

Notes for Matthew -Chapter 5 Part 1 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction Part 1 - "The Sermon on the Mount"

1. Chapters 5-7 of Matthew is one speech given by Jesus. It is called "The Sermon on the Mount".
 - a. Some argue it is a collection of speeches. That is not what the text says.
2. That title "Sermon on the Mount" does not appear in the Bible.
 - a. It is a nickname for this section given as Jesus went up on the side of a hillside and spoke.
3. One of the great secrets to understanding the Sermon on the Mount is to understand the impossibility of accomplishing anything on this list without the help of God himself.
 - a. Chapter 5 ends with the statement "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Well now, try living that one for a while. ☺
 - b. The secret to understanding the Sermon is that we are only perfect because we accept Jesus perfect sacrifice as payment for our sins. That is how we are perfect in God's eyes.
4. There are two verses that come later in Matthew that apply here as well:
 - a. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:25-26, NIV)
 - b. When you start reading the Sermon on the Mount, you begin to understand God's requirements to get into heaven are impossible to live by without the help of God himself.
5. The other idea to get out of the Sermon is that once you comprehend your need for Jesus, and turn your life over to him, there are practical aspects to this speech that apply as well.
 - a. Jesus is teaching our problems as well God's blessings begin with our internal attitude. This Sermon teaches it is a sin to think a bad thought as well as to act upon it.
 - b. It is only by trusting God and praying for the Spirit of God to work through you that you are capable of living any single aspect or command taught in the Bible.
 - c. That is the secret of Christianity. Letting God work through you to glory Him.

Chapter 5 Verses 1-2: Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying:

1. Notice Verse 2 says Jesus is teaching "them". Is "them" referring to the disciples or the crowds?
 - a. I would argue it is the disciples and to all of us who commit to following Jesus.
2. From Verse 3 through the end of Chapter 7, we have the one speech by Jesus.

Verse 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

1. Verses 3-11 are called the "Beatitudes".
 - a. You won't find the word "beatitude" in the bible as it comes from the Latin.
 - b. Each of the "Beatitudes" begins with the phrase "blessed are".
 - c. The word describes joy from within as opposed to external circumstances.
 - d. You can read these verses as, "You will be blessed in this way if you do this..."
1. It is helpful to compare the rewards for each of the blessings with the blessings themselves.
2. Verse 3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit".
 - a. Aren't we full of the Holy Spirit as believers? (See Ephesians 5:18)
 - b. Remember that Jesus is speaking to those who don't comprehend the Gospel message yet.
 - c. The word for "poor" means destitute. It means you have nothing.
 - d. One must realize that apart from Christ, we have nothing spiritually.
3. As a believer, this verse is a constant reminder that we are nothing without God.
 - a. It is a reminder to constantly "empty" ourselves of our egos, our sins and our faults and our dependency on God. Jesus says blessed are those who are poor (as in destitute) in Spirit. It is a continual action for believers.

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Verse 4: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

1. This verse sounds like a catchall for anybody who is mourning over any pain. It is not.
2. In Verse 3, Jesus talks about being “spiritually poor”, which is our condition when we ignore God or we refuse to ask forgiveness of our sins.
 - a. Our mourning is the realization of our sinful nature and our need for forgiveness.
3. The reward for our mourning is stated in Verse 4. We will be comforted.
 - a. This is a continual action. Our mourning comes from the realization of our sinfulness and our need to bring those faults to God. The comfort comes from the fact we accept God’s forgiveness upon confession and repentance.

Verse 5: Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

1. Meek means you are full of power and strength, and don’t need to show it off to people.
 - a. Think of a martial arts expert who walks away from an insult. He or she doesn’t have to beat up the one who insulted them just to show off their power.
 - b. It may help to understand the opposite of “meek” is “vengeful”.
2. The attitude of meekness refers to all believers in Jesus.
 - a. We as believers will inherit the earth. We will live forever and have blessings more powerful than one can imagine. What is that in comparison to riches or power?
 - b. We can, and should act meek to all the things the world has to offer, because we already own them. The world will eventually be handed over to Jesus (Revelation Chapter 5) and we will be adopted sons of God (Ephesians 1:5). We’ll inherit everything through Jesus.

