desired, a drink of water, not all the water in the tank.

This is not the Greek case used here for the word "righteousness." Another noun form or case is used known as the accusative case which means that the hunger and thirsting is not for part of righteousness, but for all of it, for the whole ball of wax. To say I hunger for bread in the accusative means, I want the whole loaf of bread. To say I thirst for water in the accusative means, I want the whole pitcher. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to hunger and thirst for the whole of righteousness, for complete total righteousness.

Most people are content with a part of righteousness. They don’t want to get too fanatical or too dedicated. They want just enough
goodness to be respectable. A man, for instance, may be a good man in the sense that nobody could pin a moral fault on him no matter how hard they tried. His honesty, his morality, his respectability are beyond question. However, it may be that no one could go to that man and share a burden or heartache. He would freeze up if someone tried to do this and remain aloof. His goodness was accompanied with a coldness and a lack of compassion or sympathy. Such a goodness is a partial goodness.

On the other hand a man may have all kinds of faults; he may drink, swear, gamble, and lose his temper. Yet, if any one is in trouble, he would give him the last penny out of his pocket and the very coat off his back. Again this man has a partial goodness. This verse says, it is not enough to be satisfied with a partial goodness. Blessed is the man who hungers and thirsts for total, complete righteousness. An icy faultlessness or a faulty warm-heartedness is not enough. Blessed is the man that has a passion for total, consistent righteousness and goodness. This is the intensity of the appetite. We are to have a sweet tooth for saintliness and to long for it with our whole heart.

III. THE ABUNDANCE OF SATISFACTION 5:6c

.... for they shall be filled.

In 1939, William Sangster assumed leadership of Westminster Central Hall, a church near London’s Westminster Abbey. During his first worship service he announced to his stunned congregation that Britain and Germany were officially at war. He quickly converted the church basement into an air raid shelter, and for 1,688 nights Sangster ministered to the various needs of all kinds of people. At the same time, he somehow managed to write, to preach gripping sermons, to earn a Ph.D., and to lead hundreds to Christ. He became known as Wesley’s successor in London and was esteemed as the most beloved British preacher of his era.

Sometime after the war, Sangster was diagnosed with progressive muscular atrophy. For three years, he slowly died, becoming progressively more paralyzed, finally able to move only two fingers. His attitude didn’t falter, however, for when first learning of his illness, Sangster made four rules for himself. Many people have rules for living. Sangster composed four rules for dying: “I will never complain. I will keep the home bright. I will count my blessings. I will try to turn it to gain.” He did all those things and thus, the work of God was displayed in
his life, and in his death. He hungered and thirsted after righteousness and was filled as the Lord promised.

Jesus said, "They" shall be filled. "They" is from the Greek word autoi which means "they alone." This blessing is not just for anyone. It is for those who meet the conditions for satisfaction. Such abundance of fullness and satisfaction, the blessedness of this filling from the hand of God, can never be known except through the experience of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. It is a limited blessing in that it is limited only to those who meet the requirement.

Many folks direct their attention on the promises in the Scriptures, but not on the principles or precepts. People today, including Christians, hunger and thirst for all kinds of things, except for that which can truly satisfy. They do not hunger and thirst for God and His righteousness. They may express dissatisfaction with their spiritual condition, but they will not earnestly and continuously try to correct the problem. The result is they lose out on a blessing. Unless you pay attention to the precepts of God's Word and obey them, you can forget about the promises. The mature and discerning Christian will let God take care of the promises, and he will obey and concentrate on the precepts of God's Word.

God's promise is they "shall be" filled. Some doubt the claims of Scripture and charge that they do not work. The "shall be" however, condemns man not God, if the reward is not possessed. "Shall be" says the reward will come for sure. If you have an appetite for righteousness, a sweet tooth for saintliness, it will be satisfied. God says they will be filled.

The word "filled" is from the Greek word chortazo (khor-tad'-zo). It was used to describe animals or birds that gorge themselves or cattle that were fed, filled, and fattened. It means "to be satisfied or full." The passive voice of the word "filled" in the Greek language shows that God Himself is the great and blessed source of all good things. God IS our source of satisfaction. He is in the "filling" business. Those who are perishing for want of righteousness; those who feel that they are lost sinners and strongly desire to be holy, shall be satisfied.

* Psalm 107:9- For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.
* James 1:17- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.
* Psalm 68:19- Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits,
even the God of our salvation. Selah.
* Ephesians 3:20- Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
* John 4:14- But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.
* John 6:35 - And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Like the other beatitudes, this world has no use for this one. Of course, those without Christ are lost in sin and walk in darkness. It is quite common for unsaved people to make fun of and mock Christians who have a desire to be honest, upright and godly. The heroes of a lost world are usually those who are very weak in character, are morally filthy, or are grossly perverted and profane. The world views Christianity and living for Christ as a kill-joy. They think to be happy, you must engage in wild living and parties. Their conclusions are that a person who insists on living for the Lord Jesus Christ will never know what it is to be happy or have fun. They scorn the Christian who refuses to participate in deception, dishonesty, or evil conduct, and they tell that person that he will not have any fun if he insists on living that way. These attitudes were very common when I was in high school.

Unbelievers mock the right and embrace the wrong even though the wrong always cheats and hurts them. Though the world is not interested in righteousness and has a very small, if any appetite for righteousness, it still blames God for all the problems and evil in the world. The lack of righteousness is not God's fault, however. Men and women are to blame. If mankind had an appetite for righteousness, it would stop the crime problem, stop lawlessness, and in general lift the character of society to record heights. Society disdains this appetite for righteousness and the result is a world filled with violence instead of being filled with righteousness which is the reward of this beatitude. Christ and the Bible tell us that it is godly living that brings real happiness. It is sin, not holiness, that brings sorrow to men. The sweet tooth for saintliness brings satisfaction.
IV. ARRIVING AT THE DESIRE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

How do I develop an appetite or a sweet tooth for saintliness in my life? The answer is found in the same pattern in which we develop a sweet tooth for chocolate or an appetite for other foods. It is found in frequently enjoying these foods or desserts. We can grow in our passion for purity by frequently doing certain things.

A. Frequently Study the Scriptures

Alexander Duff, the first foreign missionary of the Church of Scotland, got off to a rough start. He was young, only twenty-three, bright and innovative, but on his way to India in 1829, with his new wife, he was shipwrecked...not once but twice! The most serious wreck occurred when his ship, the Lady Holland, was within a few miles of India.

At ten o’clock P.M., Duff was half-undressed when a shock and shudder ran through the vessel. He rushed to the deck where the captain met him with terrifying words, “Oh, she’s gone! She’s gone!” The ship split apart, but a portion clung precariously to a reef. Through the night the passengers huddled in terror in the surviving portion, expecting every moment to be swept away. They were saved the next day, but their clothes and prized possessions were lost, including Duff’s entire library of eight hundred volumes. Later, standing on the shore and looking sadly toward the reef, Duff saw a small package bobbing atop the water. He watched and waited as it floated close enough for him to wade out and retrieve. It was his Bible.

Of all his precious books, it alone survived. His heart soared, for he took it as a sign from the Lord that this one book alone was worth more than all the others put together. He assembled his fellow survivors and read Psalm 107, the Traveler’s Psalm. Soon, using the same Bible, he began his first class with a little group of five boys under a banyan tree. Within a week the class had grown to three hundred, and it soon became a school that evangelized and educated the higher classes in India, producing a qualified generation of outstanding, godly leaders for the nation’s young church.

Beloved, the Word of God promotes a sweet tooth for saintliness when it is studied and embraced. Getting into the Word of God is like hanging around the kitchen when good food is cooking. It will inspire an appetite and it will satisfy your soul. David, Jeremiah, the Berean Christians, and multitudes of others have given testimony of its
transforming power.
* Psalm 119:11- Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
* Jeremiah 15:16- Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.
* Psalm 119:103- How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
* Acts 17:11- These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

B. Frequently Spend Time at Church

You will never develop much of a spiritual appetite to do what is right if you do not spend time at church and worship the Lord with other Christians. One of the blessings of true worship is that it inspires you to live like Christ. Many of us can testify that after spending time in church, we have left with a rejuvenated desire to live a holier life, to live a life with more submission and dedication to the Savior. When you skip out on church, there is a tendency to lose your appetite for righteousness. You need Bible preaching and Bible people. You need the fellowship of believers. Lloyd-Jones said, “The man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the man who never misses an opportunity of being in those certain places [such as church or Revival meetings] where people seem to find this righteousness.”

A pastor was once asked to define "Faithful Attendance at Worship," and this was his reply: All that I ask is that we apply the same standards of faithfulness to our church activities that we would in other areas of our life. That doesn't seem too much to ask. The church, after all, is concerned about faithfulness. Consider these examples: If your car started one out of three times, would you consider it faithful? If the paperboy skipped Monday and Thursdays, would they be missed? If you didn't show up at work two or three times a month, would your boss call you faithful? If your refrigerator quit a day now and then, would you excuse it and say, "Oh, well, it works most of the time." If your water heater greets you with cold water one or two mornings a week while you were in the shower, would it be faithful? If you miss a couple of mortgage payments in a year's time, would your mortgage holder say, "Oh, well, ten out of twelve isn't bad"? If you miss worship and attend meetings only often enough to show you're interested but not often
enough to get involved, are you faithful? Let a man examine himself.

* Hebrews 10:24-25... And let us consider one another to provoke unto
love and to good works: [25] Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves
together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so
much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The word “provoke” comes from the Greek word *paroxusmos* {par-
ox-oos-mos'} which means “encouragement, stimulation, rousing to
activity, stirring up, provoking.” When drinks like hot chocolate are
stirred, they taste much better for the taste is more potent. When the
church is stirred for Christ, it too, has more potency and power and offers
a better taste to a lost and dying world.

* Acts 2:46- And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple,
and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness
and singleness of heart,

The advantages of faithfulness in church are close friendships that
are developed, the challenge from Scripture, the counsel and direction
that God gives you through the preaching and other believers, a clear
conscience that comes from being faithful in the Lord’s house, a
cognizant awareness of the need of the church family and missionaries,
and a channel to serve God through the different ministries of the church.

C. Frequently Shun those Things that will Affect Your Appetite for
God

There are some things that I don’t like to eat because they affect my
appetite. For example, I don’t like peanut butter and honey mixed
together on the same sandwich. It reminds me of the sack lunches we ate
in college. Everyday we had peanut butter and honey sandwiches. I do
like them separately. I like Pepsi, but I don’t like to drink it at a big meal
because it fills me up and I don’t eat as much food as I want. That’s
important, especially when you are eating at a smorgasbord and you want
to get your money’s worth.

The same principles of avoidance apply to our spiritual appetites.
Those things that will distract us from seeking the Lord or make us numb
toward sin should be avoided. Such things may not necessarily be evil,
but if they distract us, get us sidetracked from the most important things
that the Lord would have for us, or quench our thirst or hunger for
righteousness, then we should set them aside. You know what draws you
closer to the Lord and what diminishes your first love for Him. This does
not come easy for us. Missionary Jim Elliot put it this way, “One does
not surrender a life in an instant. That which is lifelong can only be
surrendered in a lifetime.”

Men who trap animals in Africa for zoos in America say that one of the hardest animals to catch is the ring-tailed monkey. For the Zulus of that continent, however, it’s simple. They’ve been catching this agile little animal with ease for years. The method the Zulus use is based on knowledge of the animal. Their trap is nothing more than a melon growing on a vine. The seeds of this melon are a favorite of the monkey. Knowing this, the Zulus simply cut a hole in the melon, just large enough for the monkey to insert his hand to reach the seeds inside. The monkey will stick his hand in, grab as many seeds as he can, then start to withdraw it. This he cannot do. His fist is now larger than the hole. The monkey will pull and tug, screech and fight the melon for hours, but he can’t get free of the trap unless he gives up the seeds, which he refuses to do. Meanwhile, the Zulus sneak up and nab him. Beloved, Satan has traps and snares set for us all throughout our lives. The best thing to do is stay as far away from those things that tempt you personally, lest you become ensnared in sin.

* James 4:7- Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

* Psalm 1:1- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

* Proverbs 4:14-15... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

* 2 Corinthians 6:17- Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

* 2 Timothy 2:16- But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

D. Frequently make Supplications to the Lord

Praying will develop an appetite for righteousness because it draws us closer to the One who is righteous and holy. We need God’s help in fulfilling any of these attitudes. Help comes from prayer.

Three preachers were talking about prayer in general and the appropriate and effective positions for prayer. As they were talking, a telephone repairman was working on the phone system in the background. One minister shared that he felt the key was in the hands. He always held his hands together and pointed them upward as a form of
symbolic worship. The second suggested that real prayer was conducted on your knees. The third suggested that they both had it wrong—the only position worth its salt was to pray while stretched out flat on your face. By this time the phone man couldn't stay out of the conversation any longer. He interjected: "I found that the most powerful prayer I ever made was while I was dangling upside down by my heels from a power pole, suspended forty feet above the ground." No matter what position you take Beloved, pray!

* Psalm 51:10 - Create in me a clean heart, O Lord; and renew a right spirit within me.
* Mark 14:38 - Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
* Psalm 88:9 - Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: Lord, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.
* Psalm 88:1 - O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee:
* Psalm 55:17 - Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.
* Psalm 86:3 - Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

E. Frequently Serve the Lord and Work for Him

Work greatly increases the appetite of a person. In fact, if you work hard, you often have to stop for lunch breaks. Spiritually it is the same way. When you get busy in the service of Christ, you will be surprised how quickly and forcefully it increases your appetite for righteousness. Godliness is essential if you want to truly be a blessing to others and lift them up spiritually because they are watching your life. If you lose your testimony, you lose or weaken your credibility to minister to others.

* Acts 20:19 - Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:
* Romans 12:11 - Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
* Matthew 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
* Titus 2:7 - In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.
* Titus 2:14 - Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
* Titus 3:8 - This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou
affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful
to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.
* 1 Peter 2:12- Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles:
that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good
works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Serving the Lord may be difficult at times, but when we remember
what He has done for us, it will create an appetite in us to be totally
surrendered to His will and walking with Him daily. When missionaries
Tom and Mabel Willey arrived in the village of El Valle, Panama, they
moved into a mud hut with a thatched roof and dirt floor. Tom was often
out and about, visiting the Indians, but Mabel found herself stuck at
home, the center of attention of various villagers who examined her
curiously, but with whom she couldn’t speak. The Willey children would
come in from playing, covered with little brown insects which Mabel
removed only with great difficulty, many tears, and liberal amounts of
kerosene.

One evening after the children were in bed, Mabel was overcome
with emotion. She ran outside, sat down on an old stump, and complained
to the Lord. “Lord, all I ever wanted was a beautiful home. Is this my
beautiful home? This mud hut with a thatched roof and creatures falling
from the ceiling? And what about my children? Can I bear this for them?”
Kneeling by the stump, she continued weeping and praying.

Suddenly the Lord seemed to speak to her. He asked, “Can you not
live in this mud hut for me? Remember what I have done for you.”
Mabel’s heart was touched, and she remembered the many blessings and
gifts of love she had continually received from the Lord’s hand. “Yes,
Lord,” she prayed, “I can live in this mud hut for you. I give my desire for
a beautiful home, my children, my husband—all of us—to you. Do with
me what you will.”

She later recalled, “Suddenly, peace surrounded me. I rose from my
knees and that mud hut might have been a mansion since my Lord had
placed me there. It looked altogether different to my eyes. I saw what
could be done to make it a home. I thought of the saying, ‘Two men
looked through prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars.’ God had
showed me the stars.” May we see those stars too and have a sweet tooth
for saintliness and satisfaction in doing the will of God.
Chapter 5
Mercy Me!
Matthew 5:7
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Most people are not familiar with the names Uwe Holmer or Erich Honecker. The lives of these two men crossed in 1990, and became a vivid example of God's mercy to the entire world. Uwe Holmer is a pastor who served the Lord in what was formerly known as East Germany, a former communist nation. Like many other believers, he suffered from the 40 years of Erich Honecker's iron-fisted rule.

History has a way of changing things. Honecker had been disposed of as leader and was facing trial on the charges of treason. While awaiting his trial, he was operated on for cancer and needed a place to recover. This beaten and sick man had no where to go: he was too sick to stay in prison and no one dared to open up their home to him because he was so hated and despised. No one wanted to have anything to do with this tyrant.

Pastor Holmer's church ran a convalescent center in the secluded village of Lobetal. Unfortunately, there was no room for the villainous Honecker. Holmer could have easily rationalized this situation and closed his heart, but instead, he felt led of the Lord to open up his own home to Honecker and his wife. The Holy Spirit compelled Uwe Holmer to reach out and minister to this man's needs, even though he was a scoundrel.

Torrents of rage were directed at Pastor Holmer: hate mail, bomb threats and threats to cut off funding to his ministry were received, all because Holmer had offered mercy to an enemy. Uwe Holmer explained to the nation (and to the world) why he had mercy on Erich Honecker in a letter to an East German newspaper, Neue Zeitung. He wrote, "In Lobetal, there is a sculpture of Jesus inviting people to Himself and crying out: 'Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' We have been commanded by our Lord Jesus to follow Him and to receive all those who are weary and heavy laden, in
spirit and in body, but especially the homeless. What Jesus asked His disciples to do is equally binding on us."

Pastor Holmer did not do the politically correct thing at all, which would have been to join the others in throwing stones at Honecker. Instead, Uwe Holmer did things the Jesus way: *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, *28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.* (Lk. 6:27-28). Erich Honecker deserved to die a horrible death, alone. Pastor Holmer did not give him what he deserved. Instead, he gave him mercy which is not an easy thing to do or is unpopular sometimes, but can be done with the help of God in our life. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

When I read this verse, I was reminded of a phrase that I heard a lot when I was a kid and is still hear today. When people prayed for help or for God’s blessing, especially when they had a trial, they would say "Mercy me," which meant "Lord have mercy on me!" I recall mothers saying to their kids, "Mercy me, what am I going to do with you child!" Maybe your mother said it to you. I imagine my Mom probably said it at least once, especially when I did things like swallow gasoline, set the house on fire, drag mud into the house, or run through a glass door shredding my arms into bloody pieces.” My Mom is probably wondering how she survived my childhood. The answer I would say is the Lord had mercy on her. In this study we are going to look at “Mercy Me” from two viewpoints. We are going to examine our *responsibility* to be merciful and secondly, our *reward* for being merciful.

I. MERCY ME...My Responsibility to be Merciful 5:7a

*Blessed are the merciful*;

Jesus continues to confront external, self-righteousness by saying, "What really matters is on the inside, in the heart of a person." Righteousness in the heart will produce the fruit of right actions. A Christian IS something before he DOES something. As believers in Christ, we are to have a spirit of brokenness, mourn over our sin, have meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, be merciful, pure of heart, and a peacemaker.

We are not meant to control our Christianity. Our Christianity is meant to control us. Our lives are to be dictated by the Holy Spirit and the principles of the Word of God. The first four beatitudes were
inner principles dealing with how you see yourself before God. This fifth attitude begins to reach out to others. It is the fruit of the first four attitudes. When we are broken, mournful, meek, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, we will tend to be merciful with others.

The world places a premium upon earthly possessions and position, while in the Beatitudes, Christ places a premium upon spiritual character traits. Joy comes as a result of the condition of the inward man, not the result of the condition of the outward man. For example, Paul in prison experienced true joy, while Nero the emperor of Rome was miserable, even though he lived in a palace. Times have not changed. Those with high positions and great wealth in the world are often some of the most unhappy people in the world; while on the other hand, those in lowly positions and with meager possessions seem to have a corner on happiness. In this fifth beatitude Jesus basically tells us in a nutshell, “If you want have joy, then be merciful toward others.”

So what does it mean to be “merciful?” What is this all about? First we will deal with what it is NOT! Being "merciful" does not mean that we have to tolerate wicked behavior, ignore it, or pay no attention to it. Some folks conclude that the merciful person is one that ignores or smiles at transgression and crime as though it was nothing of any importance. In church, some think being merciful is not to be concerned about the sinful conduct of some of its members. Such thinking is unscriptural.

The United States has been morally weakened because our nation is putting up with all sorts of perversions today. Homosexuality, drug addiction, drunkenness, abortion, immorality, shacking up, and other evils are tolerated by much of society who think that in doing so, they are showing love and mercy. The toleration of sin, however, has nothing to do with love, compassion, or mercy.

Some folks also falsely conclude that the act of showing mercy is to minimize or eliminate entirely the punishment of criminals for their crimes. Capital punishment is treated by many as a most unmerciful deed. Television covers the demonstrations of people that demand mercy for a murderer on the eve of his execution. Leniency in punishment for serious crimes, however, is not mercy. Instead, it is cruelty to the innocent victim and a further threat to society. I debated this issue with a student in one of my classes at Normal Community High School. His view was murderers should not suffer capital punishment, but instead, they should be confined to life imprisonment. I told him,
“Tom, you would not feel that way if someone killed your Mom, Dad, or girlfriend. You would be the one who would want to pull the switch!” It got real quiet after that. Debate over. I made my point.

Beloved, God has ordained government to use capital punishment as a crime deterrent, especially upon those guilty of crimes such as first-degree murder. When we look in the Bible, we find that when Saul spared wicked King Agag, showing him leniency, Samuel did not consider it as an act of mercy because King Agag was a cruel man and deserved the death sentence. God commanded that Agag be put to death. Samuel said to Agag, "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women" (1 Samuel 15:33).

Samuel executed Agag before the Lord in Gilgal. He chopped him into pieces. Samuel was the one who demonstrated mercy in slaying Agag so that his cruelty could no longer be a threat to any more children. It was Samuel being merciful to the innocent victims that demanded Agag's death. Leniency to criminals in regards to their punishment is not mercy at all. It is cruelty especially to the victims and potential victims.

So what does it mean to be merciful? The actual word “merciful” comes from the Greek word eleemon {el-eh-ay'-mone} which means “to be concerned about people in their need, to be merciful, sympathetic, or compassionate.” In the Old Testament, there are several words for “mercy.” There is a wonderful Hebrew word in Psalm 40.

* Psalm 40:11- Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

The word “mercies” comes from the Hebrew word racham {rakh'-am} which means “womb.” The word refers to God’s affection for us, just as a mother loves her baby. David was asking the Lord to surround him with the kind of warmth, comfort, and protection that a child enjoys in its mother’s womb.

As sinners, we do deserve the punishment for sin. We all deserve to go to a place called Hell because we all are sinners. When we are repentant, however, and seek the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sins, in mercy He saves us by His wonderful grace. Mercy withholds punishment from offenders who deserve it. God showed mercy in sparing us from the judgment which our sins deserve, and in demonstrating kindness to us through the saving work of Christ. Mercy leads to forgiveness, but mercy is much bigger than forgiveness. Mercy is more than just forgiving someone.
* Psalm 119:64 - The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

* Lamentations 3:22-23 - It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. [23] They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

* Psalm 145:8-9 ... The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. [9] The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Mercy and grace are found together many times in Scripture, but they are not the same. Mercy deals with the symptoms of sin; grace deals with the problem of sin itself. Mercy offers relief from punishment; grace offers pardon from the crime. Grace comes first, removing the sin; mercy eliminates the punishment. Mercy pities us; grace pardons us. With mercy, I do not get what I do deserve...Hell. With God’s grace, I get what I don’t deserve...Heaven.

Mercy and love go together, but they too, are not the same. Love is bigger than mercy; mercy is bigger than forgiveness. Love can do more than just show mercy. Love acts out of affection; mercy acts out of a need. Mercy responds to a problem; love acts when there is no problem. Love is constant; mercy is reserved for times of trouble. Mercy is more than forgiveness, it reaches out to those in need, but it’s less than love. The love of God is the catalyst behind His mercy toward us. In fact the nature of God is love for God is love. When we look at our responsibility to be merciful, we will note several principles of the word “merciful” and apply those principles to our lives.

* Principles of Mercifulness
1. Mercifulness involves an Attitude of Pity

The word “merciful” carries the idea of caring for the afflicted, giving help to the wretched, or rescuing the miserable. To be merciful, is to have pity and compassion for those who are in need. This pity is to be shown regardless of the status or merit of the person. Having pity is not difficult, but our responsibility does not stop here, it commences.

Some feel that if they have pity or sympathy for others, they are being merciful. That is not the case at all as we will continue to see. Pity is only the beginning of mercifulness. Some folks are so hard-hearted, they don’t even get to step one. They struggle with compassion because they are so selfish or bitter.
Chapter 5...Mercy Me!...5:7

The compassion and pity of Lincoln at the end of the Civil War set the stage for restoring the United States. After Lee's surrender, Lincoln spoke to a large crowd from the balcony of the White House. He told them about the considerate policy he had in mind for the South. At the end of his speech, Senator Harlan asked, "What shall we do with the rebels?" The vindictive crowd shouted back, "Hang them!" Their bitterness squelched any kind of attitude of compassion and mercy in their hearts. Tad Lincoln, however, turned to his father and said, "No, no, Papa. Not hang them. Hang on to them!" "That's it!" replied Lincoln joyfully. "Tad has it. We must hang on to them!" At the time, Tad was only eleven, but he understood the importance of mercy, especially in restoring a broken nation.

2. Mercifulness involves Action, Association, Production, & Personal Involvement

One night a cobbler dreamed that the next day Jesus was coming to visit him. The dream seemed so real that he got up very early the next morning and hurried to the woods, where he gathered green boughs to decorate his shop for the arrival of so great a Guest. He waited all morning, but, to his disappointment, his shop remained quiet, except for an old man who limped up to the door asking to come in for a few minutes of warmth.

While the man was resting, the cobbler noticed that the old fellow's shoes were worn through. Touched, the cobbler took a new pair from his shelves and saw to it that the stranger was wearing them as he went on his way. Throughout the afternoon the cobbler waited, but his only visitor was an elderly woman. He had seen her struggling under a heavy load of firewood, and he invited her into his shop to eat. He saw to it that she had a nourishing meal before she went on her way. As night began to fall, the cobbler heard a child crying outside his door. The problem was the child was lost and afraid. The cobbler went out, soothed the youngster's tears and, with the child's little hand in his, he took the youngster home.

When he returned to his shop, the cobbler was sad. He was convinced that while he had been away, he had missed the visit of his Lord. Now he lived through the moments as he had imagined and dreamed them: the knock, the latch lifted, the radiant face, the offered cup. He would have kissed the hands where the nails had been, washed the feet where the spikes had entered. Then the Lord would have sat and
talked to him.

In his anguish, the cobbler cried out, "Why is it, Lord, that your feet delay? Have you forgotten that this was the day?" Then, soft in the silence, the Lord quietly spoke to his heart, "Lift up your heart for I kept my word. Three times I came to your friendly door; three times my shadow was on your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet; I was the woman you gave to eat; I was the child on the homeless street." The moral of the story is when we are merciful in getting involved in the lives of others, we do that which pleases Christ and are Christlike in our actions.

*Matthew 25:35-40... For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: [36] Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. [37] Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? [38] When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? [39] Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? [40] And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Pity is the starting-block of mercy. It launches us into action, into the "race" of mercy. Mercifulness is not just a frame of mind, but a performance of deeds. The sympathy and compassion that come from a heart of mercy is translated into action toward those in need, including a readiness to assist and relieve the suffering of others. Mercifulness does not involve feeling pity or compassion, but then remaining dormant like a bear in hibernation. Instead, mercifulness does what it can to relieve the miseries of mankind. Having pity and compassion and doing nothing accomplishes nothing and helps no one. That is what James was trying to get across to us in his epistle.

*James 2:15-16... If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, [16] And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

*James 1:27- Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

The word "visit" is from the Greek word *episkeptomai* {ep-ee-skep'-tom-ahee} which means "to look upon or after, to inspect, examine with
the eyes in order to see how a person is doing; to look upon in order to help or to benefit; to look after, have care or provide for someone.” This word indicates “involvement.” In fact, this is the same word for “visited” used above in Matthew 25:36, “I was sick and you visited me.”

Another Hebrew word for mercy is *checed*; and it is an untranslatable word. It does not mean only to sympathize with a person in the popular sense of the term; it does not mean simply to feel sorry for someone in trouble. *Checed* or mercy, means the ability to get right inside the other person's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings. The basic meaning is to give help to the afflicted and to rescue the helpless. It is compassion in action.

Clearly this is much more than an emotional wave of pity. It demands a deliberate effort of the mind and of the will. It denotes a sympathy which is not given, as it were, from outside, but which comes from within, from a deliberate identification with the other person, until we see things as he sees them, and feel things as he feels them. This is sympathy in the literal sense of the word. In fact the word sympathy is derived from two Greek words, *sum* which means “together with,” and *paschein* which means “to experience or to suffer.” Sympathy means “experiencing things together with the other person, literally going through what he is going through.”

Such was the case with Peter the Great. When Peter the Great took by storm the city of Narva, in 1704, the soldiers, in defiance of the express orders of the Czar, carried fire and destruction into every quarter of the town, slaughtering the inhabitants without mercy. They were ruthless. Peter the Great threw himself, sword in hand, into the midst of the massacre and rescued many of the defenseless women and children from his own merciless troops. He killed, with his own hand, one of his ferocious soldiers, and at last succeeded in curbing the fury of this uncontrolled army.

Covered with dust, sweat, and blood, he then hastened to the townhouse, where the principal inhabitants of the place had taken refuge. As soon as he had entered the hall, he laid his sword on the table. He then said to the frightened multitude, "It is not with the blood of your fellow-citizens that this sword is stained, but with that of my own soldiers, whom I have been sacrificing for your preservation." Peter the Great demonstrated mercifulness by taking action and getting directly involved in the needs of the people of Narva. He did not have to do this,
but mercy compelled him to act.

**Mercy is meeting people’s needs.** It is not simply feeling compassion but showing compassion, not only sympathizing but giving a helping hand. Mercy is giving food to the hungry, comfort to the bereaved, love to the rejected, forgiveness to the offender, and companionship to the lonely. Mercy gets involved in the needy person’s life. The heart of the merciful person is willing to leave his comfort zone to meets the needs and relieve the burdens of others and make them happy. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us.

* Titus 3:5- Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
* Ephesians 2:4-9 ... But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, [5] Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) [6] And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: [7] That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast. Just as Jesus did, the merciful person is willing to pay the price to meet another’s needs, not considering whether that person is worthy of mercy. True mercy is given without merit. It is not earned.

The French Army, never known for being soft on crime, wanted a disobedient soldier executed in order to make an example and a statement to the remaining soldiers. The soldier’s mother was a widow and could not bear the thought of losing her only son. She approached Napoleon, seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice, and justice demanded his death. The mother explained, “But I don’t ask for justice, I plead for mercy.” Napoleon’s response to her plea, “Madam, your son does not deserve mercy.” The mother cried, “Sir, it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.” Napoleon replied, “Well, then, I will have mercy.” He spared the woman’s son. Thank God for the mercy we have in Christ. We do not deserve it; it is freely given to us by His grace when we seek His forgiveness.

**It is difficult for people to be merciful because they don’t want to get involved.** That is the motto of America, especially when a crime has been committed. Most people are so concerned with their own
feelings that they are unconcerned with the feelings of anyone else. When they are sorry for someone, they feel pity from a safe distance. They stay in the bleachers, if you know what I mean. They just watch. They do not want to get in the game and make the deliberate effort to get involved and inside the other person's mind and heart. They are hesitant to see and feel things as the hurting person sees and feels things. Thank God, Jesus did not feel this way. He literally got involved in the needs of mankind. The Son of God became a man in order to meet our needs and understand what we faced.

* Hebrews 4:15- For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Queen Victoria was a close friend of Principal and Mrs. Tulloch of St. Andrews. Prince Albert died and Victoria was left alone. At the same time, Principal Tulloch died and Mrs. Tulloch was left alone. Unannounced, Queen Victoria came to call on Mrs. Tulloch when she was resting on a couch in her room. When the Queen was announced, Mrs. Tulloch struggled to rise quickly from her couch and to curtsy to the Queen. Victoria stepped forward: "My dear," she said, "don't rise. I am not coming to you today as the queen to a subject, but as one woman who has lost her husband to another." Victoria got involved and had compassion and sympathy for Mrs. Tulloch, for the Queen knew what she was going through.

A sterling example of someone who got involved in the life of another in need is found in the Good Samaritan. This well-known display of mercy is recorded in Luke 10.

* Luke 10:30-37... And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. [31] And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. [32] And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. [33] But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, [34] And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. [35] And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. [36] Which now of
these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? [37] And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Jesus was dealing with His religious critics about being neighborly and gave the illustration of the Good Samaritan who showed mercy to the poor man who was beaten by thieves on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. Religious people, a priest and Levite, passed by without doing anything. They may have had some thoughts of pity for the man's poor situation, but they had no deeds of compassion which means they did not fulfill the requirement of being merciful which is given in the Beatitudes. Their religion was in vain according to James.

Mercifulness involves both an attitude and action. They only had the attitude at most. The Samaritan, however, had both attitude and action, for he went to the man and took the man to a place where he could obtain help. The illustration of the Samaritan which Christ gave ends with the listeners acknowledging that the Samaritan did indeed show mercy.

We must never imagine that we are merciful because we feel compassionate toward someone in distress. Mercy means active goodwill. This was well understood by the nineteenth-century preacher who happened across a friend whose horse had just been accidentally killed. While a crowd of onlookers expressed empty words of sympathy, the preacher stepped forward and said to the loudest sympathizer, "I am sorry five pounds. How much are you sorry?" Then he passed the hat. True mercy demands action. Mercy not only involves an attitude of pity, action, association, production and personal involvement, but it involves a third principle.

3. Mercifulness involves Astuteness, Perceptiveness, and Patience

Years after the death of President Calvin Coolidge, this story came to light. In the early days of his presidency, Coolidge awoke one morning in his hotel room to find a cat burglar going through his pockets. Coolidge spoke up, asking the burglar not to take his watch chain because it contained an engraved charm he wanted to keep. Coolidge then engaged the thief in quiet conversation and discovered he was a college student who had no money to pay his hotel bill or buy a ticket back to campus. Coolidge counted $32 out of his wallet, which he had also persuaded the dazed young man to give back in the future! He declared it to be a loan, and advised the young man to leave the way he had come so as to avoid the Secret Service! Yes, the loan was paid back. Coolidge
was merciful by not arresting the young man even though he deserved this. Instead, he found out the reason for the young man’s actions and what was the problem that prompted him to steal. He did not give the boy the money, he loaned it. He used discernment in the situation in order to do what he thought was best for the young man. Mercy does not hold a grudge, harbor resentment, capitalize on another’s failure or weakness, or rejoice in another’s sin.

Mercifulness is prudent, wise, and discerning in its performance. It knows when giving a handout may not be the most merciful thing to do, but instead of a handout, a job or counsel may be better help, even though the recipient may not think so. We must use wisdom and take care not to harm men by encouraging them in idleness, laziness, deception or the waste of money on things like alcohol, tobacco, or lotteries. Some folks have dire needs because they just won’t work or they waste their money on sinful habits. Jesus made it clear if a man won’t work, then he should not eat. Hunger is a great remedy for laziness. Mercy may refuse to give on the spur of the moment, that it may help permanently and efficiently after inspecting the circumstances. Mercy knows that outward assistance is not only important, but also inward counsel, help, and direction. The heart and soul need mercy as well as physical needs.

4. Mercifulness involves Animation and Pleasure

The late Corrie ten Boom recalled in her book The Hiding Place, a postwar meeting with a guard from the Ravensbruck concentration camp, where her sister had died and she herself had been subjected to horrible indignities. This camp was an awful, horrifying place. The meeting with the guard was at a church service in Munich where she saw the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of the actual jailers that she had seen since that time.

She said, “And suddenly it was all there in my mind—the roomful of mocking soldiers, the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s pain-blanchéd face. He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing and said to me, ‘How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein. To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!’ His hand was thrust out to shake mine and I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of those
thoughts. Jesus Christ had died for this man. Was I going to ask for more? 'Lord Jesus,' I prayed, 'forgive me and help me to forgive him.'

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer, 'Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.' As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me." Corrie was continuing to learn what it was to be merciful toward others.

Beloved, mercy is not to be dreaded or a drudgery. It is not to be drab, dismal, dreary, down, and depressing. We are not to show mercy begrudgingly or with a resentful, sour spirit. That kind of attitude is not going to encouraging or be a blessing to anyone. In fact, it will create resentment from the recipient. Instead, mercy is to be shown with joy and cheerfulness. Paul addressed this in Romans 12.

*Romans 12:8 - Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

We are to show mercy with a cheerful countenance, which in itself, will add to the mercy shown to the needy. Our sacrifice and giving to meet the needs of others is to be done with joy. The Lord loves this kind of attitude in us. Notice 2 Corinthians 9.

*2 Corinthians 9:7- Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

5. Mercifulness involves Aggressiveness, Alertness, & Probing.

The merciful person is alert and aggressive in trying to meet the needs of others. He looks for opportunities to assist those in need. The merciful person makes inquiries about the welfare of others. The Good Samaritan was alert to the condition of the man that was beaten and robbed. He went out of his way to assist him. The merciful person has the attitude of Christ and wants to be used of God to be a blessing to other people. His prayer is, "Lord use me!"

The Roman Empire did not know the meaning of mercy but Jesus did. The mercy of Christ motivated Him to reach out and help those who were sick, sightless, speechless, soundless, sorrowful, sad, sensual, and stiff from death. The attitude of Rome and the Jews,
however, was not one of mercy. For the most part, the days in which Jesus lived and taught were not characterized by mercy. The Jewish religionists themselves were not inclined to show mercy, because mercy is not characteristic of those who are proud, self-righteous, and judgmental. To many of Jesus’ listeners, showing mercy was considered one of the least of virtues, if it was thought to be a virtue at all.

A popular Roman philosopher called mercy “the disease of the soul.” It was the supreme sign of weakness. Mercy was a sign that you did not have what it takes to be a real man and especially, a real Roman. The Romans glorified masculine courage, strict justice, firm discipline, and, above all, absolute power. They looked down on mercy, because mercy to them was weakness, and weakness was despised above all other human limitations.

During much of ruthless Roman history, a father had the right of patria opites tas, of deciding whether or not his newborn baby would live or die. As the infant was held up for him to see, the father would turn his thumb up if he wanted the child to live, or down if he wanted it to die. If his thumb turned down, the child was immediately drowned without mercy. Citizens had the same life-or-death power over their slaves. At any time and for any reason they could kill and bury a slave, with no fear of arrest or reprisal. Husbands could even have their wives put to death on the least provocation. In fact, women were treated like disposable diapers. Rome was a cruel government upon people, especially women.

Likewise the pagan governments of communism, Islamic nations, and dictators are characterized by cruelty. Cruel rulers disdain mercy. Our own government is also filled with disdain for mercy. That explains the laws for abortion and other evils. A society that despises mercy is a society that glorifies brutality and has a cheap view of life. There is a lack of love and respect for other people. In spite of the attitude of this world about mercy, we are still to be merciful. We are to obey God no matter what everybody else is doing and in so doing, we shall reap His reward. We will obtain mercy according to His promise.

II. MERCY ME....My Reward in being Merciful  5:7b

.... for they shall obtain mercy.

What does Jesus mean by the statement that the merciful shall obtain mercy? First of all, let me say that this obtaining of mercy does not deal with the salvation of a person’s soul.
Some folks misunderstand and get upset with this verse and say it goes against the doctrine of salvation by grace and makes salvation dependent upon showing mercy. Acts of mercy, however, do not save your soul. We must be saved by God’s mercy before we can truly be merciful. The Bible is clear that salvation is by grace and is free. God gives us grace because it is needed, not because it is merited or earned.
* Ephesians 2:8-9... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The subject of salvation is not the issue of Matthew 5:7. It is talking about the general experience of life in which if you want to experience or obtain mercy, then you must show it. The Lord is speaking of the daily mercy needed for Christian living and of mercy, in that future day, when the Christian’s works will be reviewed. If one has not been merciful, that person will not receive mercy; that is, one’s rewards will decrease accordingly.
* 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 - Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. [14] If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.
* Matthew 7:2 - For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
* Galatians 6:7- Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Those who are merciful shall obtain mercy has reference to those who have been born again by the mercy of God. Because Christ’s love has been extended to them, they have the work of the Holy Spirit in them producing a mercy which defies explanation by unregenerate men. Jesus Himself became the ultimate example of this mercy when He cried from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” The believer does not show mercy in order to obtain mercy, he shows mercy because he has obtained mercy from the Lord. In other words, he is not saved simply because he shows mercy and is kind to people. He shows mercy and is kind because he is saved.

The reason the merciful are blessed is that "they will be shown mercy." The word "they" in the phrase is emphatic. It is the Greek word
**autos** which means “they alone.” Those who meet the conditions are the ones who will receive mercy. Those who are not merciful will not receive mercy, but judgment. Other Scriptures teach the same principle.

* Proverbs 11:17 - The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

* James 2:13- For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

* Matthew 6:14-15... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: [15] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

We reap what we sow. If we are merciful to others, most of the time others will be merciful to us. This is not always the case. All men may not treat you kindly, for some men are cruel no matter how much mercy you show them. Look at what men did to Jesus Christ, the epitome of mercy. The more Jesus showed mercy, the more He showed up the unmercifulness of the Jewish religious leaders. The more He showed mercy, the more they were determined to put Him out of the way. The ultimate outcome of His mercy was the cross of Calvary.

In Jesus’ crucifixion, two merciless systems—merciless government and merciless religion—united to kill Him. Totalitarian Rome joined intolerant Judaism to destroy the Prince of mercy. In this beatitude, God is the One who is guaranteeing the mercy because men cannot be depended upon to give it. He will see to it that the merciful will experience the reception of mercy in their own lives. **Matthew 5:7 does not teach that mercy to men brings mercy from men, but that mercy to men brings mercy from God. If we are merciful to others, God will be merciful to us, whether men are merciful or not.**

* Hebrews 2:17- Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

* How to Develop Mercy in Your Life

1. Supplication: Pray for Mercy in your Life and Confess your Need for it to the Lord

   Pray for, desire, love, and seek mercy; it will open the doors of blessing wider than any other means. There is never a moment of our lives in which we are not in need of mercy, both at the hands of our
fellows, and above all, from the hand of God. That we need it daily from the Lord is found in a prayer of David's in the Psalms. As we receive God's mercy, we are able to have mercy on others.

* Psalm 86:3 - Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Pray to this effect: "Father, I know your mercy. I have been merciful at times. But, God, I need more compassion, and I need to forgive. I know this is your will for me. Help me."

* Psalm 41:4 - I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

* Hosea 6:6- For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

* Micah 6:8- He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

2. Study the Scriptures

The more you read the Word of God, you will be encouraged to show mercy. Scripture is a great key to all the beatitudes. God’s Word is an important factor leading to holy conduct. Be earnest in your study of the Scriptures. It will have much to do with developing good character in your life. Read especially the Scriptures that have to do with mercy and compassion. We have listed many already in this study. Here is another one that shows the priority we are to place on being merciful.

* Matthew 23:23- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

3. Show Mercy to Others

You grow in mercy by practicing it. Volitionally forgive those who have wronged you. Purposely become involved with those who are hurting, especially those who are poor. Why not assist a family in a third world country. We show mercy by praying for those without Christ. Our mercy can be measured by our prayer for the unsaved and for Christians who are walking in disobedience. We also show spiritual mercy by proclaiming the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, the most merciful thing we can do. Mercy is one of the graces that should characterize or clothe our lives as Christians.

* Colossians 3:12-13... Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; [13] Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,
if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
* Matthew 6:14- For ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
* Jude 1:21-23... Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. [22] And of some have compassion, making a difference: [23] And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
* Luke 6:36- Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.
* Proverbs 14:21-22... He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. [22] Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

May the Lord help us all to be merciful and may our prayer each day be “Mercy me!”

**Mercy comes down from heaven to earth so that man by practicing it may resemble God.**

**Giambattista Giraldi**

**(1504-1573)**
Chapter 6
How Can a Person See God?

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

What are some of the things in your life that you could not wait to see? Think about it for a minute. As I pondered this question, I tried to go back to my childhood years all the way up to now. As a boy, I remember that I couldn’t wait to see Santa Clause for my first time and sit on his lap. As I got little older, my first time in Busch Stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals, was a memorable occasion. I had never seen so many people in one place and the stadium was so beautiful. Baseball was in my blood. On my wedding day, I could not wait to see my bride in all of her glory and then the birth of each one of my kids through our years. Seeing President Ronald Reagan and the sites of the nation of Israel were very special times in my life, but nothing will compare to the day when I shall at last get to see the Lord.

This is the ultimate goal of all religions in the world, but unfortunately, the methods that men conjure up to see God are faulty and false. Much of the emphasis of different religions is placed on outward actions and behavior for salvation. Outward goodness, without inward goodness, however, is no goodness at all. God is concerned about what is going on in our heart, for it is the source of our troubles and our decisions.

* Jeremiah 17:9- The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? *

* 1 Samuel 16:7- But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

This beatitude takes the issue of hypocrisy by the horns as it reveals the importance of inward purity. Jesus says that the pure in
“heart” will see God. Our hypocrisy hurts our relationship with God, with others, and robs us of God’s blessings. Are you missing out on God’s blessings in your life because you are struggling with hypocrisy and are not pure in heart? Do you know what the Bible says about the issue of hypocrisy and its consequences? We are going to look at this topic before we get into the heart of Matthew 5:8, because hypocrisy is one of the key factors that blurs our spiritual vision and stunts our spiritual growth. It is a big obstacle in becoming pure in heart and it develops spiritual blindness.

