

**MT. 5:3-17 THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Continued)**

We now will study the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever given. It comprises in theory and practice what will later be called, "the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:19-21). As predicted in Isaiah 42:21 about Jesus: "He will exalt the law and make it honorable." So this Sermon amplifies the spiritual dimension of the Old Testament laws.

In fact, Christ was the perfect person to do it since, as the pre-existent Word, He gave this very law to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Notice 1 Cor. 10, where it mentions *twice* that it was Christ who led the Israelites through the wilderness and at times even disciplined them. We read, "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that *all our fathers* were under the cloud, all passed through the sea [the Red Sea]...and all drank the same spiritual drink of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and *that Rock was Christ*....nor let us tempt *Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents" (vs. 1-9).

Now, the Sermon on the Mount is divided into three sections: 1) the *magnification* of the Law; 2) the *contrast* between God's law and the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees; and 3) the difference between the *application* of the law according to Jesus and according to the scribes and Pharisees.

We begin studying the eight *beatitudes* (from the Gk. *makarioi* and the Latin, *beatus*, which means blessed or happy). They show us internally what a real Christian possesses through God's Holy Spirit. It begins, not with a description of the Law itself, but what the *attitudes* of such people should be. It reveals the *inner* spiritual values—what the fruits of God's spirit produces—humility, sensitivity to sin and its consequences, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity, peacefulness, and perseverance. This is what the law of God in Christ develops in us. Of course, it is a goal—for no one can achieve it completely, but we should be gradually becoming better at it.

We read in **Mt. 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** Why did Christ say kingdom of "heaven" and not of "God," a term He did use in Luke 6:20? Remember, Matthew was primarily writing *to the Jews*, who had an *overly* high regard for God's name and avoided

using it when possible, so instead they used euphemisms such as "heaven."

This beatitude is the first attribute of a Christian, and it was carefully chosen by Christ. Notice it means not being full of ego and lacking something—God's spirit. It is full of humility by realizing the need for God's spirit and going continually to Him for it. *The Good News Bible* says, "Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them."

Isaiah 66:2 describes this very principle, "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

What a contrast with the scribes and Pharisees! They saw themselves as full of righteousness and above the common people. Many were filled with pride and vanity. As spiritual leaders and teachers, they distorted many of God's laws with their traditions and forgot to promote the law's spiritual dimension. So once you have this first attitude, you are ready for the next.

Mt. 5:4, "Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

When a person is poor in spirit by knowing his deficiencies and going to God to be filled, he can better see the world around him *as God sees it*, with all its sins and sorrows, and mourns about it.

We see this attitude in Ezekiel 9:4, where God says, "Go through the midst of the city...and put a mark on the foreheads of *the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations* that are done within it." A true Christian knows spiritually combating the world is not a light matter but serious business!

James 4:9-10 describes this perfectly: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and you joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

So we should never lose our sensitivity or become jaded by sin, but mourn about the world.

Mt. 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

This is similar to the first beatitude, but meekness means *humility toward others*. Notice Num. 12:3 says Moses was the "meekest" person on the earth. Jesus Christ said, "Take My yoke upon you

and learn from me, for I *am gentle and lowly in heart*, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt. 11:29). If you are meek, then you will be teachable and show humility toward others.

Mt. 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

This means deeply desiring to grow spiritually. Just as there is an appetite for eating, there is also a spiritual appetite for God's ways. Remember, righteousness is defined as the keeping of God's laws: "For *all your commandments* are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172).

Next, **Mt. 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."**

James 2:12-13 sums up this principle: "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." So being merciful pays big dividends with God!

We read how to apply it in Col. 3:13-14, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another; if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

Mt. 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

We must keep that purity of heart and thought before God, despite the world's corrupting influence. As Tit. 1:15 says, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled."

So we need to focus on positive, healthful things, as Phil. 4:8 indicates, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

Mt. 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Being a peacemaker is not easy, since the world is so filled with strife. But, as Paul tells us in Rom. 12:17-21, "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves,

but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" Remember, God is ultimately in charge.

Mt. 5:10, "Blessed are those that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for they shall be called the sons of God."

Persecutions will come. As Christ said, "These things I have spoke to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

Paul adds in 1 Tim. 3:12, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." In other words, Christianity and persecution go hand in hand.