Verse 6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

1. If you are really hungry or thirsty, do you care about anything else?
 - a. God wants us to seek Him as if we are really hungry or thirsty for Him.
2. The blessing of Verse 6 is that God satisfies that spiritual appetite.
3. This verse requires balance. On one hand, if we seek God as if one is really hungry and thirsty, He satisfies completely that desire for worship. Yet, he desires we seek Him on a regular basis.
4. I should add that this verse does not teach to ignore your physical needs, just to put them in perspective. There are false teachers that say we should deny our needs for food or money in order to be “more spiritual”. This verse is about perspective and priority in our lives.

Verse 7: Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

1. To be “merciful” is to ask God for mercy in our sinful actions.
2. The promise by Jesus that we will be shown mercy. That is the word to underline in your bibles.
3. If God shows mercy to us by forgiving our sins, God expects us to show mercy to others.

Verse 8: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

1. “Pure in heart” refers to eternal forgiveness of our sins. Our reward is we will see God.
2. The progression is we seek God’s mercy (Verse 7) and our eternally forgiven (Verse 8).

Verse 9: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

1. The term “Sons of God” as it is used here refers to adoption into God’s eternal family.
2. “Peacemakers” are those who are trying to make peace between themselves and God.
 - a. We become “peacemakers” with God by asking Him for forgiveness for our sins.
3. One can also see peacemakers as making an effort to bring others to Jesus.
 - a. One has to know Jesus in order to have peace. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27 NIV)
 - b. “No Jesus, No Peace; Know Jesus, Know Peace!”

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Verse 10: Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. I believe Verse 10 focuses more on the internal struggle of persecution.
 - a. It is that guilt we wrestle with inside when we know we have done wrong.
2. Verses 11-12 focus on external persecution. Persecution comes from people and demonic forces.
 - a. When others see you actually changing, there is a sense of guilt in their hearts placed there by God. They know that living for God is the right thing to do. Out of guilt, you will be persecuted by man if you are witness for God. That is a promise made by Jesus.
 - b. Another reason for persecution is satanic attacks. I have stated many times in these studies that Satan's goal is to prevent or delay God's redemptive plan for mankind. Persecution makes you want to run and hide and not be a witness to other people for Jesus.
3. Notice why you are persecuted. It is because of righteousness.
 - a. This set of verses are not a catchall for anybody who is persecuted for any reason.
4. You also have to remember you don't have to panic. ☺ God is more powerful than these enemies:
 - a. "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1st John 4:4, NIV)
 - b. Jesus is saying in effect, "Jump up and down with joy right now". You may think you are suffering, but you can't imagine the eternal reward you will get in exchange for what you have to put up with in this lifetime.

Verse 13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

1. In that culture, salt is first and foremost thought as a food preservative. Refrigerators didn't exist.
2. We are being preserved from eternal damnation by God. By abiding in the things God asks us to do (pray, study, time with other Christians), we are spiritually "preserving" ourselves from the sinful nature and temptations of the world.
3. One of my favorite quotes about the bible is, "Sin will keep you from this book, and this book will keep you from sin". The bible is being described as a preservative to keep you from spoiling.
4. Being a public witness for Christian values and lifestyles is a preservation of our society becoming corrupt. God expects us to be a witness for him to help people to turn from the corruption of sin.
5. This verse is not teaching that if we lose our "saltiness" we lose our salvation. It is about being a good witness for Jesus.