I. THE HINDRANCES FROM HYPOCRISY

The Bible gives several principles about hypocrisy and hypocrites.

* Bible Principles on Hypocrisy
1. It’s an Attribute of the Pharisees.

In the 1600’s, great effort was taken in Europe by wealthy families to look as beautiful as possible. Men wore expensive suits, which would include accessories such as a leather purse hanging from the belt and a fashionable walking stick. They would shave their heads and wear high crowned wigs with long flowing hair. As the women, they would also paint their faces and be adorned with lace.

Women wore beautiful long-flowing dresses. Around their waste they wore puffy panniers stiffened with cane frames to make their hips fashionably wide. They too, wore extravagant, tall wigs supported with wires and decorated with feathers or flowers. Sometimes these wigs would brush against the candles of the chandeliers and they would catch on fire.

What really amused me was the purpose of their elegant fans that hung by their wrist. I always thought they used them to keep themselves cool in the summer heat, but this was not their main purpose. Instead, the women used these elegant fans to cover their rotted teeth and to blow away their bad breath. Outward they were beautiful and elegant, but inwardly they struggled with rot and odor. What a fitting picture of the Pharisees plagued by their own hypocrisy. They were outwardly good, but inwardly corrupt.

* Matthew 23:25- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.
*Matthew 23:27* - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

*Matthew 23:28* - Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

*Luke 12:1* - In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The leaven of the Pharisees involved outward actions without inward purity.

2. **Abomination and Anger reside in the heart of the hypocrite.**

*Proverbs 26:24,25* - He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Hypocritical people may cover their hatred with pleasant words, but they're deceiving you.

*Job 36:13* - But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them. Those who are hypocrites are full of resentment. Even when the Lord punishes them, they refuse to cry out to Him for help.

3. **It will be Among Us in the Last Days.** It will be a problem.

*1 Timothy 4:1,2* - Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

4. **Anticipation of his judgment is described.**

*Matthew 24:51* - And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

5. **He is Absonant or inconsistent in his outward and inward behavior. The Attention or focus of the hypocrite tends to be on the faults of others.**

A man came home to discover that his wife had bought a pet monkey. “You bought a monkey?” the incredulous man asked. “Where will the monkey sleep?” “In our bed—with us,” said the wife. “But what about the odor?” asked the man. “Well, I got used to you,” said the wife, “I guess the monkey can too.” Beloved, are you numb to the stench of your own sin and at the same time, worrying what everyone else is doing?

*Luke 6:42* - Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out
of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye. We are to deal with our own faults and sins first before we go around dealing with the faults of others. Their faults are like splinters while ours are like logs. It is the hypocrite that complains there is too much sex and violence on his VCR or DVD player.

6. His Appearance outwardly is fake.
Finding himself desperately in need of money, a man went to the city zoo, hoping to find a job feeding the animals. Although no such opportunity was available, the manager, seeing the size and the strength of the applicant, suddenly got an idea. The manager said, “You know, there are few creatures who attract attention like a gorilla. Unfortunately, ours died yesterday. If we got you a special fur suit, would you be willing to imitate him for a few days?” The hungry man agreed to try. He was quite successful as he beat his chest, bellowed, and shook the bars of the cage. The visitors were greatly amused and said they had never seen a gorilla with so much intelligence.

One day, while swinging on his trapeze, the gorilla man accidentally lost his grip and landed in the lion’s den. The huge lion gave a ferocious roar. Backing away, the gorilla man realized he could not cry for assistance without revealing that he was a fake. He retreated, hoping to crawl back over the fence into his own cage. The lion, however, followed him. Finally, in desperation, the gorilla man yelled, “Help!” Immediately the lion said in an undertone, “Shut up, stupid! You’ll get us both fired!”

7. Our Affections are to be without hypocrisy.
* Romans 12:9- Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. We are not to be two-faced, but prove the sincerity of our love. Our love is to be “without dissimulation.” What does that mean? It comes from the word anupokritos {an-oo-pok’-ree-tos}. This word means “without hypocrisy, without pretending, sincere, genuine.”

One fine evening a man walked into a fast-food chicken place and bought a nine-piece bucket of chicken. He took his chicken to the park for a romantic picnic under the moonlight with his girlfriend. Upon reaching into the bucket, however, he received a surprise. Instead of chicken he discovered what was apparently the restaurant’s night deposit—nine thousand dollars.

Being basically honest—and really hungry besides—the young man brought the bucket back to the store and asked for his chicken in
exchange for the money. The manager, in awe of the young man’s honesty, asked for his name and told him he wanted to call the newspaper and the local news station to do a story on him. He would become a local hero, an example of honesty and morality that would inspire others!

The hungry man shrugged it off. “My date’s waiting. I just want my chicken.” The manager’s renewed amazement over the young man’s humility almost overwhelmed him. He begged to be allowed to tell the story on the news. At this, the honest man became angry with the manager and demanded his chicken.

“I don’t get it,” the manager responded. “You are an honest man in a dishonest world! This is a perfect opportunity to show the world that there are honest people still willing to take a stand for what is right. Please, give me your name and also the woman’s name. Is that your wife?” “That’s the problem,” said the young man. “My wife is at home. The woman in the car is my girlfriend. Now let me have my chicken so I can get out of here.”

If our love is not sincere, it is repulsive and hypocritical. Counterfeit love is a worthless coin in God’s kingdom. We are not to say, “I love you brother,” then stab him in the back with our tongue or “I love you Honey,” to our spouse and then cheat on her. Our love is to be without dissimulation. It is to be genuine, not hypocritical. Hypocrisy and love cannot co-exist. They are directly opposite. Hypocrisy focuses on self and love upon others. If you are uncaring, unloving, or hypocritical, then you need an attitude adjustment.

8. The Attributes of God’s Word and wisdom are without hypocrisy.
* 1 Peter 2:2- As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
* James 3:17- But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Godly wisdom is “without hypocrisy.” This phrase also comes from the Greek word anupokritos {an-oo-pok'-ree-tos} which means “undisguised, sincere, without play-acting, genuine.” A hypocrite in ancient Greece was a person who played the part of an “actor.” This word refers to a person who acts differently than what he really is.

Worldly wisdom is insincere many times, but God’s wisdom is characterized by openness, plainness, and honesty. What we ARE is important to the Lord. The wisdom from above causes us to be genuine and the wisdom of this world is hypocritical. To be a Christian, and not
live the Christian life, is to be a failure and hypocritical.

9. Our Attitudes and Actions are to be without hypocrisy.

* Philippians 1:10- That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

The word “sincere” comes from two Latin words: sine which means “without” and cera which means “wax.” The word means “without wax.” In the Greek language the word “sincere” comes from the word, heilikrines, which means “unmixed or pure.” It is formed by two Greek words: heile which means “the warmth or light of the sun” and the word krino which means “testing.” It emphasizes our relationship with God. It means “to be tested by the light of the sun or to be completely pure.”

Ancient dealers of porcelain filled the cracks of damaged porcelain or pottery with wax. An honest dealer would describe a perfect piece with the words “sin ceræ” which means “without wax.” If the customer doubted the dealer’s integrity, he would sun-test the pottery by holding it up to the sun to reveal any cracks in the pot. So this word “sincere” suggests a pure or tested character, genuine, without hypocrisy or falsehood.” This truth continues throughout the rest of the New Testament.

Paul gives a reason why Christians should be sincere: “That we might be without offense.” The words “without offense” emphasize our relationship with others. We should live so that we don’t cause others to spiritually stumble and fall. The word “offense” comes from the Greek word skandalon which was the name of that part of a trap to which the bait was attached. In spiritual warfare, it is the snare which causes one to fall into Satan’s trap. As a Christian, I am to give no occasion for anyone to fall into Satan’s trap.

* 1 Corinthians 8:12-13.... But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. [13] Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

* Romans 14:13- Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

* Acts 24:16 - And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Paul’s prayer is for moral purity, sincerity, and genuineness among Christians. As we expose ourselves to the light of God’s Word, we should be found without wax, genuine on the inside as well as the
outside. Don’t be a hypocrite.

One night at a revival meeting, one of the members of a church who had a habit of being hypocritical came to the prayer meeting which took place before the revival that night. He prayed with one of the godly deacons of the church who was very aware of this man’s weakness and hypocrisy. The hypocrite began to pray and in his prayer he cried out, “Lord, fill me! Lord, fill me!” The deacon who was praying with him could not keep quiet any longer and prayed, “Don’t do it Lord! Don’t do it Lord! He leaks! He leaks!” Let me ask, “Do you leak?” We are to be of transparent character, our hearts being on the inside what we appear to be on the outside. The Christian is to be the opposite of the hypocrite.

* 2 Corinthians 8:8- I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

10. The Aspirations, Ambitions, Animation or joy of the hypocrite are short.
* Job 20:5- That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?
* Job 27:8- For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?
* Job 8:13- So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish:

11. The Assertions, Admonitions, and Assurances of the hypocrite are deceitful and destroy others.
* 1 Timothy 4:2- Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;
* Proverbs 11:9- An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

12. Hypocrisy Attracts rebuke from others.
* Galatians 2:13-14... And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. [14] But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? Our hypocrisy irritates and angers others under our leadership, who follow us, or who are dependent upon us.

13. We are to Avoid hypocrisy in our lives.
* 1 Peter 2:1- Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,
The words “laying aside” come from the Greek word *apotithemi* {ap-o-teeth'-ay-mee} which mean to strip off or throw down. It is a word of intensity and force. This word could be used to describe the spiking of a football in the end zone after a touchdown. We are to avoid, thrust away, or shun hypocrisy in our lives. Here are some of the areas.

A. In the Payment of our tithe.
* Matthew 6:2- Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
* Matthew 23:23- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

B. In our Praying
* Matthew 6:5- And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

C. In our Periods of fasting
* Matthew 6:16- Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

D. In our Profession of devotion to the Lord
* Matthew 15:7-8- Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, [8] This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

II. HOLINESS IN THE HEART - *Blessed are the pure in heart*....

Jesus says, “Oh the joy of those who are pure in heart.” What does this actually mean? Let me say that purity of heart is more than sincerity. A motive can be sincere, yet lead to worthless and sinful things. The pagan priests who opposed Elijah demonstrated great sincerity when they lacerated their bodies in order to induce Baal to send fire down to consume their sacrifices. They were sincere in their worship, but were sincerely wrong. So what does Jesus mean here?

When we examine the Greek word for “pure” we find some clarity on the verse. The Greek word is *katharos*, which helps to form our
English word “catharsis.” Catharsis is a term used in psychology and counseling for a cleansing of the mind or emotions. The Greek word is related to the Latin castus, from which we get “chaste.” The related word “chasten” refers to discipline given in order to cleanse from wrong behavior. The word katharos, has a variety of usages, all of which have something to add to the meaning of this beatitude for the Christian life.

1. Originally, the word katharos, meant clean, and could, for instance, be used for soiled garments which have been washed clean.

2. This word is regularly used for corn which has been winnowed or sifted and cleansed of all chaff or of vines that have been cleansed by pruning in order to bear fruit. It was also used to describe an army which has been totally purged of all discontented, cowardly, unwilling and inefficient soldiers, and which is a force composed solely of first-class fighting men. They were an army of pure warriors.

3. Katharos very commonly appears in company with another Greek adjective—akiratos. Akiratos can be used of milk or wine which is unmixed with water, or of metal which has in it no tinge of alloy. So, then, the basic meaning of katharos is unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed. That is why this beatitude is so demanding a beatitude.

Inward sham, deceit, and moral filth cannot coexist with sincere devotion to Christ. A pure-hearted person is one whose motives are unmixed, whose thoughts are holy, whose conscience is clean. He seeks not only to have his external actions correct, but desires to be holy in heart and outwardly lives a consistent, godly life. His devotion to the Lord is focused and undivided. He is not double-minded. God states over and over that our heart is to be united with Him and not divided and distracted by selfish, sinful, impure motives.

*James 4:8- Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.
*Psalm 86:11- Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.
*1 Corinthians 7:35- And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. God wants us to give Him notable and constant service without any distractions from His will.
*Jeremiah 32:39- And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:
*Ezekiel 11:19- And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new
spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

The struggle with distractions and double-mindedness has plagued God’s people since the garden of Eden. We are to have only one master and that is the Lord.

* Matthew 6:24- No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

* James 4:4- Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Matthew 5:8 prompts us to examine our heart and motives and to see if they are true and pure. Why do you serve the Lord? Is it for prestige and the applause of men or of God? Whose approval do you seek when you serve the Lord or attend to spiritual matters? Are you seeking to be seen of men or do you seek to honor and glorify Christ? These are pointed questions which we should keep before us all the time. We are to regularly examine our selves for impure motives.

* Psalm 26:2 - Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. David said, “Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and my heart.”

The emphasis on purity of the heart tells us that we must first get the heart right if we expect to truly get anything else right. Purity of heart will ensure purity of life and conduct. If you want the outward to be genuinely holy, then you must have the inward holy. Even genuinely good deeds that do not come from a genuinely good heart are of no spiritual value. Thomas Watson said, “Morality can drown a man as fast as vice,” and, “A vessel may sink with gold or with dung.” Though we may be extremely religious and constantly engaged in doing good things, we cannot please God unless our hearts are right with Him.

This emphasis on the heart refutes the humanistic theory which says education is the answer to man’s social problems. You may be a very educated person and still be evil. Adam and Eve were highly educated when they fell into sin. Heart purity also refutes the environmental theory which says build a better house for a person and he will be a better man or woman. That theory is shot down by the fact that great wickedness is done by folks who live in the finest of houses. Adam and Eve lived in the best environment anyone on earth has ever lived in. It was absolutely perfect, yet they still sinned. Education and
environment do not purify the heart.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. What does Jesus mean by the word “heart?” The depth of what is called for here is seen in the qualifying words "in heart." We are to be singly focused "in heart" on God. The word “heart” is from the Greek word kardia, from which we get the word “cardiac” and similar terms.

Throughout Scripture, as well as in many languages and cultures throughout the world, the heart is used metaphorically to represent the inner person, the seat of motives and attitudes, the center of personality, but in Scripture it represents much more than emotion or feelings. It also includes the thinking process and particularly the will. It is the totality of our ability to think, feel, and decide. So "pure in heart" means that not only are our minds but our feelings and actions are to be concentrated singly on God. It deals with the soul of a person. If our focus is merely intellectual, we are not pure in heart. So how do we become pure in heart? What does the Bible actually say about the topic of “purity?” Let’s take a look.

* What the Bible Says About PURITY

A. The Perverted View for Purity

1. Men believe they can purify themselves of sin.

* Proverbs 16:2- All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

* Proverbs 30:12- There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

Claiming to be pure doesn’t make it so because the basis of purity is gauged by the wrong standard. If you are concerned about being forgiven and cleansed, then you need to consider God’s prescription for cleansing since He is the one who is going to judge you and declare you guilty or not guilty, forgiven or not forgiven, filthy or clean. Proclaiming a tree is pink when it is green does not change the fact it is green. Claiming you are righteous and pure, when you are not, does not help your eternal destiny at all.

2. Men believe their ways are right, but they lead to destruction.

The deadliest mine disaster in state of Pennsylvania was in 1915, at Orenda mine in the town of Boswell. An explosion killed 197 miners. Another disaster occurred four years ago on July 24th, 2002, in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, about thirteen miles from place where September 11's, Flight 93 crashed. Eighteen men on the 3-11 p.m. shift went 245
feet below ground into tunnels that were four to four and a half feet high. Two hours before their shift ended, a continuous miner machine that chewed into the walls of coal, ended up cutting through a wall that was supposed to be 100 feet thick. Instead, it broke into the abandoned Saxman mine NO.2 unleashing 150 million gallons of groundwater into the Quecreek mine.

What happened? What caused the disaster? The answer was inaccurate maps falsely led the men to believe they were not anywhere near the old mine. The inaccurate maps gave them a false sense of security. Nine men got out right away, but the other nine were trapped. Thank God, after 78 hours underground, at a cost of 10 million dollars, the nine miners that were trapped were eventually rescued. This story has a good ending, but such is not the case of those who are following their own maps to Heaven. If you reject the Gospel and plan to get to Heaven another way, you are following a false map and will spend eternity in a place called Hell.

* Proverbs 14:12- There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

3. Men mistakenly conclude that purity is based on outward appearance rather than the inward condition of the heart.

* Matthew 23:25-28... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. [26] Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. [27] Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. [28] Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

4. We cannot purify ourselves.

* Proverbs 20:9- Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

* Jeremiah 2:22- For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God. Nitre is carbonate of soda. Soap is also lye or potash. The word "marked" means "deeply stained."
B. The Promise of Purity

* Jeremiah 33:8- And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

* Isaiah 1:18- Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

* 1 John 1:9- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

C. The Precautions & Precepts about Purity

1. We are commanded to be pure and depart from sinful living.

* 1 Timothy 5:22- Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.

* 2 Timothy 2:22- Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. The principle of replacement is taught here. That which is bad should be replaced by that which is good. The same principle is seen again in 1 Peter 2.

* 1 Peter 2:1,2- Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

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

* Isaiah 1:16- Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

* James 4:8- Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

2. Our Preaching and witnessing are to be done with pure motives.

* Philippians 1:16-17- The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: [17] But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

The word “sincerely” comes from the Greek word ἀγνόησις {agnōse'} which means “purity, chasteness, or sincerity.” Here is an example of doing something good with the wrong motives.
3. We are to Love others with a pure heart.
* 1 Timothy 1:5- Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

The purpose of Paul’s instruction was that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. A pure heart is a heart purified by faith, and purified from corrupt affections. In order to have holy love, our hearts must be cleansed from all sinful lust. Love that steps outside of God’s boundaries for purity becomes destructive lust.

4. We are to live pure lives so that the Word of God is not blasphemed and mocked.
* Titus 2:4-5... That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, [5] To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Blasphemed means “to speak evil of or to revile.

Beloved, the Bible makes it clear that we are ambassadors for Christ. We are representatives of the Lord and His Word. It should be our desire to protect God’s name, His reputation and the reputation of His Word by the way we live. Our lives are to compliment the teachings of the Bible and the example of Jesus Christ. When we are hypocritical and fake, however, others quickly detect it and are repulsed by our behavior. Never underestimate the importance of a name.

In 1892, a Philadelphia inventor, James Mitchell, devised a machine that extruded cookie dough in a firm wrap-around sandwich that could hold a filling, but a filling of what was the issue. “What should we put inside this cookie dough?” was their concern. Mitchell approached the Kennedy Biscuit Works in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, and after testing his machine, they decided in 1895, to manufacture a stuffed cookie containing the company’s first and most successful jam: figs.

The name of the snack generated heated debate. The managers of the company felt that the name should include the word “fig,” and for local marketing purposes, it should have the familiar name of a nearby town. They tried the name “Fig-Boston.” Naah! How about “Fig-Shrewburys?” No, I don’t think so! Then an employee that lived in Newton, Massachusetts said, “How about Fig-Newtons?” That’s it! Thus, the newest sweet in American cookie jars was named at the turn of the 20th century and the rest is history. The name and cookie continue to live on over a century later. Names are important. Solomon stressed this truth to us in Proverbs.
* Proverbs 22:1- A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. Do you have a good name, a good testimony for Christ?

5. Pure religion gets involved in the lives of those in need.
* James 1:27- Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. The word “visit” has the idea of getting involved in the needs of others.

6. We are to have a pure conscience.
* 1 Timothy 3:9- Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
* 2 Timothy 1:3 - I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;
* Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. A pure conscience is a result of having things right with God and right with men. Wrongs have been made right; restitution has been made; forgiveness has been sought for offenses.

7. Purity is needed for useful service.
* 2 Timothy 2:21- If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

During a tour of a large manufacturing plant, a visitor noticed a man using a fiery torch to work on huge slabs of steel. There were times, however, when the flame would not make an impression on the steel. When this happened, a chemical substance was applied to the resisting patch, and immediately the cutting could be resumed. The worker explained that although the torch was able to cut through clean steel eight inches thick, if he encountered the slightest film of rust on the surface, the flame would not penetrate it.

The rusty metal is an accurate picture of many Christians today. The Holy Spirit is seeking to produce God’s perfect design in our life. If our life is right with God, He is able to freely work in us. However, if we are backslidden, corrupted with carnality, and rusting with rebellion, then the Spirit of God is hindered until that area of our life is thoroughly cleansed. We need to be clean so the Lord can work in us and through us.

8. We are to be pure in order to worship and fellowship with the Lord.
* Hebrews 10:22 - Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance
of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

As you look at your life, are you clean before the Lord? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and been cleansed by His blood? As a Christian, are you walking with the Lord and do you have a right relationship with Him? If not, then get right with Him today.

D. The Path or Process for Purity
1. Cleansing comes by the power & blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Purification from sin begins by recognizing our weakness to cleanse ourselves. We need Christ to forgive and cleanse us and He is the only one who can and will if we seek His forgiveness.

* 1 John 1:7- But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Grape juice is used in the Lord’s Supper to represent the blood of Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that there is a chemical in grapes called “Resveratrol” that lowers cholesterol in the body. As we drink the juice that helps cleanse our heart physically, may we be reminded of the spiritual cleansing we find in Christ.

* Mark 1:41- And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

2. Confession of our sins to the Lord cleanses and purifies us.
1 John 1:9- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Compliance to the Commands & Concepts of Scripture lead to purity.

* 1 Peter 1:22- Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

If we are going to be what God wants us to be, we must make the choice to obey the Lord, get rid of our sin, and do what is right. In Mexico and the tropical zones of South America a “strangler” fig grows in abundance. The Spanish-speaking people refer to it as the “matapalo” which means “the tree killer.” The fruit is not edible except to the cattle and birds.

After birds eat it, they must clean their beaks of the sticky residue. They do this by rubbing them on nearby trees. The seeds have a natural glue which enables them to stick to the branches. When the rainy season
comes, germination begins. Tiny roots begin to make their way down into the heart of the wood. Within a few years, beautiful trees become entangled with this parasitic vine. Unless the tree is freed from these vines, it eventually dies. The only way to stop the killing process is to cut away the vine.

We must take the same action when it comes to sinful habits in our life. They must be removed or else they will choke out the desire to obey the Lord’s will in our life. Applying God’s Word will help to clean up our lives. On the other hand sin will choke spiritual growth and purity.

* Matthew 13:22- He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he cometh unfruitful.
* Matthew 24:12- And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
* Psalm 12:6 -The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
* Psalm 19:8 - The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
* Psalm 119:140- Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.
* Psalm 105:19- Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The word “tried” comes from the Hebrew word tsarah\textsuperscript{th} (\textit{tsawraf}) which means “to smelt, refine, or purify.”
* Ephesians 5:26- That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
* John 17:17- Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
* Psalm 119:9- Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

4. Chastening has a purifying effect on our lives.
* Proverbs 20:30 - The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.
* Hebrews 12:11- Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

5. The Consternation or Fear of the Lord purifies and cleanses our hearts.
* Psalm 19:9- The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. A reverence and respect for the Lord will help us stay right with the Lord and reject that which is wrong.
6. The Coming of the Lord helps motivate us to keep ourselves pure.
* 1 John 3:2,3- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

7. We are to Call out to God and have a Craving for Purity.

In the forests of northern Europe and Asia lives a little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don’t set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn’t enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life. We are to have that kind of craving for purity in our own heart. Purity needs to be a priority in our heart.
* Psalm 19:12- Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.
* Psalm 19:14 - Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.
* Psalm 51:2- Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
* Psalm 51:10- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
* Psalm 139:23-24... Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: [24] And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
* Psalm 26:2- Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. The word “try” comes from the Hebrew word *tsaraph* (*tsaw-raf*) which means “to refine or purify.”

8. Consistency in purity leads to more growth in purity.
* Titus 1:15- Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

We see only what we are able to see and that is true not only in the physical sense, it is also true in every other possible sense. If the ordinary person goes out on a night of stars, he sees only a host of
pinpoints of light in the sky. He sees what he is fit to see, but in that same sky the astronomer will call the stars and the planets by their names, and will move amongst them as his friends. The ordinary person can walk along a country road, and see by the hedgerows nothing but a tangle of weeds, wild flowers, and grasses. The trained botanist, however, would see this plant and that, and call it by name and know its use. He might even see something of infinite value and rarity because he had eyes trained to see.

Put two men into a room filled with ancient pictures. A man with no knowledge and no skill could not tell an old master from a worthless painting, whereas a trained art critic might well discern a picture worth thousands of dollars in a collection which someone else might dismiss as junk.

In the same line of thought, there are people with filthy, perverted minds who consistently see perversion in that which is pure, all for the purpose of trying to impress someone or get a laugh. On the other hand, those who are pure see purity. They see God’s blessings and wonders and the goodness of others. Their mind is not in the gutter because they dwell upon good things. This is what Paul instructed us to do.

* Philippians 4:8- Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9. Complications, Conflicts, and our Crosses have a purifying effect upon us.

Trials have a way of getting our attention and getting rid of junk in our lives.

* Psalm 66:10-11...For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. [11] Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
* Isaiah 48:10- Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.
* Psalm 119:67- Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

10. Cutting off close fellowship from evil companions will help to purify us.

During the war in Iraq, roads are marked on a map to determine whether they are safe for transporting supplies. Roads in red are off
limits. Roads in yellow or amber are OK to travel. It was the yellow-brick road in the Wizard of Oz that led to Emerald City and the blessings that came with it. We too, are to follow the yellow brick road in our lives and avoid the red, dangerous roads of a carnal crowd. The wicked lifestyles of unbelievers are off limits to Christians.

There is nothing wrong in having friendships with unsaved people, as long as you do not adopt their lifestyles. The problem with most Christians is they are not spiritually strong enough to not be drug down by the lives of the unsaved. Some unbelievers will intimidate Christians by taunts, mockery, jokes, or threats of rejection. The passion to be accepted at any cost leads some Christians to compromise with sin. This is why it is better not to hang around a carnal crowd. There are people, places, practices, philosophies, and passions that we must separate from if we intend to have a pure heart.

* 2 Corinthians 6:17- Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

* 1 Corinthians 15:33- Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

11. The Control of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is needed to live a pure life.

* Galatians 5:16- This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

We have seen the promise of purity, the perverted view of purity, the precautions and precepts about purity, the path or process to purity, and now we will examine purity’s rewards and blessings. We will look at the pleasantness and pay-off from being pure.

E. The Pleasantness and Pay-off from being Pure

1. We are Revived by the purifying effect of God’s Word

* John 15:3 - Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

*Psalm 119:25- My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

* Psalm 119:107- I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.

* Psalm 119:154- Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.
2. **We are Reliable and Ready for service to the Lord.**

We must heed the memorable words written by Robert Murray McCheyne to the Rev. Dan Edwards on 2 October 1840, after his ordination as a missionary to the Jews. He said, “I trust you will have a pleasant and profitable time in Germany. I know you will apply hard to German, but do not forget the culture of the inner man... I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his saber clean and sharp. Every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God’s sword, His instrument, and I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy Christian is an awful weapon in the hand of God.”

* 2 Timothy 2:21 - If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.

3. **We Rejoice in the goodness of God.**

* Psalm 73:1 - Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

4. **Rejoicing or kindness to others are a result of the pleasant words of the pure.**

* Proverbs 15:26 - The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

5. **The Recognition of purity in our life.**

Godly people attract attention because godly people are so rare. Some people may not respect a godly person, but most people recognize genuine purity when they see it.

* Proverbs 20:11 - Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

6. **Righteousness will characterize our conduct.**

* Proverbs 21:8- The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right. The word “work” means “conduct or deeds.”

* Psalm 24:3-5... Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? [4] He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. [5] He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

7. **We will be Renewed, Restored, and Reinforced by our purity.**

* Job 17:9 - The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath
clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Purity has a strengthening and shielding effect in our lives against temptation. The Mongols were nomads who dwelled in northern China. They were warriors that frequently fought other tribes for control over grazing lands. In 1206, these fighting tribes were united by a young leader known as Genghis Khan which means “Universal Ruler.” He trained the tribes to be a powerful, disciplined army because his dream was to conquer the world.

Training started when the children were young. At the age of two they knew how to ride a horse. Archers were taught to string their bows while riding the horse and shoot their arrows when all the hoofs of the horse were off the ground so their aim would not be affected by the pounding hoofs. To protect themselves, they not only wore armor made from animal hides, but Genghis ordered all of his soldiers to wear a shirt made of pure, raw silk. Why?

The reason for this order was the fact that arrows could not easily penetrate pure, raw, silk shirts. Though wounded, fellow soldiers would gently pull on the silk shirt and the arrow would pop out of the wound. The silk protected the soldier from the tip of the arrow and kept the wound cleaner, accelerating the healing process. Beloved, purity has the same effect in our own lives. It has a strengthening and shielding effect against temptation and sin.

III. THE HONOR OF SEEING GOD
   “... for they shall see God.”

As Christians, in a way we can see the Lord now. We can see the Lord in the pages of Scripture. It is there we see His love, compassion, holiness, justice, wisdom, long-suffering, and power. We can also see the Lord in His creation.

* Psalm 29:3-10...The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters. ⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. ⁶ He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. ⁷ The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. ⁸ The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. ⁹ The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his
glory. 10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.

* Romans 1:20- For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. We see the footprints and the hand of God in nature. The atheist, on the other hand, does not see or refuses to see Him in creation because the heart of the atheist is wicked.

Those who live by faith also see the Lord in the events of life whether they are triumphs, tragedies, or trials. Job exclaimed this after his varied experiences of life. We can see the Lord with spiritual eyes.

Job 42:5 - I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Job said, “I have seen you Lord.”

* John 14:9-Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

The pure in heart will see God in Jesus Christ. A pure heart sees God as holy, mighty, and magnificent. It does not belittle the character of God, and ultimately the day is coming when all the redeemed shall indeed see God in Heaven. That will, of course, be a spiritual experience, not a physical one with the physical body we now have. We will have a glorified body. You will not see God unless you are pure in heart. This is the condition for seeing Him face to face one day in Heaven. The word “they” indicates this truth which means “they alone.” Purity and holiness are requirements in seeing the Lord.

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

To see God is the greatest privilege and honor that anyone can have. Thus, it is the greatest reward of all the Beatitude rewards. The carnal mind will not get excited about or be interested in seeing God. The only rewards the carnal mind is concerned about are the rewards which are earthly and temporal. The unsaved man has no desire to see God. He does not consider this to be a reward or blessing. He scorns such a reward for he wants to see the sights of the earth but not the sights of Heaven. He wants to see the stars of the earth but not the Star of Heaven.
The person without Christ scorns spiritual blessings. The greater the spiritual blessing, the greater the scorn by the unbeliever.

**Sin will rob you of God’s greatest blessings.** Satan tries to convince us that sinful, selfish living is the way of promotion and honor, but such is not the case. In the desert, mirages appear as lakes, deceiving especially those who thirst and crave water to survive. In fact, the Arabs call mirages “Lakes of Satan.” The mirage of being blessed by living a wicked life is a trap of Satan. Sin distorts our thinking and clouds our judgement. When sin grips a person, he tends to lose all common sense and makes the dumbest of decisions. I never cease to be amazed at the stupidity of sinners and backsliders.

* 1 John 3:6- Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

* 3 John 1:11- Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

**How is your spiritual vision?** Do you see the Lord working in your own life right now? Will you see Christ one day because you have trusted Him as your Savior? I hope so. If you keep your eyes open, you can see the Lord working in your own life, even in your trials. Such was the case with Thomas Hamill whose book, *Escape from Iraq*, gives an accounting of God’s working in his life in a time of danger.

On April 9th, 2004, Thomas Hamill from Mississippi was driving a fuel truck for KBR, a company that was helping the Army in Iraq. The convoy he was leading one day was attacked by militants. He knew something was wrong when people were running or driving away from the convoy. Bullets began to riddle the truck and fuel tank, which showered the roads with diesel fuel. Most of the fuel convoy went up in flames.

Thomas was seriously hit in the arm, but continued to drive as they were being peppered with bullets. The truck he was driving, however, started losing power. As it began to slow, a military Humvee pulled in front of them and stopped to pick up the men in his truck. Thomas got out and ran toward the Humvee with the others, bullets were flying everywhere. He was within 10 steps of the vehicle when the driver gunned it and left him behind all alone.

Soon after his abandonment, he was captured by militants. He remarked that he was totally out of control of his circumstances, yet God was in control. It was a miracle he survived the attack. He was taken in
a car to another location when he spotted a news team that was filming the battle. They were from the Australian Broadcasting Company. The militant shoved his face into the camera and the reporters asked what happened. Thomas was angry though because he felt they were capitalizing on the misery of those killed in his convoy. They asked his name and he told them.

Thomas said there was nothing he could do. He could not control his destiny. He prayed: \textit{God you are going to have to intervene in this situation. There is nothing I am going to be able to do. I have no control. You are going to have to take care of everything from this point on until I am rescued or released. I have to lay this all at your feet, at the cross, because there is nothing I can do to change my outcome with these people.}

Shortly after his capture, he was held in a guarded room. A man came into the room with no right arm. He raised his left arm, clinched his fist and said, \textit{"By the hand of Mohammad, I will hang you from the bridge in Fallujah tomorrow! By my hand I will hang you from the bridge in Fallujah tomorrow!"} Thank God, that did not happen. God spared Thomas’ life.

During his captivity, Thomas was interrogated by Iraqi’s that gave him a list of questions that he was to answer while he was being videotaped. Thomas gave his name, age, hometown, occupation, and finished his sentence with the words, \textit{"God bless."} The men scoffed at him and asked why he said, \textit{"God bless."} Thomas told them, \textit{"I am alive and God has blessed me today."}

In his captivity, Thomas saw God working on his behalf. The statement, \textit{"God bless,"} angered the men and they desperately tried to rewind the tape and remove the words \textit{"God bless"} but they would not come off after a number of attempts. Finally, after ten minutes they got them off. Thomas was told, \textit{"You have angered these people with the words \textit{"God bless. They may kill you now."}} Nevertheless, Thomas counted his blessings and kept trusting God. He was ready to die if that was the Lord’s will.

Thomas’ captors continued to take him from one house after another. They moved him frequently. On the ninth day he was taken to a home of a gentle family. An old woman about 80 years old told Thomas that she was praying for his release. \textit{What a blessing and encouragement this was for him.} Thomas said the first ten day of captivity were interesting in the mornings. They would come in each
morning and ask him if he was a Christian or Muslim. Thomas boldly
told them he was a Christian. Each day they would also come into his
room around 3 p.m and prayed to Allah. It was as if they were trying to
convert him. On the tenth day he was told, “If you want to be a Muslim,
we will get you a wife. We can give you a store in Bagdad and you can
run it and live there. Thomas declined the offer and they did not inquire
about his faith anymore.

The men that watched him for a number of days were gentle with
him. God was working on his behalf. He was given an abundance of
food and medical care for his wound. His enemies treated him well most
of the time. The loneliness of farming and being a truck driver prepared
him for the loneliness of captivity.

On the 24th day of captivity, Thomas finally escaped by the hand of
God. An infantry unit of the Second Battalion was patrolling the area
that morning and his guard had fled the shack where he was confined.
The infantry were to provide security for a crew that was to repair a pipe
line that had been blown up. A soldier told Thomas, “The coordinates
that we were given are right in this area, but we have not seen anything
blown up.” There was, however, a plume of smoke about seven miles in
the distance. The soldier said, “That is probably where we are to go.”
The wrong coordinates that were given to them were used to get them to
the right place. God worked behind the scenes on Thomas’ behalf to free
him without danger.

After his safe return, the doctors just could not understand how
Thomas was able to calmly cope with his ordeal. They were concerned
that he would suffer emotional trauma from his ordeal. The doctors said,
“You are not a soldier and have not been trained. We have a book we go
by and are trained by this book. You don’t have the book but you did
everything according to the instructions.” Thomas told them, “God got
me through this. I followed His Book. He got me through this from day
one through day twenty-four. Some of the men understood what he was
saying for they too, were Christians.

As Christians, we will see the Lord one day when we go home to
glory, but we can see Him now if we will just look. Can you see Him
working in your own life? Do you see His blessings? If not, then let me
challenge you to open your eyes!
Chapter 7
A Passion for Peacemaking
Matthew 5:9
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

A retired couple was alarmed by the threat of nuclear war so they undertook a serious study of all the inhabited places on the globe. Their goal was to determine where in the world would be the place to be least likely affected by a nuclear war. They searched for a place of ultimate security. They studied and traveled, traveled and studied. Finally they found the place and on Christmas they sent their pastor a card from their new home.... in the Falkland Islands. However, their "paradise" was soon turned into a war zone by Great Britain and Argentina. There so called "paradise" was plundered by war.

We live in a very violent world that seems bent on destruction. News about bombings, bleeding, broken bodies, battles, and butchery are as common as weather reports. We are a planet plagued with wars. When World War I broke out, the War Ministry in London sent a coded message to one of the British outposts in a very remote part of Africa. The secret message said: "War has been declared. Arrest all enemy aliens in your district." Soon after this, the War Ministry received a message back: "We have arrested ten Germans, six Belgians, four Frenchmen, two Italians, three Austrians and an American. Please tell us immediately who we're at war with." Sometimes we may wonder who we are at war with now.

The celebrated historians, Will and Ariel Durant, in their book The Lessons of History, begin the chapter on "History and War" with these words: "War is one of the constants of history, and has not diminished with civilization and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war." That is a chilling statement and it
would, no doubt, be even more so if the facts of unrecorded history could be known.

Because of the turmoil of conflicts that we face with foreign nations, foes, sometimes friends and family, the person who is the “peacemaker” plays an important role in society in maintaining stability, peace, and reconciliation where there is division. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. This beatitude must have been shocking to warring Zealots when Jesus preached it, when political passions were inflamed. So what is this all about? Let’s take a close look at the meaning of this passage.

I. THE PEACEMAKER IDENTIFIED

"Blessed are the peacemakers..."

There is great joy in being a peacemaker. This is the idea behind the word “blessed.” The question is, “What is a peacemaker?”

A. The Personal Peace of the Peacemaker

A peace-maker is a person who labors for the public good. Instead of fanning the fires of contention and strife, he uses his influence and wisdom to reconcile divided parties, adjust their differences, and restore them to a state of reconciliation and unity. The peacemaker is also one who, having received the peace of God in his own heart, brings peace to others. They have been reformed by the regenerating power of the Gospel. They are peacemakers because they themselves are at peace with God.

The peacemaker is not simply one who makes peace between two parties, but one who spreads the good news of the peace of God which he has experienced. As all men are represented to be in a state of hostility toward God and each other, the Gospel is called the Gospel of peace, because it tends to reconcile men to God and to one other. They have entered into the peace of Christ and thus are able ambassadors of God’s message of peace to a troubled world. The peacemaker is concerned about peace between men and God. He strives to get men right with God.

The title “peacemaker” reveals interesting insights when you break down the word. First, there is the word “peace.” In the Greek language, the word is εἰρήνη (i-ray' -nay), and in the Hebrew language it is the more familiar word shalom. In Hebrew, peace does not only mean the absence of trouble, evil things and conflict. It also means everything which makes
for a man’s abundant blessings and God’s highest good for him. It bears
the idea of wholeness and overall well-being. In the Middle East when
a man says, “Shalom” to another, he is wishing the enjoyment of all good
things as well as the absence of trials and burdens for that person.

B. The Personal Involvement of the Peacemaker

God’s blessing is on the peace-maker, not necessarily the one who
is a lover of peace. The Lord is not speaking about people with a
peaceful disposition or those who love peace. He is referring to those
who actively intervene and get involved to make peace. The Jewish
Rabbis held that the highest task which a man can perform is to establish
right relationships between man and man. The natural tendency of most
people is to watch “strife” from the sidelines. Some folks like to watch
a good fight because it is exciting to watch. God’s approach, however,
is to take positive action toward creating peace, even if it means taking
abuse.

**Being a peacemaker is not being a peace activist who parades
and protests on the streets and causes more trouble than tranquility.**

Being a peacemaker is not appeasement. Winfield Scott said, “Peace won
by compromise is usually a short-lived achievement.” George
Washington stated, “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual
means of preserving peace.” President Reagan called this same
philosophy, “Peace through strength.” George Herbert said, “One sword
keeps another in the sheath.” You can postpone war by appeasement; but
it generally means that you are doing something that is unjust and
unrighteous in order to avoid war.

**If a person loves peace, but goes about it the wrong way, he can
end up making trouble instead of peace.** We may, for instance, allow
a dangerous situation to develop, and our defense is that for the sake of
peace and harmony, we do not want to take any action. There are many
folks who think that they are loving peace, when in fact they are
accumulating trouble for the future, because they refuse to face the
situation and to take decisive action which the circumstance demands.

**Appeasement does not make for peace.** It just puts off the conflict.
The history of Europe during the 1930s is a classic example of this fact.
The result was Adolph Hitler and WW2. The true peacemaker, contrary
to what most people think, is not afraid of making waves. He is not one
who could care less what anyone else does as long as it does not directly
affect him. Neither is the peacemaker always tolerant — "You do your
thing and I'll do mine."
C. The Pursuit of the Peacemaker

We now want to look at the second part of the word, "makers," which demands that we understand that the person is not passive, but is a source of peace. As it is used here, it is a dynamic word bursting with energy. Both parts of the word "peacemakers," taken together, describe one who actively pursues peace in its fullness. He pursues more than the absence of conflict; he pursues wholeness and well-being in his own life and in the lives of others.

The peacemaker gets involved to bring peace. If a child is doing something destructive, the parent confronts the child to bring about an end to the destructive behavior. If a marriage is on the verge of implosion, then the peacemaker confronts the problem to resolve it and foster love and peace in the marriage. If there are problems or sinful behavior in the church, the peacemaker deals with it so sin does not fester in the church family.

The peace that the Scriptures refer to that bring blessing, does not come from avoiding problems or matters that demand attention, it comes from facing them, dealing with them, and solving them. What this beatitude demands is not the passive acceptance of uncomfortable or bad things because we are afraid of the trouble of doing anything about them, but the active confrontation of things, and the making of peace, even when the way to peace is through difficulty, risk, and struggles. The peacemaker wages peace, which may sometimes bring trouble, to bring about eventual peace. Peace is the ultimate and eventual goal.

* Romans 12:18- If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

* Romans 14:19- Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. The words “follow after” come from the Greek word *dioko* (dee-o’-ko) which means “to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing; to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal; to pursue or earnestly or seek.” This is the attitude we are to have toward peace.

* Ephesians 4:3- Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Most of the early scholars of the Church took this beatitude in a purely spiritual sense, and held that it meant: *Blessed is the man who makes peace in his own heart and in his own soul.* No one can become a peacemaker until he has found peace himself. The tragedy is that people
do not go to the heart of the matter. Without grace, we are natural enemies of God and of one another. Our hearts must be changed. We cannot give to others what we do not possess in our own lives. This inner change, coupled with dependence on the Holy Spirit, is what makes a peacemaker. The Holy Spirit molds the character of the lives of peacemakers so that their “peace” becomes increasingly gentle, humble, and loving.

D. The Pull on the Peacemaker

In every one of us there is a struggle within between good and evil. We are always pulled in two directions at once almost constantly it seems. A spiritual or moral civil war takes place in the life of every person, especially in the life of the Christian. Blessed indeed is the man who has been conquered by Christ and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Paul spoke of this conflict that rages within us.

* Romans 7:22-25... For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [23] But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [25] I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

E. The Pain that is Risked by the Peacemaker

The peacemaker is willing to risk pain. Any time we attempt to bring peace personally or among others, we risk misunderstanding and failure. If we have been wrong, there is the pain of apologizing. On the other hand, we may have to shoulder the equally difficult pain of rebuking another person who is in the wrong. In any case, the peacemaker has to be willing to "risk it." The temptation is to let things slide. It is so easy to rationalize the fact that trying to bring true peace will "only make things worse."

F. The Purity of the Peacemaker

*Ezekiel 13:10,11 - Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar. Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. How this speaks to real life! We tend to putty over the cracks in our lives.
*Jeremiah 6:14 - They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

The person who is a peacemaker is also honest with himself, with God, and with others. He admits problems when they exist instead of pretending they are not there. The prophet Ezekiel warned against those who act as if all is well when it is not. Such folks, according to Ezekiel, are merely plastering over cracked walls. The plaster obscures the cracks, but when the rain comes, the true state of the walls is revealed and the walls crumble. Many a marriage has crumbled because the couple would not honestly admit their problems. While claiming that all was OK, they drifted apart until nothing was left in their hearts for each other.

The peacemaker is painfully honest about the true status of relationships in the world, in the society in which he moves, and in his own personal dealings with others. He admits failed relationships. He admits that he is at odds with others if it is so. He honestly acknowledges tension if others have something against him. He does not pretend. He refuses to say, "Peace, peace!" when there is no peace. Admitting there is a problem is the beginning step in solving it. Pretending there are no problems doesn’t solve them.