So now, we go from a description of the spiritual attributes to the next section of the *effects* or *results* it should have on the world. Christ illustrates this by drawing two word pictures.

Mt. 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."

Now, salt is known for three main qualities:

1. It prevents spoilage, being an antiseptic.
2. It gives flavor
3. It is very valuable

(1.) Christ refers to its first quality—it keeps food from spoiling. This implies society is becoming more corrupt and rotten all the time by having more license to break God's laws and sin.

As one commentary brings out, "Now [salt] is not only a description of the Christian; it is a description by implication of the world in which he finds himself. What does it imply? It clearly implies rottenness in the earth; it implies a tendency to pollution and to becoming foul and offensive. That is what the Bible says about this world. It is sinful and bad. It is like meat which has a tendency to putrefy. It is something which can only be kept wholesome by means of preservation or an antiseptic, as salt is. As a result of sin, life in the world in general tends to get into a putrid state. Far from there being a tendency in life and the world to go upwards, it is the exact opposite. The world, left to itself, is something that tends to fester. There are these germs of evil, microbes in the very body of humanity, and unless checked, cause disease" (Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Matthew 5*).

We saw this tendency toward moral spoilage in Noah's day, in Sodom and Gomorrah, and now in our days. If we lose the qualities of being the salt of the earth--by being corrupted by the sins all around us--then we become worthless to God. In our conversations, conduct, actions--we are to preserve God's laws and values in us or else--like bad salt, we become useless.

(2.) Salt gives flavor to food. We not only should prevent the spoilage from society, but we can give it good flavor by our example. So we should not only withstand the negative influences, but also add positive values. Just like a pinch of salt makes eggs delicious, so our speech and conduct should produce a positive effect around us.

As Col 4:5-6 says, "Be wise in the way you act toward those who are outside the Christian faith. Make the most of your opportunities. Everything you say should be kind and well thought out so that you know how to answer everyone" (*God's Word Bible*).

(3.) The third characteristic of salt was its scarcity and great value--not like today that it is so abundant and cheap. The word "salary" comes from the Latin, *salarium*, because Roman soldiers at times were paid with this valuable salt. You only needed a tiny bit of it to enhance the flavor or to use it as an antiseptic. Christ said such followers would be few, but very valuable to God--as long as they did not lose these qualities. We might not be of great value to the world, but we are to God. That leads us to the next word picture, the second result of living the beatitudes.

Mat. 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Again, this illustration has important implications--if the light is lost, then the rest becomes darkness. Society is in darkness--and we are to bring light to it. Why is it in darkness? It's because they are disobeying God's laws. To the extent they violate them, it brings darkness. In fact, society has only succeeded to the point that it has applied more of God's principles and we see the results on the nations that applied them or didn't.

1. Light brings transparency.

We have to learn to be transparent, with no hidden motives, and have this childlike quality.

Rom. 16:19 says, "Therefore I am glad on your behalf, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil." Phil. 2:14-15 adds, "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

2. Light brings out the reality of the objects--the truth about things.

God's Word is called a lamp because it sheds the light of truth on things (Psalm 119:105). In John 1:1-10 & 8:14, we see Christ, the Light, brought the abundant life--the true way to live according to God's laws. In Acts 26:14-18, we see Paul was to bring the light of truth to a Gentile world steeped in darkness.

3. Light brings triangulation.

A source of light reflects off objects, and then the retina sees and registers it. Notice the spiritual effect--we reflect light--others see our example and then they glorify God (not the reflection we give but the source of all of it--God!)

So these are the two effects (salt & light) by developing the beatitudes in us. But some could say, is the Law of Christ then abolishing the O.T. law? So Christ proceeds to explain it does not, in fact, instead it enriches and magnifies it.

We read in **Mat. 5:17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets (the O.T.), I did not come to destroy but to fulfill (Gk. *pleroo*)."**

Strong's Dictionary says about "fulfill": "Literally to cram a net, to fill to the fullest."

Thayer's Lexicon adds: "1) to make full, to fill to the full; to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting, fill to the brim. 2) to consummate...to render perfect; to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking). McNeile: "He came to fill the law, to reveal the full depth of meaning that it was intended to hold."

Christ certainly did all of that! Next time, we will continue with this vital Sermon on the Mount, so continue reading all of Matthew 5 and 6.