Verse 14-16: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

1. One can read Verses 13-16 and realize the topics of "salt and light" refer to being a good witness for Jesus and not salvation. Verse 16 makes that clear.
2. Jesus states in the Gospel of John that He is the light of the world. (John 8:12, 9:5)
 - a. Yet in Verse 14, it says "You (us!) are the light of the world."
 - b. Think of it as sunlight and moonlight. The moon does not give light, but reflects the sun's light on the earth. That is what we are to be as well.
3. These verses also argue against us living in a "Christian-only" world.
 - a. That concept is contrary to what Jesus teaches. He wants us to be witnesses to the world. That means living among nonbelievers and being living examples to them.

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Verses 17-18: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

1. These verses are a good summary of the purpose of all the Old Testament laws and rules.
 - a. Jesus states he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law.
 - b. All of the sacrificial laws described in Jesus are fulfilled in Jesus.
 - c. This is why we don't bring animal sacrifices with us to church.
2. Remember about 30% of the bible are predictions about the events of Jesus 1st and 2nd coming.
 - a. Jesus is saying that human history will exist until every last one of them is fulfilled.
3. Notice Jesus validates "The Law and the Prophets" exactly as it is written as being from God. That expression "The Law and the Prophets", to a Jew, encompasses all the books of the Old Testament. If you believe Jesus is Lord and His word is Truth, then you must believe that all of the Old Testament is the Word of God.
4. Notice the word "fulfill" in verse 17. Jesus said He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.
 - a. Jesus states that the Old Testament is written about Him (John 5:39). The word pictures of the Bible, the stories, the commands, all point to Jesus.
5. These verses do not mean we are ignore the Old Testament laws just because they are fulfilled by Jesus. The main purpose of the law is to drive us to Jesus. The Old Testament laws of the are a model for our happiness and well-being. Out of gratitude for what Jesus did for us we are to study and apply them to our lives.
 - a. How they apply to us as believers is covered through most of the New Testament.

Verse 19: Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

1. Jesus does not say, "anyone who breaks these commands goes to hell". It says anyone who breaks one will be called the least in "the kingdom of heaven". It is about eternal rewards.
2. Jesus does not say, "Since I fulfilled the law, you don't have to worry about the Old Testament laws anymore".
 - a. This verse, first of all shows, that there are different rewards in heaven.
 - b. The secret of "how" to obey them is what being a New Testament believer is all about.
 - c. The only way to obey is by letting God work *through* you to obey the laws. That is what the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is all about. It is about trusting in God, sticking close to God, praying to God, reading his word, which God works through us and transforms us so that we have the *ability* to obey his laws and commands.
3. The "works" of a Christian can (and is) summarized by Jesus below:
 - a. Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:28-29, NIV)
 - b. It is through that belief that we are able to obey the law. Jesus fulfilled the law (Verse 17). In Verse 19, Jesus calls upon us to obey that law by believing in Him.

Verse 20: For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

1. Jesus is not so much condemning the religious Jew's faithfulness to God, as he is saying, "These guys are missing the point. It is not about *effort* that gets you into heaven, but about trusting me for a perfect relationship with God the Father."
2. It is about not "thinking I'm good enough for God" based on my religious actions.

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Verse 21-22: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

1. Jesus condemns three actions 1) murder 2) calling someone "raca" (roughly "an idiot") and 3) calling someone a fool. The punishment for these three are progressively worse.
2. One of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall not murder". (Exodus 20:13).
 - a. The Jewish law calls for death for murder. When Jesus says "judgment" here, he refers to being turned over to the Jewish court or the Roman court for punishment.
3. In the 2nd point, Jesus says if you call someone "raca" you should be tried in front of the Sanhedrin, which is the Jewish religious court.
4. The 3rd point is about calling someone a fool. A fool, to a Jewish mind, is somebody who doesn't care about God nor lives his or her life with any respect of the Jewish Law.
 - a. "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psalm 14:1, NIV)
 - b. Jesus then states that the punishment for breaking this law is to be sentenced to hell.
5. The progression sounds illogical. Why should calling someone a fool be a worse crime than murdering someone?
 - a. Jesus is not saying those who commit mass murder get less punishment than those who call someone a fool. That misses the point.
 - b. Jesus' point is that getting into heaven requires perfection. To get into heaven we must never sin, ever once, or accept Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
 - c. Hell is not a place for those who commit sin. Hell is a place for those who willfully choose to reject God. Sins are *consequences* that come from living in disobedience to God. When we ignore God, we sin. When we ignore God completely, we sin at greater levels.
 - i. "The gates of hell will be locked from the inside". C.S. Lewis
 - d. Jesus is saying if you ever sin even once in your life you have now violated the law. You are no longer "perfect" and heaven requires perfection as an entrance requirement.
6. Let's talk about the practical day-by-day aspect of our Christian life.
 - a. Is this verse teaching we are to never be angry when we are wronged?
 - i. Paul said, "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV)
 - ii. The point is not the anger; the point is what we do with that anger.
 - b. Jesus never condemns anger itself; he condemns the action caused by anger. That action causes murder at the worst, or at the very least, we call people "an idiot or a fool".