God’s people are to contend without being contentious, to disagree without being disagreeable, and to confront without being abusive. The peacemaker speaks the truth in humility, patience, and love. To start with love is to start toward peace. We begin peacemaking by starting with whatever peaceful point of agreement we can find. Peace helps beget peace. The peacemaker always gives others the benefit of the doubt. He never assumes that others will resist the Gospel or reject his testimony. When he does meet opposition, he tries to be patient with other people’s blindness and stubbornness just as he knows the Lord was, and continues to be, patient with his own blindness and stubbornness.

* Ephesians 4:15 - But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

G. The Price of being a Peacemaker

The peacemaker must be pure and he must be willing to pay a price. This is why so few are peacemakers. These qualifications are exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. In order for Christ to bring peace with God for mankind, He had to be absolutely sinless, and He had to pay an enormous price, that price was His blood. Paul spoke of this price.
* Colossians 1:20- And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

We have to be righteous to be a peacemaker, for sin causes strife. How can one who is causing strife and evil contention be a peacemaker? Righteousness must always come before peace. It is sin that breaks the peace and we must deal with that if we are going to have it. We are not called upon to sacrifice truth for peace, and thus make the issue of having peace at any price. You cannot separate peacemaking from truth and righteousness as we have just noted.

* Psalm 85:10- Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

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

Political peace efforts which would endeavor to bring peace apart from righteousness are not peace efforts at all. This is why they eventually fail. The Nobel peace prize winners are not true peacemakers, for these men have ignored the need of righteousness for the work of peace. In fact, the Nobel Peace Prize is in itself a contradiction of terms based on the facts of its history. Why is the date of Alfred Bernard Nobel's will commemorated? Nobel’s will left the bulk of a vast fortune amassed from the invention of dynamite and other explosives to the establishment of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1867, at age 34, Nobel was granted a patent for dynamite and over the next 29 years of his life he became fabulously wealthy from the manufacture of explosives, much of which were used in war and the destruction of mankind. His will, dated November 27, 1895, provided for a trust to establish 5 prizes in the fields of peace, physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and economic science. Recipients of the prizes were to receive a gold medal, a citation diploma, and cash awards from $30,000 to $40,000. When Jesus returns, they should give Him the Nobel Prize for all of these areas when He establishes His kingdom for 1000 years.

H. People that were Peacemakers

The perfect peacemaker is the son of God who demonstrated purity and sacrifice in His own life.

* Ephesians 2:14- For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;  Christ fulfilled the qualification of purity and sacrifice in order to be the world’s
peacemaker. In fact, He was the sinless Son of God and the sacrifice of the cross was necessary to bring peace between God and man. There is no greater peacemaker than the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, we find several examples of peacemakers that exemplified the traits of sacrifice and purity. In endeavoring to bring the peace, Abraham fulfilled the two qualifications of purity and sacrifice. He honestly and truthfully dealt with the problem of strife between the herds-men of Lot and his own men. His solution involved sacrifice. He told Lot to choose first what land he wanted and he would pick land elsewhere. In this there was the sacrifice of privilege because Abraham had seniority and deserved to have first choice, and secondly, the sacrifice of property. Abraham let Lot have the best land. The result of Abraham's attitude and actions brought peace in the clan.

Abigail was also a peacemaker. Her story is found in 1 Samuel 25. She was the wife of Nabal, the man who was harsh in his treatment of David. When Nabal refused to pay David for the protection David and his men had provided for Nabal, David threatened bloody revenge. When Abigail heard of David's threat, she quickly took action to bring peace. She brought a liberal gift of food to David and his men then humbly pleaded with him for mercy. Her intervention worked and brought peace instead of bloodshed. In being a peacemaker, Abigail fulfilled the two basic requirements of purity and sacrifice. Her purity was seen in the humble position she took and the confession of Nabal's evil. Her sacrifice was seen in the large gift of food which she brought to David and his men.

A man named Telemachus demonstrated a willingness to be a peacemaker at all cost. He was a monk who lived in the 4th century in a cloistered monastery. He felt God saying to him, “Go to Rome.” He put his possessions in a sack and set out for Rome. When he arrived in the city, people were thronging in the streets. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting and killing each other in the Coliseum, the day of the games, the circus. He thought to himself, “Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?”

He ran to the Coliseum and heard the gladiators saying, “Hail to Caesar, we die for Caesar” and he thought, “this isn’t right.” He jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands and said “In the name of Christ, forbear.” The crowd protested and began to shout, “Run him through, Run him
through!” A gladiator came over and hit him in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand. He got up and ran back and again said, “In the name of Christ, forbear.” The crowd continued to chant, “Run him through.”

One gladiator came over and plunged his sword through the little monk’s stomach and he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood. One last time he gasped out, “In the name of Christ forbear.” Something then happened in the huge area. A hush came over the 80,000 people in the Coliseum. Soon a man stood and left, then another and more, and within minutes all 80,000 had emptied out of the arena. It was the last-known gladiatorial contest in the history of Rome. Such is the price sometimes of being a peacemaker....being misunderstood, reviled, physically abused, and sometimes put to death.

II. PEACE ROBBERS
What Robs Us of Our Peace?
1. Attitudes and Actions of Sin Rob Us of Peace.
* Psalm 38:3 - There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.

Until sinful behavior is changed to righteousness there cannot be godly peace. Many times truth will produce anger before it produces happiness; righteousness will produce antagonism before it produces harmony. The Gospel brings bad feelings before it can bring good feelings. People are offended by the fact that they are sinners and on their way to Hell.

A person who does not first mourn over his own sin will never be satisfied with God’s righteousness. The sword that Christ brings is the sword of His Word, which is the sword of truth and righteousness. Like the surgeon’s scalpel, it must cut before it heals, because peace cannot come where sin remains. The great enemy of peace is sin. Sin separates men from God and causes disharmony and enmity with Him. Men’s lack of harmony with God causes their lack of harmony with each other. The world is filled with strife and war because it is filled with sin. Peace does not rule the world because the enemy of peace rules the world. Those with wicked hearts cannot produce a peaceful society.

* Isaiah 57:20 - But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
* Isaiah 59:8 - The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth
therein shall not know peace.
* Isaiah 48:22 - There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.
Romans 8:6 - For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually
minded is life and peace.

2. Adultery Robs People of Peace.
* Proverbs 6:35 - He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest
content, though thou givest many gifts.

Hilde Houlding, coordinator of the Calgary Family Service Bureau's
counseling division, describes an affair in this way: An affair is often an
attempt to find a little bit of paradise on the side, pursuing the belief that
if one just finds the right sexual partner, there will be instant happiness
and everything will fall into place. An affair is often able to fulfill this
myth until it itself becomes a relationship that has to be worked at and
looked at in a long-term light. Seen in this way "paradise" soon becomes
a prison.

3. Arguing with Foolish Men Robs of Peace.
* Proverbs 29:9- If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether
he rage or laugh, there is no rest.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that firefighters in Genoa,
Texas, were accused of deliberately setting more than forty destructive
fires. When caught, they stated, "We had nothing to do. We just wanted
to get the red lights flashing and the bells clanging."

The job of firefighters is to put out fires, not start them. The job of
Christians is to help resolve conflict, not start more of it. Beloved, don’t
run around with a chip on your shoulder looking for fights and
arguments. That may sound kind of weird, but there are many Christians
who have this kind of attitude, especially preachers! If you are a Pastor
that is constantly fighting and arguing with others because you are a hot-
head, you have no business being a pastor until you can get victory over
this destructive trait. A pastor is not to be a brawler or fighter.
* 1 Timothy 3:3- Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre;
but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4. Anger and bitterness can rob us of peace.
* Proverbs 15:1b- "..... but grievous words stir up anger."

How do you respond when a mistake has been made with your fast-
food order? If you’re 6’3” and weigh 270 pounds, people don’t
recommend crawling through the drive-through window, but that’s
exactly what happened when a University of Kansas football player
realized a chalupa was left out of his Taco Bell order. He got so angry
that he tried to climb through the 14- by 46-inch drive-through window and got stuck. The frightened manager and employees locked themselves in an office and called the police. The police pulled up to the drive-through and laughed hysterically as they discovered the legs and back end of the football player kicking in midair. Police Sergeant George Wheeler said, “When you take a big guy and put him through a small space, something’s got to give.” Beloved, when we let our anger get a hold of us, it has a tendency to get the best of us.

* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

During World War II the U.S. submarine Tang surfaced under the cover of darkness to fire upon a large Japanese convoy off the coast of China. Since previous raids had left the American vessel with only eight torpedoes, the accuracy of every shot was absolutely essential. The first seven missiles were right on target, but when the eighth was launched, it suddenly deviated and headed right back at their own ship. The emergency alarm to submerge rang out, but it was too late. Within a matter of seconds, the U.S. sub received a direct hit and sank almost instantly.

In much the same way we can destroy ourselves by hostility toward others. The effects of holding a grudge are very serious. Modern medicine has shown that emotions like bitterness and anger can cause problems such as headaches, backaches, allergic disorders, ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart attacks, to name just a few. When we do not love our enemies but strike back at them, we are usurping God's prerogative to mete out justice. The Lord will repay if we will let Him.

5. Apprehension or Worry robs us of Peace

Rod Cooper said, “I grew up in rural Ohio, and sometimes the level of our boredom got to the point where my friends and I would get together late at night and go haunted-house hunting. We'd usually find one down a dusty, narrow lane, where you could hear the shrubs scraping like fingernails against the car. You'd get out of the car in pitch blackness. The wind would be whistling through the trees, and a hoot owl would be singing his song.

The house would be just like you would imagine—a dark, gray, imposing figure with the windows broken out and the shutters falling off. The broken picket fence had a squeaky gate that swung lazily back and forth. We'd go into the house and turn on the flashlight. If you were to
reach out and touch us at that moment, you'd have to peel us off the ceiling. Every step was one of caution. Every step was one of concern. Every step was one of worry because we didn't know what was waiting for us around the corner. Could we handle it when we found out? Many people are living their lives as if they're in a haunted house. Every step is one of caution, concern, and worry. Can I handle what is just around the corner?” Worry robs us of peace. For this reason we are to give our cares to the Lord.

* 1 Peter 5:7- Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.
* Psalm 37:5- Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.
* Psalm 55:22- Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
* Matthew 6:25- Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
* Matthew 6:34- Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

### III. PEACE PROMOTERS

1. **The Savior, the Prince of Peace is a peace promoter.**

Men are without peace because they are without God, the source of peace.

* 1 Corinthians 14:33 - For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. *Ephesians 2:14* - For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

2. **A Soft Answer leads to peace.**

*Proverbs 25:15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.
* Proverbs 15:1 - A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.
* Ecclesiastes 10:4- If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences. If the ruler's temper rises or flares up against you, do not abandon or quit your position, because composure and calm responses can undo great offenses.

Grievous words create combustion causing conflicts, communication breakdowns, caustic behavior, confusion, cynicism, and
crippled testimonies. For example, back in the 1920's the leading fundamentalist preacher in Texas was J. Frank Norris. Norris loved conflict. He ran an on-going verbal war with the Southern Baptist Convention. He called one preacher, "the Old Baboon." One of his sermons was entitled, "The Ten Biggest Devils in Ft. Worth, Names Given." The sermon lived up to its title.

Norris especially liked to attack the Roman Catholic mayor of Ft. Worth. After Norris said the mayor wasn't fit to be a manager of a hog-pen, a friend of the mayor's threatened Norris by phone then came to his study in the church. After a heated argument, Norris pulled out a revolver and shot him dead. The jury let him off the hook by ruling it was self-defense but it didn't help J. Frank Norris' reputation and testimony for Christ with many folks in Fort Worth, Texas. Grievous words do not promote peace and reconciliation and accomplish nothing. There is a right way and wrong way to take a stand on controversial matters.

When we are confronting a person about a problem, we are to attack the problem, not the person. We are to engage our minds before we engage our mouth. Be sure you are not sarcastic, critical, condemning, and comparing. Don't get caught up in name calling, character assassinations, and tearing down people. Instead, let your speech be seasoned with love, grace, and wisdom.

* Ephesians 4:29- Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

3. Supplication leads to peace.

To fulfill the requirements of the Beatitudes, we must pray for God's help. Our own flesh is weak when it comes to living up to the standards of these Beatitudes. How little we pray for such needs, however. We are often busy praying for material and physical needs, but seldom are we busy praying for spiritual needs such as help for fulfilling the beatitude qualifications for blessing. We would be better Christians if we were intense in our praying about spiritual growth in our lives.

* Psalm 34:6-This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

* Psalm 61:2- From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

4. Secret Gifts lead to peace.

* Proverbs 21:14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the
bosom strong wrath. The power of a gift cannot be underestimated. Whether it is concealed in secret or given openly, it can calm the anger of a person. The word “reward” can be translated as “bribe.”

5. Selflessness and Sacrifice lead to peace.

When trying to resolve conflicts, find areas where you can agree. Trivial matters have room for compromise. We are to make every effort to demonstrate love, even toward those who are our enemies and have been hateful toward us. Ouch! That is not easy to do, is it? The Lord, however, can help us.

* Matthew 5:44- But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
* Romans 12:18- If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

There are some folks that just don’t want to get along with anyone. Yes, they are out there for sure! They just flat-out refuse to be loveable, be reconciled, and let go of the conflict. We at least need to try to resolve our differences with them. Be willing to unselfishly and sacrificially give-in to those things that are not crucial. This is what both Abraham and Abigail did. If you have been wrong, admit it, and go on with your life.

The two most difficult words we can say are, “I’m sorry.” The three most difficult words are “I was wrong.” The five most difficult words are “I’m sorry. I was wrong.” The seven most difficult words are, “I’m sorry. I was wrong, a lot.” Have you ever heard this saying, “Love means never having to say your sorry.” It comes from a movie and it’s dead wrong. Seek forgiveness when it is appropriate. Many couples could heal their marriages if they would be willing to share these words with their spouse.

* James 3:17-But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

6. The Scriptures lead to peace.

* Psalm 119:165- Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

The Word of God gives us the strength to live the way that God wants us to live. We are to saturate our lives with the Scriptures. When we do, we will find help to live consistent, godly lives and to put into practice these beatitudes. No one who ignores the Word of God and gives
Chapter 7...A Passion for Peacemaking...5:9

it scant attention will do much in the way of conforming to the Beatitudes. No one who leaves the Word of God out of their life will do much true peacemaking.

7. The Saintly life of God’s Saints leads to peace.
* Psalm 34:14 - Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
* Proverbs 16:7 - When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

We noted earlier that one of the main qualifications for peacemaking was purity. Therefore, if you hope to do any work in this area, you must live a holy life. Practice purity in your life. Separate from the evil practices of the world. Live a clean life; turn from evil and you will be much better able to be a peacemaker.

Unholy lives do not do well at all in being a peacemaker. Sin destroys peace, and one who has sin in their life does not have peace. They cannot give peace because they cannot give of what they do not have. God’s way to peace is through purity. Peace cannot be attained at the expense of righteousness. Two people cannot be at peace until they recognize and resolve the wrong attitudes and actions that caused the conflict between them, and then bring themselves to God for cleansing. Peace that ignores the cleansing that brings purity is not God’s peace. When God gives peace, we can enjoy His blessings even in the most difficult or unlikely places.

Upon the plains of Waterloo there stands a great bronze lion, forged from the captured guns of Britain’s enemies in 1815. The lion’s mouth is open and snarls through his teeth over the battlefield. The birds in the area build their nest right inside the lion's mouth. They twine the twigs of their downy bed where the chicks nestle around the very teeth of the metal monster. From the very jaws of this bronze beast the chirp of the swallows twitter forth timidly the melodies of peace. Thank God for the peace He gives to us even when we are in the mouths of our lions.

8. Slowness to Anger brings peace.
* Proverbs 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. Keeping your cool will help others to cool down when they are upset.

9. Seeking Forgiveness for Offenses brings forth peace.
* Matthew 5:23-24 ... Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; [24] Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy
brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

We are to assume the responsibility in making the first move whether we are the offender or the offended. We are to take the initiative because Jesus said so! Conflicts are not resolved accidentally. They do not resolve themselves. We are to do it quickly because delay tends to make matters worse. If the offender and the offended put this verse into practice, they will meet each other half way.

IV. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF PEACE
"...they shall be called the children of God."

Peacemakers are called children of God. This is not how they become children of God—that can only happen by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior.

* John 1:12- But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: By making peace, believers manifest themselves as children of God, and God will one day acknowledge them as people who bear the family likeness.

The King James Version says that the peace-makers shall be called the children of God. The Greek more literally reads they will be called the sons (*huios {hwee-os]*) of God. This is a typical Hebrew way of expression. Hebrew is not rich in adjectives, and often when the Hebrew wishes to describe something, it uses, not an adjective, but the phrase son of... plus an abstract noun. Hence a man may be called a son of peace instead of a peaceful man.

Barnabas is called a son of consolation instead of a consoling and comforting man. This beatitude says: Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the sons of God. What it means is: Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be doing a God-like work. The man who makes peace is engaged in the very work which the God of peace is doing.

Both *huios* and *teknon* are used in the New Testament to speak of believers’ relationship to God. *Teknon* (child) is a term of tender affection and endearment as well as of relationship. Sons, however, is from *huios*, which expresses the dignity and honor of the relationship of a child to his parents. As God’s peacemakers, we are promised the glorious blessing of eternal son-ship in His eternal kingdom. Peacemaking is a hallmark of God’s children. A person who is not a peacemaker either is not a Christian or is a disobedient Christian. The
person who is continually disruptive, divisive, and quarrelsome has good reason to doubt his relationship to God altogether.

Again, as in the six previous beatitudes, the pronoun is emphatic. In the Greek text the word order is, "for they sons of God shall be called." The idea is that they, and no others, shall be called God's sons. Moreover, the passive voice of the word indicates that it is God, not man, who assigns the title "sons." The sublimity of this promise comes from the fact that the title "sons of God" refers to character. The peacemaker partakes of the character of God. He is like God in the way he lives. No wonder God says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Being called a child or son of God is a reward that has been misunderstood by some to mean soul salvation. But this reward says "called" not "made." There is a big difference in being "made" and "called." Many folk are "called" Christians who have not been "made" Christians, they have never been born again. Likewise, many who have been "made" Christians are not "called" Christians because they do not act like it. So this reward is not talking about salvation at all. It is simply telling of the praise that will come to peacemakers. Nothing compares to being a child of God. Are you one?
Chapter 8
Happiness in spite of Heckling, Harassment, and Hellish Treatment
Matthew 5:10-12
Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

In The Christian Reader, Randy Bishop writes: For many young people in Fort Worth, Texas, September 15, 1999, started with prayer around their high school's flagpole. After taking a public stand for their faith, about four hundred youth gathered in the sanctuary of Wedgwood Baptist Church for a See You at the Pole rally that night. Alleluias rang out as they sang praises that evening.

Suddenly a lone gunman burst in. Larry Ashbrook killed seven people before committing suicide. At first, many thought the gunman was part of a skit, but they soon realized the bullets weren't blanks and the blood wasn't ketchup. Many of the youth, plus 150 adults and children, at Wedgwood that night must have wondered where God was. In the weeks following the tragedy, they, and the world, have found that God didn't abandon them. Drawing information from the church's official
Web site and other sources, here are some confirmed instances of God's hand at work.
1. Although the deaths and injuries were tragic, the devastation could have been much worse. Sixty-eight bullets were fired and only 14 people were hit. About 90 bullets remained unused.
2. A bomb Ashbrook fashioned blew up in the sanctuary, but most of the shrapnel went into the ceiling, injuring no one.
3. Though it was a beautiful night, no children were on the church's playground, which Ashbrook had to walk past to enter the church. The shooter did not come to the nursery or elementary school areas of the church, and leaders were able to get the children out with very few of them seeing anything but police cars and fire trucks.
5. A paramedic, Art DeFord, was at church that night and gave some of the victims immediate medical attention, stabilizing them before other emergency personnel arrived.

This tragedy opened many doors to present the Gospel and win others to Christ. When prompted by a question from Vice President Al Gore, Pastor Meredith was able to present the Gospel clearly on the television show, Larry King Live. The husband of a church member professed a newfound faith in Christ shortly after the shooting. His wife, Jodi, and three-year-old daughter were at the church during the shooting, as he watched the scene unfold on television. The wife had been praying, with others, for his salvation for two years. She says the shooting helped him realize he was not in control of everything around him. The church has received more than $100,000 in unsolicited donations.

The pain of the persecution and attack on Christians in this Texas church has been constantly repeated since the days of Christ. It should not be a surprise, however, for Jesus warned us that tribulation would come and tells us how to respond to it.

*John 16:33- These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

**The central theme of the Beatitudes is righteousness.** The first two have to do with recognizing our own unrighteousness, and the next five have to do with our seeking and reflecting righteousness. The last beatitudes have to do with our suffering for the sake of righteousness and of Christ. The first part of the Beatitudes are about the virtues of holy conduct, and the second section is about the vexations for holy conduct. The inward condition of the saints is addressed in the first section and the
last part deals with the outward circumstances of the godly Christian. The walk of the believer is now followed by the warfare he may face. Two beatitudes are listed here, but we will go ahead and combine them. Both beatitudes deal with persecution, but there are some differences between the two as we will see Jesus is not speaking of every hardship, problem, or conflict believers may face, but those that the world brings upon us because of our faithfulness to the Lord.

All of the other beatitudes have to do with inner qualities, attitudes, and spiritual character. The next two beatitudes speaks of external things that happen to believers, but the teaching behind these results also has to do with attitude. The believer who has the qualities required in the previous beatitudes will also have the quality of willingness to face persecution for the sake of righteousness. He will have the attitude of self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ. It is the lack of fear and shame and the presence of courage and boldness that says, “I will be in this world what Christ would have me be. I will say in this world what Christ will have me say. Whatever it costs, I will be and say those things.” That kind of attitude and persistence in the face of persecution is what gives joy to the believer as we will see. Notice verse number ten.

I. THE RUN AFTER THE RIGHTEOUS 5:10a

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: ....

Savonarola was one of the greatest reformers in the history of the church. In his powerful condemnation of personal sin and ecclesiastical corruption, that Italian preacher paved the way for the Protestant Reformation, which began a few years after his death. “His preaching was a voice of thunder,” writes one biographer, “and his denunciation of sin was so terrible that the people who listened to him went about the streets half-dazed, bewildered and speechless. His congregations were so often in tears that the whole building resounded with their sobs and their weeping.”

The people and the church, however, could not long abide such a strong witness, and for preaching uncompromising righteousness. Savonarola was convicted of “heresy.” He was hanged, and his body was burned. He was persecuted for “righteousness sake,” and for doing what was right. This can happen to you and me too. You may be harassed, heckled, or hurt for doing what is right.
Jesus says, "Oh the joy of those who are persecuted for righteousness sake!" The word rendered "persecuted" in Matthew 5:10 bears the root idea of "pursue" or "chase." It comes from the Greek word diako {dee-o'-ko} which means "to make to run or put to flight, to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to pursue (in a hostile manner); in any way whatever to harass, trouble, or molest one." Happy are those who are pursued, chased, or followed for righteousness sake! This word is also translated "follow" or "press."

* 2 Timothy 2:22- Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
* Philippians 3:14- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The Greek verb "persecuted" is a passive perfect participle, and could be translated "allow themselves to be persecuted." The perfect form indicates continuousness, in this case a continuous willingness to endure persecution if it is the price of godly living. This beatitude speaks of a constant attitude of accepting whatever our faithfulness to Christ may bring into our lives.

Chet Bitterman, a Wycliffe Bible translator in Bogata, Columbia, made this entry in his diary on September 13, 1978: Costa Rica, the situation in Nicaragua is getting worse. If Nicaragua falls, I guess the rest of Central America will too. Maybe this is just some kind of self-inflicted martyr complex, but I find this recurring thought that perhaps God will call me to be martyred for Him in His service in Columbia. I am willing. On January 19, 1981, 7 armed terrorists burst into the Wycliffe Bible translators office in Bogota, Columbia and took Chet captive for 7 weeks until they shot him in the head. His path led to martyrdom for Christ.

The word "persecuted" also describes past action which continues in the present. This also emphasizes the fact that persecution is persistent and unrelenting. It does not deliver one blow then quit, but it delivers blow after blow. The second-century Christian leader Tertullian was once approached by a man who said, "I have come to Christ, but I don't know what to do. I have a job that I don't think is consistent with what Scripture teaches. What can I do? I must live." To that Tertullian replied, "Must you? Loyalty to Christ is the Christian's only true choice. To be prepared for kingdom life is to be prepared for loneliness, misunderstanding, ridicule, rejection, and unfair treatment of every sort." Beloved, persecution for Christians does not go away and will not until the return of Christ. For this reason, Paul admonished us
to not be quitters, but to be steadfast in our race for Christ.

*1 Corinthians 15:58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

**Christians throughout history have been followed or pursued to their deaths.** Persecution can go to physical extremes as the church's bloody history records. In describing the Nicene Council, Vance Havner said that not more than a dozen of the 318 delegates had NOT lost an eye or a hand or did not limp upon a leg shrunk in its sinews by the burning iron of torture.

In the early days of the New Testament church, the price paid was often the ultimate. To choose Christ might mean choosing death by stoning, by being covered with pitch and used as a human torch for Nero, or by being wrapped in animal skins and thrown to vicious hunting dogs. To choose Christ could mean torture by any number of excessively cruel and painful ways. That was the very thing Christ had in mind when He identified His followers as those willing to bear their crosses. That has no reference to mystical devotion, but is a call to be ready to die, if need be, for the cause of the Lord.

**One of the most famous of all the martyrs was Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smyrna.** The mob dragged him to the tribunal of the Roman magistrate. He was given the inevitable choice--sacrifice to the godhead of Caesar or die. "Eighty and six years," came the immortal reply, "have I served Christ and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" So they brought Polycarp to the stake, and he prayed his last prayer: "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and ever-blessed Son, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee ... I thank thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour." Here was the supreme opportunity to demonstrate his love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is no accident that Jesus should pass from peacemaking to persecution, for the world enjoys its cherished hates and prejudices so much that the peacemaker or the godly Christian is not always welcome. Opposition is a normal mark of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus. You will often find that the persecution of righteousness will come from unexpected places and people. Many times it comes from people who claim to be religious.

Notice I didn’t say Christians sources, even though this does happen. Some of the most intense persecution has been suffered by
Christians at the hands of so called "religious people." Homer Duncan points out that millions of Christians were put to death in the Dark Ages by the Roman Catholic church in her effort to keep unity. In Spain alone, between 300,000 and 400,000 died in the Spanish Inquisition. One does not have to go back to the Dark Ages to see a demonstration of persecution. In the 1940s and 1950s, hundreds of Christians died at the hands of the Roman Catholic church in Columbia, South America.

In the early days of America, persecution was widespread. Contrary to popular opinion, the Pilgrims did not come here to establish religious toleration and freedom. They came to practice their brand of faith, period. If anyone disagreed with them, they could move on. This is exactly what happened to Roger Williams, an early Baptist. He arrived in Massachusetts in 1631, to escape persecution in England from the Church of England, but by 1636, Massachusetts kicked him out, too. He ended up starting the colony of Rhode Island, the first area in America to guarantee religious freedom for everybody.

Throughout history, Christians have been persecuted in the name of "religion" by those who thought they were doing something that was righteous and godly instead of repulsive and gross. Jesus warned us of this kind of treatment.

* John 16:2- They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

II. THE REASONS FOR PERSECUTION 5:10,11

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

The godliness of the committed Christian is a source of conviction to the lost and carnal. Thus, the Christian is persecuted for righteousness sake. His godly life is a source of irritation to those who are not born again or disobedient to the Lord's commands. Their integrity condemns the ungodly world and brings out its hostility. People hate a righteous life because it exposes their own unrighteousness. Persecution comes for the sake of righteousness and for the sake of Christ. F.B. Meyer said, "The more there is of Christ in us, the more we condemn the world, and there is nothing the ungodly man so dislikes as to have the search-light of unsullied purity flashed in upon the workings
of his heart and life. Jesus Christ is to the ungodly what the sun at
noontide is to the diseased eye."

* Proverbs 29:27 - An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he
that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

Take Christ out of the picture and you will stop a lot of
persecution. The reason that Islam, the Muslim's religion, can be taught
in schools but Christianity is forbidden is that Christianity is about Christ.
It does not bother people when Islam is present, because Islam does not
include Christ, but Christianity is all about Christ. The name of the Lord
is so offensive to this wicked world, that even the mention of His name
in the word “Christmas” is repulsive. Thus, the words “Merry
Christmas” are being replaced with words like “Happy Holidays, Holiday
Greetings, or Winter vacation” by our schools, government, and
department stores. There is an intense hatred for our wonderful Savior
by those who are under Satan’s control.

When Adolph Hitler began his conquest of the world, he quickly
recognized that there was one formidable power which stood between
him and his goal of controlling the government, the confessing church
and the men who were the spiritual descendants of Martin Luther. To
neutralize the criticism of the church, Hitler spoke of himself as a
believer and sought to win the church's support for a White Paper—a
position paper outlining the supremacy of the Aryan or white race,
denouncing Jews as inferiors.

There were men who would not compromise with Hitler’s evil
treachery. Hitler knew they had to be destroyed. Thousands of German
pastors were among those sent to the concentration camps, including an
outspoken German preacher by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
Bonhoeffer is famous as a Christian martyr. He is one of the few
Germans who stood up to Hitler. Actually, he went beyond this and was
part of the plan to assassinate Hitler. The reason he did this is because
Bonhoeffer took seriously the commandment to have no other gods.

Nazism was heavily into the god and idolatry business. Churches
were encouraged to fill their sanctuaries with the symbolism of the Third
Reich. Some churches went over completely and began teaching ancient
German pagan beliefs. Almost all the churches accepted Nazi policies
such as the persecution of Jews. The Hitler Youth even met on Sundays
so the young Germans couldn't go to church.

The Protestant church was silent to all this. Bonhoeffer's response
was to begin a new church, called the Confessing Church. He preached
against the persecution of Jews. He preached against Hitler and Protestants who compromised with Hitler and his policies. After a few years only a handful of followers were left, and then the Gestapo closed him down. Six years later they arrested him. On April 5, 1943, the Nazis arrested Bonhoeffer and put him in prison. Two years later they executed him, hanging him on the gallows, just days before the Allies swept into Germany to liberate the area.

In prison, Bonhoeffer had time to reflect on the true nature of the Gospel and what it costs to be a Christian. Out of that experience came Bonhoeffer's book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Pastor Bonhoeffer understood the cost of standing for Christ and against compromise with evil. Both Paul and Peter addressed the issue of standing for the Lord and the price that might be paid.

* 1 Peter 3:13-17... And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? [14] But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled: [15] But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: [16] Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. [17] For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

* 2 Timothy 3:12- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

This does not mean that every Christian will necessarily suffer physical abuse as evidence of true salvation. While many Christians have sealed their faith with their blood, many more have had to withstand the social temptations and pressures of the world in order to live effectively for Christ.

**The cost of discipleship is billed to believers in many different ways.** A Christian stonemason in Ephesus in Paul’s day might have been asked to help build a pagan temple or shrine. Because he could not do that in good conscience, his faith would cost him the work and possibly his job and career. A believer today might be expected to lie, be dishonest, or hedge on the quality of his work in order to increase company profits. To follow his conscience in obedience to the Lord could also cost his job or at least a promotion. A Christian housewife who refuses to listen to gossip or to laugh at the sensual, sexual jokes of her neighbors may find herself ostracized. Some costs will be known in
advance and some will surprise us. Some costs will be great and some will be slight, but by the Lord’s and the apostles’ repeated promises, faithfulness always has a cost, which dedicated Christians are willing to pay such as the Christians in Rome under the Caesars.

By the end of the first century, Rome had expanded almost to the outer limits of the known world, and unity became more and more of a problem. Because only the emperor personified the entire empire, the caesars came to be deified, and their worship was demanded as a unifying and cohesive influence. It became mandatory to give a verbal oath of allegiance to Caesar once a year, for which a person would be given a verifying certificate, called a *libellus*.

After publicly proclaiming, “Caesar is Lord,” the person was free to worship any other gods he chose, even Jesus Christ. Because faithful Christians refused to declare such an allegiance to anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ, they were considered traitors, for which they suffered confiscation of property, loss of work, imprisonment, and often death. One Roman poet spoke of them as “the panting, huddling flock whose only crime was Christ.”

We have seen the reproach; we are persecuted. We have seen the reasons for our reproach which include the sake of righteousness and the sake of Christ. We now will look at the revilement of men.

**III. THE REVILEMENT OF MEN 5:11**

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

Persecution may come in the form of physical abuse. It will also come more frequently in the form of verbal abuse which can be just as painful and destructive. This word “revile” comes from the Greek word *oneidizo* (<i>on-i-<i>d</i>-i<e>o</e>zo) which carries the idea of reviling, upbraiding, or seriously insulting someone, and literally means to cast in one’s teeth.” It is that reproach, upbraiding, and reviling that is done in our very presence. To cast insults is to throw abusive words in the face of an opponent or to mock them viciously. Christians throughout history have been the brunt of the revilement of men and continue to be verbally attacked, harassed, and heckled to this day. Many times the pattern of abuse begins with verbal lashings that are followed by physical persecution when it is popular to do so.

Our Lord was reviled by men. He was accused of being of
illegitimate birth (John 8:41), and called a Samaritan (John 8:48). A number of times He was accused of being demon possessed (John 8:48; John 10:20,21). At the crucifixion trials, He was accused of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65) and condemned to death for it, and when He was on the cross they still continued to attack Him verbally—"They that passed by reviled him" (Matthew 27:39).

*1 Peter 2:23- Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

In resentment against the Gospel, the Romans invented charges against Christians, such as accusing them of being cannibals, because in the Lord's Supper they spoke of eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood. They accused them of having sexual orgies at their love feasts and even of setting fire to Rome. They branded believers as revolutionaries because they called Jesus Lord and King and spoke of God's destruction of the earth by fire. Persecution can go to physical extremes as the church's bloody history records, but most often it is verbal harassment, sometimes audible, sometimes whispered, sometimes direct, and sometimes innuendo. Verbal abuse and social ostracism may call for as much heroism as braving the arena.

Let's stop here for a second. Let me ask, "Are you a reviler?"

Unfortunately, many Christians are guilty of this sin. The person who is a reviler or raider has a goal to expose the person he has already judged. He doesn't go privately first to the person to deal with difficulties or conflicts when they arise. His mission is to destroy the person's reputation and happiness. Those who persecute verbally like to embarrass those they persecute. They often wait until their object of hatred is in public, then they assail them with all sorts of verbal abuse. This is to shame the persecuted one in front of all the people. While verbal persecution is not limited to public shaming, it is a favorite and frequent practice of those who use a vile tongue to attack God's people.

The raider or reviler could care less about the person he has already judged and condemned in his mind. He does not claim any further concern or responsibility for that person. People rail or revile others today when they go to a person and tell them off without giving them an opportunity to get all the facts on the table or tell their side of a predicament. Some folks will go to an authority such as a boss, parent, or pastor, tell them off, and then quit or run away. A boss, parent, or pastor can also be guilty if they discipline or fire someone without
hearing out the whole matter.

The reviler or raillor recognizes no rules, restrictions, or limitations on his intentions to vilify, defame, destroy, or punish the person. He could care less about the individual, and, as we have already noted, this word says the persecutor continually pursues the attack. The persecutor is aggressive as well as abusive. Persecutors have no regard for the truth. They hate the righteous, they hate those who follow Jesus Christ, and they do not need truth to accuse. They will fabricate and falsify the worst of lies. If Christians are not careful, they can be guilty of reviling others and unfortunately many times they do. In fact, reviling is such a serious offense that a Christian who persists in doing it is to be totally avoided by other Christians.

* 1 Corinthians 5:11- But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raillor, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. Just as a wild beast is to be avoided, a raillor is to be avoided. Stay away from people like this lest you become just like them.

* Proverbs 22:24,25- Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Reviling is not the same as rebuking or admonishing someone. There is a big difference. The person who reproves or rebukes has the intention of restoring the offender through the exhortation of Scripture.

* 2 Timothy 4:2- Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

The individual who reproves or rebukes understands that he or she has limitations too. He will correct the person with a balance of love and truth. Truth without the love ends up coming across in a harsh manner. On the other hand, love without the truth is compromise and does not help the person either.

* Revelation 3:19- As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

IV. REJOICING IN THE FACE OF REPROACH 5:12a

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad;....

Persecution is not unusual for the Christian. The proper response to harassment and persecution is unusual! The Beatitudes emphasize the character of the Christian. God wants us to
respond to harassment, heckling, and hellish treatment with happiness and joy. Run that by me again. Yes, you read it right. The Lord wants us to rejoice when we are persecuted and reviled.

The word “rejoice” comes from the Greek word *chairo* {khah'-ee-ro} which means “be glad, to rejoice exceedingly, to thrive.” It is the same word used when you greet or say, “Howdy!” to someone in a letter or when you meet them. God wants us and actually commands us here to thrive in the face of fury, fiery trials, and fanatical opposition. These verses neither encourage seeking persecution nor permit retreating from it, sulking, or retaliation. The appropriate response of the disciple is rejoicing.

* 1 Peter 4:15-16... But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. [16] Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

The words “exceedingly glad” come from the Greek word *galliao* {ag-al-lee-ah'-o} which means “to exult, rejoice exceedingly, be exceeding glad.” The literal meaning is to skip, jump, and leap for joy with happy, ecstatic, excitement and joy. Jesus uses the imperative mood, which makes His words more than a suggestion. We are commanded to be glad.

Not to be glad when we suffer for Christ’s sake is to be untrusting and disobedient. Notice also that Jesus did not say, "Pray" when you are persecuted, although we should pray, of course. Rather, He said, "Rejoice." It seems impossible that we could rejoice when persecuted, but the Lord does not give any commands that we cannot put into practice. This command may seem ridiculous, but God does not give any stupid commands, for He is a God of wisdom. He is the One who gives us the ability and power to rejoice in the face of reproach and revilement.

* Acts 5:41 - And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

* 1 Peter 4:14 - If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

In the third century a certain Cyprian, who was later Bishop of Carthage, wrote to his friend Donatus: "It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world, but I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people, who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousands times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful
life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians... and I am one of them."

The world can take away a great deal from God's people, but it cannot take away their joy and their happiness because it comes from within from the indwelling Holy Spirit. We know that nothing the world can do to us is permanent. When people attack us for Christ's sake, they are really attacking Him. Their attacks can do us no more permanent damage than they can do Him.

* Galatians 6:17- From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Missionary Stan Dale bore the marks for Christ with his own life. As a sequel to his book Peace Child, Don Richardson has written Lords of the Earth. He tells the story of Stan Dale, another missionary to Irian Jaya, Indonesia, who ministered to the Yali tribe in the Snow Mountains. The Yali had one of the strictest known religions in the world. For a tribe member even to question, much less disobey, one of its tenets brought instant death. There could never be any change or modification.

The Yali had many sacred spots scattered throughout their territory. If even a small child were to crawl onto one of those sacred pieces of ground, he was considered defiled and cursed. To keep the whole village from being involved in that curse, the child would he thrown into the rushing Heluk River to drown and be washed downstream.

When Stan Dale came with his wife and four children to those cannibalistic people, he was not tolerated for long. He was attacked one night and miraculously survived, being shot with five arrows. After treatment in a hospital, he immediately returned to the Yali. He worked unsuccessfully for several years, and the resentment and hatred of the tribal priests increased.

One day as he, another missionary named Phil Masters, and a Dani tribesman named Yemu were facing what they knew was an imminent attack, the Yali suddenly attacked them. As the others ran for safety, Stan and Yemu remained back, hoping somehow to dissuade the Yali from their murderous plans. As Stan confronted his attackers, they shot him with dozens of arrows. As the arrows entered his flesh he would pull them out and break them in two. Eventually he no longer had the strength to pull the arrows out, but he remained standing.

Yemu ran back to where Phil was standing, and Phil persuaded him to keep running. With his eyes fixed on Stan, who was still standing with
some fifty arrows in his body, Phil remained where he was and was himself soon surrounded by warriors. The attack had begun with hilarity, but it turned to fear and desperation when they saw that Stan did not fall. Their fear increased when it took nearly as many arrows to down Phil as it had Stan. They dismembered their bodies and scattered them about the forest in an attempt to prevent the resurrection of which they had heard the missionaries speak, but the back of their “unbreakable” pagan system was broken, and through the witness of the two men who were not afraid to die in order to bring the Gospel to this lost and violent people, the Yali tribe and many others in the surrounding territory came to Jesus Christ.

Even Stan’s fifth child, a baby at the time of this incident, was saved reading the book about his father. Stan and Phil were not rewarded in this life with the things of this life, but they seem to have been double-blessed with the comfort, strength, and joy of their indwelling Lord and the absolute confidence that their sacrifice for Him would not be in vain. The joy of the Lord was their strength and gave them courage in the face of danger, desperation, and death.

V. THE REWARD 5:12b

.... for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This reward does not make the rewarded one a subject of the kingdom but a possessor of the kingdom. Scripture promises royalty to God’s children.

* Revelation 1:6- And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
* 2 Timothy 2:12- If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Those who are persecuted may be suffering now, but they will reign later, and the reign will be forever and ever. Not every believer is rewarded in this life with the things of this life, but every believer is rewarded in this life with the comfort, strength, and joy of His indwelling Lord. He is also blessed with the assurance that no service or sacrifice for the Lord will be in vain.

Knowing our Lord is coming, knowing where our eternal home is, knowing we will see the Lord Jesus Christ one day, knowing that other great Christians have trod the path of persecution, give the Christian confidence, courage, commitment, and even cheer. Such traits were
found in John Chrysostom.

John Chrysostom, a godly leader in the fourth-century church preached so strongly against sin that he offended the unscrupulous Empress Eudoxia as well as many church officials. When summoned before Emperor Arcadius, John was threatened with banishment if he did not cease his uncompromising preaching. His response was, “Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father’s house.” The Emperor responded, “Then I will slay you,” Arcadius said. “Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God.” The next threat was, “Your treasures will be confiscated” to which John replied, “Sire, that cannot be, either. My treasures are in Heaven, where none can break through and steal.” In a final desperate warning the Emperor shouted, “Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left!” John was not intimidated and firmly said, “That you cannot do either, for I have a Friend in Heaven who has said that I will never leave you or forsake you.”

Chrysostom was indeed banished, first to Armenia and then farther away to Pityus on the Black Sea, to which he never arrived because he died on the way, but neither his banishment nor his death disproved or diminished his claims. The things that he valued most highly, not even the Emperor could take from him.

The blood of martyrs has been shed by the bullies of hatred, wickedness, and unbelief in Christ throughout the hourglass of history. Yet, God’s people continue to grow and go with the flow with the sands of time with a righteous resolve and rigid resistance to temptation, trepidation, and the trauma of trials. They continue to “Keep on keeping on!” All I can say is “Glory to God!”

**The Emperor Diocletian hated Christians.** "In one wave of persecution after another, that continued until A.D. 298, it looked as if Emperor Diocletian, the last persecuting emperor, was going to destroy the Christian faith from the earth. In North Africa, he cut out the tongues of Christians, boiled them in oil, and threw them into the sea. In the Roman Coliseum, he threw Christians to the lions. Diocletian imprisoned the preachers, murdered the Christians, and took their books and burned them to ashes. He killed so many Christians, with such outrageous cruelties, and destroyed so many Bibles, that many Christians "went underground" and hid themselves from his wrath.

When it seemed to Diocletian that he had made an end of them, he had a medal coined with this motto on it: "The Christian religion is
destroyed, and the worship of the (Roman) gods is restored." He also erected a column in the city of Rome, and on that column was written in Latin *Extincta Nomina Christianorum* which means "For Having Exterminated The Name Christian From the Earth." He proclaimed in triumph the name of Christ extinct, but if he could see that monument today, how embarrassed he would be!

A strange thing happened toward the end of Diocletian's reign. Diocletian divided his empire up, and the fellow who came after him in A.D. 312, was a guy named Constantine. He looked up in the sky and said there at Milvian Bridge, "I see something strange in the sky." He saw a cross, and next to it the words, 'Under this sign, conquer.' Constantine considered this a sign from God and promised the Lord that if He would give him victory in battle, he would worship Him. He triumphed and the persecution of Christians under the Roman thumb ended. Christianity became the state religion of Rome. God had the last laugh on the despicable, demonic Diocletian who believed that Christianity was extinct.

Satan may try to overwhelm you with heckling, harassment, and hellish treatment, but God will have the last laugh if you can respond with rejoicing and joy. May the Lord help us to have joy in our trials.

**The Lord gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction.**

*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*
Chapter 9
Good for Something or Good for Nothing

Matthew 5:13
Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

There have been times that I have gone to my tool box or storage drawer to get an item that I needed to perform a task that needed to be done, but because of time or wear, the tool was useless and good for nothing. Many times I have purchased glue or caulk and used them on projects. When finished I would screw on the cap to prevent drying only to find a year later, I can’t get the cap off or somehow the glue or caulk dried. At one time it was good for something, but now it was good for nothing. I have found that good paint can be rendered good for nothing if it freezes in your garage. The chemicals break down under freezing temperatures, rendering the paint as useless.

Jesus has just finished a list of attitudes we are to have in our lives. It is a list of what we are to be. Upon completing the list, He then says, “You are the salt of the earth.” The word “are” indicates He is concerned about what we are, our being. When what we ARE is right, then what we DO will be right. When we as Christians, implement the Beatitudes in our lives, we are the salt of the earth. When we are possessed of these characteristics, we will be a positive influence and we will make a difference in the world around us. In this verse, by using salt as an object lesson, Jesus tries to get across to us that we are good for something and
are valuable to this world. He also warns us that we can end up being good for nothing. There is a lot of spiritual juice in this sponge. Let’s squeeze it and get all the goodies we can get out of it.

I. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STATEMENT

“Ye are the salt of the earth...”

Jesus was no stranger to salt, especially when the Dead Sea was so near. Even today, the concentration of salt in the Dead Sea is ten times higher than that of any other sea or lake on earth. Every liter of its sea water contains an average of 30 grams of salts and other minerals. It is one of the greatest sources of salt in the world. No animal or plant can exist here. Few fish are found in it, if you can find any at all.

Because of its high specific gravity, no one will ever sink or drown while bathing in the Dead Sea. Nobody has ever committed suicide there by drowning. It was said that Vespasian, commander of the Roman legion which later destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, heard of this fact. He tested it by ordering slaves to be thrown into the sea waves with their hands and feet tied. The slaves floated. Other commanders had Christians thrown into the Dead Sea in order to drown them. When they would not sink, it was renamed by some as the Miracle Sea.

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth.” What does this mean? When we examine the attributes of salt, we begin to understand why Christians are good for something. We can begin to comprehend what the Lord was trying to get across to us.

A. Salt Preserves

In the ancient world salt was the commonest of all preservatives. It was used to ward off rot and decay! It was rubbed into meat in an effort to preserve it and to keep things from going bad, and hold putrefaction at bay. It preserves from corruption. The chlorine that salt contains has antiseptic qualities.

If the Christian is to be the salt of the earth, he must have a certain antiseptic influence on life. Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared or preserved from destruction if there were ten righteous people in those cities. The righteous would have been like salt. I believe the presence and prayers of God’s people in the United States today have withheld God’s full hand of wrath against this nation as it continues to be more pagan and wicked. Righteousness made our nation great and the lack of it will destroy it.
Our actions and attitudes should be salty. We should preserve our families and towns from rot and keep corruption at bay. This is done by taking a stand against things like pornography, abortion, immorality, liquor, drugs, gambling, etc. We can take a stand in our pulpits, at City Hall if need be, at the mailbox or the ballot box. The most important thing we can do, however, is live godly, holy lives. We are good for something when we live this way.

*Proverbs 14:34- Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*

*2 Chronicles 7:14- If MY people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

**B. Salt is Powerful**

Salt is very influential and powerful. It has a way of penetrating and infiltrating whatever it contacts. We are to have God’s power on our lives and be influential for Christ. We are called to be thermostats and not thermometers in the world around us. We are to be the instruments that God can use to implement change in a wicked world. We just need to be sure that we are changing the world instead of the world changing us. The philosophy of many churches today is to win the lost by being like the lost and living the same lifestyle. We will win more to Christ if we will live like Christ and be salty.

We are not to be wasting our lives on the playground of life, but on battle ground where the destinies of men’s souls are at stake. Like an invading army, we are to be on the attack, endeavoring to win the lost to Christ just like the early church. God wants us to get off of our blessed assurance and do something with it for our Lord! According to Morton Salt Company, the biggest problem of food grade salt is RUST! The problem in the church today is rusty, inactive Christians. Be salty and use your influence for Christ. Point people to the Lord

*Acts 1:8- But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

*Acts 17:6- And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;*

*Matthew 16:18- And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not*
prevail against it.

The power of salty Christians cannot be underestimated. In the last century, two independent studies were conducted fifty years apart to determine the kindest city in the United States. In both surveys, 1940 and 1990, the city that was ranked first was Rochester, New York. What is attributed to their friendliness? The answer is the greatest revival in the history of the United States that took place in 1831, under the preaching of evangelist Charles Finney.

Twelve hundred people united with churches during this revival that swept lawyers, doctors, and prominent businessmen into the kingdom of Heaven. Forty of the converts entered the ministry. The entire town was changed as many taverns and red light districts closed down. The ripple effect of this revival spread to 1500 towns and villages in the surrounding areas. The testimony of those that were saved, their salt, their influence for the Lord, is still having an impact for Christ on their descendants that live in Rochester and across the globe. Salt is powerful and so is a godly Christian that has the power of the Holy Spirit on his life.

When we fail to have God’s power in our lives and have a consistent Christian testimony, we can lead others astray away from the Lord. The devastation of inconsistency is seen in the following story. R. C. Sproul, in his book Objections Answered, tells about a young Jewish boy who grew up in Germany many years ago. The lad had a profound sense of admiration for his father, who saw to it that the life of the family revolved around the religious practices of their faith. The father led them to the synagogue faithfully.

In his teen years, however, the boy’s family was forced to move to another town in Germany. This town had no synagogue, only a Lutheran church. The life of the community revolved around the Lutheran church; all the best people belonged to it. Suddenly, the father announced to the family that they were all going to abandon their Jewish traditions and join the Lutheran church. When the stunned family asked why, the father explained that it would be good for his business.

The youngster was bewildered and confused. His deep disappointment soon gave way to anger and a kind of intense bitterness that plagued him throughout his life. Later he left Germany and went to England to study. Each day found him at the British Museum formulating his ideas and composing a book. In that book he introduced a whole new world-view and conceived a movement that was designed to change the world. He described religion as the “opiate for the masses.” This young
man committed the people who followed him to a life without God. His ideas became the norm for the governments of almost half the world’s people. What was his name? It was Karl Marx, founder of the Communist movement. The history of the twentieth century and perhaps beyond was significantly affected because one father let his values become distorted and was inconsistent in his beliefs. Have you lost your power and influence with others because of wrong priorities or inconsistency in your life? Are you good for something or good for nothing?

C. Salt is Pure

Salt was connected with purity. No doubt its sparkling whiteness made the connection easy. The Romans said that salt was the purest of all things, because it came from the purest of all things, the sun and the sea. Salt was indeed the most primitive of all offerings to pagan gods. The Jewish sacrifices were offered with salt.

* Leviticus 2:13- And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

So then, if the Christian is to be the salt of the earth he must be an example of purity in speech, character, conduct, attitudes, and thoughts. Our lives are to be like salt, they are to be pure and offered to the Lord as a sacrifice.

* Romans 12:1- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

* James 1:27- Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

The purity of salt gives it great ability to clean things. Elisha cleansed the waters at Jericho with salt (2 Kings 2:19-22). Put salt in bitter tea and it will take away the bitterness. In ancient times, newborn babies were washed in salt to cleanse their bodies and to give firmness to their skin (Ezekiel 16:4). Salt was used to cleanse and heal wounds. People with toothaches put salt in their cavities to take away the pain. Gargling with salt water is soothing for sore throats. Washing smelly or dirty containers with salt water will cleanse them and remove odors.

Scientists inform us that the salt content in the oceans of the world is extremely important, for without the saltiness of the oceans the great oceans would be great areas of corruption which would plague the earth
with disease. As the salt of the earth, our lives are to be characterized by purity and we should have a purifying effect upon others. When we live this way, we are good for something!

* 1 Timothy 4:12- Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

* 1 Timothy 5:22- Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

**When we compromise with sin, it hurts our influence for Christ and destroys our testimony.** Compromise will do this. If we are not careful, we can become like the family that had become fed up with the noise and traffic of the city and decided to move to the country and try life in the wide open spaces. Intending to raise cattle, they bought a western ranch. Some friends came to visit a month later and asked them what they had named the ranch. The father said, “Well, I wanted to call it the Flying-W and my wife wanted to call it the Suzy-Q, but one of our sons liked the Bar-J and the other preferred the Lazy-Y. So we compromised and called it the Flying-W, Suzy-Q, Bar-J, Lazy-Y Ranch.” Their friend asked, “Well, where are your cattle?” The man replied, “None of them survived the branding!”

When God’s people are the salt of the earth and live holy lives, their entrance in a room often causes people in that room to want to clean up their language and behave better. Those of holy conduct will have a holy influence upon society. For example, Andrew Murray lived an exceptionally holy life. Among those on whom his influence was the greatest were his own children and grandchildren. Five of his six sons became preachers of the Gospel and four of his daughters became pastor’s wives. Ten grandsons became preachers and thirteen grandchildren became missionaries.

Woodrow Wilson told the story of being in a barbershop one time. He said, “I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a powerful personality had entered the room. A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as me, to have his hair cut, and he sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered showed a personal interest in the barber who was serving him. Before I got through with what was being done to me, I was aware I had attended an evangelistic service, because Mr. D. L. Moody was in that chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular effect that his visit had brought upon that barber shop. The men talked in undertones. They did not know his
name, but they knew something had elevated their thoughts, and I felt that I left that place as I should have left a place of worship.” Salt is not only pure, powerful, and preserves, but it is also very precious.

**D. Salt is Precious**

People do not realize that wars have been fought over the control of salt. More wars have been fought over salt than over gold because salt is so precious. The early road *via Solaria* from Rosetta to Rome was constantly guarded by Roman soldiers who fought off marauders and invading armies seeking salt. The Germans waged war for saline streams. Many Indian wars in our country were fought over salt licks or salt springs. Indians protected them at all costs. One of the principal purposes of the Union campaign in Virginia was to capture a source of salt of the Confederacy at Saltville. The objective of the Union Army in Louisiana was to cut off sources of salt from New Orleans. Their success helped to shorten the war. Salt in 1865, sold for an expensive $1 per pound.

**In the ancient world and Bible times, salt was highly valued.** Homer called salt "divine." Plato said it was a "substance dear to the gods." Barbarous tribes have sometimes made a bag of salt worth more than a man. Salt cakes served as money in ancient Ethiopia and Tibet. In its use as money, it is instructive to note that the English word “salary” comes from the word *salarium*. The *salarium* was the pay of the Roman soldier or their money allowance for salt. This is where the phrase, “Not worth his salt” comes from. Along that line, notice Ezra 4:14.

*Ezra 4:14-* Now because we have *maintenance from the king's palace*, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we *sent and certified the king;*

The statement, "we have maintenance from the king's palace" literally means, "we are salted with the salt of the palace" according to Peloubet and the marginal notes of the 1611 King James Version. They were given salt for their services in the palace. The word translated "maintenance" in Ezra 4:14 means "salt" and is translated "salt" in the KJV the other two places the word is found in the Bible (Ezra 6:9; 7:22).

In a phrase, which in Latin, is a kind of jingle, the Romans said, "There is nothing more useful than sun and salt.” It was considered valuable because it kept men alive in the hot climates and flavored their food. When the body sweats too much, the muscles cramp up. Salt eliminates the cramping.
Beloved, Christians are valuable to the world, even though the world may not see or understand this truth. A world without Christians would be a nightmare as the world will find out on the day of the Rapture and afterwards in the Tribulation. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates the truth of the importance of God’s people. When you act like salt in society, you are precious to that society, even though people may not recognize that you are valuable. You are good for something. Salt is not only pure, powerful, preserving, and precious, it is also pleasant.

E. Salt is Pleasant

The greatest and the most obvious quality of salt is that salt lends flavor to things and brings out the best in food, especially popcorn, corn on the cob, and french fries. Food without salt is sadly insipid and sometimes sickening. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. Christianity lends flavor to life. The presence and influence of godly, salty Christians will encourage and lift up others and bring out the best in people. We are to live for others and be a blessing to them. Our words should strengthen people and bring healing to their lives. Just as salt melts coldness and heals the body, our lives, our words, ought to help people heal spiritually and help them to overcome a cold, hard heart that has been numbed by sin.

* Matthew 24:12 - And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

* Colossians 4:6- Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Believers are not to be a bunch of deadbeats. They will bless no one and will dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ if they act this way. Those professing Christians who are sour, selfish, stingy, sensual, cranky, complaining, caustic, critical, and cantankerous do not add a good seasoning effect to those around them. They become good for nothing. They are not like salt but more like onions and cause people to cry. It is true that Christianity often aggravates an ungodly world that rejects Christ, for Christianity honors Christ. Causing that aggravation by Christlikeness is not dishonorable.

What is dishonorable is when we are a bunch of old grouchies. Men need to discover the lost radiance, love, and joy of the Christian faith. In a worried world, the Christian should especially be the man who remains serene. In a depressed world, the Christian should especially be the person who remains full of the joy of life. There should be a sheer sparkle
about the Christian, but too often, he acts like a mourner at a funeral. We all need to work on being pleasant no matter what situation we find ourselves in.

* Philippians 4:11- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

On July 24, 2002, nine men were trapped in a mine in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, when a mining machine dug through a wall that unleashed 150 million gallons of groundwater into the Quecreek mine. The wall was supposed to be 100 feet thick, but the maps were inaccurate. One of the pastors that went to the scene to comfort the frightened families was Pastor Ritenour. When he entered the fire hall, he saw a room full of sad, sorrowful faces. Then he noticed one woman with a perpetual smile. Her name was Susan. Susan had Multiple Sclerosis and needed a walker to move around the room, but she radiated with optimism. She remained calm when others lashed out with frustration and lost their composure. She had a resolute faith stating, “I know they are going to come out.” Her faith gave her strength and joy and helped her to be salt in a sickening situation.

Two days after this ordeal began, the governor, Governor Schweiker, comforted the families on Friday afternoon, not with a speech, not with hollow hopes, but by sharing with them that which can truly comfort... the Word of God. He read to them Psalm 46...God is our refuge and strength, a present help in times of trouble. The Governor was being salty, encouraging others with his words that were seasoned with salt. Finally, after 78 hours underground, at a cost of 10 million dollars, all nine miners were rescued.

F. Salt Promotes Thirst

Salt creates a thirst for water. Ocean water contains seven times more salt than the human body can safely ingest. Drinking it, a person dehydrates because the kidneys demand extra water to flush the overload of salt. The more salt water someone drinks, the thirstier he gets. He actually dies of thirst that is created by the salt.

Beloved, we are to live our lives in such a way that we create a hunger and thirst for the Lord by the way we live. Our love, compassion, consistency for Christ, courage, and concern for others create a thirst for the Lord in some of the hearts of those searching for answers to the problems and needs they have in their own lives. We are good for something when we live this way. As ambassadors for Christ, we are to represent our Lord well.
* 2 Corinthians 5:20- Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.

* John 13:35- By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

G. Salt Provides or Gives of Itself

When salt is used, it loses itself. It makes its contribution in your food and is gone. In chemical processes, it dissipates and vanishes. When Christians are salty, they are willing to give of themselves to God and men. It is when we give of ourselves or die to self, that we do something that is remembered and has an impact on the lives of others. God has mightily used Christians who died to self and lived for others, such as men like Paul and John the Baptist. These men were good for something.

* John 3:30 - He must increase, but I must decrease. (John the Baptist)

* Philippians 1:21- For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Paul)

* Philippians 2:4- Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

* Romans 15:1-We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

* 1 Corinthians 10:24- Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

H. Salt is a Product of Work

When we work hard, we perspire. Have you ever tasted sweat dripping down your face? It is salty, isn’t it? As salty Christians, we are to be working for the Lord and serving Him. Make each day count for Christ. Realize that our labor is not to earn Brownie Points with God or make Him love us more. He already loves us. We labor to glorify Him and reach others for Christ.

* Romans 12:11- Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

* John 6:27- Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

* 1 Corinthians 15:58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

If you are a pastor, let me challenge you to labor in the Word of God. There is nothing dishonorable about studying the Word of God and
digging out its wonderful truths to share with your church.

* 1 Timothy 5:17- Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of
double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Beloved, when a Christian fulfills his responsibility as salt of the
earth, he will have a tendency to:

* stalk the Savior, following Him.
* walk in the Word of God, learning and applying its truths.
* balk at bitterness and bad attitudes that rob others and him of joy.
* squawk at sinful living, selfishness, and injustice.
* talk of the tremendous blessings that God has given him and the time
  of Christ's return.
* fault folly and foolishness in his own life and the lives of other believers
  that should know better.
* halt hypocrisy and hate in his own life.
* exalt the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
* assault attitudes of apathy that can creep into his heart, leaving him
  unconcerned and uninterested in the things of God and the ministry of
  the church.

Let me ask you at this point, "Are you salty? Are you good for
something or good for nothing?"

II. THE IMPOTENCE OF THE SALT

"...but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"

If the salt loses its savor or saltiness, how will it become salty
again? The impotence or weakness of the salt noted here is the
loss of saltiness. The words "lost its savor" are translated from the
Greek word *moraino* {mo-rah'-ee-no} from which we get our English
word "moron." The word *moraino* means "to be or act foolishly, to make
flat or tasteless." Applied here it means the salt has become dull, that is,
insipid, tasteless, or flat. Applied to behavior, it means "to play the fool
or be foolish." It is translated "they became fools" in Romans 1:22 which
speaks of the ungodly and says, "Professing themselves to be wise, they
became fools." When we behave or live foolishly, we act like a moron and
we lose our influence, our savor for Christ.

The Scots translate "savor" by the more expressive word *tang*, "If
the salt has lost its tang." The problem today is that most church members
have not only lost their tang as salt, but as pepper, they have lost their pep
also. We have very few salt and pepper Christians in our day. Now salt
doesn’t keep fermentation and that type of thing from taking place, but it will arrest it. You and I ought to be the salt in the earth and have an influence for good in the world. Our savior as Christians is our influence and testimony for Christ.

When we lose our testimony for the Lord, when our carelessness causes us to lose our influence to persuade men to turn to Christ, we become useless at that point of our lives. That is a tragedy! A greater tragedy is when Christians don’t care about their testimony or savor because they are not concerned about serving God or the souls of men. With this kind of attitude, they become good for nothing! Christians can lose their moral and spiritual savor by playing the fool and disobeying the commands of God and leaving God out of their life just as the people of Romans 1 did. How do we do this? What causes us to lose our savor, our testimony, our effectiveness, our influence for the Lord Jesus Christ? Let’s answer the question.

* What Causes Us to Lose Our Savor or Influence for Christ?
1. Discontent, Dander, Anger, or Bitterness can damage your effectiveness.

When we are angry or bitter, we have difficulty focusing on what God wants for us. Instead, our focus is upon the person we are angry with. We become consumed with hate and our bitterness poisons our spirit and the lives of others. Our bitterness gets us sidetracked and we begin to lose our effectiveness for the Lord. If we vent our anger and bitterness upon others, we create resentment and lose our ability to lead or teach them. They can’t hear what we are saying because our actions are screaming at them. Others that observe our anger are also turned off by our behavior, even though our anger is not vented upon them. They take up an offense for other people who they feel have been wronged.

* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Our bitterness affects not only us but others are stained or sullied by it. This is the idea behind the word “defiled.” Is bitterness causing you to lose your savor?

Many times, when a person is filled with rage, it comes out of his mouth. His words tend to be like poison. If we claim to be believers, but can’t control our mouth, we lose our savor and effectiveness. Our “religion” is good for nothing. This is what James told us.

* James 1:26 - If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth
not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

2. Disobedience, and Deafness toward the Truth of God's Word can ruin your testimony.

Disobeying God leads to defeat and a loss of spiritual power. How can we sway people to follow Christ when we are not doing this ourselves? Our willfulness or stubbornness lead to woe many times. We are so determined to get our own way that we are distracted from the common sense of the Word of God or good counsel from others. We become fools or lose our savor, making stupid decisions that hurt us and others because we refuse to listen to what the Lord has to say to us. People look at what we are doing and wonder, "What in the world are you doing? What has gotten into you? Are you crazy? I thought you were a Christian." We not only lose our savor, our effectiveness for God, but we also lose God's blessings because we walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

*Jeremiah 5:23- But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

*Psalm 1:1- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

*James 1:19 - Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

3. Dollars or material possessions can sift your savor.

In ancient China the people wanted security against the barbaric hordes to the north, so they built the Great Wall of China. It was so high they believed no one could climb over it and so thick nothing could break it down. They settled back to enjoy their security. During the first hundred years of the wall's existence, China was invaded three times by their enemies. How did this happen?

Not once did the barbaric hordes break down the wall or climb over it. Here is what they did. Each time they invaded, they bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right through the gates. The Chinese were so busy relying on walls of stone they forgot to teach integrity to their children. The greed for money made the guard ineffective. He was good for nothing. In fact, he became dangerous and destructive.

**When money becomes a priority to the point where we neglect the Lord and His Word in our lives, we lose our effectiveness for the Lord.** When a person loves earthly things so much that he can't get along without them and will do anything to get them, he opens himself up
to intense temptation and suffering. His behavior, choices, and decisions become destructive toward the cause of Christ because of his example to the unsaved. Paul warned us about our relationship with money and things.

* 1 Timothy 6:9- But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. If you are drowning, how are you going to rescue someone else? You lose your effectiveness to help others and point them to Christ.

* Matthew 13:22- He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. When God’s Word is choked out of our lives and we are distracted from doing what God wants us to do, we become unfruitful, and ineffective because we have hurt our Christian testimony.

4. Dullness and Depletion in your first Love for Christ.

When we spiritually cool off in our love and dedication for Christ, we begin to lose our effectiveness in serving Him. Apathy or dullness leaves us unconcerned, uncaring, and uninvolved in the things of God. We don’t care about going to church, about praying, about Bible study, or about the souls of men. We lose our savor, our power or punch for the Lord. This is what happened to Demas and the church at Ephesus.

* 2 Timothy 4:10- For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

*Revelation 2:4- Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Once a thriving spiritual community, the Ephesus believers became distracted and diverted their attention from Christ to works done in His name. They had lost sight of what was most important in their relationship with Christ—their love for Him.

**When we cool off spiritually and become apathetic in our relationship with Jesus, we become easily distracted.** We become unconcerned about what God thinks of us and tend to do that which we want to do. God’s counsel to those who have become distracted by a loss of their first love for Christ is found in the next verse. He tells the church to get focused again. He tells them to remember, repent, and repeat.

* Revelation 2:5- Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and...
will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

When apathy develops in our life, we bury the treasures, the gifts, the abilities that God has given to us to use for His glory. Hidden treasures today are rare. In the ancient biblical lands, however, they were common. Palestine, which was a land bridge between Egypt and the great empires, was repeatedly invaded, ravaged, and captured. Multitudes buried their gold because there were no banks. The government, nobility, clergy, and Arab invaders all robbed the common people often and without warning. Because of this, the people quickly buried treasure in the ground, in walls, in tree trunks, or wherever they could. Earthquakes could cover up entire cities and bury gold with them. All kinds of people quickly buried what they had in the face of invasion or political change. They left, they died, they were captured, and no one knew where the treasure was hidden.

W.M. Thompson was a missionary in Syria and Palestine for 30 years. He told of workmen digging up a garden in Sidon. They found several copper pots of gold. They did exactly like the man in the parable and concealed their find of gold with care. But then, wild with joy, they could not keep their mouths shut. The governor of the city caught them, and recovered two of the pots. It was found that they contained 8,000 pure gold coins of Alexander and his father Philip. As long as the treasure was buried, it was good for nothing. It was not being used at all. When we are spiritually dull, and wane in our dedication to Christ, we waste-away our abilities and lives and if we are not careful, we will lose our effectiveness and become good for nothing.

More than anything else, the Lord wants our love, worship and adoration. He wants our heart. He wants us! The Macedonian Christians realized this truth and put it into practice.

* 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. How is your love-life with the Lord?

5. Double-mindedness will sift our savor and make us ineffective.

When we can’t make up our mind about serving the Lord, then our inconsistency hinders our effectiveness in reaching others that note our wishy-washy attitude. It is hard enough to reach others when we are dedicated and have our mind made up about serving the Lord. If we can’t make up our mind, why should others make up their minds to accept Christ and follow Him? Our inconsistency causes us to lose our savor. It weakens our message to the lost because they are offended or distracted.
by our instability. Notice what James and Jesus said about being double-minded.

* James 1:8- A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.
* Matthew 6:24- No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

God wants us to make up our mind in serving Him. He is to be the priority and master of our lives. On the night of April 14, 1912, the great ocean liner, the Titanic, crashed into an iceberg in the Atlantic and sank, causing great loss of life. One of the most curious stories to come from the disaster was of a woman who had a place in one of the lifeboats. She asked if she could return to her stateroom for something and was given just three minutes. As she hurried through the corridors, she stepped over money and precious gems littering the floor where they had been dropped in haste. In her own stateroom she ignored her own jewelry, and instead grabbed three oranges. Then she quickly returned to her place in the boat. Just hours earlier it would have been ludicrous to think she would have accepted a crate of oranges in exchange for even one small diamond, but circumstances had suddenly transformed all the values aboard the ship. Oranges had become more precious than diamonds.

Beloved, the Lord wants us to understand the fact that the most valuable things in life are the souls of men and living our lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what matters to Him. When we resolve to make our lives count for the Lord and not be distracted by other masters, we will be salty Christians that are good for something. On the other hand, as long as we are double-minded, we will lose our savor. What is really important to you?

6. Distractions from doing God’s will make us ineffective.

Some Christians lose their testimony because they get distracted from doing what God wants them to do. They may be distracted by money, people, power, prestige, position, or popularity. The distraction gets them sidetracked from doing what is important and focused on that which ends up being foolish. Following foolish flings and things fractures the force of our message for Christ. Following Christ makes us good for something. This was the priority of Paul’s life.

* Philippians 3:12-14... Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. [13] Brethren, I count not
myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [14] I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Paul’s goal was to please Jesus Christ.

Robert J. Mckain said, “The reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first.” Some years ago a headline told of three hundred whales that suddenly died. The whales were pursuing sardines and found themselves marooned in a bay. Frederick Broan Harris commented, “The small fish lured the sea giants to their death…. They came to their violent demise by chasing small ends, by prostituting vast powers for insignificant goals.”

**Often the little things, the little distractions in life trip us up.** A tragic example is an Eastern Airlines jumbo jet that crashed in the Everglades of Florida. The plane was the now-famous Flight 401, bound from New York to Miami with a heavy load of holiday passengers. As the plane approached the Miami airport for its landing, the light that indicated proper deployment of the landing gear failed to light.

The plane flew in a large, looping circle over the swamps of the Everglades while the cockpit crew checked to see if the gear actually had not deployed, or if instead the bulb in the signal light was defective. When the flight engineer tried to remove the light bulb, it wouldn’t budge, and the other members of the crew tried to help him. As they struggled with the bulb, no one noticed the aircraft was losing altitude, and the plane simply flew right into the swamp. Dozens of people were killed in the crash. While an experienced crew of high-priced pilots fiddled with a seventy-five cent light bulb, the plane with its passengers flew right into the ground.

This type of story is what happens to many Christians. They destroy their lives, ruin their reputation, trash their testimony, erase their effectiveness for Christ, and squander their savor by being distracted by trivial matters. The plan that God has for them goes unfulfilled or delayed. If we are going to be good for something, we need to give ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

* 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.
* Romans 12:1- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
7. Disgraceful, sinful living will sift your savor.

Sinful living will damage your testimony for Christ pronto. The world expects us as Christians to behave like Christians. When we don’t, they turn a deaf ear to our message. For this reason, we are admonished to not be a stumbling block to others and not live worldly carnal lives.

* Romans 14:13 - Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.
* 1 Corinthians 8:9- But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.
* 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 ...Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? [15] And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [16] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

You may not be concerned about your testimony right now because you are not trying to win someone to Christ. Being faithful to the Lord may not be a big deal to you. The day may come, however, that the Lord changes your heart and you do get concerned about a lost friend or loved-one. If you have trashed your testimony for Christ, if you have lost your savor, they most likely will not give you the time of day because the damage to your message and influence has already been done. Your past inconsistency will cause many to conclude that you are no different than them and Christ has nothing to offer them. If He didn’t change you, how can He change them? How wrong they would be and how wrong you have been to squander your savor, your effectiveness and influence for Jesus Christ.

8. The Demeanor of Pride

When we get proud or cocky, we turn people off. People react to our pride in a negative way. Our pride causes us to make foolish choices that usually end up hurting our example with others. Solomon, a man who had everything to be proud about, warned us extensively about pride and its destructiveness in the book of Proverbs.

* Proverbs 11:2- When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the
lowly is wisdom.
* Proverbs 13:10- Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.
* Proverbs 16:18- Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18 was literally fulfilled on the world stage on February 17, 2006, when Lindsey Jacobellis was having the race of her life in the 2006 Winter Olympics at Torino, Italy. Lindsey was racing in the championship heat of the Ladies Snowboard Cross race. She was looking real good. In fact, she had a lead of three seconds or 140 feet over Tanya Freeden of Switzerland.

As Lindsey slid up the last hill of the race and high into the air, she knew the race was in the bag. In her excitement, as she flew high into the air, she did some pre-mature celebrating and showing off to the huge crowd that was gathered at the finish line. She wiggled or rotated her snow board back and forth in the air which looks very impressive, but when she landed, she fell on her face right before the finish line and watched Tanya Freeden come up from behind and pass her for the gold medal. Lindsey got up and finished, but had to settle for the silver medal and the loss of millions of dollars in commercial endorsements that come from winning a gold medal. Over-confidence, showing off, or perhaps cockiness caused her to fall before the finish line and lose a greater reward.

May we not make the same mistake in our race for Christ. God help us to finish our race for the Lord without getting distracted, proud, and cocky, lest we too, fall before the finish line and lose our influence, usefulness, and some of our reward from the Lord.
* 2 John 1:8- Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

9. Doubt and Discouragement squander our savor.

Discouragement and doubt rob us of our energy and enthusiasm for the Lord. They cause us to give up and not live by faith. When we get in this predicament, we are not as effective for Christ. We don’t want to do anything. When we lack conviction and trust in the Lord and His Word, we keep quiet and hush up. We will not share with others what we do not believe ourselves, thus, our salt loses its savor. God’s challenge to us is to trust Him, His Word, and live by faith.
* Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a reworder of
them that diligently seek him.
* Romans 1:17- For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
* Romans 10:17- So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Jell-O turned one hundred years old in 1997, and the story surrounding its inventor is truly ironic. In 1897, Pearl Wait wore several hats. He was a construction worker who dabbled in patent medicines and sold his ailment remedies door-to-door. In the midst of his tinkering, he hit on the idea of mixing fruit flavoring with granulated gelatin. His wife named it Jell-O and Mr. Wait had one more product to peddle.

Unfortunately, sales weren’t as strong as he’d hoped, so in 1899, Pearl Wait sold his Jell-O rights to Orator Woodward for $450. Woodward knew the value of marketing so within just eight brief years, Wait’s neighbor turned a $450 investment into a $1 million business. Today, not a single relative of Pearl Wait receives royalties from the 1.1 million boxes of Jell-O that are sold each DAY. Why? Because Mr. Wait just couldn’t wait. Beloved, learn to wait on God, trust His timing and His delays. Waiting, trusting the Lord, and living by faith will yield blessing and impatience will rob you of them.
* Proverbs 3:5-6... Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

III. THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE SALT
*...it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

In 1833, Horatio Greenough was paid $5,000 to sculpt a heroic statue of George Washington for the nation’s Capitol rotunda. Horatio went to Florence, Italy, emerging several years later with a 20-ton marble statue. When longshoremen started to hoist the statue onto a boat, the rope broke and the giant George Washington sank in the mud. So U.S. Navy sent a battleship to Italy, fished poor George out of the drink and took him to New York.

Because railroad tunnels between New York and Washington weren’t big enough, they took this huge statue all the way down South to New Orleans and forwarded him by various routes, without tunnels, to Washington, D.C. This artistic enterprise now had gone from $5000 to
$26,000.

The unveiling ceremony finally came ten years later on George’s birthday, 1843. The Navy band played and lawmakers made speeches to the crowd that had gathered for the wonderful occasion. The Speaker of the House pulled the string to unveil the statue, and there was George Washington, twice as big as life, scantily clad as a Roman senator!

Over Capitol Hill rose a horrified gasp. After weeks of bitter debate, Congress decided to build a wooden shed for $1,600 to now hide the statue. By 1908, around 65 years later, the shed was so weatherbeaten, and the lawmakers so mortified, that they appropriated a final $5,000 to tear the shed down and haul the semi-naked Washington, in the dead of night, to the Smithsonian Institute. So, for decades it languished in the West Wing of the main building, along with a row of antique printing presses. All that effort, all that expense, ended up being good for nothing.

Beloved, at the moment, I can’t think of anything that would bother me more than to be useless or good-for-nothing. Have you ever been given or found useless things? There is not much you can do with a ticket or credit card that has expired. Have you ever done useless things? If not, try telling a baby to not cry... it’s useless. Whipping a dead horse is useless. Hiding your sin from God is useless too. Here in this verse, Jesus tells us that when the salt has lost its saltiness or effectiveness, it is good-for-nothing, it’s worthless.

The difficulty of this saying is understanding how salt could lose its flavor since its chemical properties cannot change. It is thus often assumed that Jesus was referring to chemically impure salt, perhaps a natural salt which, when exposed to the elements, had all the genuine salt leached out, leaving only the sediment or impurities behind. Much of the salt in Palestine, such as that found on the shores of the Dead Sea, is contaminated with gypsum and other minerals that make it taste flat and even repulsive. When a batch of such contaminated salt would find its way into a household and be discovered, it was thrown out on a path or road. Sometimes it would be thrown on the roof to harden it because people spent time on their roofs. It would also help prevent leakage of the roof.

Others have suggested that the background of this saying is the use of salt blocks by Arab bakers to line the floor of their ovens for heating purposes. Under the intense heat these salt blocks would eventually crystallize and undergo a change in chemical composition, finally being
thrown out as unserviceable. Another possible reference to this trodden salt could be to a species of bituminous salt in Judea, which was spread in a part of the Temple, to prevent slipping in wet weather. This is also a possible reference that the Lord may have alluded to in this verse.

What we do know is if the salt loses its effectiveness, it is good for nothing, useless, and without value. The warning for salt is about its failure to maintain its saltiness. The warning takes up most of the text on salt. That puts great importance on the warning. The warning is for us as Christians. When a believer falls into sin and spiritually scars up his life, he risks losing his testimony completely with people who know what he has done. Christians may be forgiving, but those without Christ may not be as forgiving or tolerant.

This passage is not speaking about losing your salvation. A Christian cannot lose his salvation, but he can lose his savor or influence for Christ which can render him handicapped for Christian service. It puts limitations on what he can do and not do for the Lord because he has damaged his testimony with people. Christians cannot lose their salvation, just as salt cannot lose its inherent saltiness. Christians can lose their influence and effectiveness in the kingdom when sin and worldliness contaminate their lives, just as salt can become tasteless when contaminated by other minerals. Ruining your Christian testimony is a very serious matter. Unfortunately, many Christians just don’t get it and they could really care less.

It is interesting to note that sometimes the early Church made a very strange use of this text. In the synagogue, among the Jews, there was a custom that, if a Jew became an apostate and then returned to the faith, before he was received back into the synagogue, he must in penitence lie across the door of the synagogue and invite people to trample upon him as they entered. In certain places the Christian Church took over that custom, and a Christian who had been ejected by discipline from the Church because of wicked living, was compelled, before he was received back, to lie at the door of the Church and to invite people as they entered, "Trample upon me who am the salt which has lost its savor." They took the matter of losing one’s savor seriously.

You may have messed up your life big time. You may have done something that has seriously hurt your Christian testimony and feel that right now, you are good-for-nothing. Let me say that first of all there is forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ if you seek His forgiveness and repent. Christians will forgive you if you will go to them and seek their
forgiveness with a repentant, humble spirit. Yes, your behavior has hurt your testimony and limited some of the things you may do to serve the Lord. God, however, can still use you if you are willing.

You can begin to put your life back together by being faithful to the Lord, faithful in church, and by clearing your conscience with God and with men by seeking their forgiveness and restoring any damages you may have made. Spend time in God’s Word each day and develop your love for Him. In time, as people begin to gain confidence and trust in you, as they see consistency and faithfulness in your life, opportunities to serve the Lord may open up again. Your responsibility is to be faithful to Christ and leave the rest up to God’s will for your life. You can still be good for something if that desire is in your heart or you can take the foolish way out, give up, get out of church, and truly be good for nothing.

A certain speaker started off his seminar by holding up a $20 bill. "Who would like this $20 bill?" he asked. Hands started going up throughout the audience. He said, "I am going to give this $20 to one of you, but first let me do this." He proceeded to crumple up the bill. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" The same hands went up in the air. "Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" He dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, all crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Again, hands went into the air.

"You have all learned a valuable lesson," the speaker said. "No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. You still saw the value in the money even though it was dirty and wrinkled. It was still worth $20. Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value in God's eyes. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are priceless to him."

On the same line, we may know others that have dirtied and wrinkled their lives. If they are repentant, we can help them by seeing the value of their lives in the service of Christ. We can help them get back on their spiritual feet. As the Lord saw value in us when we were astray, may we see the value of others and their potential, even though they are not where they should be spiritually.

* Romans 5:8- But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
Chapter 10
This Little Light of Mine, I’m Gonna Let it Shine!

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

When I was a little lad, one of the first few songs I learned was “Jesus Loves Me” and “This Little Light of Mine.” The basis of the latter song comes from this portion of the Bible. Following the beatitude section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses the important principle of doing which follows being. It is important that we be what God wants us to be before we do what God wants us to do. Failure to do this can leave us drained and also destructive by an inconsistent Christian life. Some Christians, however, emphasize being so much they never get around to doing anything! Jesus addresses this issue by using salt and light in His message to illustrate the importance of our influence for Christ in this world, of making our life count for Christ. Jesus calls us not only to be salt but to be light. He said, “You are the light of the world.”

Salt is hidden in its work, light, on the other hand is obvious. Salt tends to work secretly, while light works openly. Salt works from within, light from without. The salty effect works primarily through our living, while light works primarily through what we teach and preach. The believer does not have inherent light; we have reflective light. As we behold the glory of the Lord, we reflect it. Therefore, we need to make
sure that nothing comes between us and the Lord’s light in our own life. When that happens, when our focus on Christ is blocked or distracted by other things or matters, we live in shadows, in darkness.

Christians are the light of the world. What does this statement entail? What is the full meaning behind these verses? We are going to direct our attention on three things: The Identity of the Believer, the Issue of Uselessness; the Imperative concerning our Influence.

I. THE IDENTITY OF THE BELIEVER 5:14a

Ye are the light of the world....

You are the light of the world. What does this mean? The phrase “light of the world” was well known among the Jews in Jesus days. The phrase “light of the world” was a title given only to eminent rabbis or teachers. As Christians, we are to be teaching and influencing the world for Christ instead of the world influencing us, which unfortunately, happens many times. If we are going to teach and tell others about the Lord, it is vital we know His Word!

The term “Light of the World” was also known by Jewish priests. In the Temple, there stood in the Holy Place a 6 to 7 foot gold menorah or lampstand with seven branches. It had a central shaft with three branches on each side. This lampstand gave light in the Holy Place. This central shaft was very significant because it was used to light the other candles and supplied the oil to the other lamps. This center shaft was called by the priests the Servant Candle or The Light of the World.

Jesus is the Light of the World. This central shaft reminds us that Christ is to be at the center of our lives. He served us by giving of Himself to us. He gives light to the rest of this world as the Servant Candle gave light to the other six branches on the menorah. Now that He is in Heaven, we are to be the light of the world. We are His ambassadors and are to serve Him and one another.

* Galatians 5:13- For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. * Romans 12:11- Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

* Philippians 2:14-15... Do all things without murmurings and disputings: [15] That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;
Paul says we are to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked world. We are to be right in the thick of things, shining for Christ, not hiding in a cave. This world is "crooked" which means "dishonest or unscrupulous" and it is "pervasive." Perverse means "perverted or depraved." It is formed from two Greek words. One word means "to turn" and the other word is added to intensify the meaning. This world has intensely turned from the truth and has become depraved and perverted.

As the years continue to pass, we see the escalation of depravity in all aspects of society. We see the animosity toward the name of Christ at Christmas time. Last week (April, 2006) ABC News came out with a story that prayer does not work and is a waste of time. Just today in the news, the media said that Jesus told Judas to betray Him. The betrayal was supposed to be all arranged. This is nuts and has no reliable basis of fact at all.

**Christ and the Bible are under attack like never before by a secular media and society.** *The Da Vinci Code*, a clever book that has mixed facts with fiction, is claiming that Jesus did not die, but got married to Mary Magdalene and they had a child. Dan Brown claims this is historical fact. Not so! This is totally false and unscriptural. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus was married.

The book states that Mary Magdalene wanted to restore to the church the idea of the sacred feminine. Dan Brown, the author, states that Mary was not only the wife of Jesus, but the founder of the church. The basis of all these claims comes from what is called Gnostic gospels written in the second and third century.

Gnosticism was a problem in New Testament times. Gnosticism claimed to have a secret knowledge that was needed to know the truth about God. It denied the deity of Christ and His role in redeeming mankind from sin. Thank God, knowing Christ and how to go to Heaven are not secrets for the elite. A child can know and understand these truths.

*The Da Vinci Code* regards these Gnostic gospels as the lost books of the Bible, but this is not the case because they do not meet the criteria for Scripture which included these standards.
1. They were not written by an apostle or anyone who had direct contact with one.
2. They do not have wide acceptance as being consistent with the teachings of Christ and the apostles.
3. They do not bear the mark and effect of spiritual power and truth. They do not measure up to the New Testament standard of reliable documents. These books contradict Bible teaching.

These Gnostic books do not meet Aristotle’s criteria for recognizing the trustworthiness of an ancient document. He listed three guidelines which have stood the test of time and are used today in studying Bible manuscripts.

1. Was the person an eyewitness to the event he recorded?
2. How many copies of the record do we have and how close are they to the event described?
3. Are there other sources outside the document that corroborate the document’s claims?

The fact that The Da Vinci Code casts doubt and denies the deity of Christ should be a red flag to all. The Bible warns us of such propaganda.

* 2 Peter 1:16- For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. The words “cunningly devised” can be translated “artfully framed by human cleverness.”

* 1 Timothy 4:1- Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

* 1 John 4:1-4 ... Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. [2] Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: [3] And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. [4] Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

The attacks, lies, and attempts to undermine Christ and the Bible will only continue to get worse as the return of Christ approaches. Until He comes, we are to shine as lights. Christians are the light of the world. When we begin to look at the traits of light and its effect, we learn what it is to be the light of the world.
1. Light DISPELS DARKNESS

* Matthew 5:16- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Why is it important that we be lights. The answer is because the world is in darkness. The physical earth is shrouded with dark clouds, suspended in dark space. The real darkness of the world is a spiritual darkness that dominates the entire world system, and it is terrible. The real horror is that the inhabitants of the earth love and choose to be in the dark.

* John 3:19- And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Darkness by itself is one thing, but intentional darkness is far worse. To be subject to the darkness of the night before the dawn is one thing, but it is quite another thing to deliberately live in caves and refuse to come to the light. Why this preference for darkness? John tells us that the world loves darkness because its deeds are evil. Darkness is the absence of light and darkness alone cannot dispel the light, but the smallest light can dispel the greatest darkness. Therefore, let your light shine through a clean life before the Lord and before the world in which you live. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you need to understand that you are walking in spiritual darkness.

* Ephesians 5:8- For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light

The world's longest night took place in A.D. 1752. This was the time of the changeover from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. People went to bed on September 2 and when they woke up the next morning, it was September 14. That was truly a long night, but far longer was the night of sin in which we all lived until Jesus Christ saved us.

A General Electric ad raises the question: "What was Thomas Edison's biggest blunder?" The ad reveals that Edison opposed the theory of alternating current developed by Charles Steinmetz. The ad concludes by stating that Steinmetz was almost refused admission at Ellis Island as an unfit immigrant. One of the men most responsible for the electrification of America was almost turned away at its gate. That would indeed have been a tragedy. A greater tragedy, however, takes place all the time. People turn Christ away on the doorstep of their lives because they do not want Him to reign over their lives.
2. Light DELIGHTS others

Light cheers, gives warmth and energy. Light is used in Alaska to treat or prevent depression from days of total darkness. It called “cabin fever.” We are to encourage and cheer others as lights in the world.

A number of years ago, in a mental institution just outside Boston, Mass., a young girl known as "Little Annie" was locked in the dungeon. This institution was one of the more enlightened ones for the treatment of the mentally disturbed. However, the doctors felt that a dungeon was the only place for those who were "hopelessly" insane. In Little Annie's case, they saw no hope for her, so she was confined to a living death in that small cage which received little light and even less hope.

About that time, an elderly nurse in the institution was nearing retirement. She felt there was hope for all of God's creatures, so she started taking her lunch into the dungeon and eating outside Little Annie's cage. She felt perhaps she could communicate some love and hope to the little girl. In many ways, Little Annie was like an animal. On occasions, she would violently attack the person who came into her cage. At other times, she would completely ignore them. When the elderly nurse started visiting her, Little Annie gave no indication that she was even aware of her presence.

One day, the elderly nurse brought some brownies to the dungeon and left them outside the cage. Little Annie gave no hint she knew they were there, but when the nurse returned the next day, the brownies were gone. From that time on, the nurse would bring brownies when she made her Thursday visit. Soon, the doctors in the institution noticed a change was taking place. After a period of time, they decided to move Little Annie upstairs. Finally, the day came when this "hopeless case" was told she could return home, but Little Annie did not wish to leave. The place had meant so much to her, she felt she could make a contribution if she stayed and worked with the other patients. She felt she could encourage and give hope to others. The elderly nurse had seen and brought out so much in her life that Little Annie felt she could see and help develop something in others.