Verses 23-24: "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

1. The first word of verse 23 is translated "therefore".
 - a. That means that the "therefore" connects the next set of verses with the last set of verses.
 - b. Jesus' illustrations given in Verses 23-27 are meant as illustrations and applications for when you *want* to call someone an idiot, a fool, or have hatred toward someone. It is important to read these verses in that context.
2. Notice the emphasis is not on an enemy causing you to anger, or for example, somebody cutting you off in traffic. It says when your "brother" has something against you.
 - a. In the next two verses, Jesus will talk about anger and enemies (Vs. 25-26).

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Verse 23-24 (cont):

3. What Jesus is teaching is that if you know someone is angry at you, especially someone who is close to you, try to reconcile that arrangement before you come to church to pray. (If that person refuses to cooperate, that's a different story. The effort must be on your part to do so.)
 - a. If you are angry with someone at the moment, it consumes you. It prevents you from worshipping God and praying to God because your mind is focused on that anger. It is better to try to reconcile that anger so you can have peace with God.
 - b. But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice. (1st Samuel 15:22, NIV)

Verses 25-26: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

1. Now we are moving from anger with a "brother" to anger with an "adversary".
2. In that day and age, when somebody wanted to sue you, they literally and personally dragged you to court to face their accusation. When Jesus says "adversary", in that setting, people thought it was referring to someone who had a charge against you.
 - a. Jesus' first point is we should try to settle the case on the way to court.
 - b. Jesus' second point is we are guilty. Notice Jesus says we will not get out (of jail) until "we have paid the last penny". The illustration implies we are guilty.
3. Let's get back to the discussion of how to properly deal with our anger.
 - a. Let's say we are angry about something. Of course we are right. We always are. ☺
 - b. Jesus tells when we are going to court, to try to settle the matter before going to court.
 - c. What does either of these illustrations have to do with the judgment upon us for acting upon our anger?
 - i. First of all God wants us to be a good witness for Him. As Christians, our lives are all about serving God. We are his "ambassadors" or representatives at all times.
 - ii. What do "non-Christians" expect you to do when you are frustrated?
 1. They *expect* you to get mad, because that is what they would do.
 2. If you can give that anger to God, they will think "Hey, I want to have peace of mind in the times of frustration too. How do you do that?"
 - d. That anger is also blocking your relationship with God because you are focusing on the anger and not on God.
 - i. This does not mean to avoid prayer in order to reconcile the anger.
 - ii. Sometimes we have to give that anger to God in order to have the Holy Spirit work through us to properly handle the situation.
 - e. The point Jesus is making is about reconciling the situation with your "brother" or your "adversary" in order for you to get on with your life in the way God intends it.
 - f. "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord." (Romans 12:18-19, NIV)
 - g. "It is an honor for a man to stay out of a fight. Only fools insist on quarreling." (Proverbs 20:3, The Living Bible)
 - h. Jesus is not calling for total pacifism. If someone is about to physically attack you, Jesus does not expect you to sit there and be killed. We'll talk about that in the next lesson.