Many years later, Queen Victoria of England, while pinning England's highest award on a foreigner, asked Helen Keller, "How do you account for your remarkable accomplishments in life? How do you explain the fact that even though you were both blind and deaf, you were able to accomplish so much?" Without a moment's hesitation, Helen Keller said that had it not been for Anne Sullivan (Little Annie), the
hopeless girl that was healed and stayed to help others, the name of Helen Keller would have remained unknown.

It's not too well known, but Helen Keller was a normal, healthy baby before some mysterious disease left her almost helpless and hopeless. Anne Sullivan saw Helen Keller as one of God's very special people, treated her as she saw her, loved her, disciplined her, played, prayed, pushed and worked with her until the flickering candle that was her life became a beacon that helped light the pathways and lighten the burdens of people all over the world. Yes, Helen Keller influenced millions after her own life was touched by "Little Annie," who in turn was loved, and encouraged by an elderly, encouraging nurse. The love and encouragement we give to others has a domino effect. Like light, do you give warmth and cheer to others?

*Hebrews 3:13 - But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

3. Light DELIVERS messages

Messages are transmitted on fiber optic cables now at a speed of 186,000 miles per second. A.T. & T introduced the first processor that transmits information with light using laser beams with an inch wide lense. All the information in the world's phone wires can be put on one lense. As light delivers messages, we too, are to deliver the message of the Gospel.

* Romans 1:16- For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

It is interesting to note that the Mount of Olives was called the Mountain of Light. Fires were lit on top of the mountain by Jewish authorities in early times to signal Jews throughout the world, through a fire signal network on mountain tops, to show the commencement of festivals in worshiping the Lord. The Mount of Olives was called the Mountain of Light for several reasons.

1. First, because it was the first to catch the rays of light of the sun each day.
2. Secondly, the lamps of the Temple lit up the whole western side of the Mount of Olives.
3. Thirdly, this was the mountain where the great fire was lit by the priests for burning the red heifer sacrifice.
4. Fourth, the olive trees provided oil for lamps in the Temple.
Chapter 10...This Little Light of Mine....5:14-16

It was from the Mount of Olives, the Mountain of Light, that Jesus commanded us to be lights in spreading the Word of God. What He said is found in Matthew 28.

* Matthew 28:19-20... Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

4. Light DEVELOPS health, maturity, and strength

In 1903, Niels Finsen received a Nobel prize for his discovery that skin lesions of tuberculosis often were resolved after exposure to ultraviolet light, and that light therapy is central to managing several common disorders including psoriasis, acne, and some forms of jaundice in newborns.

Long before Finsen, however, the ancient Egyptians had recognized that a common plant had medicinal properties that were triggered by light. The plant Ammi majus, is a weed that grows on the banks of the Nile. The Egyptian doctors noted that soon after eating the plant, people became prone to sunburn. They exploited this property to treat the skin disorder vitiligo, in which the skin appears blotchy because some areas lose their pigmentation. This Egyptian plant has been used today to make a drug 8-MOP, to successfully treat a dangerous type of cancer known as CTCL. Using ultraviolet light with this drug will help treat this cancer. Light develops good health. We are to develop maturity and spiritual health in others.

* 1 Peter 2:2- As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

* Ephesians 4:11-12... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; [12] For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

* Luke 22:32- But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

5. Light DEVELOPS fruit

* John 15:8,16- Herein is my Father glorified, that ye hear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my
name, he may give it you. What fruit are we to bear in our lives? What is the meaning of “fruit?”

1. Fruit refers to **attitudes** and character traits in the believer’s life.
   * Galatians 5:22,23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

2. Fruit refers to **actions** or godly living.
   * Romans 6:22 - But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

3. Fruit refers to **adoration** for God and praise.
   * Hebrews 13:15 - By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

4. Fruit refers to the **addition** of converts.
   * Philippians 4:16,17 - For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

6. Light **DISPLAYS** warnings

A lighthouse, ocean buoys, power towers, radio towers, police or emergency vehicles, road signs, etc., all use lights to caution and warn of hazards. A light is often the warning which tells us to halt when there is danger ahead. It is sometimes the Christian’s duty to bring to his fellow men the necessary warning. That is often difficult, and it is often hard to do it in a way which will not do more harm than good; but one of the most poignant tragedies in life is for someone, especially a young person, to come and say to us, "I would never have been in the situation in which I now find myself, if you had only spoken in time."

It was said of Florence Alishorn, the famous teacher and principal, that if she ever had occasion to rebuke her students, she did it "with her arm round about them." If our warnings are given, not in anger, not in irritation, not in criticism, not in condemnation, not in a desire to hurt, but in love, they will be effective. We are to be warning others about Hell and the consequences of sin.

* Ezekiel 3:18 - When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

* Colossians 1:27-28 - To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in
you, the hope of glory: [28] Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Sometimes our warnings may go unheeded, but we are still to keep on warning others. When the unsinkable Titanic sank, warning after warning had been sent to tell them they were speeding into an ice-field, but the messages were ignored. In fact, when a nearby ship sent an urgent warning, the Titanic was talking to Cape Race about the time that chauffeurs were to meet the arriving passengers at the dock, and what menus were to be ready. Preoccupied with trivia, the Titanic responded to the warning: "Shut up. I am talking to Cape Race. You are jamming my signals." If someone is warning you about sin's consequences or Hell, don't be angry with them. They are trying to help you.

7. Light is DILIGENT and DOES its DUTY

Light is unselfish, shining for the benefit of others. It gives and gives until it is used up. That is its duty. Light is diligent too, penetrating and seeking out the darkness. It constantly assaults the surface of the earth and will penetrate the slightest crack. The darkest place is not safe from it if the tiniest opening appears. We are to be diligent as Christians, doing our duty for Christ, not getting sidetracked, and not quitting. We have a duty to Christ, to live for Him, and a duty to reach others for the Lord. Paul was an outstanding Christian because he died to self to do what God wanted him to do. He did his duty.

* Galatians 2:20- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.
* Galatians 5:13b- ... With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

The sign in the window read: "Boy Wanted." Young John Simmons, though he was lazy, saw his opportunity to get a job and applied. He was quickly hired by elderly Mr. Peters. The pace was leisurely so he enjoyed the job. Toward the middle of the afternoon however, he was sent up to the attic, a dingy place full of cobwebs and infested with mice. Mr. Peter's said to John, "You will find a long, deep box there. Please sort out the contents and see what should be saved."

John was disappointed. It was a large container, and there seemed to be nothing in it but a bunch of old junk. After a few minutes he went back to the ground floor. Asked by the proprietor if he had completed his
work, he replied, "No, sir, it was dark and cold up there and I didn't think it was worth doing." At closing time he was paid and told not to return.

The next morning the old sign "Boy Wanted" appeared in the window again. Crawford Hill was the next to be employed. When he was asked to tidy up the same box, however, he did his duty spending hours separating the usable nails and screws from the things to be discarded. Suddenly he raced down the stairs all excited. He shouted with delight, "Mr. Peters, at the very bottom of the box I found this!" Then Crawford held up to his boss a twenty-dollar bill.

At last, the store owner had discovered a conscientious, responsible boy to whom he could entrust his business when he retired. Years later Mr. Peters said, "This young man, Crawford, who is now my successor, found his fortune in a junk box!" Then, correcting himself, he added, "No, Crawford actually found it in his mother's Bible because he heeded the verse she made him memorize: 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much!'" Crawford did his duty and was faithful in doing the little things which later led to greater things in his life.

8. Light is DESCENT and pure

Light is pure, not contaminated by pollution or chemicals. It remains pure. Because light is pure, it is a symbol of God and to the Jews, a symbol of the Messiah. It is also a symbol of what a Christian is supposed to be.

*I Timothy 4:12- Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

*I Timothy 5:22- Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

*Philippians 2:15- That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

The word "blameless" comes from the word amemptos. This word expresses what the Christian is to the world. It means that his life is of such purity, that no one can find any fault in it. This person is without fault before others and has a clear conscience with men and with God. No one can point a finger at this person and say, "You wronged me and have not made it right." This was the way Daniel lived in Daniel 6.

*D Daniel 6:4- Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none
occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

God also wants us to be "harmless." This word comes from the Greek word *akeratios*. It deals with the inward condition of the believer and expresses what the Christian is *in himself*. It means "unmixed and unadulterated." It was used of wine or milk not mixed with water or of metal that had no alloys in it. Our thoughts and motives are to be unmixed with selfishness, insincerity, bitterness, and hatred. We are to keep our hearts clean and pure. We are not to have mixed motives in what we do and are not to be conniving to get our own way. Our character is to be as pure as snow. This will help us to live straight in a crooked world.

Christians are to be blameless, harmless, the sons of God, and "without rebuke." This phrase is formed from the Greek word *amometos*. This word describes what the believer is *before God*. It means "to be above reproach, without blemish or defect." It was used in connection with sacrifices that were fit to be offered on the altar of God. Our lives must be such that they can be offered like unblemished sacrifices to the Lord. Paul spoke about offering your body as a living sacrifice.

* Romans 12:1,2- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

A soap manufacturer and a pastor were walking together down a street in a large city. The soap manufacturer casually said, "The gospel you preach hasn't done much good, has it? Just observe what is going on around us. There is still a lot of wickedness in the world, and a lot of wicked people, too!" The pastor made no reply until they passed a dirty little child making mud pies in the gutter. Seizing the opportunity, the pastor said, "I see that soap hasn't done much good in the world, for there is much dirt, and many dirty people around." The soap manufacturer replied, "Oh, well, soap is only useful when it is applied." And the pastor said, "Exactly, so it is with the gospel." Beloved, if we are going to be pure, we need to put into practice the truths of God's Word. We need to apply it to our lives.
9. Light DIRECTS and guide others

Light shows what is on the path. It serves as a beacon for getting our bearings. Sailors navigated by the light of the stars and sun. In the Old Testament, God’s presence was manifested in the Shekinah glory. The fiery and cloudy pillar in the wilderness pointed the way, guided, protected God’s people from the Egyptians, and provided shade during the day and warmth at night in the desert. As Christians, we are to direct and guide others as we get direction from the Lord in His Word.

* Psalm 119:105- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
* Psalm 119:130- The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.
* 2 Timothy 2:2- And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

As the lights of the world, we must make the way clear to others. Christians must of necessity be a good example to others, but many times they are not. One of the things which our communities need more than anything else are individuals who are prepared to be good examples. Suppose, for example, there is a crowd of people, and it is suggested that some questionable thing should be done. Unless someone makes his protest, the thing will usually be done. If just one person rises up, however, and says, "I will not be a party to that," another and another and another will rise to say, “I don’t want to have any part in that either.” Had someone not taken a stand, they would have remained silent and gone with the flow of the crowd.

There are many Christians who have not the moral strength and courage to take a stand by themselves, but if someone else takes a stand, they will follow. If they have someone strong enough to lean on, they will do that which is right. It is the Christian's duty to take the stand which the weaker brother will support, to give the lead which those with less courage will follow. The world needs its guiding lights. There are people waiting and longing for a leader to take a stand for that which is right and to do the thing which they do not dare by themselves.

When we are shining lights, we will never know the impact of our lives until we stand before the Lord one day. Guiding and touching just one life can impact multitudes. For example, a Sunday School teacher, a Mr. Kimball, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879,
he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Fredrick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F. B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach. During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ.

We may not agree with some of the things these men did or believed, but we can conclude that they all preached the Gospel and many people have been saved because of their ministries. Only eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that one Sunday School teacher, Mr. Kimball, who was a guiding, shining light that pointed people to Christ. We have seen the identity of the believer, now we will look at the issue of uselessness.

II. THE ISSUE OF USELESSNESS 5:14b-15

... A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. [15] Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Jesus addresses the issue of uselessness here by using a city and a candle or lamp. The reference to the "city on a hill" is fairly obvious. Often built of white limestone, ancient towns gleamed in the sun and could not easily be hidden. At night the inhabitants' oil lamps would shed some glow over the surrounding area.

As such cities could not be hidden, so also it is unthinkable to light a lamp and hide it under a bushel or basket. Its purpose would be unfulfilled. A lamp is put on a lamp stand to illuminate the room or path and meant to be seen. The houses in Palestine were very dark with only one little circular window, perhaps not more than eighteen inches across.

The lamp was like a sauce-boat tiled with oil with the wick floating in it. It was not so easy to rekindle a lamp in the days before matches existed. Normally the lamp stood on the lamp stand which would be no more than a roughly shaped branch of wood. When people went out, for safety's sake, they took the lamp from its stand, and put it under an earthen bushel measure, so that it might burn without risk until they came back and not blow out. The primary duty of the light of the lamp,
however, was to be seen.

If you are a Christian, you are not to be a secret agent believer and working under cover. Your life is to radiate the righteousness and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Burying your testimony and decision of faith in Christ is like burying treasure. It becomes good for nothing. God wants you to brighten the corner where you are. He wants you to be like a Ford Mustang with two coats of wax. He wants you to shine! The Lord desires that you to be an example and beacon, pointing people to the Lord, so get over your shyness and be a light to your family, friends, foes, the faculty at school, fellow workers, and the foreman at work. Christianity is something which is meant to be seen. As someone has well said, "There can be no such thing as secret discipleship, for either the secrecy destroys the discipleship, or the discipleship destroys the secrecy."

A man's Christianity should be perfectly visible to all men. The visibility of Christ in our life should extend far beyond the church. We are to be shining lights every day, not just on Sunday. We are to be lights wherever we go. Our treatment of people in the community should show we are Christians. The manner in which we conduct our business, pay our bills, behave at school, do our jobs, treat our family, lead our employees, should show that we are Christians. We are not lights of the church, we are lights of the world. Is your light visible?

In the early days, a product known as Vaseline, had a wide range of uses. Fishermen globbed it on their hooks to lure trout. Stage actresses put it down their cheeks to simulate tears. Since it did not freeze, Robert Perry took this jelly with him to the North Pole to protect his skin from chapping and his mechanical equipment from rusting. Since it does not turn rancid in heat, the natives in the Amazon cooked with Vaseline, ate it as a spread on their bread, and exchanged it for money. Baseball players put it on their gloves to soften them and mechanics put it on the car batteries and equipment to prevent corrosion and rust.

The jelly was discovered by a young Brooklyn chemist, Robert Chesebrough who went to Pennsylvania for the purpose of entering the petroleum business. His curiosity was aroused by a pasty paraffin-like residue that stuck to the drilling rods and gummed them up. The field workers discovered one good purpose for this stuff. If they rubbed it on a wound or burn, it would accelerate the healing.

When Robert returned to New York, he did not have an oil
partnership. Instead, he returned with this mysterious oil waste-product. He experimented and purified the paste which turned out to be a clear, smooth substance known as petroleum jelly. He became his own guinea pig, inflicting wounds and burns upon his body, applying the jelly, which quickly healed the wounds. The sterling purpose of the jelly for medicinal purposes was discovered and marketed in 1870, as Vaseline Petroleum Jelly. Vaseline comes from the German word wasser (water) and elation (olive oil). This waste product became valuable when its true purpose was discovered and implemented. When we fulfill our purpose as Christians in being lights, we become valuable, effective, and useful in serving the Lord.

When we fail to really shine forth for Christ, the purpose of our lives goes unfulfilled. We become ineffective in reaching others. Inconsistent living and unconfessed sin in the life of the believer will become a basket-like covering which hides the light of God. Why would a Christian want to conceal the fact that he is a Christian in the first place? There are, in fact, a number of reasons why a Christian may not want others to know he is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

* Six Reason Why Christians Don’t Shine for Christ

1. Prosperity-

* Matthew 5:15- Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

The bushel here refers to the grain-measure which is found in every house. The bushel is a symbol of money or business. We can get so taken up with materialism that we cease to shine spiritually. We think that things can satisfy us and will give us prestige with others. Such thinking is vanity.

A husband and wife were attending a county fair where, for five dollars per person, a man was giving rides on an old biplane. The couple wanted to go up in the plane, but they thought the price was too steep. Consequently, they tried to negotiate a lower price. "We'll pay you five dollars for both of us," they said to the pilot. "After all, we'll both have to squeeze into that tiny cockpit that was built for only one person."

The pilot refused to lower his price, but he made a counter-offer. He said to the couple, "Pay me the full price of ten dollars and I'll take you up. And if you don't say one word during the flight, I'll give you all your money back." The couple agreed and got into the plane. Up they went and
the pilot proceeded to perform every trick he knew, looping and whirling and flying upside down and lots more. Finally, when the plane had landed, the pilot said to the husband, "Congratulations! Here's your ten dollars. You didn't say a single word." To which the man replied, "Nope, but I almost did when my wife fell out." The things we will do to save a buck! Beloved, Paul warned us of the problems that accompany wealth.

* 1 Timothy 6:9- But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

2. Pleasure-Seeking-

* Mark 4:21- And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

The bed in this verse is a piece of furniture such as a couch for reclining or laying down. This word speaks of a substantial piece of furniture in contrast to that which speaks of a pallet or roll as a bed. Therefore, it is something that could indeed hide a lamp from shining its light. The bed speaks of leisure.

Beloved, we can become so involved in pleasure-seeking that we cease to shine. Many Christians do not want to be inconvenienced by sacrifices, interested in spiritual matters, or involved in serving the Lord because they want the freedom to pursue their pleasures. Becoming lazy and slothful will put out our light and make us good for nothing. Victories for the souls of men are not won on the playground, but on the battlefield of life.

3. Perverse Behavior

* Luke 11:33- No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

The word translated "a secret place" in the KJV is only found here in the New Testament, and it means "a crypt, a vault, a cellar." This is a cellar or vault which no one can see. The secret place speaks of low, perverse behavior morally and which will put out your light quickly. Sinful living dims our effectiveness for Christ because we become a stumbling block to others.

* Romans 14:13- Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

In Jules Verne's novel The Mysterious Island, he tells of five men
who escape a Civil War prison camp by hijacking a hot air balloon. As they rise into the air, they realize the wind is carrying them over the ocean. Watching their homeland disappear on the horizon, they wonder how much longer the balloon can stay aloft. As the hours pass and the surface of the ocean draws closer, the men decide they must cast overboard some of the weight, for they had no way to heat the air in the balloon. Shoes, overcoats, and weapons are reluctantly discarded, and the uncomfortable aviators feel their balloon rise, but only temporarily. Soon they find themselves dangerously close to the waves again, so they toss their food. Better to be high and hungry than drown on a full belly!

Unfortunately, this, too, is only a temporary solution, and the craft again threatens to lower the men into the sea. One man has an idea. They can tie the ropes that hold the passenger-basket and sit on those ropes. Then they can cut away the basket beneath them. As they sever the very thing they had been standing on, it drops into the ocean, and the balloon rises. Not a minute too soon, they spot land.

Eager to stand on the ground again, the five jump into the water and swim to the island. They live, spared because they were able to discern the difference between what really was needed and what was not. The "necessities" they once thought they couldn't live without were the very weights that almost cost them their lives. The writer to the Hebrews said we are to lay aside every weight and the sin that easily hinders and entangles our lives. Are you clinging to some sin or something that is dimming your light for Christ? Remove the stumbling block from your life.

4. Position or Power

There are positions in the world which you will not be able to obtain or keep if you live faithfully for Jesus Christ. Liberal organizations are not in the habit of hiring right-wing, conservative workers, and if they do, they will not permit them to voice their conservative view points. If the person shows loyalty to a conservative position, or stands against that which is unjust, dishonest, or wrong, he may lose his job. So it is with dedicated, godly Christians.

The world has animosity toward Christians. With some employers, if you live your Christian faith, you will either not be hired for the job or you can lose your job. I know of Christians who have faced this dilemma. In many Muslim and Communist countries, Christians have lost their jobs, possessions, freedom, and sometimes their lives just because they are Christians.
* John 16:33- These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

5. Persecution and Harassment

One of the most common reasons why Christians do not want to let their light shine is when persecution is present. Fear grips the believer when there is opposition. Some fear rejection, humiliation, or pressure from scoffers which causes many Christians to just “shut up.” When the enemies of God get in power and begin to hunt down and harass the saints, many of them try to conceal their identity in order to protect themselves from persecution and opposition. God urges us to stand and shine for Him no matter what. In our stand for Christ, we are to use wisdom, being wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

* Matthew 10:33- But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

6. Popularity with the World

The believer who wants to be popular with the world is not anxious for others to know that he is a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be popular with the world, one must be like the world. If a person is living his Christian life conspicuously, he is more likely to be jeered, mocked, ostracized, and persecuted by the lost. Letting others know you are a Christian may terminate some friendships that you have because unbelievers may not be comfortable around you or angry with your stand for what is right. Your life may also be a source of conviction.

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

* John 16:33- These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

* 1 Corinthians 4:13-Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

Beloved, God does not want us to waste away our lives and be useless. It is His desire for us that we be radiant shining lights for Christ. If you want to be a useful Christian and shine for Christ, then there are several things you can do.

1. Be in LINE with love and loyalty to Christ.
2. PINE for purity and the power of God in your heart and life.
3. Make a BEELINE toward belief in God and blessing others.
4. Make your GUIDELINE God's Word.
5. SIDELINE selfishness, stubbornness, and sinful ways in your life.
6. REFINE wrong attitudes and decisions, learning from your mistakes.

III. THE IMPERATIVE CONCERNING OUR INFLUENCE  5:16

\textit{Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.}

Jesus answers the question of why we should shine before men. God wants them to see our good works and glorify God the Father. The Sermon on the Mount is \textit{not} anthropocentric or man-centered. It is theocentric which means it is God-centered. Does this verse say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify you and pat you on the back, and give you a gold medal and a loving cup?" No! This verse says that you and I are to let our light so shine in this world that we may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

\textbf{Men are to see our good deeds.} In Greek there are two words for "good." There is the word \textit{agathos} which simply defines a thing as good in quality. There is also the word \textit{kalos} which means that a thing is not only good, but that it is also winsome, beautiful, and attractive. The word which is used here is \textit{kalos}. The good deeds of the Christian must be not only good; they must be also attractive. There must be a certain winsomeness in Christian goodness. Of course, He is not recommending self-conscious, staged works. Yet, He does suggest that we should let them be beautiful and attractive so that Christ is glorified!

The tragedy of so much so-called goodness today is that in it there is an element of hardness, pride, and coldness in the goodness of some. There is a goodness which attracts and a goodness which repels when the performer seeks self-glory and attention. They have a "\textit{Look at me!}" attitude. The Pharisees were examples of this kind of thinking.

* \textit{Matthew 23:5 - But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,}

At a conference at which D. L. Moody was present, there were also present some young people who took their Christian faith very seriously. One night they held an all night prayer meeting. As they were leaving it in the morning they met Moody, and he asked them what they had been doing. They told him and then they continued by saying, "Mr. Moody, see how our faces shine." Moody answered very gently, "Moses wist not that
his face shone." That goodness which is conscious, which draws attention to itself, is not Christ-honoring goodness.

On the other hand, there is a charm in true Christian goodness which makes it a lovely thing. Our good deeds ought to draw attention, not to ourselves, but to God. One of the old historians wrote of Henry the Fifth after the Battle of Agincourt: "Neither would he suffer any ditties to be made and sung by the minstrels of his glorious victory, for that he would wholly have the praise and thanks altogether given to God." The Christian never thinks of what he has done, but of what God has enabled him to do. He never seeks to draw the eyes of men to himself, but always to direct them to God. If you are a pastor, do you direct the attention of your people to yourself or to the Lord Jesus Christ?

We are to shine and do good works to glorify God. The primary purpose of all our conduct is to glorify God. All other purposes are secondary. Paul reminds us of this truth.

* 1 Corinthians 10:31 - Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

We must shine to exalt God. The world dishonors God. The world needs a light that puts honor upon God. Christians are that light. Holy conduct will put the spotlight of honor upon God. Our good works are to magnify God’s grace and power. This is the supreme calling of life: glorifying God.

Everything we do is to cause others to give praise to the God who is the source of all that is good. The way we live should lead those around us to honor and glorify Him. On the other hand, when what we do causes people to be attracted to us rather than to God, to see our human character rather than His divine character, we can be sure that what they see is not His light. We are not shining for Him. How then do we really glorify God? What are we to do to accomplish this?

The word for “glorify” in the Greek language is doxazo and it means “to praise, magnify, draw attention to; to cause dignity and worth for a person or thing to be acknowledged; to honor.” This sums up the purpose of the Christian life. In what way is God glorified in our lives? The Bible has the answers to these questions. Let’s pull over and park for a minute and do a mini-study on How Do We Glorify God?
* How Do We Glorify God?
1. By our CONTRIBUTION in Service and COMPASSION for Others

The story is told of a nine-year-old boy named Joshua who decided to skip church and go for a long walk. His mother frequently told him that if he skipped church, he would miss a chance to see Jesus. Joshua had been going to church his whole life and had never seen Jesus there before, so he didn’t think he’d be missing much. Besides, his church was an old, small, run-down building, just a little too confining for his desire to run and play.

Joshua’s walk took him across the railroad tracks in town for the first time in his life. He noticed that the houses on the other side of the tracks were much bigger and much nicer than any in the poor neighborhood where he lived. A few blocks later Joshua found himself in front of the biggest, most beautiful church he had ever seen. The steeple alone seemed as tall as a mountain. As he got closer, the big church bells stopped ringing and the last people filed in from the parking lot. They all had nice cars and wore nice clothes. He didn’t see any people from his side of the tracks going to this church. “This must be the church where Jesus goes,” Joshua told himself. “It’s so big and nice.”

As he walked closer, he could hear the music coming from inside. He remembered hearing his mother talk about how angels sing to Jesus in Heaven. “Wow!” said Joshua as he listened to the choir. “I’ll bet those are angels singing to Jesus!” He walked up the steps, through the big front doors, and into the spacious lobby. He continued through another set of doors and entered the sanctuary. It was the biggest room he had ever seen. “This must be where Jesus is!” Joshua whispered to himself. He noticed an empty seat a few rows from the back, so he sat down to scan the crowd, so he could find Jesus.

The choir stopped singing and a large man in a black suit tapped Joshua on the shoulder. The man leaned down and asked Joshua if he could speak with him outside. In the lobby, the man asked, “Son, where do you live?” Joshua answered, “Well, if you go down the hill, take a left at the corner, cross the railroad tracks, and head down that street a few more blocks, that’s where I live.” “And where are your parents?” the man asked. “They’re probably at church right now,” Joshua replied. “Well, son, don’t you think it would be better for you to go to your parents’ church today?” “But I saw this church, and I knew Jesus was here,” Joshua said. “So I came to see him!” “Well, son, I think it would
be best if you were to run along home and go see Jesus in your own church in your own neighborhood,” the man said. “You really can’t stay here.”

Realizing what the man was trying to do, Joshua got upset. “You just don’t want me to see Jesus!” he yelled as he turned and ran out the big doors leading to the street. Sobbing as he returned home, Joshua shouted, “God, it isn’t fair! All I wanted to do was see Jesus, and they wouldn’t let me in!” Joshua shuffled along, staring at the sidewalk through his tears. Suddenly he heard footsteps behind him and felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned around, wiped his eyes, and stared in amazement. It was Jesus! The Lord smiled at Joshua, gave him a big hug, and said, “Don’t be too upset, my son. They wouldn’t let me in there either.” May that never be said about our churches. Amen!

* Matthew 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
* 1 Peter 4:11 - If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. The word “minister” is diakoneo and it means “to be a servant to others.” This is what we are to be and to do.

2. **By COMMENDING & CHEERING the Lord**

* Psalm 34:3 - O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. Exalt means “to lift up, talk about, or brag about” the Lord. Don’t be afraid or ashamed to brag about what Christ has done for you and others.
* Psalm 50:23- Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

3. **By our CONSISTENCY in Spiritual Growth and Fruitfulness.**

* John 15:8 - Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Christ is glorified when we are controlled by the Holy Spirit and win others to Christ.

4. **By our total CONSECRATION TO CHRIST.**

* 1 Corinthians 6:20- For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. When we give the Lord our all, we demonstrate His worth to us.

5. **By our CONCERN for Others.**

At a fund-raising dinner for a school that serves learning disabled children, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would
never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question. "When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?"

The audience was stilled by the question. The father continued. "I believe, that when a child, like Shay, comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes, in the way other people treat that child." Then the father told the following story: Shay and his father had walked past a park where some boys that Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, "Do you think they'll let me play?" Shay's father knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but the father also understood that if his son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of longing.

Shay's father approached one of the boys on the field and asked if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and, getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning." In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the outfield. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as his father waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat. At this juncture, the father wondered if they would let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible because Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball.

However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least be able to make contact. The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft
grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game.

Instead, the pitcher took the ball, turned, and threw the ball on a high arc to right field, far beyond the reach of the first baseman. Everyone started yelling, "Shay, run to first! Run to first!" Never in his life had Shay ever made it to first base. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed, shocked, and startled. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, Shay. Run to second!"

By the time Shay rounded first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions and intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman's head. Shay ran toward second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases toward home. Shay reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base, and shouted, "Run to third!"

As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams were screaming, "Shay, run home!" Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the "grand slam" and won the game for his team. "That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love, encouragement, and humanity into this world to a struggling, yet bright-eyed, little boy. Want to glorify God? Love people!

*John 13:35 - By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
*John 15:9 - As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

6. **By our CONCORD or Unity with One Another.**

*Romans 15:6* - That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Agreement attracts attention.

7. **By our CARES, CONCERNS, or Suffering.**

*I Peter 4:14* - If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

A beekeeper once told F.B. Meyer how some of the young bees are nurtured to ensure their healthy development. The queen lays each egg in a six-sided cell which is filled with enough pollen and honey to feed upon until it reaches a certain stage of maturity. The top is then sealed with a capsule of wax. When the occupant has exhausted its supply of nourishment, the time has come for the tiny creature to be released from
its confinement, but what wrestling and straining it endures to get through that wax seal. The opening is so narrow that in the agony of the exit, the bee rubs off the membrane that encases its wings. Thus, when it finally does emerge, it is able to fly!

The man telling F.B. Meyer the story said that one time a moth got into the hive and devoured the wax capsules. As a result, the young bees crawled out without any effort or trouble, but they couldn't fly. Soon the mature insects, seeing the pitiful, unproductive state of new arrivals, instinctively proceeded to sting them to death.

Dr. Meyer drew from this information a spiritual application. He asks, "Are you congratulating yourself on having an easy time in life with no hardships or difficulties to bear? Then beware, lest you lose your 'wing power' like the handicapped bees, and perish miserably in the dust of defeat." Faith, peace, confidence, and joy in suffering attract attention and develop maturity and character. People ask, "How do you do this? How do you keep your sanity? How can you have peace in your trial?"

This gives us an opportunity to tell others about the Lord and point people to Him. Our suffering has helped us to soar.

* 1 Peter 4:16- Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

8. By our CONFESSION of Sin

* Joshua 7:19 - And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

God is glorified because His power is working to change the sinner and bring him to repentance. Sinners tend to be proud. When they accept responsibility for their actions, humble themselves, and confess their wrongs, it demonstrates that the Lord is working in their lives and He is truly glorified.

9. By our COMPREHENSIVE CONDUCT

In 1989, Michael Chang won the French Open Tennis Tournament, becoming the first American in 34 years to do so. His mother, Betty, says Michael plays tennis "to spread the Word," and he surely did that in the last week of the tournament, crediting his every victory to "the Lord Jesus Christ." After miraculously outlasting Lendl, he said, "I prayed, and my cramps went away. Maybe there are more important things to pray for, but everything that happens in my life is because of Him. I get my strength from Him. He's in control. He keeps me going."

Following the final, Stefan Edberg of Sweden, who was defeated by
Michael, dismissed any higher authority holding sway over the result, but Chang again acknowledged the Lord, whose name the crowd greeted with an abundance of hefty boos and whistles. "I know every time I bring Jesus up, everybody nods and gets sick of it," he said. "But it's the truth. He gets all the credit."

* 1 Corinthians 10:31 - Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

10. By our CONFIDENCE in God’s Word  
* Romans 4:20- He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Our confidence and conviction in God’s Word will inspire confidence in the lives of other people to trust the Lord and His promises.

12. By our CONTENTMENT and Gratefulness.  
* Psalm 69:30 - I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

An attitude of gratitude for the Lord shows altitude in our spiritual height, servitude to the Savior, plenitude in our praise, and a multitude of maturity.

13. By the CESSATION or Death of our Life.  
* John 21:19- This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Jesus was speaking to Peter about his death and how Peter’s death would bring glory to the Lord. Every year, around 160,000 Christians glorify God in their deaths as they are martyred for Christ. God help us all to bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. The ship Central America was in pretty bad shape at sea. She had sprung a leak, and was sinking. Therefore, she hoisted a signal of distress. A ship came close to her, and its captain asked, through the trumpet, "What is wrong?" They answered, "We are in bad repair and are going down. We will wait till morning for a rescue," but the captain on board the rescue ship said, "Let me take your passengers on board now." Again the message came back,"Wait until morning." Once again the captain cried, "You had better let me take your passengers on board now." "Wait until morning," was the reply that sounded through the trumpet.

About an hour and a half later all on board had gone down to the fathomless abyss below. Do not say, "Wait until morning." Today, put your faith in Jesus Christ and let your life shine for Him.

* 2 Corinthians 6:2b- ....now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)
Chapter 11
The Focus on Fulfillment
Matthew 5:17-20

The structure of the Sermon on the Mount is remarkably beautiful. It begins in Matthew 5:1-12 with the Beatitudes, which give us a penetrating description of the inner character or righteousness of those who are believers and members of the kingdom of Heaven. Next, the Lord gives two brilliant metaphors about salt and light in verses 13-16, emphasizing our responsibilities in this world as believers and impressed upon us the effects of our inner righteousness upon those around us. Then in verses 17-20, Jesus gives a summary description of the purpose of His ministry and the importance of applying the Word of God in our lives. He explains that His focus is upon fulfilling the Word of God. When we focus on obeying the Word of God in our lives, we will find fulfillment in our own lives.

I. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST’S MINISTRY  5:17

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

Christ came not to destroy the law or prophets, but to fulfill what they had written. The terms law and prophets were a reference to the main divisions of the Old Testament. The third division was the Psalms. The law is that system of legislation given by God through Moses to the nation of Israel. The entire body of the law is found in Exodus 20-31, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, though its basic essence is embodied in the Ten Commandments. The law was not given as a means of salvation. A person is not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments.
* Romans 3:20 - Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

* Galatians 2:16- Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

If you set aside a glass of water with dirt and garbage in it and left it undisturbed for a few days, the particles would settle to the bottom of the glass so that the water would begin to look drinkable. However, we all know that it would still be dangerous to drink, even though it wasn't readily evident. If you took a sterile spoon and stirred the water, it would become readily evident that the water was not clean. The law is like the sterile spoon - though perfect in itself, it was intended to make evident to us the true nature that exists within us. The law was designed to show people their sinfulness and then drive them to God for His gracious salvation. The law tells me how crooked I am; grace comes along and straightens me out. The law was given to the nation of Israel, even though it contains moral principles which are valid for people in every age. The law had attached to it the penalty of death and to break one command was to be guilty of breaking them all.

* James 2:10- For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Since we are all sinners and have broken the law, we are under the curse of death. God's righteousness and holiness demanded that the penalty for sin be paid. It was for this reason that Jesus came into the world. He came to pay the penalty of mankind's sins by His death on the cross. He died as a substitute for guilty lawbreakers, even though He Himself was sinless. He did not wave the law aside, rather He met the full demands of the law by fulfilling its strict requirements in His life and also in His death. Thus, the Gospel does not overthrow the law. It upholds God's law and shows how the law's demands have been fully satisfied by Christ's redemptive work.

Jesus came not to destroy His Word. The word "destroy" is from the Greek word kataluo {kat-al-oo'-o} which means "to utterly overthrow, to tear down and smash to the ground, to obliterate completely." In several places, as here, the word is used figuratively to indicate "bringing to nothing, rendering useless, or nullifying." It is the same word used of the destruction of the Temple. Christ did not come to obliterate the law and render it useless.
If Jesus did not come to abolish the law, does that mean all the Old Testament laws still apply to us today? Let’s answer that question. In the Old Testament, there were three categories of the law: ceremonial, civil, and moral.

1. **The ceremonial law** related specifically to Israel's worship. Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ. These laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus was often accused by the Pharisees of violating ceremonial law. While we are no longer bound by ceremonial laws, the principles behind them, to worship and love a holy God, still apply.

   *Mark 12:30- And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

2. **The civil law** applied to daily living in Israel. Because modern society and culture are so radically different from that time and setting, all of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. The principles behind the commands, however, are timeless and should guide our conduct. Jesus demonstrated these principles by His example.

3. **The moral law** (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and it requires strict obedience. The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and His moral laws still apply to us today. Stealing, homosexuality, incest, adultery, coveting, etc. are still wrong today. The one commandment not repeated in the New Testament is the Sabbath law. Christians are never taught to keep the Sabbath or the seventh day of the week, Saturday. The law is still a standard for godly living. It reveals to me that I cannot measure up to God’s standard. This drives me to the cross of Christ. The only way I can fulfill the law is by accepting the only One who could fulfill it.... the Lord Jesus Christ.

   **The cry of the world today is freedom to do anything you want!** Live any way you want without any restrictions. The motto of the sixties was “Free Love or Free Sex!” True freedom, however, does not mean the absence of constraints or moral absolutes. Suppose a skydiver at 10,000 feet announces to the rest of the group, "I'm not using a parachute this time. I want freedom! I don’t want any more restrictions!" The fact is that a skydiver is constrained by a greater law—the law of Gravity. When the skydiver, however, chooses the "constraint" of the parachute, he is free to enjoy the exhilaration of the dive. God's moral laws act the same way: they restrain, but they are absolutely necessary to enjoy the exhilaration of real freedom. God’s laws are to protect us from the pain...
and destruction from sinful living. They point out what will harm us.  

**While the Christian is not under the law, that doesn’t mean he is lawless.** He is bound by a stronger chain than the law because he is under grace or the law of Christ. His behavior is molded, not by fear of punishment, but by a loving desire to please his Savior. Christ has become his rule of life.  

The story is told of a husband and wife that didn’t really love each other. The man was very demanding, so much so that he prepared a list of rules and regulations for his wife to follow. He insisted that she read them over every day and obey them to the letter. Among other things, his “do’s and don’ts” indicated such details as what time she had to get up in the morning, when his breakfast should be served, and how the housework should be done.  

After several long years, the husband died. As time passed, the woman fell in love with another man, one who dearly loved her. Soon they were married. This husband did everything he could to make his new wife happy, continually showering her with tokens of his appreciation. One day as she was cleaning house, she found tucked away in a drawer the list of commands her first husband had drawn up for her.  

As she looked it over, it dawned on her that even though her present husband hadn’t given her any kind of list, she was doing everything her first husband’s list required anyway. She realized she was so devoted to this man that her deepest desire was to please him out of love, not out of obligation. God wants us to willingly love and obey Him from the heart. True love and obedience come from a willing heart. When we focus on serving Him, we will find fulfillment in our lives.  

* Romans 6:17- But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.  

* Ephesians 6:6- Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;  

**God’s grace raises the standard of godly living.** Not only are we forbidden to murder people, we are not to hate others. In fact, we are to love our enemies. We are to go the second mile with those who abuse us and turn the other cheek when we are smitten or abused. Grace takes us farther than the law. We are to follow the Lord’s example of “grace living” in our own lives. We are to focus on fulfilling His Word.  

* John 13:15- For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.
* John 15:12 - This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
* Ephesians 5:1 - Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
* 1 John 3:16 - Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Jesus obeyed the moral law completely. In reality, Christ established the law and the prophets. He came to fulfill the law. The word “fulfill” is from the Greek word πληρέω {play-ro'-o}. It does not mean to fill out but to fill up. It does not mean to add to but to complete what is already present. Jesus completed or fulfilled the law. How did He do this? How did He fulfill the law? We will list several ways.

* How Did Christ Fulfill the Law?

A. The Predictions or Prophecies were Fulfilled by the Lord

Jesus fulfilled the messianic predictions found in the Old Testament. Both the prophets and the law pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord mentions the law and the prophets here, He is referring to the entire Old Testament. Jesus himself said, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

* Matthew 11:13 - For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

The Old Testament had a prophetic function that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Some of it was clearly predictive such as the predictions of Jesus' place of birth. Micah's prophecy indicated the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

* Micah 5:2 - But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

The crucifixion of the Lord is referred to in Psalm 22.

* Psalm 22:16 - For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Whether obvious or hidden, Jesus fulfilled all the messianic predictions of the Old Testament. This was His principal fulfillment.

B. The Payment for Breaking the law was Fulfilled by the Lord

Jesus fulfilled the law by dying on the cross and satisfying the demands of the law when it was broken. The price for disobedience was death. This is why the Jews offered sacrifices to the Lord to atone for their sins. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to the Lord. The offerings, the Tabernacle and its furnishings all pointed to
Christ. The Old Testament sacrifices prepared the Jews for the Lord Jesus' death when He came to die for the sins of the entire world. Jesus fulfilled what the sacrificial system represented.

Christ could make the payment for the penalty of sin because He was perfect. His perfect obedience and sinlessness qualified Him to be our Savior. Salvation is not obtained by ignoring the law about the punishment of sin. Rather, salvation is obtained by substitution. Christ was our substitute and died for our sins, but to die for our sins, Christ had to be without sin. Otherwise He would have had to die for His own sins. However, He fulfilled the Word by absolute and perfect obedience to it, and this qualified Him to be our Redeemer.

C. The Performance of the law was Fulfilled by Christ.

Jesus perfectly kept all the commands of the law. He was born under law to fulfill all righteousness. He kept the law perfectly, never falling short in even one point.

* Galatians 4:4- But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

* Matthew 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

The purpose of Christ's mission to earth was to "fulfill" the Word of God. He fulfilled it in His conduct. Christ's great attentiveness to the Word of God to fulfill it in every detail exhorts us to do likewise. The Word must be that which guides our every thought, word, and deed. Few in our day let the Word of God be the guide of their life, but it is the only guide that can be trusted.

* Psalm 119:105- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

* Psalm 19:8- The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

D. The Power of God’s Spirit enables us to Fulfill the Righteousness of the law.

Jesus fulfills the law in believers by means of the Holy Spirit.

* Romans 8:2-4... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. [3] For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: [4] That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
We are able to fulfill the righteousness of the law by the power of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer and enables us to live a godly life. Our flesh has no desire to obey the Lord, but the Spirit of God gives us the desire to do what is right and the ability to do what is right. This is what Ezekiel prophesied:

* Ezekiel 11:19-20... And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: [20] That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

A duck hunter was with a friend in the wide-open land of southeastern Georgia. Far away on the horizon he noticed a cloud of smoke. Soon he could hear crackling as the wind shifted. He realized the terrible truth: a brush-fire was advancing, so fast they couldn't outrun it. Rifling through his pockets, he soon found what he was looking for...a book of matches. He lit a small fire around the two of them. Soon they were standing in a circle of blackened earth, waiting for the fire to come. They didn't have to wait long. They covered their mouths with handkerchiefs and braced themselves. The fire came near -- and swept over them, but they were completely unhurt, untouched. Fire would not pass where fire had already passed.

The law is like a brush fire. I cannot escape it, but if I stand in the burned-over place, not a hair of my head will be singed. Christ's death is the burned-over place. The law is powerful, yet powerless: Christ's death has disarmed it. Because the righteousness of Christ has been credited or imputed to our “account,” we are justified and declared righteous before God.

* Romans 5:1 - Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

The person who trusts in Jesus is no longer under the law; he is under grace.

* Romans 6:14- For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The Christian is dead to the law through the work of Christ. The penalty of the law must be paid only once. Since Christ paid the penalty, the believer does not have to pay. It is in this sense that the law has faded away for the Christian. The law was a tutor until Christ came, but after salvation, this tutor was no longer needed. It has done its job.
* Galatians 3:24-25 ... Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. [25] But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

II. THE PRESERVATION OF GOD’S WORD 5:18

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

There is a story about a student at Cambridge University who entered the classroom on exam day and asked the proctor to bring him cakes and ale. The proctor refused, expressing astonishment at the young student's audacity. At this point the student read from the four-hundred-year-old laws of Cambridge, which were written in Latin and still nominally in effect. The passage read by the student said, "Gentlemen sitting for examinations may request and require Cakes and Ale." The proctor was forced to comply. Pepsi and hamburgers were judged the modern equivalent, so the necessary accommodations were made for the student. After all, the law was on his side.

Three weeks later the student was summoned to the office of Academic Affairs to face disciplinary action and was assessed a fine of five pounds. He was not fined for demanding cakes and ale, but for blatantly disregarding another obscure Cambridge law. He had failed to wear a sword to the examination. The student lived by the law and also was judged by the law to the "t." The old Cambridge laws, good or bad, were still preserved.

Jesus refers to the power and preservation of the Law here. This is what He is talking about in this passage. His language is compelling. "The smallest letter" is the Hebrew yod, which looks something like an apostrophe. There are approximately 66,420 yods in the Old Testament. The tittle is the Hebrew serif or extended horn, a tiny extension on some letters that distinguishes them from similar Hebrew letters just as the bottom stroke of a capital “E” makes it differ from a capital “F” or a “P” from an “R.”

To change a small point of one letter, therefore, might vary the meaning of a word, and destroy the sense. Hence the Jews were exceedingly cautious in writing these Hebrew letters, and considered the smallest change or omission a reason for destroying the whole manuscript when they were transcribing the Old Testament. Not one of the 66,000-plus yods or innumerable little serifs will pass from the law
(which here includes the law and the Prophets) until "everything is accomplished."

**Our Lord is here teaching the inspiration and immutability of the Old Testament Law.** He is not only saying that the Old Testament Law contains the truth or that it becomes the truth, but that "the Word of God cannot be broken." Nothing will stop the Word from being fulfilled. Every prophecy and every promise of the Word will be fulfilled. Every judgment and every blessing of the Word will come to pass and it will be fulfilled to the minutest detail, for every "jot and tittle" will be fulfilled.  
*John 10:35- If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;*

In the 16th century, children fairy-tail stories were violent because children in Elizabethan times were considered miniature adults. They were not innocent, but hardened by the circumstances from life they faced everyday. They were exposed to filthy, vulgar language. The lack of privacy in their crowded homes exposed them to nudity and sex. They witnessed drunkenness and drank liquor themselves at an early age. Violence, cruelty, and death were no strangers to them as they witnessed hangings and beheadings in public squares. It was not a good time to raise a child. The harshness of those times was reflected in stories for children.

Many people do not realize that the original versions of popular fairy tales were violent and gruesome and have been changed or toned down through the years. For example, the original "Sleeping Beauty" does not end happily once the princess is awakened with a kiss. Her troubles just begin. She is raped and abandoned and her illegitimate twin children are threatened with cannibalism. In the authentic version of Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf has yet to digest the grandmother when he pounces on Red, ripping her to pieces from limb to limb. In another version, the wolf collects the grandmother’s blood in bottles, and induces the unsuspecting Red to drink it. Fairy tales may change, but Jesus makes it clear that His Word will not change or pass away.

Holy Scripture and its teaching will not change. Time and time again when our Lord quotes the Old Testament, He used the perfect tense, *eggraptai* — "It is written" — which means "it was written, it is written, and it always will be written." The Scriptures are more enduring than the universe.

*Matthew 24:35- Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*
* Isaiah 40:8- The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

* 1 Peter 1:23,25- Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. The word translated "abideth" and the word translated "endureth" are the same words simply rendered differently by the KJV translators. The word means "to continue to be, not to perish, to last, to endure."

No book has been so attacked as the Bible, yet no book has survived so well as the Bible. Many attacks have been made against God's Word, yet it endures. The French philosopher Voltaire set out to destroy Christianity and the Word of God. In his hatred of Christianity, he said it took 12 men to start Christianity, and that it would take only one man, Voltaire, to stop it. Voltaire said that inside 100 years there would be no copies of the Bible left except copies in museums. However, when a century had passed, the Word was thriving but Voltaire was not. God got the last laugh on Voltaire. Voltaire's house was used by the Geneva Bible Society for storage of copies of the Bible. Jesus Christ was right and Voltaire was wrong. The Word of God will endure forever.

The Word of God will perform perfectly. It will not deviate one iota. All hell can rise up against the Word of God, but it will still perform perfectly. In spite of minor variations in Greek and Latin manuscripts, God has preserved His Word in thousands of ancient manuscripts and translations of Scripture in many languages of the world. He has preserved His Word in a number of English Bible translations besides the King James Version and hundreds of foreign translations. His Word is not confined to just one translation of Scripture in 1611. Such man-made teaching is errant and illogical. It does not make sense at all. His truth and message have been preserved in many languages, even though the translations are not exact. God's Word was preserved in foreign and English translations before 1611 and also after 1611.

* Isaiah 55:11- So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
III. THE PERFORMANCE OF GOD’S COMMANDS 5:19

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

When we are disobedient to God’s commands, we show disrespect and resistance toward the Lord. We reveal our rebellion by our attitude and actions. We can appear on the outside to be obeying the Lord, but our heart may be filled with resistance toward Christ. Jesus spoke of this attitude.

*Isaiah 29:13- Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Does this describe you?

Rebels do not like to rebel alone. They feel more secure when others rebel with them. Thus, they teach and encourage others to follow them in their disobedience. Jesus reveals the pattern of rebellion and disobedience here. Usually our sin begins with disobeying the least commandments. It begins with small seeds, not towering trees. Bad habits start with little surrenders or transgressions. Sinful living is more acceptable when it breaks "least" commandments. It gets its foot in the door of our heart that way. What it does not show you in the beginning is that when you start breaking "least" commandments, it will lead to breaking other vital commandments of which the consequences are more destructive. Beware of the burden of belittling so called “little sins.” They are the bait for more destructive sins because they get us into the habit of disobeying God.

Those who lead others astray by false teaching are called “least” in the kingdom of Heaven. This does not mean that those who oppose the Word of God will be kept out of Heaven. There are many Christians who oppose God’s Word by their disobedience, yet they are still going to Heaven. It simply means they will have no honor in Heaven and will lose reward from the Lord. They will be called "least." Those who encourage others to obey God’s Word by their actions and teaching will be called great in God’s kingdom.

We are to be “doing” the Word in our lives. By our obedient actions, we honor His Word. Our teaching should be filled with His Word. If you are going to be a Bible preacher, then make sure you are
preaching the Bible, not your philosophy of life. Those who live God’s Word and teach it will be honored in Heaven, even though they may not be honored here on earth. They will be considered “great” according to God’s standard, and that is what really counts. If you want to be great in God’s eyes, then focus on fulfilling His Word.

IV. THE PRECEDENT TO ENTERING GOD’S

KINGDOM 5:20

*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Here, Christ states the requirement for Heaven. The text reveals that Jesus’ standards were not lower but higher than those of the best religionists of the day. Wherever Christ went, He always raised the standards. Jesus makes it clear that righteousness is necessary for entrance into Heaven. This is the basic tenant regarding the requirement for Heaven. Righteousness is always the prime requirement of God for Divine blessings. It is not riches or reputation but righteousness. God is not looking at our power, position, prestige, or popularity. He is looking for righteousness...the righteousness of Christ.

He continues to explain that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. These words must have shocked the listeners. The scribes were the most renowned teachers of the law, and the Pharisees had the reputation of being the most exemplary models of Judaism. For our Lord to have solemnly affirmed that their righteousness was altogether inadequate for entitling them to an entrance into the kingdom which He had come to set up must have seemed a most radical and startling declaration.

The Pharisees were looked up to as those who had attained to the very pinnacle of personal piety, and the common people supposed that such heights of spirituality were quite beyond their reach. Men in general imagined that they could not be expected to equal their attainments. It was a proverb among the Jews that ‘If but two men were to enter Heaven, the one would be a scribe and the other a Pharisee.’"

The scribes and Pharisees were not so righteous as what people thought. They were, in fact, extreme hypocrites. They were a wicked bunch according to the Lord. From that standpoint, it would not take much righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. The
people, however, were not aware of the evil of these religious leaders and thought them to be the model of piety. Christ is not pointing out the evil of the scribes and Pharisees here, but treating them as the people viewed them in order to teach the people the great requirement for salvation. He is endeavoring to show the people that the best examples of righteousness which they can think of are still not good enough to get them into Heaven. Christ says the best of men is not good enough for Heaven. Isaiah emphasized this truth.

* Isaiah 64:6 - But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

All of this makes us look outside ourselves for this righteousness and this is where Jesus Christ comes in for our salvation. When we receive Him as our Savior, He gives us a righteousness that meets Heaven's requirement.

* 2 Corinthians 5:21 - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.
* Romans 10:3-4... For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. [4] For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Without righteousness that was greater than the scribes and Pharisees, the best examples of that time, no one would enter the kingdom of Heaven. The absoluteness of this requirement is found in the words translated "in no case." They are a translation of two Greek words ou me (me is pronounced "may"), which is the double negative in the Greek language. In the English language, the double negative cancels out the negative, and in fact, it is generally considered poor English to use a double negative. However, in the Greek language, a double negative is very acceptable. It means an emphatic negative. That is, it is absolute and permanent. There are some great places in Scripture where this double negative shows up and emphasizes the security of the believer. Here are some examples.

* John 6:37 - All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. "No wise" is translated from the double negative. Absolutely no one will be cast out.
* John 10:28 - And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. "Never" is translated from the double negative. No one will be lost from His hands.
In our text here in the Sermon on the Mount, the double negative gives emphasis and absoluteness to the fact that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the best of men, you will never get in Heaven. No one gets into Heaven on their own merits, works, or deeds. What Jesus demands is a kind of righteousness that is so godly that it cannot be the product of human effort, but must be the gift of God. Only with the righteousness of Jesus Christ can one gain Heaven for their eternal destiny. This righteousness would be made available as God’s free gift to those who believe in Jesus Christ. This is the righteousness that would exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Those who are in love sometimes sign their letters with XXX. The custom of doing this goes back to the Christian era where an “X” conveyed the force of a sworn oath or promise that would not be broken. In the days where few people could write, their signature cross or “X” was a legally valid mark. To emphasize their sincerity of their mark, they would kiss the X they had made. It was this practice of kissing the “X” that led it to become a symbol for a kiss. Beloved, God has promised us in His Word that if we trust in Him, He will give us eternal life. His “XXX” is on this promise which is backed by the love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

*John 3:16- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue; wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.**

John Wesley
Chapter 12
The Rudiments for Relationships
Matthew 5:21-26

Thomas Carlyle had married his secretary, whom he dearly loved, but was thoughtless and absorbed in his own interests and activities, treating his wife as if she were still his employee. Stricken with cancer, she was confined to bed for a long time before she died. After her funeral, Carlyle went back to his empty house. Grieving over his wife’s death, he wandered around downstairs thinking about the woman that he loved. After a while, he went upstairs to her room and sat down in the chair beside the bed on which she had been lying for months. He realized with painful regret that he had not sat there very often during her illness.

He noticed her diary. While she was alive, he would never read it, but now that she was gone he felt free to pick it up and thumb through its pages. One entry caught his eye: “Yesterday, he spent an hour with me and it was like being in Heaven. I love him so much.” He turned a few more pages and continued to read, “I listened all day to hear his steps in the hallway and now it is late. I guess he won’t come to see me.” Thomas continued reading through the diary and then threw it on the floor. He rushed out into the bone-numbing rain back to the cemetery where his wife was laid to rest and fell upon her grave. As the cold mud oozed between his fingers, he sobbed with a broken heart, “If only I knew... If only I knew!”

Carlyle was a broken man because he realized he had abused and neglected his relationship with someone that cared about him very much. He is not alone, however. Most people fall in the same trap whether they are a husband, wife, parent, or child. Our lives are composed of various relationships with people and how we handle those relationships
determines our happiness or sorrows, our success or failures, our peace or our turmoil.

Relationships with people are vital, especially the ones with your spouse, parents, kids, and family. The most important one, however, is your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. When you reject Him or neglect Him, your life begins to fall apart and your blunders begin to multiply with destructive consequences. One of the blessings that we get from the Bible is it instructs us on how to have a great relationship with God and with other people, whether the person is your wife, husband, children, parents, pastor, boss, government leaders, or even your enemies. All of these relationships are addressed in the Scriptures.

This section in Matthew 5 is one of the foundational passages on human relationships in the Bible. Jesus begins with the prohibition against the ultimate fracture of human relationships that takes place through murder, then He supplies His own teaching, which goes far beyond the mere preserving of life itself to the preserving of human relationships. In this section of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes how a righteous person conducts his or her relationships. We are given the rudiments or elements of things that destroy relationships with people, and in turn, destroy our own lives. Let’s examine the issues that Jesus addresses here.

I. THE ISSUE OF ASSASSINATION OR MURDER 5:21

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Jesus says we are not to kill which means we are not to murder people. This is what He is saying here. Obviously, murder is a real relationship killer. He is not saying it is wrong to kill animals for food. He is not saying it is wrong to go to war to defend yourself against an enemy. The Old Testament is filled with examples of God commanding His people to go to war. He is not saying that capital punishment or the death penalty is wrong. Leviticus chapter twenty gives a whole list of capital crimes. The law is clear about the punishment for the person who commits murder. It is death. The fact that death is the penalty for the murderer is greatly emphasized in Numbers 35. Six times that chapter in Numbers plainly states that the murderer is to be put to death (Numbers 35:16,17,18,21,30,31), and then the chapter closes by stating that "the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein,
but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numbers 35:33). However, long before the law was given to Moses, God told Noah that the murderer was to be put to death.

* Genesis 9:6-Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.

The death penalty for the murderer still applies today, yet is resisted by liberals. The death penalty, however, is the only penalty that makes sense in regards to murder. It honors God, protects the innocent, and warns others adequately about committing murder. Those who murder face man’s judgment and God’s judgment.

* Revelation 21:8- But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

II. THE ISSUE OF ANGER 5:22a

*But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: ...

Jesus just didn’t want people to refrain from murdering one another. He wanted them to refrain from the hatred that leads to murder. Murder is only the external manifestation of an internal problem. The scribes and Pharisees dealt only with the external act. Jesus showed that God’s concern ran much deeper. God is concerned about what is going on in our hearts. Refraining from homicide does not constitute a person righteous in God’s sight.

Anger is such a foolish thing. It makes us destroyers instead of builders. It robs us of freedom and makes us prisoners of our bitterness. Anger leads to hate and to hate someone is to commit murder in our hearts. In fact, to hate a brother in the Lord was absolutely unthinkable.

* 1 John 3:15- Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

The Jews of Jesus’ time knew that murder was forbidden by God and that the murderer was liable to punishment. This was true before the giving of the law (Gen. 9:6) and it was later incorporated into the law (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). With the words, “But I say to you,” Jesus institutes an amendment to the teaching on murder. No longer could a person take pride in having never committed murder. Jesus now says, “In My kingdom, you must not even have murderous thoughts.” Here again,
the Lord is raising the standard of righteousness. Grace always went the second mile beyond the law. Because of God's grace and working in our lives through the person of the Holy Spirit, we can obey God's higher standards for living.

Let me say that we must not think that Jesus forbids all anger with other people. It is possible for humans to be angry and not sin (Eph. 4:26). Jesus Himself was angry when He cleared the Temple (John 2:13-22). He was angry with those who assailed Him for healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:5 uses the word "anger"). In Matthew 23:17, He called the Pharisees "blind fools." Jesus' demonstrations of anger were appropriate for Him since He was God, and God gets angry. His anger was always righteous unlike the anger that arises from unjustified hatred. There is a place for righteous anger. Jesus was angry at sin and injustice, but He never became angry at personal insult or affront.

* 1 Peter 2:23- Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

In Greek there are two words for anger. There is thumos, which was described as being like the flame which comes from dried straw. It is the anger which quickly blazes up and just as quickly dies down. It is an anger which rises speedily and just as speedily passes.

Each year in America, an average of fourteen men are killed by soft drink vending machines. After not receiving a drink or due change, these men shook the machines until they tipped over and crushed them to death. Each man became the victim of his own thumos or temper. Inappropriate anger is a dangerous weapon.

The second word for anger is the word orge, which was described as long-lived anger. It is the anger of the man who nurses his wrath to keep it warm. It is the anger over which a person broods, and which he will not allow to die. On Mother's Day of 1987, Percy Washington killed the wrong woman. Washington and his wife, Corene, had been married for twenty-nine years before separating the previous year. The sixty-one-year-old retiree became angry with his estranged wife and accused her of taking advantage of him. He bought a shotgun the day before and went to her church with the intent of murder. When the morning worship service ended, Washington waited for his wife to get in her car. He then leveled his shotgun and fired through the windshield, but because Washington wasn't wearing his glasses, he shot a woman who he mistook for his wife. Fannie Watson was driving a similar car so he
just assumed she was his wife. After being arrested, Washington said, “I’m sorry about the other woman. I meant to kill my wife, but I forgot my glasses.”

Beloved, anger leaves us blinded to reality regardless of whether or not we wear corrective lenses, and it will ultimately hurt innocent people. Jesus forbids the anger which broods, the anger which will not forget, the anger which refuses to be pacified, or the anger which seeks revenge. This is sinful, selfish anger which the Bible condemns.

* James 1:20- For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.
* Colossians 3:8- But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

The anger that seeks revenge has a way of backfiring upon us. Jesus makes this clear by the fact that our anger can lead to judgment. A classic story of anger that backfired occurred in the summer of 1853. American Indian George Crum was employed as a chef at an elegant resort in Sarasota Springs, New York. On the menu of the restaurant were the thick-cut, French fries that were popularized in France in the 1700’s. Thomas Jefferson loved these fries when he was ambassador to France. Unfortunately, a dinner guest at Crum's restaurant didn’t like the thick fries and rejected the order. Crum cut and fired a thinner batch, but they too were unacceptable. Exasperated and angry, Crum decided to provoke the guest and upset him by producing French fries too thin and crisp to poke with a fork. The plan back-fired in his face. Instead of making the guest upset and angry, the guest loved them and others wanted them too. They were placed in the menu and listed as the Saratoga Chip. Eventually they were manufactured and distributed across the country. We know them as the potato chip whose birth was the result of anger that backfired. Good came out of this, but most of the time anger leads to destruction, sorrow, and judgment.

There is a place for righteous anger. Such anger brings pleasure to God, but in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking of unrighteous, sinful anger, and His words leave no doubt about what He means. We are quick to get angry at personal affront but slow to become angry with sin and injustice, and we need to take our Lord's words to heart. Sinful anger robs us of fellowship with God as well as with our brothers, but it does not put us into jail as murderers. However, more than one person has become a murderer because he failed to control sinful anger. Sinful anger must be faced honestly and must be confessed to God
as sin. We must go to our brother and get the matter settled, and we must do it quickly. The longer we wait, the worse the bondage of bitterness becomes! We put ourselves into a terrible prison when we refuse to be reconciled with others whether it is an actual prison or an emotional one.

III. THE ISSUE OF ABUSIVE WORDS  5:22b
...and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

To call someone the Aramaic word "Raca" is literally to call him "empty-headed, numbskull, nitwit, blockhead, bonehead, jerk, or brainless idiot." Raca, used in deadly earnest, demotes another person to the level of a nothing, a nobody. It is an utterly contemptuous word which belittles the value and worth of a person. If my kids talk this way with their siblings, Dad gets mad real quick.

The term "fool" is a translation of the Greek word moros, from which we derive “moron,” but its meaning did not involve judgment of one's IQ but rather of one’s moral condition. It was applied to those who denied God's existence and as a result fell to further evil. It was sometimes used in secular Greek literature of an obstinate, godless person. It was also possibly related to the Hebrew mara, which means “to rebel against.”

To call someone a fool was to accuse them of being both stupid and godless. Such a man was a moral fool, a man who lived an immoral life, and who in wishful thinking said that there was no God. To call a man a moros was not to criticize his mental ability, it was to cast aspersions on his moral character. It was to take his name and reputation from him, and to brand him as a loose-living and immoral person. It signified that he ought to be dead and expresses a wish that he was dead. To call a person a fool is the same as cursing him and murdering him, to show contempt for his heart and character. These two words, raca and fool, were not terms of endearment but of malignant contempt. Jesus here condemns angry contempt and all its cousins...animosity, malice, hostility, malevolence, wrath.

There is no sin quite so pagan as the sin of contempt. There is a contempt and snobbery which comes from pride of birth. There is a contempt which comes from position and from money. Pride in material things is an ugly thing. There is a contempt which comes from knowledge
or claiming to "know-it-all." We should never look with contempt on any man for whom Christ died.

As believers we must purge ourselves of any delusion of spiritual superiority. It is all too true that a long association with Christ, His Word, and His church can foster the feeling that one is a spiritual giant, looking down on the rest of empty-headed, foolish humanity. This kind of smugness makes words like "fool, nitwit, and idiot" as natural as breathing. Believers must purge themselves of any attitude that says, "I am better than you!" If there is anyone who ought to know who they really are and what is within them, it is Christians. We must never devaluate others.

* 1 Corinthians 10:12- Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Because of the testimony of God's Word, we also know that fools of the worst sort do exist and it is our obligation to warn those who are clearly in opposition to God's will, that they are living foolishly. We certainly are not wrong to show someone what Scripture says about a person who rejects God. He is a fool. Jesus' prohibition is against slanderously calling a person, especially a brother in Christ, a fool out of anger and hatred. Such an expression of malicious animosity is tantamount to murder and makes us deserving of Hell. Our only hope is Christ. Jesus insists that the gravest thing of all is to destroy a man's reputation and to take his good name away. No punishment is too severe for the malicious tale-bearer, or the gossip which murders people's reputations. If a Christian is guilty of this kind of behavior, don't be surprised when he or she is severely chastened by the Lord.

Notice that the sin of belittling contempt is liable to severe judgment. It is liable to the judgment of the council. The word translated council is, in the original Greek, sunedrion {soon-ed'-ree-on}, and there can be no doubt that he refers to the Jewish tribunal of sanhedrin. This was the highest court in the land of Israel. It was instituted in the time of the Maccabees, probably about 200 years before Christ.

It was composed of seventy-two judges, six from each tribe of Israel, with the High Priest acting as the president of this tribunal. The seventy-two members were made up of the chief priests and elders of the people, and the scribes. This tribunal had cognizance of the great affairs of the nation. Till the time when Judea was subjected to the Romans, it had the power of life and death. It still retained the power of passing sentence, though the Roman magistrate held the right of execution. It
usually sat in Jerusalem, in a room near the Temple. It was before this tribunal that our Savior was tried.

Jesus continues to give warning and reveals that the person who slanderously accuses someone of being a fool is in danger of “hell fire” which comes from the Greek word **geenna** {gheh'-en-nah}. What is this all about?

**Geenna** is derived from Hinnom, the name of a valley just southwest of Jerusalem used as the city dump. It was a forbidding place where trash was continually burned and where the fire, smoke, and stench never ceased. The location was originally desecrated by King Ahaz when “he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom, and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel” (2 Chron. 28:3). King Ahaz used the valley to erect an altar to the pagan god Molech, an altar on which one’s own children sometimes were offered by being burned alive.

In that worship of Molech the ancient Jewish writers inform us that the idol of Molech was of brass, adorned with a royal crown, having the head of a calf, and his arms extended, as if to embrace anyone. When they offered children to him, they heated the statue from within by a great fire, and when it was red hot, they put the miserable child into his arms, where it was soon consumed by the heat. In order that the cries of the child might not be heard, they made a great noise with drums and other instruments around the idol. These drums were called **top**. Hence, a common name of the place was **Topheth** {to'-feth}.

*Jeremiah 7:31-32... And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. [32] Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.*

After the return of the Jews from captivity, this place was held in such abhorrence, that, by the example of Josiah, it was made the public incinerator where to throw all the dead carcases and filth of the city. It was also a common place of executions. It became, therefore, extremely offensive for the sight was terrific and the air was polluted and pestilential. To preserve it in any manner that was half-way pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning in this place. The smell of smoke would be preferable to the smell of decay and death. The extreme
loathsomeness of this place, the filth, the putrefaction, the corruption of
the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and by night, made it
one of the most appalling places with which a Jew was acquainted.
Always the fire smouldered in it, and a pall of thick smoke hovered over
it. It bred a loathsome kind of worm which was hard to kill (Mk 9:44-48).

So Gehenna, the Valley of Hinnom, became identified in
people's minds with all that was accursed and filthy. It was the place
where useless and evil things were destroyed. That is why it became
a synonym for Hell. So Jesus says that he who destroys his brother's
name and reputation is liable to the severest judgment of all, the
judgment of the fire of Gehenna. It is very probable that our Lord means
no more here than this: if a man charge another with apostasy from the
Jewish religion, or rebellion against God, and cannot prove his charge,
then he is exposed to that punishment (being burned) which the other
must have suffered, if the charge had been substantiated.

If we are going to have the right kind of relationship with other
people, we can't go around killing them, belittling and verbally abusing
them, making them feel worthless, and we cannot be slandering and
destroying their lives and reputations with our false accusations. It really
doesn't take any brains to figure this out, yet so many violate these
rudiments of relationships every day.

IV. THE ISSUES OF THE ALTAR, ADORATION, &
ACCORD 5:23,24

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest
that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before
the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then
come and offer thy gift.

A

s the Lord continues His message on the rudiments of
relationships, Jesus gets down to the nitty-gritty and reveals
some very serious, crucial principles that are vital in maintaining good
relationships with other people. They are vital because we tend to offend
others and also feel we can gloss over our offenses by racking up
Brownie points with God by some good deed. These principles deal with
correcting the problem of our offensiveness and keeping our heart tender
and close to the Lord.

The Lord Jesus gives us a phenomenal picture here. The worshiper
has entered the great Temple of Herod with his sacrifice and has passed
through the concentric courts (the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of Women, the Court of Men). Beyond him lies the Court of the Priests, into which only priests could pass. The worshiper is standing at the threshold of the court. His hands are on the sacrifice, and suddenly he remembers that he has wronged his brother. So he turns and retreats through the great courts. He must first make things right with his brother.

Jesus' point is clear: It is far more important to be reconciled to your brother than to fulfill the external duties of worship. Worship is merely make-believe if we have offended others in such a way that they are holding grudges against us. God is not impressed with our sacrifices or offerings when we have not made things right with those whom we have wronged. The matters of the heart are much more important to Him than outward religious rituals. The Lord wants our hearts first. He wants us, before we offer Him anything else. When He has our heart, He then has everything else.

* 2 Corinthians 8:5- And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

* 1 Samuel 15:22-And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

**Having a clear conscience is a priority in the Christian life.** Paul stressed this repeatedly and Peter addressed this too. If we are going to grow spiritually and be used of God to our fullest potential, then we must make sure our lives are right with God and right with men. Jesus is quite clear about this basic fact, we cannot be right with God until we are right with men. It is more important to lift the load of hate from another brother’s heart than to engage in a formal act of worship. Ritual worship was very important to the scribes and Pharisees, but Jesus put internal purity first, even the internal purity of another person.

* Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

* 1 Timothy 1:19- Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

* 1 Peter 3:16- Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Many people undoubtedly try to suppress the guilt of their sin by an outward act that they hope will please God in some way. Ceremony,
regular attendance at worship, and giving, however, will never produce a clear conscience. If we are at odds with others because of our actions and are unwilling to do anything about it, attendance at a church service is an exercise in futility. We need to first attempt to make things right with those we have wronged. Sometimes the reason our prayers are hollow or empty is because we have offended another brother or sister and are not willing to do anything about it.

* Psalm 66:18 - If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

* 1 Peter 3:7 - Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Perhaps you are sensing spiritual dryness and emptiness in your life. You pray, you try to be as close to the Lord and good as possible, but somehow it just does not seem to be working. The reason might be that you have not faced up to your offense in a fundamental relationship. We are called to sensitivity in our relationships with others. This does not mean morbid sensitivity to imagined offenses, but rather dealing with real offenses that the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

Regardless of who is responsible for the break in relationship, and often there is guilt on both sides, we should determine to make reconciliation before we come before God to worship. True worship is not enhanced by better music, better prayers, better architecture, or even better preaching. True worship is greatly enhanced by better relationships between those who come to worship.

**Jesus tells us to be reconciled with our brother first, then come and offer our gift to the Lord.** Reconciliation means "to settle the difficulty; to make proper acknowledgment or satisfaction for the injury." If you have wronged a person, make restitution. If you owe him a debt which ought to be paid, pay it. If you have injured his character, confess it, and seek pardon. If you have publicly slandered or hurt someone, then publicly make it right. The confession and reconciliation go as far as the ripple of your offense. If your offense was private it is dealt with privately. If it was public, it is dealt with in public.

Reconciliation has priority over worship. We normally think of worship as having the highest priority, but Christ tells us a higher priority than worship is reconciliation with a brother with whom we have offended.
What basic steps does one take to reconcile with another person? What does the Bible have to say about this subject? Reconciliation involves several key elements. Putting them into practice may be difficult, but that is where the Holy Spirit steps in and helps us to do what is right. Blessing will eventually come when we do what God has commanded us to do.

* Steps to Reconciliation
1. Consideration- If there is a problem, we should consider the matter of reconciliation a priority of our life. Jesus stressed this here in Matthew 5:24.

2. Commitment and Courage- Two porcupines in Northern Canada huddled together to get warm, but their quills pricked one another so they moved apart. Before long, they were shivering again, so they sided close together again. Soon they were both getting jabbed again with the cycle repeating itself. They needed each other, but they kept needling each other. We too, are in the same boat. We need others, yet sometimes we end up needling one another. It is in those times our commitment for friendship becomes essential.

Reconciliation is built upon the foundation of committed relationships. Commitment is a strong, motivating factor and catalyst in keeping people together. Our commitment will help us reach out to those we have offended or are angry with us. It helps us to overlook or forget the offenses of others toward us. Reconciliation is not weakness or cowardice. It demands courage, nobility, generosity, sometimes heroism, an overcoming of oneself rather than of one's adversary.

In 1913, the Federal Government held a fiftieth anniversary reunion at Gettysburg. It lasted three days. Thousands of survivors bivouacked in the old battlefield, swapping stories, looking up comrades. For the most part the old men got along well enough, but over dinner at a restaurant one evening harsh words were passed between a Yankee and a Rebel and they went at one another with forks: "Unscathed in the melee of 1863," Myers wrote, "one of them--and I never learned which--was almost fatally wounded in 1913 with table hardware!"

The climax of the gathering was a re-enactment of Pickett's Charge. Thousands of spectators gathered to watch as the Union veterans took their positions on Cemetery Ridge, and waited as their old adversaries emerged from the woods on Seminary Ridge and started forward toward them again, across the long, flat fields. "We could see," Myers wrote,
"not rifles and bayonets but canes and crutches. We soon could
distinguish the more agile ones aiding those less able to maintain their
places in the ranks." As they neared the northern line, they broke into
one final, defiant rebel yell. At the sound, after half a century of silence,
a moan, a sigh, a gigantic gasp of unbelief rose from the Union men on
cemetery Ridge." Myers wrote, "It was then, that the Yankees, unable to
restrain themselves longer, burst from behind the stone wall, and flung
themselves upon their former enemies ... not in mortal combat, but
re-united in brotherly love and affection." Reconciliation takes courage
and commitment. Joseph was able to reconcile with his brothers because
he was committed to doing so. He could have easily taken revenge, but
didn’t.

3. **Concern**- Our concern for the feelings of others or seeing our offenses
from the perspective of those we have angered will help us to see our
need to make our “wrongs” right with them.

4. **Confession**- We should confess our fault to the one we offended and
seek forgiveness if we have wronged someone.

* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for
another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a
righteous man availeth much.

5. **Clearing our Conscience and Cost**- Clearing our conscience involves
seeking forgiveness of our offense and making restitution for any
damages. Reconciliation involves a sacrificial spirit. In the case of
Jacob, he gave Esau a portion of his blessings.

* Philippians 2:3-4.... Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;
but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. [4]
Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things
of others.

6. **Cooperative Spirit**- Jacob had a spirit of humility as he confronted
Esau. If we have wronged others, we too must have a humble attitude
and not a defensive one. Humility leads to God’s exaltation of your life
before others. A cooperative spirit breaks down the walls that people
emotional erect and use to shut people out of their lives. It makes them
less defensive and opens them up to peace and resolving the conflict.

* James 4:10- Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall
lift you up.

7. **Communication**- A story is told of two unmarried sisters who had so
bitter a ruckus they stopped speaking to each other. Unable or unwilling
to leave their small home, they continued to use the same rooms and sleep
in the same bedroom. A chalk line divided the sleeping area into two halves, separating doorway and fireplace, so that each could come and go and get her own meals without trespassing on her sister's domain. In the black of night each could hear the breathing of the foe. For years they coexisted in grinding silence. Neither was willing to take the first step to reconciliation. That is a sad story. They stopped communicating and never resolved their differences.

**Reconciliation involves talking conflicts and difficulties out with others.** Christians are not to close the door to communicating with other believers when there is an offense or problems. We are to leave the door open for reconciliation. Unwillingness to do this reveals a bitter spirit and lack of forgiveness. Is someone trying to make things right with you? Talk it out. You may not agree with one another, but you can respectfully agree to disagree. People may be offended by your position on a matter, but make sure they are not offended by your disposition.

8. **Condonation**—Reconciliation not only involves seeking forgiveness, but also granting forgiveness to those who have wronged us just as Esau forgave Jacob.

* Matthew 18:21,22- Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

* Colossians 3:13- Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

9. **Compassion**—In a Peanut’s cartoon, Lucy said to Snoopy: “There are times when you really bug me, but I must admit there are also times when I feel like giving you a big hug.” Snoopy replied: “That’s the way I am....huggable and buggable.” Scripture teaches that we should not only forgive those who wrong us, but to love them. They may be buggable, but also are huggable. Esau expressed his love to Jacob by embracing, kissing him, weeping, and offering to leave his servants to assist him with his herds in his return to Edom.

* Romans 12:14- Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
* Romans 12:20- Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
* Romans 12:21- Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Scriptures teach that if we are offended, we are to go to the offender and endeavor to reconcile our differences.
* Matthew 18:15-17 ... Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. [16] But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. [17] And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, once sought to describe the incarnation of God in Christ. He used this simple illustrative story: A certain king was very rich. His power was known throughout the world, but he was most unhappy, for he desired a wife. Without a queen, the vast palace was empty. One day, while riding through the streets of a small village, he saw a beautiful peasant girl. So lovely was she that the heart of the king was won. He wanted her more than anything he had ever desired. On succeeding days, he would ride by her house on the mere hope of seeing her for a moment in passing. He wondered how he might win her love. He thought, I will draw up a royal decree and require her to be brought before me to become the queen of my land. But, as he considered, he realized that she was a subject and would be forced to obey. He could never be certain that he had won her love.

Then, he said to himself, "I shall call on her in person. I will dress in my finest royal garb, wear my diamond rings, my silver sword, my shiny black boots, and my most colorful tunic. I will overwhelm her and sweep her off her feet to become my bride." But, as he pondered the idea, he knew that he would always wonder whether she had married him for the riches and power he could give her. Then, he decided to dress as a peasant, drive to the town, and have his carriage let him off.

In disguise, he would approach her house. But, somehow the duplicity of this plan did not appeal to him. At last, he knew what he must do. He would shed his royal robes. He would go to the village and become one of the peasants. He would work and suffer with them. He would actually become a peasant. This he did and he won his wife.

So did God consider how He might win human-kind. God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, became one of us. He took upon Him the form of human flesh to dwell among us. Paul says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." The King of the universe forgave us of our sins when we put our faith in Him.

* 2 Corinthians 5:18- And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of
reconciliation;

V. THE ISSUE OF AGREEMENT 5:25-26

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. [26] Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

The urgency of reconciliation is expressed in these practical verses. In a nutshell, Jesus is telling us to nip problems in the bud quickly. He is telling men to get trouble sorted out in time, before it piles up as more serious trouble for the future. The Lord paints a picture of two opponents on their way together to the courthouse. He tells them to get things settled and get matters straightened out before they reach the court, for, if they do not, and the law takes its course, there will be still worse trouble for one of them at least in the days to come. The offender should remove the occasion for the other man’s anger and hatred quickly. Otherwise the judge might make things difficult for both of them after he hears the case and makes a ruling.

The reference of going from the judge, to officer, to prison pictures the red tape and complications involved in not settling the dispute out of court. Likewise, God will make it difficult for haters and those who provoke hate in others if they come before Him with unresolved interpersonal disagreements. Jesus is saying, “If you are wrong, be quick to admit it and make things right. If you remain unrepentant, your sin will eventually catch up with you and you will not only have to make full restitution but suffer additional penalties as well. Don’t be in a hurry to go to court. If you do, the law will find you out, and you will pay the last penny.”

This portrait of two opponents on the way to court together seems to us very strange, and indeed rather improbable, but in the ancient world it often happened. Under Greek law there was a process of arrest called apagoge, which means “summary arrest.” In it the plaintiff himself, not the sheriff or police, arrested the defendant. He caught him by his robe at the throat, and held the robe in such a way that, if the man struggled, he would strangle himself. Obviously the causes for which such an arrest was legal were very few and the malefactor had to be caught red-handed.

The crimes for which a man might be summarily arrested by anyone in this way were thieving, clothes-stealing (clothes-stealers were the
curse of the public baths in ancient Greece), picking pockets, house-breaking and kidnaping (the kidnaping of specially gifted and accomplished slaves was very common). Further, a man might be summarily arrested if he was discovered to be exercising the rights of a citizen when he had been disfranchised, or if he returned to his state or city after being exiled. In, view of this custom it was by no means uncommon to see a plaintiff and a defendant on their way to court together in a Greek city.

It is much more likely that Jesus would be thinking in terms of Jewish law, and this situation was by no means impossible under Jewish law. This is obviously a case of debt, for, if peace is not made, the last farthing will have to be paid. Such cases were settled by the local council of elders. When a man was pronounced guilty, he was handed over to the court officer. It was the duty of the court officer to see that the penalty was duly paid, and, if it was not paid, he had the power to imprison the defaulter, until it was paid. It is no doubt of that situation that Jesus was thinking.

The counsel that Jesus gives here may mean one of two things. First of all, again and again it is the experience of life that, if a dispute is not healed immediately, it can go on breeding worse and worse trouble as time goes on. Bitterness breeds bitterness. It has often happened that a quarrel between two people has filtered into their families, has been inherited by future generations, and has in the end succeeded in splitting a church or a society in two. If one of the parties, at the very beginning, had the grace to apologize, a grievous conflict could have been avoided.

Jesus stresses the urgency of agreement or reconciliation. If ever we are at variance with someone else, we must get the situation put right straight away. It may mean that we must be humble enough to confess that we were wrong and to make apology; it may mean that, even if we were in the right, we have to take the first step toward healing the breach.

When personal relations go wrong, in nine cases out of ten, immediate action will mend them, but if that immediate action is not taken, they will continue to deteriorate, and the bitterness will spread in an ever-widening circle as people take up offenses. Paul stressed the importance of urgent reconciliation in Ephesians 4.

* Ephesians 4:26- Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

The Lord may be saying to us in the second place, "Put things right with your fellow-men, while life lasts, for some day—you know not
when--life will finish, and you will go to stand before God, the final Judge of all." It may well be that we do not need to choose between these two interpretations of this saying of Jesus. It may well be that both were in His mind, and that what Jesus is saying is: "If you want happiness in time, and happiness in eternity, never leave an unreconciled quarrel or an unhealed breach between yourself and your brother. Act immediately to remove the barriers which anger has raised."

If you do not know Christ as your Savior, you need to be reconciled with God, for your sin has separated you from the Lord. Paul stresses the urgency of being saved today, not tomorrow for there is no guarantee of tomorrow.

* 2 Corinthians 6:2- (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)
* James 4:14- Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

I like the story of Tweetie Bird. He got up one morning and prayed, "Dear Lord, today has been a good day so far. I haven’t fussed, cussed, lost my temper, eaten chocolate, or charged anything on my credit cards. But Lord, I’m about to get out of bed now and I’m going to need your help to help me do what is right and get me through the day.” We need the Lord’s help too, to get us through the day and to help us to have right relationships with people. God help us all!
Chapter 13
Addressing the Issue of Adultery
Matthew 5:27-32

Jesus has been dealing with the issue of our relationships with other people and what ruins those relationships. He has mentioned murder, sinful anger, contempt, belittling others, slander, and delay in reconciling differences. He now addresses a very destructive sin that harms our relationships with others, and with God. It is the sin of adultery. Let’s take a look at what He says.

I. THE STANDARD IS RAISED 5:27-28

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: [28] But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

How marvelous our Lord's words are! In one single sentence He elevated our entire concept of sexual purity beyond the mere physical to a matter of the soul and heart. In doing so, He has shown us our hearts and has uncovered the source of our trouble. His words are cutting and surgical. They expose to us our sin, and they show us His radical righteousness. In understanding what Jesus means, first let us see what He does not mean.

The pronoun I (ego) is emphatic, indicating that Jesus puts His own words above the authority of revered rabbinic tradition. The word "looks" from the Greek word blepo, is a present participle, and refers to the continuous process of looking. In this usage, the idea is not that of an incidental or involuntary glance, but of intentional and repeated gazing. Jesus is therefore speaking of intentional looking with the
purpose of lusting. Jesus does not mean it is wrong to look at a woman admiringly, but it is wrong to do so lustfully. He does not forbid the natural, normal attraction that is part of our humanity.

According to the literal meaning of the Greek text, the man who is condemned is the man who looks at a woman with the deliberate intention of lusting after her. The man who is condemned is the man who deliberately uses his eyes to awaken his lust, the man who looks in such a way that passion is awakened and evil desire deliberately stimulated. What He forbids is deep-seated lust that consumes the inner person. He is speaking of the man who fills his mind with pornography and nudity or who does any such thing with the expectation and desire of being sexually and sinfully titillated. He is not speaking of the natural, normal desire, which is part of human instinct and human nature.

This verse has also been translated another way. Klaus Haacker has convincingly argued that the phrase “to lust after her” can also be rendered "so as to get her to lust." The man is therefore looking at the woman with a view to enticing her to lust. Thus, so far as his intention goes, he is committing adultery with her, he makes her an adulteress. This does not weaken the force of Jesus’ teaching; the heart of the matter is still lust and intent.

Looking at a woman lustfully does not cause a man to commit adultery in his thoughts. He already has committed adultery in his heart. It is not lustful looking that causes the sin in the heart, but the sin in the heart that causes lustful looking. The lustful looking is but the expression of a heart that is already immoral and adulterous. The heart is the soil where the seeds of sin are imbedded and begin to grow.

* Matthew 15:19- For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Jesus thus, raises the standard of the law. God’s grace raises the standard of holy living because through the person of the Holy Spirit and the help of God’s grace, we are given the ability to live at a higher standard. Jesus makes clear that sensual sins are preceded by sensual fantasies. Such truth was illustrated in King David on a warm spring night in Palestine when he could not sleep and strode onto the rooftop garden for some cool evening air and a look at his city. As he gazed around, his eye caught the form of an unusually gorgeous woman bathing. As to how beautiful she was, the Hebrew is explicit: "The woman was exceedingly, abundantly beautiful in appearance." She was young, in the flower of life, and the evening shadows made her even more enticing.
David's look became a leer, and mental adultery ensued. His sexual engine shifted into fourth gear while his hormones were racing, and he would not be denied, even when his servant meekly reminded him that she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11:1-4).

The fantasy preceded the act, and that is how it has always been. No sensual sin was ever committed that was not first imagined. Scripture says this, and our experience confirms it. Our imagination (one of the faculties that distinguish us from animals) is one of God's wondrous gifts. Through it we dream great dreams. Without it there would be no great works of art or great achievements of science, but as with any of God's gifts, it must be used responsibly.

When abused, the imagination spawns great evil. Fantasized immorality is just as sinful to God as physical immorality. The fact that immorality that takes place in the brain has fewer bad consequences than immorality that takes place on a bed does not mitigate this truth. The question that comes up at this point is "How can we live a life of purity in this sex-saturated age of sensuality?" We will answer this question later in this message.

II. THE SOLUTION OF SURGERY  5: 29-30

And if thy right eye offend 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. [30] And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, 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.

This is tough teaching! Oswald Chambers said, "This line of discipline is the sternest one that ever struck mankind." It was also one of Jesus' favorite sayings because he used variations of it at various times. Some have taken Him literally. The most famous case is that of Origen of Alexandria who had himself physically castrated in an attempt to overcome his sensual desires. It is significant that not long afterward, the Council of Nicea outlawed the practice. Apart from the fact that such mutilation is contrary to Scripture, poor Origen still had his eyes, and if he had removed them, he would still have had his mind's eye to entertain his fantasies.

Another outstanding example in history of the wrong way to deal with such thoughts and desires was the hermits and the monks in the
desert in the time of the early Church. They were men who wished to free themselves from all earthly things, and especially of the desires of the body. To do so they went away into the Egyptian desert with the idea of living alone and thinking of nothing but God. They still had to contend with their flesh and desires.

Like Origen, Saint Anthony sought to escape immorality and lust by separating himself from the rest of society. He became a hermit in the Egyptian desert, where he lived in poverty and deprivation for thirty-five years. Yet by his own testimony, he was never freed in all that time from the cares and temptations he sought to escape. Because his heart was still in the world, he could not escape the world, and he quickly discovered that Satan, the god of this world, had no difficulty finding him in the desert.

So what is the Lord talking about here? Jesus is speaking of what we call "spiritual surgery or mortification." The word He uses for "offend" is interesting. The English word "offend" means "to displease; to make angry; to affront." This is by no means the sense of the word in Scripture here. This word is from the Greek word skandalizo.

Skandalon is a noun form of the this word which means the bait-stick in a trap. It was the stick or arm on which the bait was fixed and which operated the trap to catch the animal lured to its own destruction. So the word came to mean anything which causes a man's destruction. Behind it there are several pictures.

First, there is the picture of a hidden stone in a path against which a man may stumble, or of a cord stretched across a path, deliberately put there to make a man trip. Second, there is the picture of a pit dug in the ground and deceptively covered over with a thin layer of branches or turf, and so arranged that when the unwary traveler sets his foot on it, he immediately falls into the pit. It also means a net, or a certain part of a net, against which, if a bird strikes, it springs the net, and is captured.

Skandalon signifies anything by which we fall, or are ensnared. It is something which trips a man up, something which sends him crashing to destruction, or something which lures him to his own ruin. Applied to morals, it means anything by which we fall into sin, or by which we are ensnared. It means, to cause to fall, or to allure into sin. The eye does this, when it wantonly looks on a woman to lust after her. The "eye" is the member of the body most commonly blamed for leading us astray, especially in sexual sins.
* Ezekiel 20:8 - But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

Was Jesus actually advocating self-mutilation? Are we to pluck out our eyes and cut off our hands or feet? The words are literal to this extent: *if it were necessary to lose a part of your body rather than one’s soul, then we should gladly part with the body part.*

Parting with a body part is not going to get you into Heaven. Thank God, **it is never necessary to do this.** We can have eternal life through the saving power and grace of Jesus Christ when we put our faith in Him for salvation. When a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit empowers that believer to live a holy life. However, there must be cooperation and rigid discipline on the Christian’s part in dealing with his own sin.

 Cutting off or gouging out the offending part is a way of saying that Jesus’ disciples must deal radically with sin. Imagination is a God-given gift, but if it is fed garbage by the eye, it will be dirty. The right eye is not the source of sin; the heart of man is that source. Someone who had plucked out his right eye in an attempt to deal with lust would simply become a left-eyed luster!

The real source of the sin of adultery comes from within man’s heart or imaginations. If the problem is in the heart, what good is plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand? If the right eye were lost, the left would continue to look lustfully, and if the right hand were cut off, the left would still remain to carry on sinful acts. Mutilation will not cleanse your heart.

All sin, not least sexual sin, begins with the imagination. Therefore what feeds the imagination is of maximum importance in the pursuit of godly living. This is why we are to be guarded about what we think about in our mind.

* Philippians 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

The eye is the member of the body initially responsible for luring us into an immoral thought or deed. Those who take a literal interpretation
of this verse would have Jesus crippling every member of the human race. If the right eye is plucked, should not one pluck out his left eye as well? The problem with that reasoning is disposing of the eye would not remove the real cause of the problem, a lustful heart. Clearly this is a symbolic statement designed to make a point by overstatement. Jesus' point was that His disciples must deal radically with sin. We must avoid temptation at all costs. This is what He is talking about when He refers to plucking out eyes and cutting off hands.

**We must take drastic actions to deal with our temptations and sins.** Remove the temptations from your life at any cost. This may mean the removal of certain items of temptation from your home or the breaking off of certain friendships if your friends are bringing you down spiritually. This is painful, but amputation is painful.

Amputation involves pain, discomfort and even inconvenience. Therefore, to keep from committing adultery may require you to do some very painful things, but purity is worth the pain. A greater pain than any amputation is the pain of losing your purity and testimony for Christ. Those who have fallen into the sin of adultery know the pain it causes. Christ is saying that no matter how important something is to us, if it is a trap to adultery, cut it off, amputate it. In other words, get it out of your life! It takes severe action to combat a serious sin.

**Control your eyes! This is repeated throughout the Bible.**

*Job 31:1- I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?*

*Proverbs 4:25- Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*

*Psalm 119:3- Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.*

If your eye causes you to sin because temptation comes to you through your eyes (objects you see), then pluck out your eyes. In other words, don't look at the temptation and don't put yourself in the path of temptation if you can help it! Behave as if you had actually plucked out your eyes and flung them away, and were now blind and so could not see the objects which previously caused you to sin. Again, if your hand or foot causes you to sin, because temptation comes to you through your hands (things you do) or your feet (places you visit), then cut them off which means don't go to those places of temptation! Da! It really doesn't take any brains to figure this out. Behave as if you had actually cut off your hands and feet, and had flung them away, and were now crippled
and so could not do the things or visit the places which previously caused you to sin.

**Jesus is sharing with us the principle of taking drastic, severe measures when struggling with sin.** Jesus is telling us that anything that stands between us and Him must be ruthlessly, even savagely, torn out or cut off and thrown away. Drastic measures are always appropriate in order to protect one's spiritual health! Halfway measures will never do the job! How this strikes against our desire to seek the middle road, to never be too extreme either way, but it is Christ's advice, and some of us need to take some extreme measures today! This is what He is referring to in the statements about plucking out eyes and cutting off hands and feet. We must avoid our temptations at all costs lest we suffer from the painful consequences of adultery in our lives. What are those consequences? What are the effects of adultery? Let's pull over a park a bit and do a mini-study that answers this question.

* The Consequences of Adultery  
1. Double-dealing and Deceit-

Adultery is dishonest, and it promotes deceit. Adultery is often spoken of as "unfaithfulness." It is especially unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. The person who lives in immorality cannot be trusted. Immoral persons lie about their immorality and try to cover it up. The lying wreaks havoc on the marriage and creates suspicion and distrust, even after the affair has been terminated.

When David committed adultery, he began to try to cover up his sin by deceit. Where there is immorality, there is dishonesty and an unwillingness to acknowledge any wrong-doing. On May 3, 1987, the story of Gary Hart's fling with blond model and actress Donna Rice finally erupted into a national scandal. As it unraveled, the tale included accounts of her visit to his townhouse in Washington, a boat trip to Bimini, off the coast of Florida, as well as assorted reports about the promises he had allegedly made to her about their future together. Gary Hart showed no remorse.

* On May 5, he admitted he'd made a "big mistake" but insisted he had done "nothing immoral."
* On May 8, Hart announced he was withdrawing from the Presidential race.
* On May 25, Hart's picture with Donna Rice sitting on his lap appeared on the front page of a national weekly newspaper, along with an account
of their overnight trip to Bimini.
* On Sept. 22, Hart told Ted Koppel on ABC-TV's Nightline that he had not been "absolutely faithful" throughout his marriage.
* On December 15, Gary Hart announced he had decided to re-enter the Presidential race.
* On Jan. 9, he told a newspaper in Des Moines, Iowa, that, if elected, he "wouldn't be the first adulterer in the White House."
* By Jan. 13, he had received almost $1 million of taxpayers' money for his campaign.
* On Jan. 15, at the Democratic Presidential candidates debate in Iowa, he maintained that "there is a difference between public morality and private morality." His actions are summarized in Proverbs 30.
* Proverbs 30:20- Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

2. Debasement and Degradation

Immorality is beastly. In fact some vile people who would advocate immorality (they call it "free love" when it is neither "free" nor "love") speak of the sex drive as "bringing the beast out of me." Speaking like that only condemns them and emphasizes the debasement and cheapening effect of immoral conduct. Immorality does not help the dignity of a man or a woman. It does not inspire them to do great things. The guilt that comes from this kind of living make the person feel lousy as many have attested.

We hear a lot about dignity today, but little about the fact that immorality and adultery destroy dignity. Being immoral is the natural conduct of beasts who have no morals. What is amazing, however, is some beasts are more faithful to their partners than some humans. The dove is loyal to its mate. The stork is also generally faithful to its mate. Thomas Watson said, "Naturalists write that if a stork, leaving his own mate, joins with any other, all the rest of the storks fall upon it, and pull its feathers from it." Immoral conduct is not the way to honor, peace, love, and joy.

3. Disgrace and Dishonor

Immorality brings great dishonor. It dishonors both the Lord and the sinner. The worst thing about this sin and any sin is that it dishonors God. When David confessed his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, he acknowledged that his sin was against the Lord.
* Psalm 51:4- Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be
clear when thou judgest.

Adultery not only brings great dishonor to God, which is the worst thing about the sin, but it also dishonors the adulterer.
* Proverbs 6:32-33. But whoso committeeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. [33] A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

Someone once said, "Some, when they get wounds, get honor. The soldier's wounds are full of honor; the martyr's wounds for Christ are full of honor; but the adulterer gets wounds, but no honor to his name. His reproach shall not be wiped away. Wounds of reputation no physician can heal. When the adulterer dies, his shame lives. When his body rots underground, his name rots above ground. His base-born children are living monuments of his shame and disobedience to God's Word."

4. Depletion and Debt-

Adulterous and immoral conduct is costly and expensive. It drains your billfold and can leave you depleted financially or busted broke, especially if you are paying for prostitutes or trying to keep an illicit lover happy with possessions or expensive dates. This was the case with the prodigal son.
* Proverbs 6:26. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.
* Proverbs 29:3. Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.
* Luke 15:30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Divorce court settlements often reflect this truth with alimony payments, keeping the adulterer poor. Watson said, "Whores are the devil's horse-leeches, sponges that suck in money. The concubine of King Edward III, when he was dying, got all she could from him, and even plucked the rings off his fingers, and so left him."

Adultery depletes you emotionally too as guilt works like acid on your soul. The strain on your relationships becomes excessive, almost a nightmare. Hilde Houlding, coordinator of the Calgary Family Service Bureau's counseling division, describes an affair in this way: An affair is often an attempt to find a little bit of paradise on the side, pursuing the belief that if one just finds the right sexual partner there will be instant happiness and everything will fall into place. An affair is often able to fulfill this myth until it itself becomes a relationship that
5. **Disease and the Decay of health**

Venereal diseases come from immorality. These diseases ravage and destroy the body. VD could be stopped if people practiced purity in morals, but instead of purity, people resort to medicines to counter the diseases. Venereal diseases defy medicines. If a medicine works against one strain of VD, another strain of bacteria soon comes along that medicine will not affect. Immorality simply attacks the body. For this reason we are to flee from it like Joseph did when he fled from Potiphar's wife.

*Proverbs 5:11- And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed,

* 1 Corinthians 6:18-Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body: but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

*Proverbs 7:26- For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

6. **Disloyalty to a Spouse and possible Divorce**

Returning from Sunday School one day, where the Ten Commandments had been the topic, a young son asked his father, "Daddy, what does it mean when it says, 'Thou shalt not commit agriculture'?

There was hardly a beat between the question and the father's smooth reply: "Son, that just means that you're not supposed to plow the other man's field," an answer that was satisfactory to both of them.

Nothing has ruined so many marriages as adultery or plowing in another man's field. Linda Wolfe wrote a book on infidelity in marriage. She interviewed 66 women and found that 21 of them were having affairs to preserve their marriage. Five years later the author checked up on them to see if it worked. Only 3 out of 21 were still married, fully 81% were divorced.

**Nothing so populates the divorce courts as adultery.** If you want to keep your marriage intact, one of the important things you must do is practice moral purity. Purity is a must for a good marriage. In breaking the marriage vow through sexual unfaithfulness, the sinner shows dishonesty as we have already noted, and dishonesty kills trust in marriage. You certainly cannot have a strong marriage without trust. We've made adultery grounds for divorce. In actuality it's grounds for
forgiveness. By the grace of God, keep your marriage together even when your spouse has failed.

7. Destruction and Death-

Vera Czermak, of Prague, Czechoslovakia, discovered her husband was cheating on her. She contemplated both murder and suicide. Choosing the latter, she leaped out of a third-story window. She suffered only minor injuries, however, because she landed on her husband on the street below, killing him. Adultery breeds death. When you do not respect the beginning of life, you will not respect the ending of life. Countless murders have resulted from adultery.

Probably no story better illustrates how the stolen sweet waters of adultery turn invariably sour, than the story of Camelot. In this epic tale, the relationship of King Arthur and Queen Guenevere is trespassed upon when Arthur's most renowned and trusted knight, Lancelot, gingerly slips his toe across the marital boundary. It started with a look, an innocent look, without premeditation or evil intent, but it was a short, slippery step from a look to lust, from infatuation to infidelity. The look eventually led to a touch. The touch sometime later led to a kiss. The kiss led to sexual passion and their adulterous affair led to tragedy.

Furthermore, on this point, abortions abound because of the sexual immorality of couples. Bloodshed and immorality walk hand in hand. This relationship of death and adultery was very evident in David's life after his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. Bloodshed occurred in the death of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. David got rid of him in order to try to cover up his sin.

* Proverbs 7:27- Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

8. Doom and Damnation-

The sin of adultery damns the soul of the unrepentant adulterer or adulteress.

* Hebrews 13:4- Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

* 1 Corinthians 6:9-10...Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, [10] Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

While repentance from sin and trusting in Christ does indeed keep a person from Hell, it does not stop the curses that come upon the body.
There is a sense in which the judgment of God comes upon every adulterer in one way or another even though repentance may save the soul. Judgment will follow the adulterers, the immoral persons, all the days of their life on earth. It is a sin that will plague the sinner on earth as no other sin and carries a very high price tag.

We now come back to a question that we asked at the beginning of this message, but did not answer. How can we live a life of purity in this sex-saturated age of sensuality? How do we have a good thought life? There is no value in addressing a problem without providing some answers in solving it. Here are some solutions.

* Seven Principles for Having a Good Thought Life

Our mind is a battlefield and Satan is aggressive in trying to get control of our thoughts. If he can control our thoughts, he can influence our actions and attitudes. We are assaulted by his arsenal of weapons including the bombs of bitterness, whose shrapnel not only hurts us but others around us who are infected by our bitterness. The writer of Hebrews put it this way in Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled:

Satan also uses the darts of depression, defeat, and discouragement to weaken and disarm us from dedication to Christ. He will use arrows of anger to rob us of an attitude of joy and peace. The harpoon of hatred and the projectiles of pride will poison our spirit and quench our passion and love for Christ and for others. We must also contend with the spears of sensuality and lust that can rob us of our purity and testimony for the Lord.

Bitterness, depression, defeat, anger, hatred, pride, sensuality, and lust are thoughts that are unacceptable with God. So how do we keep them at bay? What can we do to get victory in our thought life and have thoughts that are acceptable to God? The Bible provides us with some answers to these questions. Here are seven vital steps you can implement to help you have victory in your thought life and have thoughts that are acceptable to God.

1. Realize Your Thoughts are Not Hidden from God.

* Psalm 94:11-The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.
Since we know the Lord knows our thoughts and that He cannot be fooled, it will help motivate us to be careful what we are thinking since we will be giving an account of our thoughts to the Lord one day. Steve Green expressed the struggle we all face when he said, “Accountability to me is unnatural. My tendency is to only let you know enough about me to give you a good impression. I am a recovering hypocrite.”

* Romans 14:12- So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

2. Reject the Lies of this World that Lead to Sinful Thoughts & Habits.

If people think that sinful habits or attitudes are not bad and will not hurt them, then there is a tendency to indulge in them or let them take root in the heart and mind. Indulging in things like pornography or harboring hatred, envy, or pride in your heart are destructive and sinful according to God’s standards of what is right and wrong. You will reap the consequences of these sins.

The "War Cry" carried a story about a tenant farmer who had worked hard for many years to improve the production of the land. Then something happened that caused him to become very bitter. When it was time to renew his lease, the owner told him he was going to sell the farm to his son who was getting married. The tenant made several generous offers to buy it himself, hoping the man's decision would be reversed, but it was all in vain.

As the day drew near for the farmer to vacate his home, his weeks of angry brooding finally got the best of him. He gathered seeds from some of the most pesky and noxious weeds he could find. Then he spent many hours scattering them on the clean, fertile soil of the farm, along with a lot of trash and stones he had collected.

To his dismay, the very next morning the owner informed him that plans for his son's wedding had fallen through, and therefore he would be happy to renew the lease. He couldn't understand why the farmer exclaimed in agonizing tones, "Oh, Lord, what a fool I've been!" The lesson is clear: Whatever we sow, we will eventually reap. When a person has been entangled in adultery, he can honestly say, “Oh, Lord, what a fool I’ve been!”

* Galatians 6:7 - Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap

* Proverbs 6:25-32 - Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. But whoso committeth adultery with a
woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

The sowing of disobedience usually begins in a mind that has been deceived into thinking that sin will not hurt you or you will not get caught. The truth of the matter is the fact that what is sown will eventually be reaped. If we are to have the right kind of thoughts, we must reject that which is unacceptable to God. We are not to be conforming to the philosophy and lifestyle of this sinful world. If our thinking is in conflict with God’s Word, then we are to change our thinking.

* Romans 12:1-2... I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

* 1 Peter 2:11- Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

3. Repress or Guard Your Mind from that Which is Unacceptable to God.

What kind of person we are becoming is determined by what we are taking into our heart. Tomorrow’s character is being fashioned by today’s thoughts. Temptation may come suddenly, but sin doesn’t. We become what we meditate upon, ponder, and fantasize. For this reason, we need to guard our heart.

* Proverbs 4:23 - Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

We are to be alert to those things that will enter and corrupt our thought life and stir up lustful desires or hate within us. We are to be careful about what we view, what we hear, and what we touch and feel. It is vital that we not willingly put ourselves into situations that will tempt us to do wrong or have the wrong kinds of thoughts. We are not to make provision for failure or for our flesh.

* Romans 13:14 - But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

* Psalm 101:3- I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

* Job 31:1- I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

* Psalm 119:37-Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.
If you are struggling with lust or other bad thoughts, then identify the times when they come into your mind. If the company we keep stirs up unacceptable thoughts, then we need to keep company with people that will build us up spiritually and not bring us down. Joseph knew that Potiphar’s wife was bad company and fled from her.

* 1 Corinthians 15:33- Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Bad company corrupts good morals.

**That which is lustful can be avoided according to the Bible.** As Christians, we do have a choice to say “No” to that which is wrong. We should do our best to prevent temptations in our lives. It is much easier to avoid temptation than to resist it. Don’t flirt with disaster! Don’t resist temptation when you can run from it and not have to deal with it in the first place. This is what Joseph did. It pays to be a coward when it comes to sexual temptation.

* 2 Timothy 2:22- Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

* Titus 2:12- Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

4. **Request God’s Help in Prayer for the Right Kind of Thoughts.**

Ask God to help you with your thought life.

* Psalm 51:10- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

* Psalm 139:23,24- Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

* Psalm 26:2- Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

* Luke 18:1- And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; We often fall on our knees after we lose a battle. We need to fall upon our knees before we face our battles and temptations.

When you are tempted to do that which is wrong, use the temptation as a prayer trigger to confront and escape the temptation. When tempted with a bad or improper thought, then pray for someone. Plan ahead of time who you will pray for and do it every time you have the wrong kind of thoughts. This truth was taught by Paul when he spoke of using the temptation as a way of escape.

* 1 Corinthians 10:13- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be
tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

5. Rivet Your Mind on the Lord Jesus Christ and Upon that Which is Good.

Think about the Lord throughout the day. This is what is good about praying because it gets your focus on the Lord instead of that which is harmful.

* Isaiah 26:3- Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.
* Philippians 4:8-Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Jesus fulfills every one of these areas. He is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of a good report, virtuous, and praise-worthy. Another activity you can do is read good books such as Bible study books or biographies of great Christians.

6. Read and Ruminate (meditate) Upon the Word of God

The adventures of Mickey Mouse are now available in 284 languages, more than the works of Lenin or Agatha Christie, but the Bible, or portions of it, can now be read in more than 1,907 languages. What an opportunity for the world today.

Beloved, read God’s Word and fill your mind with Scripture by memorizing it. This is absolutely vital for victory in your thought life. Once you memorize the Word, think upon it throughout the day and night. I love to take a verse and think about it all throughout the day and in the night when I am resting. The Holy Spirit has revealed to me many wonderful truths from Scripture when I apply this practice in my life. Meditate upon God’s Word and the Lord will reveal wonderful insights to you. The Bible is the most powerful weapon that we have in getting victory in our thought life. It helps deal with bitterness, depression, defeat, anger, hatred, pride, sensuality, and lust.

* Psalm 119:11-Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
* Psalm 119:97- O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.
* Psalm 119:165- Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.
* Psalm 1:2 - But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth
he meditate day and night.

*Joshua 1:8- This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

*Psalm 40:8- I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

*Colossians 3:16- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

*John 15:3- Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. God's Word has a cleansing effect upon our mind. It gives us direction and purpose.

During the early days of World War II, when the Nazis invaded France, French citizens took down all signposts. As the Nazi armies advanced, they didn't know which way to turn or in what direction lay their objective. Does it seem to you that the signposts of life have all been taken down? They were not taken down by us to confuse the enemy; they were taken down by the enemy to confuse us. We don't know which way to turn until we open the Scriptures. The only reliable signposts are there, and effective solutions for our problems are found within its pages.

**God's Word is powerful and always effective.** It was at a missionary committee meeting in England that the chairperson startled the people by claiming he had founded a growing Christian group in India. They knew he had never been outside of England. He explained that when he was five years old, he had been impressed by a story of missions in India. He didn't want to just put his penny in the box. The pastor had a friend who was a missionary. The little boy bought a Bible, put his own name on the flyleaf, and mailed it to India. The missionary gave it to a poor man who had walked miles to ask for a Bible. Twenty years passed, and a visitor to a remote Indian village found the people there were Christians. No missionary had ever visited them, but they showed him a well-used New Testament with a boy's name on the flyleaf. Beloved, never underestimate the power of God's Word.

*Isaiah 55:11- So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
7. Be Responsible or Accountable to Someone who is Spiritually Mature.

One of the key factors in getting victory over a sin problem is making your self accountable to someone for your spiritual condition. This person could be a pastor, parent, or a godly Christian friend. It should be someone that makes you uncomfortable about sin and it should be someone of the same sex if possible. The person should have the freedom to ask probing questions about your life and thoughts. If you know that someone is going to ask you what you are looking at or thinking about, you are going to be careful what you do. That is the goal of accountability.

Married for 16 years and with two great kids, Kurt Stansell seems to have it all together. He has a successful investment counseling business, and he's a founding elder at his church, and he's a sex addict. Kurt's the first to admit it. For years, Kurt struggled with pornography. It started with magazines, but eventually turned into visits to Triple-X theaters and strip joints. Kurt kept repeating a cycle of guilt and remorse, then prayer and repentance, only to find himself back at it again.

Eventually, Kurt found an accountability partner. At first, Kurt held back, being less than honest about his problem. But when he finally confessed, telling his friend the whole truth, Kurt immediately felt a weight lifted from his shoulders. He was on the road to victory. Kurt said, "I began to understand what shame does. When we Christians try to hide something in the darkness, we give Satan incredible license to work in our lives. So, the more open I could be, the less of a hold Satan seemed to have." The principle of accountability is seen in James 5 as we confess, profess, or acknowledge our weaknesses to the person we have made ourselves accountable to.

* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The word “confess” can also be translated “profess or acknowledge.” Notice also what Paul and Peter said.

* Ephesians 5:21- Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

The words "submitting yourselves" comes from the Greek word hupotasso {hoop-ot-as'-so} which means "to subordinate or to subject one's self; to yield to one's admonition or advice." This same word and concept is taught in 1 Peter 5:5.

* 1 Peter 5:5- Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.
Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Putting these seven steps into practice will help you to have thoughts that are acceptable to the Lord. We have seen The Standard is Raised and the Solution of Surgery, we will now address the final section of this topic, The Subject of Divorce.

III. THE SUBJECT OF DIVORCE 5:31-32

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: [32] But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. All right, what does this mean? The key to understanding this passage is understanding the Greek word for “fornication” in this context, the word porneia, and the audience to whom it was written to. The book of Matthew was written to a Jewish audience. The purpose of the book was to picture Christ as King of the Jews. This is very significant.

Some have claimed that “fornication” means “adultery,” which means that a person can get divorced on these grounds. This was not the position of the early church Fathers who believed in the permanency of marriage. This view of adultery was promoted by Erasmus in the 1500's. This made him popular with Charles V, Frances I of France, and Henry VIII of England who wanted to divorce his wife Catherine and marry Ann Boleyn. Martin Luther broke with the Roman Catholic church, but adopted the view of Erasmus on divorce and remarriage which is still popular today.

The word porneia does not refer to adultery here. If adultery was intended in the passage, the Greek word moicheia {moy-khi'-ah} would have been used. In Jewish culture, adultery was not settled by a divorce. The adulterer was stoned to death. The word “fornication” here is obviously not a reference to adultery.

* Leviticus 20:10- And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.
So what does “fornication” or *porneia* mean in these verses? The context gives the answer. Remember, Matthew is addressed to Jewish readers. The exception clause that is given in the book of Matthew does not show up in the books of Mark and Luke. Why? Mark and Luke target Gentile readers. Gentiles would not understand Jewish Law and the Jewish meanings given to the word *porneia*. The book of Matthew also makes no mention about “putting the husband away” because no provision was made in Jewish culture to do this. Jewish wives did not do this unlike Greek and Roman wives. I believe the “exception clause” in Matthew refers to three key exceptions that the Jews would understand.

A. The word *porneia* refers to unfaithfulness during the Jewish betrothal period.

In Jewish society, once a couple exchanged gifts to be betrothed, the contract to be married was binding. Usually a year was spent preparing for the actual wedding. The marriage was consummated on the first night of the wedding feast. During this one year engagement or betrothal period, if unfaithfulness or sexual uncleanness was discovered, the contract could be broken with a bill of divorcement. If it was discovered on the wedding night that the wife was not a virgin, the covenant was considered fraudulent and could be broken.

An example of betrothal concerns is found in Matthew 1 with Joseph and Mary.

* Matthew 1:19- Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. Joseph was going to put Mary away privately until the angel intervened and told Joseph what was going on.

B. The word *porneia* in Jewish society also referred to incestuous marriages.

* Leviticus 18:6-18... None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord. [7] The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. [8] The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness. [9] The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. [10] The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness. [11] The nakedness of thy
father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. [12] Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman. [13] Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman. [14] Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt. [15] Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. [16] Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness. [17] Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness. [18] Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.

The phrase "to uncover the nakedness" is a Hebrew idiom which means "to have sexual relations." In the Corinthian church, there was a problem with incest.

* 1 Corinthians 5:1- It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. Incestuous marriages were to be terminated.

C. The word *porneia* in Jewish culture referred also to homosexual marriages.

* Leviticus 18:22 - Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.
* Romans 1:28,29- And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers. Fornication can refer to homosexuality.
* Jude 1:7- Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.
* Genesis 1:28-- And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
Sodomite marriages would not be able to fulfill God's design seen in Adam and Eve. The first couple in the Garden was not Adam and Steve, it was Adam and Eve. Who would have ever dreamed that America would have to deal with homosexual marriages. God says that such marriages are to be dissolved. They are an abomination to Him. This is His standard for the home. The phrase “gay church” is an oxymoron or a contradiction in terms. There is no such creature. If it was a true genuine church of believers, they would not be indulging in this kind of wickedness or abomination which the Word of God clearly condemns.

If you have suffered a divorce and remarried another person that is of the opposite sex and not an incestuous relationship, do not terminate your marriage. Serve the Lord with that partner and purpose to be a spiritual re-builder that encourages other struggling couples to work out the problems in their marriages instead of getting a divorce. You will have some limitations, but you can still be used of God to win others to Christ, encourage Christians, and glorify the Lord.
Chapter 14
Proper Principles About Our Promises
Matthew 5:33-37

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been addressing all aspects of the life of the Christian and He does not pull any punches at all. He raises the standard of Christian living by stating what the Old Testament law teaches and then commands us to live at a higher level of spirituality. He does this by saying the law says this, but this is what I say unto you. In this section of His sermon, He deals with all aspects of our senses.

* In verse 28, He deals with our eyes and thoughts. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.
* In verse 39, He will deal with our temper. 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.
* In verses 40 and 42, He deals with our hands. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
* In verse 41, He addresses our legs. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
* In verse 43-44, the Lord directs His focus upon our will and emotions. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them
that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
* Here in verse 33-37, the Lord spends time talking about what comes from our tongue. He gives instructions about the issue of vows and oaths.

I. THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR VOWS  5:33

Again, ye 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:

W e are to keep the vows or oaths that we have made to the Lord. The two vows mentioned here are from two different, but related, Greek terms. The first, "thou shalt not forswear thyself," is from the verb epiarkeo, which means "to perjure oneself, to swear falsely, to make false vows." The second reference to performing oaths is from the noun horkos, which literally means "to enclose, as with a fence, or to bind together." Thus, the truth of an oath or vow is enclosed, bound, and therefore strengthened by that which is invoked on its behalf.

An oath is any statement calling on the Lord to affirm the truth of what is being said. Most of the time we think of an "oath" as a solemn swearing in the name of God given in a courtroom or in some other serious situation and that is indeed an "oath." An oath can also refer to what we call cursing or cussing. Basically an oath is used to strengthen a statement. In a courtroom situation, an oath is used to affirm the testimony of a witness in the court case. In an informal situation, an oath may involve profanity, which is unfortunately salted or drenched into a conversation to make an emphasis in the statement.

From this and the rest of the Old Testament we understand two things about swearing vows and oaths. First of all, when we look at the Old Testament, we find that proper, sacred, serious, sincere vows were actually encouraged!

* Deuteronomy 10:20- Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

* Isaiah 65:16 - That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Not only were people encouraged to make vows and oaths, but they were encouraged to do so in the name of the Lord Himself!
Making promises or vows in God's name was not only presumed but encouraged in the Old Testament! In Jeremiah 12:16, 17 the Bible mentions that having to swear an oath in God's name would be a sign of grace and blessing.

* Jeremiah 12:16-17... And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. [17] But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.

When we study the Bible we find that even God Himself made oaths on certain occasions, not because the Lord sometimes lies, but to impress His truthfulness upon people.

* Genesis 22:16-17... And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: [17] That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

* Hebrews 6:13-14, 17... For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, [14] Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. [17] Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

It is very apparent and obvious that the promises of the Lord made with His oath were no more truthful or binding than anything else He already promised. It is not that God makes an oath because His Word would otherwise be questionable or unreliable. He is the epitome of truth. He made an oath because He wished to impress upon men a special importance or urgency related to the promise.

* Psalm 89:3- I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

* Psalm 110:4 - The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

When we look at Jesus, we find that many times our Lord used the phrase “Truly I say to you” and the even more emphatic “Truly, truly, I say to you” to call our attention to a teaching of vital importance. As with God’s oaths, the words Jesus introduced with “truly” are no more truthful than anything else He said, but emphasize the unique importance of certain points of His teachings. It is important to note that Jesus Himself swore an oath before Caiaphas that He was the Christ, the Son
of God.
* Matthew 26:63-64. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest
answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou
tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. [64] Jesus saith unto
him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see
the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the
clouds of heaven.

Paul also testified under oath.
* Romans 1:9- For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the
gospel of his Son. that without ceasing I make mention of you always in
my prayers;
* 2 Corinthians 1:23- Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul,
that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.
* 1 Thessalonians 2:5 - For neither at any time used we flattering words,
as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:
* 1 Thessalonians 2:10- Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and
justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

What was looked down upon, was making a vow or swearing to
do something, and then not doing it. This truth and warning was
repeatedly stressed by Moses. Vows were assumed, even encouraged,
but once they were made, they were not to be broken under any
circumstances. The Bible taught that making vows was serious business.
This means that your marriage vows or promises that you have made to
the Lord are not to be taken lightly.
* Deuteronomy 23:21- When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy
God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely
require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.
* Leviticus 19:12- And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither
shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.
* Numbers 30:2- If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to
bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do
according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

II. THE PROBLEM OF FLIPPANT VOWS  5:34-36

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is
God's throne: [35] Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by
Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. [36] Neither shalt thou
swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or
black.
In Jesus' time the traditional, Biblical teaching had come under massive abuse. The problem that developed in the time of Jesus was the fact that while the Jews professed to keep the law, they had introduced a number of oaths in their daily common conversations that were not considered as binding oaths. Somewhere along the line some rabbis (but not all rabbis) began to teach that an oath was not binding if it did not include God's name or imply it.

For example, they would swear by the Temple, by the head, by the beard, by the life of the king, by Heaven, by the earth, etc. As long as the people kept from swearing an oath in the name of God, and as long as they observed the oaths that were publicly taken, they seemed to consider all other oaths as allowable and breakable.

The Jewish Mishna devotes one whole section called Shebuoth ("Oaths") to an elaborate discussion of when oaths are binding and when they are not. The swearing of oaths had degenerated into a system of rules as to when you could lie and when you could not. Their use of oaths was like children saying, "I have my fingers crossed, so I don't have to tell the truth."

This is the abuse which Jesus was addressing and trying to correct. It was the practice of swearing oaths in common conversations, and especially making oaths by created things that were being addressed. Their flippant attitude about oaths and vows caused the Jews to be mistaken in their views of the sacredness of oaths. Oaths were connected with God and to trifle with them was considered as trifling with God.

Does this saying of Jesus then forbid a man to take an oath under any circumstance, for instance, in the witness box in a court room? I don't think so. We have already seen that men like Jesus and Paul made oaths. I believe what the Lord is referring to here is that we should not be making flippant, trivial, insincere oaths that we are not going to keep. We are not to be a bunch of liars. I see nothing wrong in making a vow or an oath that is sincere and sacred, especially wedding vows.

Really, as Christians, our character should be so sterling that we should not have to make a vow to anyone because we are honest and truthful all the time. We should keep our word and our promises. Obviously an oath, no matter how strong the words used, is only as reliable as the one who makes it. The ideal is that a man should never need an oath to buttress or guarantee the truth of anything he may say.
The man's character should make an oath completely unnecessary. His guarantee and his witness should lie in what he is himself. Socrates, the Greek teacher and orator, said, "A man must lead a life which will gain more confidence in him than ever an oath could do." Clement of Alexandria insisted that Christians must lead such a life and demonstrate such a character that no one will ever dream of asking an oath from them. The man who is always trusted and believed, is he whose character is beyond suspicion in all things, who obeys all the laws of God, and whose simple declaration therefore is enough. A man that is truly a Christian, and leads a Christian life, does not need oaths and profaneness to make him believed.

Beloved, when we are dishonest and deceitful, we not only hurt ourselves, we also hurt others and rob them of blessings. For example, the islands around Indonesia are among the most beautiful in the world—crystalline tropical water, beautiful reefs with fish colored in every hue of the rainbow, powerful waves, and tranquil bays. Tourists, surfers, and scuba divers from around the world have discovered these hidden jewels and pay large sums of money to enjoy this unspoiled aquatic playground, but many of the locals won’t swim in these waters. Neither will they dive, surf, wade, bathe, or do anything else that places their bodies in the warm, inviting water.

Their fear of the water is so powerful that even though they are surrounded by ocean and must sail out in fishing boats for their daily sustenance, hardly any of the islanders ever learned to swim. Why do they deny themselves the pleasure of exploring the natural wonders all around them? The answer is because a long time ago, someone told them a lie. Someone told them that the ocean was full of demons and that swimming in it would bring harm to themselves and their families and many Indonesian islanders still believe it. In fact, the recent tsunami only inflamed this belief.

III. PROPER COMMUNICATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN 5:37

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

God’s absolute, unchanging standard is truth and honesty in everything. Not only should oaths be totally truthful and dependable, but even our most routine conversations should be truthful and Christlike in every detail. Let your communication or statements be,
"Yes, yes" or "No, no." Anything beyond this tends to come from the Evil One. Every normal word in the course of our daily speech should be a truthful word, unadorned in regard to its truthfulness. A person's words, message, or speech should be as good as his bond and as good as his oath or vow.

If we do not exercise self-control in our speech, we can end up saying things we will later regret. When a person's tongue gets out of control, he can spew out lies and profanity that hurt his testimony for Christ. Such speech is influenced by Satan. Beloved, God's people should not be using His name in vain.

Traveling on a plane next to a salesman, Dr. Graham asked him, "Are you paid anything for all the swearing you do?" "No," was the startled reply, "I do it for nothing." "Nothing?" cried the famous preacher. "You work cheap! You throw aside your character as a gentleman, inflict pain on your friends, break the Lord's commandments, and endanger your own soul -- and all for nothing! You certainly work cheap -- TOO CHEAP!" Yes, swearing is not only a "cheap" practice in many ways, but it is also a terrible sin which grieves the heart of God!

* Titus 2:7-8 ... In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. [8] Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. We are to have sound conversation that cannot be criticized, so that any opponent will be at a loss, because he has nothing evil to say about us.

We are to be truthful people. Deception and lies will come back to bite us. Coming home from work, a woman stopped at the corner deli to buy a chicken for supper. The butcher reached into a barrel, grabbed the LAST chicken he had, flung it on the scales behind the counter, and told the woman its weight. She thought for a moment. "I really need a bit more chicken than that," she said. "Do you have any larger ones?" Without a word, the butcher put the chicken back into the barrel, groped around as though finding another, pulled the same chicken out, and placed it on the scales. "This chicken weighs one pound more," he announced. The woman pondered her options and then said, "Okay. I'll take them both." Uh Oh, he was caught. Beloved, honesty and truthfulness are still the best policy.
Chapter 15
Going the Second Mile
Matthew 5:38-42

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: [39] 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. [40] And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. [41] And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. [42] Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

When I attended Normal Community High School, home of the Ironmen (yea!), I went out for the track team for two years. The month of February and March were difficult months because we were getting in shape for the season. This involved a lot of running in track practice after school. There were times we would have to run a mile at practice. If our coach was not pleased with our performance, we would have to run more laps, sometimes another extra mile. That was rough, believe me! I remember one time, puking on the track after such a practice. Going the second mile is uncomfortable and not easy at all and what Jesus is instructing us to do in this section of His sermon is by far not easy either.

We live in a country where we are very concerned about our rights. Movements have been developed for civil rights, women’s rights, children’s rights, workers’ rights, prisoners’ rights, and so on. The principles given here go against the grain because we have to surrender our rights to be in compliance with what the Lord is instructing us to do.

This section of the Sermon on the Mount has to do with the proper response when one is personally wronged. How is a Christian who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit supposed to react to personal offenses? Jesus provides some radical answers in this section which are 180 degrees different than the philosophies of this world which says, “Fight back and
get revenge.” These principles are difficult for us because they not only go against the flesh, but they are ridiculed by a carnal, unsaved society that says you are weak or cowardly if you do not fight back and get revenge.

The selfishness of our society has made us consumed with our rights and unconcerned about others. “I want mine!” has become our motto. Insisting on our rights sometimes tends to trample the rights and the welfare of others. James addressed this attitude in his epistle.

* James 4:1-2... From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? [2] Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

We tend to fume, fuss, fight or feud with those that frustrate, dictate, mandate, or debate with us. The Lord more or less says, “This needs to stop. I want you to go the second mile when you are attacked, abused, arraigned, taken advantaged of, or asked for help.” Let’s buckle up and journey through these verses which will provide a rough ride for our selfish, fleshly nature. Let’s find out what it means to go the second mile.

I. GO THE SECOND MILE WHEN ATTACKED & ABUSED 5:38-39

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: [39] 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.

Where did this phrase “eye for an eye” come from? The phrase “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth,” is an exact quotation from three Old Testament passages (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21) and represents one of the oldest, well-known laws in the world. This is the law of retaliation, which is technically known as Lex (Law) Talionis (retaliation). The earliest reference to Lex Talionis comes from the Code of Hammurabi who reigned in Babylon from 2285 to 2242 B.C. This law obliged the offender to suffer the same injury he had inflicted upon another person.

The Greeks and Romans had the same law. So strictly was it attended to at Athens, that if a man put out the eye of another who had but one, the offender was condemned to lose both his eyes, as the loss of
one would not be an equivalent misfortune. It seems that the Jews had made this law (the execution of which belonged to the civil magistrate) a ground for authorizing private resentments, and all the excesses committed by a vindictive spirit. Revenge was often carried to the utmost extremity, and more evil returned than what had been received. Human vengeance is never satisfied with justice; it wants a pound of flesh for an ounce of offense. That is one reason why God restricts vengeance to Himself.

*Romans 12:19 - Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

*Hebrews 10:30- For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.*

**Some may conclude that this was a ruthless law.** On the contrary it is far from being savage legislation. It was merciful because it limited the vengeance of the punisher. The typical primitive blood feuds between tribes, families, or nations, knew nothing of equity, just revenge. If a man of one tribe injured a man of another tribe, then at once all the members of the tribe of the injured man were out to take vengeance on all the members of the tribe of the man who committed the injury, and the vengeance desired was nothing less than death. A small infraction by one tribe against another, such as trespassing, was met with a beating, which was returned by homicide, which was then countered by genocide. Lex Talionis did away with this on paper at least.

Today we recognize Lex Talionis as foundational to all justice. The whole system of civil, penal, and international law is based on the idea of reparation and equity that has its roots in Lex Talionis. As it exists in the Bible, Lex Talionis was given to the judges of Israel as a basis for sentencing or punishment. It lays it down that only the man who committed the injury must be punished, and his punishment must be no more than the equivalent of the injury he has inflicted and the damage he has done. Seen against its historical setting this is not a savage law, but a law of mercy which deliberately limits vengeance. Individuals were not permitted to use this law to settle personal disputes with others.

Still further, this law was never, at least in any even semi-civilized society, carried out literally. The Jewish jurists argued rightly that to carry it out literally might in fact be the reverse of justice, because it obviously might involve the displacement of a good eye or a good tooth
for a bad eye or a bad tooth. Very soon the injury done was assessed at a monetary value.

The Jewish law in the tractate *Baba Kamma* of the Babylonian Talmud carefully lays down how the damage done to a person is to be assessed. If a man has injured another, he is liable on five different counts which included injury, pain, healing, loss of time, and any indignity that was suffered. The person was compensated for loss of abilities to work, medical expenses, lost wages, pain and suffering. It sounds much like today's compensation packages.

* The Striking of the Cheek

*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.*

What is Jesus talking about here? What does the Lord mean by the statement, “Resist not evil and turn the other cheek?” First, let’s make clear what He is NOT talking about.

* This passage does not teach that Christians are a bunch of doormats to be trampled upon.
* It does not mean we are to encourage evil, and be negligent in resisting or opposing evil or wickedness. We are to resist Satan and his work. *Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* (1 Peter 5:9)
* It does not mean we are to encourage or assist criminals or let the criminal go unreported.
* It does not mean we are to embrace or yield to temptations and give in to sinful living. *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* (James 4:7)
* This does not refer to policemen or soldiers that protect and defend us. Romans 13:1-7 teaches that the state is a divine institution that has the power to punish wrongdoers. This is impossible without force.
* It does not support pacifism and the basis of refusal to go into the military as the Quakers insist.
* This does not indict a nation that goes to war against an evil nation, dictator, or terrorists.
* This does not mean that church discipline is wrong. (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5).
* This passage does not mean we are to offer no opposition to evil men when they threaten our families. Jesus did not intend to teach that we are to see our families murdered, or be murdered ourselves, rather than to make resistance. If a woman is being raped, she is to defend herself and
fight off her attacker.
* This does not mean that protests of unkind conduct are prohibited. This was demonstrated by Christ at His own trial. When one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, Jesus answered him and said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me" (John 18:22,23). Christ did not strike back with His fist, but He did protest the officer’s actions. In so doing, His action fulfilled the principle of turning the other cheek. He did not retaliate, but He did protest solemnly which is permissible and practical in most cases.

So what is this all about? Jesus is describing here an intentional, calculated insult. An insult can be done by more than physical abuse but also with verbal abuse. Notice carefully that Jesus specifically mentions the striking of the right cheek which tells us He is describing a backhanded slap. Since most people are right-handed, this is surely what Jesus had in mind.

In Jesus’ time, if you wanted to really insult someone, you would slap them with the back of your hand. According to rabbinic law, to hit someone with the back of the hand was twice as insulting as hitting him with the flat of the hand. The back of the hand meant calculated contempt or withering disdain for a person. It meant that you were insulted, vilified, and scorned as a nobody. You were considered worthless or as nothing. Understanding this custom is essential in understanding what this passage is talking about.

It will not happen very often, if at all, that anyone will slap us on the face, but time and time again, life brings to us insults, either great or small, and Jesus is saying here that the true Christian has learned to not resent and seek retaliation for insults and abuses. Jesus himself was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. He was called the friend of tax gatherers and harlots, with the implication that He was like the company He kept. The early Christians were also maligned as they were called cannibals and incendiaries, and were accused of shameless immorality because their church service included the Love Feast.

When Jesus spoke of being slapped on the right cheek, He was describing especially an insult that comes because of one’s faith. It was an insult for which a Jew could seek legal satisfaction according to the law of Lex Talionis. That is, the person could seek damages, but Jesus says, “Do not do it!” “If you are dishonored as a heretic,” says Jesus, “you should not go to law about it. Instead, you should show yourselves to be truly my disciples by the way in which you bear the hatred, abuse,
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and the insult by overcoming the evil and forgiving the injustice." In short, Jesus was saying that though you could take your opponent to the cleaners, do not do it! Lovingly absorb the insult, hurt, pain, rejection, and abuse.

**Turning the cheek is more of an illustration of a principle to live by than of a literal action.** It is more of an attitude of your heart than a physical posture. It shows an attitude opposite of retaliation. Anything more than that will interpret this action wrongly. Turning the cheek is a principle that says I will not fight back and retaliate but will leave the execution of judgment to the Lord.

* Romans 12:17- Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.
* Romans 12:19- Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

What this means for us is that when we are insulted or abused for Christ's sake (whatever form that insult may take), we must not respond by becoming bitter and getting even, by getting our legal pound of flesh according to the Lex Talionis, but must turn the other cheek, especially the cheek of our heart. Jesus calls us to swallow our pride and give up our "rights" to reparation and fairness. Our Lord is saying we should not attempt personal vengeance, even through the means of the law, to compensate for a personal injury. Rather than avenging yourself, we are to be ready to suffer patiently a repetition of the same injury. We are to endure repeated insults.

These exhortations belong to those principally who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Let such leave the judgment of their cause to Him for whose sake they suffer. This is what the Apostle Paul did for the sake of Christ. He declared his rights, but suffered and yielded his rights for the sake of the Gospel.

* I Corinthians 9:1, 4-6, 12... Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? Have we not power to eat and to drink? [5] Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? [6] Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Sometimes we think we are turning the other cheek, when in essence
we are not. An old Chinese proverb says, “If thine enemy wrong thee, buy each of his children a drum.” If you have any kids, you will know that these gifts were not a blessing to the parent. I like the story about a truck driver who dropped in at an all-night restaurant in Broken Bow, Nebraska. The waitress had just served him when three swaggering, leather-jacketed motorcyclists -- of the Hell's Angels type -- entered and rushed up to him, apparently spoiling for a fight. One grabbed the hamburger off his plate; another took a handful of his French fries; and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it. The trucker did not respond as one might expect. Instead, he calmly rose, picked up his check, walked to the front of the room, put the check and his money on the cash register, and went out the door.

The waitress followed him to put the money in the cash register and stood, watching out the door as the big truck drove away into the night. When she returned, one of the cyclists said to her, "Well, he's not much of a man, is he?" She replied, "I can't answer as to that, but he's not much of a truck driver. He just ran over three motorcycles out in the parking lot." Both of these stories are examples of not really turning the other cheek, are they?

To turn the cheek and forgive someone involves three things. First, it means to forego the right of striking back. One rejects the urge to repay gossip with gossip and a bad turn with a worse turn. Second, it means replacing the feeling of resentment and anger with good will, a love which seeks the other's welfare, not harm. Third, it means the forgiving person takes concrete steps to restore good relations. Going the second mile when we are attacked and abused is not easy, going the first mile is not easy, but it can be done, yielding our rights to the Lord and letting Him take care of our problems. We belong to Him.

* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20... What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? [20] For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

II. GO THE SECOND MILE WHEN ARRAIGNED  5:40

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

In this section, the Lord gives us an example in which you may not be wronged but rather are in the wrong. You are at fault or
responsible for an offense or problem. Those times do come don’t they. It is a case in which you are judged and declared guilty or accountable in court or elsewhere and must pay for damages. This illustration says we are to go the second mile and not become bitter and retaliate, but be of an attitude that would also give up the cloak. In other words, we are to go the second mile in trying to rectify the situation and treat others right.

**What is this coat and cloak business?** The coat and cloak refer to two different garments in Jewish culture. The Jews wore two principal garments, an interior and an exterior. The interior, here called the "coat," or the tunic, was made commonly of linen, and encircled the whole body, extending down to the knees. The coat, or tunic, was extended to the neck, and had long or short sleeves. Over this was commonly worn an upper garment, here called "cloak," or mantle. It was shaped in a square, of different sizes, seven to nine feet long, and as many feet broad. It was wrapped around the body and thrown off when labor was performed. The cloak was worn over the top of a coat or inner garment. The poorest man would have a change of tunics, but only one cloak or mantle. The cloak was very important and greatly used or depended upon. To lose it would be a great loss.

When a person had no money or other possessions, the court often would require the fine or judgment be paid by his clothing, since that was all he had. It was possible in that day to sue others for the very shirt on their backs. The attitude of a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ should be a willingness to surrender even one’s coat, his extremely valuable outer garment or valuable possession, rather than cause offense or hard feelings with an adversary or someone we have wronged or harmed. Ouch!

**No one could take another's cloak or outer mantle for a permanent, twenty-four-hour-a-day possession.** The cloak was the outer robe and was absolutely essential for living in Israel. It kept a person warm when it was cold or rainy and also served as a blanket for sleeping. So even if you lost your shirt or coat in court to pay a fine, and your opponent asked for your cloak also because the shirt was not enough and won it, he still had to return the outer cloak or mantle every evening for you to sleep in. That was the law, but it would not thrill the prosecutor or plaintiff. It would be a great inconvenience to them. In fact, it would generate more bitterness and irritation.

*Exodus 22:26-27... If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: [27] For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall*
he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear: for I am gracious.

The cloak or mantle, however, could be voluntarily given to meet the required debt and that is precisely what Jesus says we should be willing to do. We are to go beyond our legal rights. If a legal judgment is fairly made against us for a certain amount, we should be willing to offer even more in order to show our regret for any wrong we did and to show that we are not bitter or resentful against the one who has sued us. In so doing we will show the love of Christ. The Lord was saying that it is better even to be defrauded than to be resentful and spiteful. Going the second mile would help in defusing the anger and frustration of the other person with us.

Nothing will bring out your anger and vengeance swiftly as a lawsuit. The other guy is viewed many times as “the enemy.” Sometimes, even though we are in the wrong, we want to retaliate when justice is executed against us. It is the flesh’s habit to feel this way. For example, if a person has a financial catastrophe and cannot make their rent and the land lord wants to evict them for default on the rent payment, which is their justified and legal right, the person being evicted may retaliate and do some damage to the house or apartment before they are removed. This story by Christ about the coat and cloak would tell the person not to do damage to the house or apartment, but instead leave the house in excellent condition. We are not to retaliate when we have been in the wrong. We are to go the second mile in trying to correct the situation. If we are taken to court and fined, we are to give beyond the fine or judgment to make matters right.

*Romans 12:17-21.* Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. [18] If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. [19] Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. [20] Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. [21] Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

We should also note here that Jesus is not saying that going to court is forbidden. There are times you may have to solve a problem in court. I believe He is telling us how to correct the situation when we have been in the wrong. We are to go the second mile in making reconciliation. Others may take a different viewpoint, but as far as I can
tell, this is close to what the Lord is trying to teach us.

III. GO THE SECOND MILE WHEN TAKEN ADVANTAGED OF 5:41

*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

It is no fun to be taken advantaged of or mistreated, but this was common in Jesus’ time under Roman domination. The indignity of being forced to go a mile that Jesus described here had its origin with the Persians. In fact, the Greek word translated “compel or force” is of Persian origin. It is from the Greek word *aggareuo* *(ang-ar-yew'-o)*. It comes from the noun *aggareus*, which is a Persian word meaning “a courier.”

The Persians initiated a kind of Pony Express system in which the mail-carrying rider simply "borrowed" horses. They were called *angari*. Post offices were then unknown. In order that the royal commands might be delivered with safety and despatch in different parts of the empire, King Cyrus stationed horsemen at proper intervals on all the great public highways.

Each road was divided into stages lasting one day. At each stage there was food for the courier, water, fodder for tired horses, and fresh horses for the road. If by any chance there was anything lacking, any private person could be compelled into giving food, lodging, horses, assistance, and even into carrying the message himself for a stage on the route. There was no pardon for a traveler that refused to let an *angari* have his horse, nor for any other who should deny him the best horse in his stable. Intelligence was thus rapidly and safely communicated. The quick transmission of the king’s commandments was implemented.

In Jesus time, whenever a Roman official or soldier asked anyone within the Empire to carry a burden a mile, that person had to do it regardless of whom he was or what the circumstances were. A Roman mile was 1000 paces. Almost all Jews had been subject to this, and they hated the very mention of it, especially when the soldier was harsh or slightly poked them with a spear or sword.

*Jesus said we must go the second mile without fussing.* Some use this text to teach the extra effort or go the extra mile, but that is not the primary lesson of this text. What this text says is to be willing to do the extra work without complaining. The focus is not on effort, though that is important. It is on our ATTITUDE. Do not retaliate when you are
required to do some distasteful duty.

This one-mile-only attitude characterizes a lot of people. These people will do only what they have to do and not one thing more. The "one mile" syndrome is an attitude of a subtle form of retaliation regarding distasteful duty. So many do not want to do anything extra yet they expect extra time off, bonuses and other benefits. Christ attacks that attitude. Jesus condemns the thinking that says, "When I am forced to do something I do not like to do, I will only do what I have to do and not one thing more." The Lord doesn't want us to do that task with this kind of attitude. Such an attitude reflects selfishness and a lack of concern for others.

The Lord knows that our attitudes speak volumes with other people. He wants our attitude to be Christlike. What Jesus was emphasizing here was willing cheerfulness for any of his followers who would come under this form of harassment or ill-treatment. The Lord is saying, "Don't be always thinking of your liberty to do as you like. Be always thinking of your duty and your privilege to be of service to others. When a task is laid on you, even if the task is unreasonable and hateful, don't do it as a grim duty to be resented. Do it as a service to be gladly rendered." Such an attitude will require patience on our part and overcoming our impatience.

Patience and impatience pull on our emotions like two teams playing tug of war. They are like two different voices screaming to us how to live and respond and their messages are directly opposite from one another.

* Impatience is characterized by complaining and criticizing. Patience is characterized by composure and calmness.
* Impatience says, "Speed Up! Take the shortcut! Use the quick fix!" Patience says, "Slow Down. Do it right! Find a lasting, real solution."
* Impatience says, "I want it NOW!" The prayer of the impatient person is, "Dear God, please grant me patience and I want it right now." Patience says, "I can WAIT! It accepts difficult circumstances without giving God a deadline to remove it.
* Impatience takes risks, is rash and reckless. (Proverbs 14:29) Patience makes one rational, concerned about rightness and safety. It avoids hasty conclusions.
* Impatience makes one HOT-tempered and uncontrolled. Patience makes one COOL, even-tempered, self-controlled.
* Proverbs 16:32- He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
* Impatience leads to stress.
  Patience leads to rest.
* Impatience makes a person short with others.
  Patience makes one long-suffering. Patience is the ability to put up
  with people you'd like to put down.
* Impatience leads to evacuation or easy surrender of responsibility.
  Patience leads to endurance and stamina in fulfilling responsibilities.
  It works out the problem until a solution is found.
* Impatience sacrifices the permanent on the altar of the immediate.
  It can take a reputation which has been under construction for years
  and tear it down in one moment of impatient, rashful, uncontrolled
  behavior. Patience subdues the pressures of the immediate so that the
  results of our decisions and actions will be peaceful, productive, and
  permanent. Benjamin Franklin said, “He that can have patience can
  have what he wills.”
* Impatience leads to immaturity, incompleteness, and dissatisfaction.
  Patience leads to maturity, completeness, and satisfaction. James 1:2-4
* Impatience makes one snappy and nervous.
  Patience helps keep a person happy and nice. In fact a pearl is a
  garment of patience that enclosed an annoyance.
  God wants us to be patient when asked to do a difficult, dreadful,
  despised task and do it with a Tony Tiger attitude. It is to be
  GRRRRREAT!!! The Bible gives us important principles about patience.

* Principles of Patience
1. The Point of Focus For Having Patience- Focus on the Lord.
   * Psalm 37:7- Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not
     thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man
     who bringeth wicked devices to pass. The word “rest” is from the
     Hebrew word damam {daw-man'} which means we are to “be silent, be
     still, to wait.”
2. The Period of Patience- How long should we be patient?
   * James 5:7- Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.
     Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and
     hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.
3. The Privileges of Patience- What are some of the blessings for patient
   people who love the Lord?
   * Isaiah 64:4- For since the beginning of the world men have not heard,
nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen. O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

4. The Products of Patience- Patience is a vital trait for overcoming problems before they overcome us. God uses the work of patience to develop our character.

*James 1:2-4...My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [3] Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5. The Priority of Patience-

6. The Procedure of Patience-
* Hebrews 12:1- Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

The marathon runner paces himself and runs with wisdom. The patient runner guards against haste and carelessness because he knows these things will eventually destroy his ability to finish. His desire is not only to finish the race, but to win.

7. The Persistence in Patience-
* Romans 12:12 - Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

8. The Product of Patience- Patiently sticking with a task sooner or later will yield rich blessings. Paul encouraged us in Galatians 6.

* Galatians 6:9- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Beloved, Jesus wants us to be patient when taken advantaged of. There are two ways to do any task. You can have a woe-is-me attitude or do the job with a good attitude and your best effort. Jesus calls for a revolutionary response in a difficult situation. He calls for cheerfulness. The kind of joy that would cause a hardened Roman soldier to say, "What's with him? This person has something I do not understand. Why are they nice to me?" Was Jesus proposal stupid, impractical, or idiotic? Was the Lord out of touch with reality? No, for this is the way Rome was won!

Revolutionarily righteous people possessing revolutionary joy, even when treated harshly or unfairly, capture the attention of others. The inefficient workman, the resentful servant, the ungracious helper, have
not even begun to have the right idea of the Christian life. The Christian
is not to be concerned to do as he likes. He is to be concerned about
helping, even when the demand for help is discourteous, unreasonable
and tyrannical. One of the best ways you can get the attention of an
unsaved boss, spouse, or parent is to go the second mile by doing more
for them than what is expected with a loving, cheerful attitude. If you
want to be a success, make your boss a success. Your attitude may help
win him to Christ.

We have seen the importance of going the second mile when
attacked and abused, when arraigned, when taken advantaged. There is
a fourth area we are to go the second mile. It is when assistance is
sought.

IV. GO THE SECOND MILE WHEN ASSISTANCE IS
Sought 5:42

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee
turn not thou away.

The fourth area of going the second mile deals with the area of
our giving to others who are truly in need. This illustration
is often misapplied more so than some of the other examples. We need
to remember that the theme here is quenching any urge of retaliation and
going the second mile with a good attitude.

In this and the previous three illustrations, Christ instructs us to
behave in a way that would cool a situation and kill the tension between
those we have had conflict. Let me say that it is good to be in the habit
of giving. At the same time, the rule must be interpreted so as to be
consistent with our duty to our families, the Lord’s work, and our
creditors.

* 1 Timothy 5:8- But if any provide not for his own, and specially for
those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an
infidel.

* Malachi 3:10 - Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there
may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord
of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out
a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

This illustration does not mean we should give whatever anyone
asks of us. We are not required to respond to every foolish, selfish
request made of us. Sometimes to give a person what he wants, but does
not need, is a detriment to that person, doing him more harm than good. Giving must never be such as to encourage a person in laziness and in shiftlessness, for such giving can only hurt that person. It is seldom, perhaps never, good to give to a man that is able to work, but will not work. The unlimited government policies which give money to those who are too lazy or unwilling to work or blow their earnings on gambling and drink has, in fact, destroyed their character. Unlimited giving is never a good thing, for the poor or for your kids, and it is certainly not the theme of this section of Scripture. Teach your kids the value of work and to earn some of the things they want.

* 2 Thessalonians 3:10- For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

  If a lazy man is indeed hungry, give him a bite to eat; if he wants anything farther, encourage him to get a job. If Christians in poverty stricken countries need assistance, help them as they help themselves. If a widow, an orphan, a man of misfortune, or a man infirm, lame, or sick, is at your door, try to assist them if you can. Do what you can to help them, but again, use wisdom. Asking questions will give you discernment on what to do.

About five years ago, a man came to the door of our house and was selling needle and thread to make money to buy his family a Thanksgiving dinner. He did not beg anything from me or give me a sob story. He wanted to know if I wanted to buy his sewing needles. I asked why he was doing this and he told me he had been laid off his job and wanted to do something to get funds for a Thanksgiving dinner which was the next day. I was so impressed with his humility and his work ethic that I took him to Wal Mart and bought the things he needed for a Thanksgiving dinner. We had a great time and he was sincerely relieved and grateful for God’s blessing. I don’t mind helping people like that.

We are not required to give everything to everyone that asks something of us. For example, if someone asks for your wife, it is preposterous and immoral that you should give her away. This lesson does not mean we should give to those who want money to gamble, buy cigarettes, drugs, lotto tickets, or booze. A Cambridge research student who thought you should give to any panhandler or beggar that asked for money ended up bankrupt as he went without funds, while he supplied half a dozen men with money for alcohol that they would have been better off without.
What this text of Scripture is about is overcoming resentment, animosity, and the desire for revenge. A key principle of this text is we are not to retaliate for some wrong done to us by someone, by refusing charity to them when they have a need in their life. If a man at work was rude and would not give you needed help with your work, do not retaliate later by not helping him. For example, if you are driving home and see that person with a flat tire and no spare, instead of retaliating by refusing to give them assistance, go ahead, stop and help him get a spare or the tire fixed. Do not say in your heart, "He didn't help me at work, I will not help him now. I'm not giving him anything or lending him any assistance."

Also implied is the principle that we should offer to give what is needed as soon as we know of the need, whether or not we are asked for help. Jesus is not speaking of begrudging compliance to a plea for help, but a willing, generous, and loving desire to help others. He is speaking of generosity that genuinely wants to meet the other person's need, not tokenism that does a good deed to buy off one's own conscience. Many times a loan is often more beneficial than an absolute gift: first, because it flatters less the vanity of him who lends; secondly, it spares more the shame of him who is in real want; and, thirdly, it gives less encouragement to the idleness of him who may not be very honest.

If God leads you to help someone, then do it with wisdom and discernment and He will bless. Many years ago two young men were working their way through Stanford University. At one point their money was almost gone, so they decided to engage the great pianist Paderewski for a concert and use the profits for board and tuition. Paderewski's manager asked for a guarantee of $2,000. The students worked hard to promote the concert, but they came up $400 short. After the performance, they went to the musician, gave him all the money they had raised, and promised to pay the $400 as soon as they could. It appeared that their college days were over. "No, boys, that won't do," said the pianist. "take out of this $1,600 all your expenses, and keep for each of you 10 percent of the balance for your work. Let me have the rest."

Years passed. Paderewski became the Premier of Poland following World War I. Thousands of his countrymen were starving. Only one man could help, the head of the U.S. Food and Relief Bureau. Paderewski's appeal to him brought thousands of tons of food. Later he met the American statesman to thank him. "That's all right," replied Herbert Hoover. "Besides, you don't remember, but you helped me once years ago
when I was a student in college."
* Ecclesiastes 11:1- Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.
* Proverbs 11:24-25... There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. [25] The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.
* Proverbs 22:9- He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

May the Lord help us to go the second mile when we are attacked and abused, when arraigned, when taken advantaged or when assistance is sought from us.

Perhaps the most important trip you will ever make is going the second mile.
Chapter 16
Loving the Unlovely
Matthew 5:43-48

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? [47] And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? [48] Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Some years ago there was a shipwreck off the coast of the Pacific Northwest. A crowd of fishermen in a nearby village gathered to watch the ship as it was smashed into splinters on the rocks. A lifeboat was sent to the rescue, and after a terrific struggle the rescuers came back with all of the shipwrecked sailors except one. A young man shouted, "There was no room in the lifeboat for him, so we told him to stay by the ship and someone would come back for him. Who will come with me?" shouted a young man.

Just then a little old lady cried out, "Don't go Jim, my boy. Don't go. You are all I have left. Your father was drowned in the sea; your brother William sailed away and we've never heard from him, and now if you are lost, I'll be left alone. Oh, Jim, please don't go." Jim listened patiently to his mother's pleading, then said, "Mother, I must go! It is my duty. I must go!" The onlookers watched as the men in the lifeboat fought their way toward the wreck. Anxiously Jim's mother wept and prayed. It
headed toward the rocks, then they saw the boat start back toward the crowd on the shore, a frail little shell tossed about by the angry waves of the Pacific Ocean. At last it came close enough to shore, and they shouted, "Did you get him? Did you get him?" Jim shouted back, "Yes, and tell mother it's William! William is alive!" A love for duty compelled the sailor to try to rescue those in danger. Little did he realize that the sacrifice he sowed would reap in the rescue of his own brother.

In this section of Scripture, we are challenged by the Lord again as He continues to raise the standard of living for the Christian. He stresses upon us our duty to love the unlovely, to love our enemies. He is not making a suggestion here. It is a command. Concern for our enemies is taught in other places of Scripture.  

Proverbs 25:21 - If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:  
Romans 12:20- Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Loving those who are dear to us is natural and easy, but to love those who hurt and harass us is extremely difficult, at least it is for me. It is necessary, not necessarily for their benefit, but for our benefit, as we will see. Let's find out how to love the unlovely.

I. THE RESPONSE TO OUR ENEMIES 5:43-44

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Jesus says, “You have heard that you are to love your neighbor.” Let’s talk about this for a minute. Now who is that? Who is my neighbor? Is it only the guy next door? In Jesus’ time the Jewish rabbis restricted the word “neighbor” to friends or those closely related to them or to those of their nation. This, however, is not the correct definition of the word “neighbor.” When we look at Leviticus 19, we find that this word “neighbor” has a broad meaning which would include a lover, friend, acquaintance, an adversary in a court case and even an enemy.

* Leviticus 19:18- Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.
The scope of a neighbor is seen in Egypt, as the Israelites asked the Egyptians for silver, gold, and jewels before they left the country. These folks were their adversaries. They enslaved them, but they were referred to as "neighbors."

*Exodus 11:2- Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.*

In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37, Jesus taught the people that "neighbor" included a lot of people normally who were not thought of as neighbors. The Samaritan was not considered a neighbor by the Jews because the Jews hated the Samaritan people. This did not hinder the Good Samaritan. He took care of the poor Jew who was beaten and robbed on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Samaritan was neighborly. So "neighbor" included a lot more people than the Jews wanted it to include. A neighbor included just about everyone. Our love is to be limitless.

There is nothing in Scripture that says we are to hate our enemy. The religious leaders, in order to accommodate their fleshly desires and to please the people, added this lying statement to their creed. We know from secular history, of the hatred and bitterness which divided the ancient world. The Jews regarded all Gentiles as dogs. They had an extreme hatred especially for the Samaritans and also for the Romans.

Jesus deals with this attitude head on because He knows that this hatred, pride, and bitterness destroys a person. He says, "You have heard this, but here is what I am telling you to do. You need to love your enemies." Imagine their shock when they hear this section of the message. What? Run that by me again! In 21st century terms the Lord might respond, "Yep! You heard it right. I want you to love your enemies. Comprende?"

What does the Lord mean when He says, "Love your enemies?"

Digging into the Greek language provides us with some treasured truths. In Greek there are four different words for "love."

A. Storgi - Stergein...Family Affection

Storgi is a noun and its accompanying verb form is stergein. These words are the characteristic words of family love. They are the words which describe the love of a parent for a child and a child for a parent. They describe family affection. This word is not used in the New Testament.
B. Eros- Eran... Sexual Love

*Eros* is the noun form and the accompanying verb form is *eran*. They form our English word "erotic and erogenous." These words describe the love of a man for a maid. There is always passion and sexual love in them. Sophocles described *eros* as "the terrible longing." In these words there is nothing essentially bad, they simply describe the passion of human love. The meaning of the word changed with history and they began to be tinged with the idea of lust rather than love. The sexual love of the Greeks became so perverted and debased that this word was considered contaminated and not considered for the Scriptures. This word for "love" is not used in the New Testament.

C. Philia- Philein...Real Love and Strong Affection

*Philia* is the noun form and the accompanying verb form is *philein*. They form our English words philanthropy (love for mankind); philharmonic (a love for music); Philadelphia (city of brotherly love). These are the warmest and the best Greek words for love. They describe real love and strong affection. *Philein* can mean to kiss. It is the word of warm, tender affection, the highest kind of love. This is the word that Peter used when the Lord Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Peter told the Lord he loved (philein) Him.

* John 21:15-17... So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. [16] He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. [17] He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

*Phileo* love is illustrated in the life of a New England girl who had just become engaged when the Civil War broke out. Her fiancé was called into the army, so their wedding had to be postponed. The young soldier managed to get through most of the conflict without injury, but at the Battle of the Wilderness he was severely wounded.

His bride-to-be, not knowing of his condition, read and reread his letters, counting the days until he would return. Suddenly the letters stopped coming. Finally, she received one, but it was written in an unfamiliar handwriting. It read, "There has been another terrible battle.
Chapter 16...Loving the Unlovely...5:43-48

It is very difficult for me to tell you this, but I have lost both my arms. I cannot write myself. So a friend is writing this letter for me. While you are as dear to me as ever, I feel I should release you from the obligation of our engagement."

The letter was never answered. Instead, the young woman took the next train and went directly to the place her loved one was being cared for. On arrival she found a sympathetic captain who gave her directions to her soldier's cot. Tearfully, she searched for him. The moment she saw the young man, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "I will never give you up!" she cried. "These hands of mine will help you. I will take care of you." That is 
\textit{philein} love.

\textbf{D. Agape-Agapan- Divine Love..the Love of Your Will}

\textit{Agape} is the noun form and its accompanying verb form is 
\textit{agapan}. These words indicate unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodwill. It loves without variableness, even if the object loved is hateful and unloving. It is a godlike love. Agape love is the love of T. E. McCully, father of Ed McCully, one of the missionaries slain by Auca Indians in Ecuador, who one night shortly after that experience prayed, "Lord, let me live long enough to see those fellows saved who killed our boys that I may throw my arms around them and tell them I love them because they love my Christ." That is love of the highest kind.

In Matthew 5:44, Jesus uses \textit{agapao} in reference to loving our enemies. Jesus is not asking us to have a romantic love, a buddy love, a family love, or an emotional love for our enemies. What He commands is an agape love, that is, a deliberate, intelligent, determined love, an invincible goodwill toward them. If we regard a person with agape, it means that no matter what that person does to us, no matter how he treats us, no matter if he insults, injures, or grieves us, we will never allow any bitterness against him to invade our heart. We will regard him with that unconquerable benevolence and goodwill which will seek nothing but his highest good.

We find insights from the use of this word in reference to our enemies. We are not asked to love our enemies the same way we love our friends. In the case of our enemies, love is not only something of the heart, it involves our will. It is something which we have to will ourselves into doing and is in fact a victory over our bitterness and anger toward our enemies.

\textit{Agape is the power to love those whom we do not like and who may not like us.} Agape love is a determination of the mind, whereby we
achieve this unconquerable goodwill even to those who hurt and injure us. Our attitude toward the unlovely is, "Whether you like it or not, I am going to love you." The only way we can have this kind of love is with the power and help of the Holy Spirit who enables us to conquer our disdain for our enemies and gives us compassion for them. Agape is a love for the unlovely. In fact, the true test of love is in how one relates not to saints and scholars, but to rascals.

* Romans 5:8- But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The word used here for love is agape, the divine love that cares for the unlovely...for sinners.

An example of agape love is seen in this true story from World War 2. It was 1944, and Bert Frizen was an infantryman on the front lines in Europe. American forces had advanced in the face of intermittent shelling and small-arms fire throughout the morning hours, but now all was quiet. His patrol reached the edge of a wooded area with an open field before them. Unknown to the Americans, a battery of Germans waited in a hedgerow about two hundred yards across the field.

Bert was one of two scouts who moved out into the clearing. Once he was halfway across the field, the remainder of his battalion followed. Suddenly the Germans opened fire, and machine gun fire ripped into both of Bert's legs. The American battalion withdrew into the woods for protection, while a rapid exchange of fire continued. Bert lay helplessly in a small stream as shots volleyed overhead. There seemed to be no way out. To make matters worse, he now noticed that a German soldier was crawling toward him. Death appeared imminent; he closed his eyes and waited.

To his surprise, a considerable period passed without the expected attack, so he ventured opening his eyes again. He was startled to see the German kneeling at his side, smiling. He then noticed that the shooting had stopped. Troops from both sides of the battlefield watched anxiously. Without any verbal exchange, this mysterious German reached down to lift Bert in his arms and proceeded to carry him to the safety of Bert's comrades.

Having accomplished his self-appointed mission, and still without speaking a word, the German soldier turned and walked back across the field to his own troop. No one dared break the silence of this sacred moment. Moments later the cease-fire ended, but not before all those present had witnessed how one man risked everything for his enemy. Bert's life was saved through the agape love of a man whom he
considered his enemy. This courageous act pictures what Jesus did for us and how we are to treat others, especially those who are unlovely toward us.

In this verse our Lord shows us that a man may be our enemy in three different ways. First, in his heart, by hatred. Secondly, in his words by cursing or using direful imprecations against us. Thirdly, in his actions, by continually harassing and abusing us. He shows us also how we are to behave toward them. The hatred of the first we are to meet with love. The cursings or evil words of the second, we are to meet with good words and blessings and the repeated injurious acts of the third, we are to meet with continual prayer to God for the man’s salvation. We are to love our enemies. Let’s look at each one of these responses in depth.

1. Our Response with our Tongue... Bless them that curse you.

The word “bless” here involves what is coming from our mouth. It is from the Greek word eulogeo {yoo-log-eh'-o}, which forms our English word eulogy. It is composed of two Greek words eu, which means “well,” and logus, which means “word.” It means to speak well of, not evilly; to praise; to ask God’s blessings on a thing.”

Our natural tendency is to rip our enemy to pieces with our tongue, but the Lord says, “Don’t do that. Speak nobly when speaking of your enemy.” "Bless" does not mean we are to condone the enemies' evil or to praise the enemy for doing evil, but it means we are to speak truthfully, honorably, not vilely or slanderously regarding our enemy. We are not to sling mud at our enemies with our tongue like politicians do at election time.

2. Our Response with our Treatment ...Do good to them that hate you.

Our treatment of others has its roots in our tongue. When we start foaming at the mouth, before long, we grow fangs and claws and start being vicious with people who rub us the wrong way or down right hate us. Jesus tells us to put “Wolf Man” back into the closet and lock him up. We are to be good to our enemies.

You may say, “That’s no fun! That’s crazy!” Jesus still says, “Be good to them, even though they don’t deserve it.” We are not to be mean and hateful to those who do that to us, but we are to treat them with good manners. This, however, does not mean we are to exonerate criminals or aid one in criminal activity.

Direk Willems is an example from history of one who did good to his enemy. In 1567, King Philip II of Spain appointed the Duke of Alba as governor of the lower part of the nation. The Duke was a bitter enemy
of the newly-emerging Protestant Reformation. His rule was called the Reign of Terror, and his council was called the Bloody Council, because it had ordered the slaughter of so many Protestants.

It is reported that one man who was sentenced to die for his biblical faith, managed to escape during the dead of winter. It was an Anabaptist, Dirck Willems, who fled for his life. As he was being pursued by a lone soldier, Dirck came to a lake whose ice was thin and cracking. Somehow he managed to get safely across the ice, but as soon as he reached the other side he heard his pursuer screaming. The soldier had fallen through the ice and was about to drown. At the risk of being captured, tortured, and eventually killed—or of being drowned himself, Willems went back across the lake and rescued his enemy, because the love of Christ constrained him to do it. He knew he had no other choice if he was to be faithful to His Lord. He was then captured, imprisoned and burned at the stake in 1569.

3. Our Response with our Thoughts and Prayers... Pray for them which despitely use you, and persecute you.

There may be times throughout your life that people will be cruel to you. Sometimes they may be Christians or claim to be Christians. Many times, however, unsaved people may vent their anger on a person when they find out he is a Christian. They may “despitely use you” which is a phrase that comes from a Greek word *epereazo* (*ep-ay-reh-ad'-zo*) which means “to insult, to treat abusively, to revile, falsely accuse or threaten.” It should not be a surprise when this happens to us. The Lord was treated this way and He warned we would be too.

* John 16:33- These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Godly people have a way of irritating wicked people because their life is a source of conviction and rebuke to the sinner. This is why the lost lash out at Christians sometimes. Solomon spoke of this in the book of Proverbs.

* Proverbs 29:27b-....he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked. The wicked hate the lifestyle of the righteous.

The Lord instructs us to pray for those who threaten, insult, falsely accuse, and persecute us. Praying for them is a way of demonstrating love for them. The greatest benefit, however, is for us. Praying for enemies is a shield against bitterness and hate in our own hearts. It’s hard to hate someone that you are praying for. Chrysostom
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said that prayer is the very highest summit of self-control and that we have most brought our lives into conformity to God’s standards when we can pray for our persecutors. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the pastor who suffered and eventually was killed in Nazi Germany, wrote of Jesus’ teaching, “This is the supreme demand. Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God.”

Cindy Hartman prayed for her enemy and God intervened in her life in a powerful way. According to an Associated Press account, in September, 1994, Cindy Hartman walked into her house to answer the phone and was confronted by a burglar. He ripped the phone cord out of the wall and ordered her into a closet. Hartman dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. "I want you to know that God loves you and I forgive you," she said. The burglar then apologized for what he had done. That’s not all. He yelled out the door to a woman in a pickup truck, "We've got to unload all of this. This is a Christian home and a Christian family. We can't do this to them." As Hartman remained on her knees, the burglar returned furniture he had taken from her home. Then he took the bullets out of his gun, handed the gun to Hartman, and walked out the door. Praying for our enemies can be incredibly disarming.

Praying for an enemy is the pinnacle of selfless love. Jesus is our greatest example, for while the Lord was being crucified, possibly even while the nails were being driven through His hands, He prayed repeatedly (as the Greek imperfect tense indicates), "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). When you pray for someone while they are persecuting you, you are assaulting the throne of God on their behalf, "God, help this person." To pray for a persecutor is supernatural! If you do that, you are walking in the same footsteps as the Lord and have reached a new level of spiritual maturity.

Evil people often frustrate Christians. The believer may try ever so hard to be nice and pleasant, but the wicked turn every comment and action into an attack. Times like this are frustrating and you feel helpless. Jesus says there is something we can do. We are not helpless. We can pray for them. In fact, it is the most effective way in dealing with your enemies. Praying will eliminate many frustrations and heated exchanges. If you are a Pastor, you must learn to pray for church trouble-makers or you will not survive very long in the ministry. Let me ask, “How is your prayer life when it comes to those who are attacking you? Last year may have been great. How about this year, this month, this week, this day?
One evening just before the great Broadway musical star, Mary Martin, was to go on stage in the play *South Pacific*, a note was handed to her. It was from Oscar Hammerstein, who at that moment was on his death bed. The short note simply said: "**Dear Mary, A bell is not a bell till you ring it. A song's not a song till you sing it. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love isn't love till you give it away.**"

After her performance that night many people rushed backstage, crying, "Mary, what happened to you out there tonight? We never saw anything like that performance before.” Blinking back the tears, Mary then read them the note from Hammerstein. Then she said, "Tonight, I gave my love away!" Beloved, we tend to be selfish with our love, giving it only to those special people in our lives. God, however, wants us to learn to be like Him and give our love away to all, including those who hurt us. May the Lord help us all to be like Him.

II. THE REFLECTION OF THE LORD IN OUR LIVES  5:45

_That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust._

Mitsuo Fuchida, commander of the Japanese Air Force, led the squadron of 860 planes that attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. American bomber, Jacob DeShazer was eager to strike back at the Japanese. On the following 18th of April, he flew his B-25 bomber called “The Bat out of Hell” on a dangerous raid over Japan. After dropping his bombs on Nagoya, DeShazer lost his way in heavy fog and bailed out as his plane ran out of fuel. He was taken prisoner, tortured by the Japanese, and threatened with imminent death. For almost two years, DeShazer suffered hunger, cold, and dysentery.

In May of 1944, he was given a Bible. The guard said, “You can keep it for three weeks.” DeShazer grabbed it, clutched it to his chest, and started reading in Genesis. Scarcely sleeping, he read the Bible through several times, memorizing key passages. On June 8, he came across Romans 10:9, "**That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.**” Jacob asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart and be his Savior.

Immediately, Matthew 5:44 became a crucial verse for DeShazer as he determined to treat his Japanese guards differently. His hatred and
hostility toward them evaporated and every morning he greeted them warmly. He prayed for them and sought to witness to them about the Lord Jesus Christ. He noticed that their attitude toward him changed drastically. In fact, they would often slip him food or supplies.

After the war was over, DeShazer returned to Japan as a missionary. Copies of his testimony, "I Was a Prisoner of the Japanese," flooded the country and thousands wanted to see the man who could love and forgive his enemies. DeShazer settled down to establish a church in Nagoya, the city that he bombed. One man, deeply affected by DeShazer's testimony, was led to Christ by Glenn Wagner of the Pocket Testament League. Shortly after he was saved, he paid a visit to Jacob DeShazer at his home and the two men became very dear friends. The man was Mitsuo Fuchida, the man who led the Pearl Harbor attack. Fuchida became a powerful evangelist, preaching all throughout Japan and around the world. The principle of loving your enemy revolutionized and dramatically changed the lives of both of these men.

The above story and verses give us the reason why we should love our enemies with a God-like love. We show the reflection of Jesus Christ in our lives like an image in a mirror. The Lord said, "that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven," which is the Hebrew way of saying that you will be LIKE your heavenly Father. When you are demonstrating love for your enemies, and praying for their benefit, you are demonstrating a depth of spiritual maturity that few Christians attain. Such behavior requires the control of the Holy Spirit in our lives, a condition which few Christians enjoy or want to enjoy because of their carnality, bitterness, or desire for vengeance.

It is vital that this verse not be interpreted to mean how a person becomes a Christian or child of God. This passage is not speaking of the effecting of salvation but evidencing it in your life. Our verse is not speaking about becoming children of God but being like the children of God. Loving as God loves does not make us sons of the Father, but it gives evidence that we already are His children. When a life reflects God's nature it proves that life now possesses His Spirit by the new birth. Loving your enemies with a God-like love confirms your profession of faith and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the last part of the verse indicates, love for your enemies demonstrates action that is God-like. God is benevolent to His enemies in that the sun shines on the unjust as well as the just and it rains on the unjust as well as the just. In other words, if you impartially show
love to your enemies as well as to friends, you will be like Christ, who shows the impartiality of His love by sending the sun and rain on both the righteous and unrighteous and also by dying for the sins of the entire world, not just a chosen few. When we love without limits and boundaries, we are just like the Lord. We are reflecting His image in our lives because He loved the unlovely. When you resemble God's conduct, you are showing your relationship to Him. You are behaving in the Spirit, not in the flesh.

The love of Christ was amply illustrated in the life of a slave in the West Indies. He was called Caesar by his master, had gained his freedom, and became a Christian. One day his lord took him to the slave market in search for some new slaves. After securing all he wanted, the owner was surprised to hear Caesar beg for the purchase of yet one more man, an old tired Negro. "Why, Caesar, should I buy him? Of what use can he possibly be?" "Please, sir," replied Caesar, "you must buy him for me."

So the purchase was made and the old man returned to the plantation. Soon after, he took sick, very sick, and Caesar cared for him as though he were his father. He washed him, waited on him, nursed him in every spare moment he found. Of course the people all noticed this, and tried to guess why Caesar was so devoted to the old man. Finally his master asked, "What connection do you have with that old man? Is he perhaps your father?" Caesar simply smiled and answered, "No, master, he is not my father." "Well, is he some old heathen friend or relative?" "No, master, he is no relative of mine." "He must be your friend then." "No, master, he is not my friend." "But who in the world is he?" asked the master impatiently. Caesar's eyes moistened as he said, "He is my enemy. While yet a child he tore me from my parents and sold me as a slave, but I must love my enemy, master, I must!"

III. THE ROUTINE RESPONSE 5:46-47

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Another reason we should love our enemies is it sets us apart from the rest of the world. It is easy to love those who love us. Even tax collectors or publicans can do that, but to love an enemy is a different, unique matter. Tax collectors may have it bad today, but it
is nothing like the reputation they had in Jesus' time. The Roman Empire
used a tax system in which the government would designate how much
money was to be collected from a specific area, then hire a man to collect
it. Each tax gatherer had to turn in that amount but could keep whatever
else he could get. Tax gatherers were crooks, rich crooks, and they were
loathed by everyone, especially the Jews, because the collectors were
employees of the Gentiles.

The Lord points out that even those disgusting, double-crossing,
despicable crooked tax collectors loved their own tax-gathering buddies!
So if a person loves only his friends, he is doing no better than a
swindling tax collector. This is no big deal for it is the routine response
of most people, many who are good and honest!

Followers of Jesus Christ, however, should do more than what is
common among nonbelievers in the way they show love. We are to rise
above the norm and go beyond what the world expects or does in the area
of concern for others. The person who loves only his friends, does
nothing for God's sake. The man who loves for the sake of pleasure or
interest, pays himself, but the person who loves his enemies is
demonstrating the character and nature of God. This is not a routine
response, but a supernatural one that has its source of power in the person
of the Holy Spirit.

A father and mother gave birth to a little boy who was born with a
severe handicap that would cause him to go into very violent seizures
without any warning. When they went to church, the father would usually
be the one holding their son during preaching services. On one particular
occasion, when the little guy started into a seizure, the father got up and
with a strong, yet, gentle love carried the boy to the back of the
auditorium. He held him close to his chest, rocked him, whispered to
him, and did all he could to help his son through the seizure.

One thing that was very noticeable was that there was no hint of
embarrassment or frustration in that father's face, only love for his hurting
son. The seizure was not lovely for sure, yet, it did not affect the love of
the father for his son. In the same way, we are seized by sin many times.
We mess up, fall down, turn aside, slip back, give in to temptation or
give out and quit because of guilt or discouragement, yet, the Lord
continues to love us in spite of our failures and offensiveness. This is
what He is telling us to do with our enemies....we are to practice
unlimited love toward them. So are you doing this? Do you really love
the unlovely, those whom you would consider to be your enemies? If not,
you are no different than a lost sinner. If you do, you demonstrate you are a child of the King of kings and exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees.

*Matthew 5:20- For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The professing Christian must be more righteous than the unbeliever. The believer is to live at a higher standard of goodness than an unbelieving sinner because he has been given the ability to do so through the power of the Holy Spirit that indwells him. Unfortunately, many Christians do not do this. They live just like everybody else, dressing, acting, talking, and living like the unsaved. The challenge of the Lord Jesus Christ is we are to go the second mile in the way we live in this world. When it comes to our enemies, we are to do what the world doesn’t. We are to love them. We are to love the unlovely.

IV. RAISING THE STANDARD OF LIVING  5:48

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Jesus raises the standard for the believer with this command, “Be perfect just like God.” What does He mean “perfect?” The word “perfect” comes from the Greek word *teleios*. This word is often used in Greek in a very special way. For example, an animal which was fit for a sacrifice to God, that is a victim which was without blemish, was *teleios*. A man who has reached his full-grown stature or maturity is *teleios* in comparison to a half-grown boy. A student who has reached a mature knowledge of his subject is *teleios* as opposed to a student who is just beginning, and who as yet, has no grasp of the subject matter.

The Greek idea of “perfection” is functional. A thing is perfect if it fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned, designed, and made. This is the idea of this word. A thing is *teleios*, if it realizes the purpose for which it was planned. A person is perfect if he realizes the purpose for which he was created and sent into the world. Do you know God’s purpose for your life?

How in the world can we be perfect, mature, and fulfill our purpose?

1. **We can be perfect in our character:** In this life we cannot be flawless, but we can aspire to be as much like Christ as possible. We are
to follow His example for us.

* 1 Peter 2:21- For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

(2) We can be perfect in holiness: Like the Pharisees, we are to separate ourselves from the world's sinful values and lifestyles, but unlike the Pharisees, we are to be devoted to God's desires rather than our own, and carry His love and mercy into the world.

* Romans 12:1-2 ... I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

(3) We can be perfect in maturity: We can't achieve Christlike character and holy living all at once, but we must grow toward maturity, in grace, and wholeness. Just as we expect different behavior from a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult, so God expects different behavior from us, depending on our stage of spiritual development.

* 2 Peter 3:18- But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

(4) We can be perfect in love: We can seek to love others as completely as God loves us. This is what He is stressing here in Matthew 5:48. Our tendency to sin must never deter us from striving to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ calls all of His disciples to excel, to rise above mediocrity, and to mature in every area, becoming like Him. Those who strive to become perfect or mature, will one day be perfect, even as Christ is perfect.

* 1 John 3:2-3... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. [3] And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

If you want to be like Christ now, then love the way He did. Love the unlovely. For example, John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose.

His interest in her had begun when he visited a second-hand book store and selected a book that interested him. When he began to browse the book, however, it was not the words of the book that intrigued him, but the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a
thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In the front of the book he
discovered the previous owner’s name, Miss Hollis Maynell. It didn’t
take long to locate her address. She lived right there in New York City.
He wrote her a letter introducing himself and invited her to correspond
with him. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World
War II.

During the next year the two of them grew to know each other
through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A
romance was budding. Blanchard requested a photograph, but she
refused. She felt that if he really cared about her, it wouldn’t matter what
she looked like. When the day finally came for him to return from
Europe, they scheduled their first meeting, 7:00 p.m. at the Grand Central
Station in downtown New York.

“You’ll recognize me,” she wrote, “by the red rose I’ll be wearing
on my lapel.” So at 7:00 he was in the station looking for a girl whose
heart he loved, but whose face he’d never seen. I’ll let Mr. Blanchard tell
you what happened: “A young woman was coming toward me, her figure
long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears;
her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness,
and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. I started
toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose.
As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. ‘Going my way,
sailor?’ she murmured.

“Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw
Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A
woman well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She
was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes.
The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. I felt as though I was
split in two, so keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my
longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned me and
upheld my own. There she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and
sensible; her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle.

“I did not hesitate. My fingers gripped the small, worn, blue leather
copy of the book that was to identify me to her. This would not be love,
but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than
love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful.

I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the
woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my
disappointment. “I’m Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss
Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?’”

The woman’s face broadened into a tolerant smile. ‘I don’t know what this is about, son,’ she answered, ‘but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat and she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!’”

Beloved, God’s love overwhelmingly has passed the test of mankind. He loved the unlovely and gave His own life for our sins that we might have eternal life. There should be no debate about Christ’s love for you and me. He has proved it.

* John 15:13- Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

* Romans 5:8- But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Does your love pass His test? Do you love the unlovely?

**Jesus didn't teach us to love our enemies for their good. It is for our own good...to keep us from becoming the enemy.**
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