

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 73.3%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Matthew 5:27 – 30

Monday: Matthew 5:31 – 32

Tuesday: Matthew 5:33 – 37

Wednesday: Matthew 5:38 – 39

Thursday: Matthew 5:40 – 42

Friday: Preparation Day

Saturday: Sabbath

Current # of email addresses in the group: 727

Thank you for your patience as I focused on teen summer camp and other matters after returning last week. This week's reading was very important to me and I wanted to ensure that I didn't rush through these next numbers of versus because they have sometimes been greatly misunderstood and I wanted to attempt to do them justice and have us potentially look at them through a different lens than we have perhaps considered them in the past.

I plan to have a reading plan out for this week and next but then will miss a couple weeks while I prepare and participate in our young adult program called Challenger Sierra that takes place in just over a week.

I hope you greatly enjoy this week's reading plan!

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 118

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 797 – SUNDAY: July 19th

Matthew 5:27-30

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 27 - Here Jesus Christ moves into the seventh commandment of “you shall not commit adultery”. Here again we will see that Jesus is continually moving us from external behavior to internal transformation. We should remember where we are in line of arguments Jesus is making. In verse 20, Jesus said that “**unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**” He has not once suggested we do that by keeping “more” commandments. Instead, He is leading us to consider how deep God’s commandments have penetrated into our hearts and minds. This forces us to not only consider what we’ve done, but whether our thoughts and actions are increasingly like God (an internal transformation that leads to external obedience).

Verse 28 – This verse requires a great deal of time. Not only for what it explicitly states, but for the implications it makes.

First, we should talk about the word “looks” (blepōn - βλέπων). In the Greek, this is a present active participle which means “the person who is continually engaged in looking”. This is not “the man who notices an attractive/beautiful woman”, but instead it is a sustained looking. The ISV translation uses the word “stares”, which captures well the sense of what Jesus is describing. This is not seeing and moving on, but rather a focus of the eyes and intentions.

This scripture goes on to show the reason for the ongoing looking at a woman. It is to “lust for her”. He is staring or continuing to look at her for the cultivation of “lust” (for the purpose of allowing the imagination to fantasize). He is using his eyes to indulge his desires. He is mentally pursuing something God hasn’t given him. Lust isn't merely sexual desire. It is the selfish pursuit of something or someone that God has not given us. In lust, another human being becomes something for my consumption rather than someone made in God's image.

This is similar to anger (which we covered in our last reading), where our anger might cause us to not properly value another human made in God's image ("you don't deserve my love and patience"). Here, lust says, "you exist for my pleasure". Again, it's a failure to properly value one made in God's image.

Notice how Jesus Christ goes far beyond us men not just committing the physical act of adultery, but to take ownership over our thoughts. Not doing so, even if we avoid ever committing adultery, will have impacts on our lives. When someone comes to see women only through a sexual lens, it devalues them from their great potential, wisdom, intelligence, etc. This sexualized view of women might come out in other ways in terms of the language we use about women and the way we treat women. Not controlling and taking personal responsibility will likely spill over into other thoughts and behaviors.

The word "lust" (epithymeō - ἐπιθυμέω) meaning "to desire", "to long for", or "to greatly desire" of itself isn't always bad. It's used in Luke 22:15 for the great desire Jesus had to keep the Passover with His disciples.

To notice a beautiful woman is not sin. As a human, Jesus would have noticed beauty. Earlier in Matthew 5:8 it talked about the "pure in heart". Jesus here is getting into how while we might govern our outward behavior that we know we can't follow through on, we who are Christians and modeling ourselves after God the Father and Jesus Christ, must take a serious look at our hearts.

Jesus Christ, as the Word, understood the great value of sex and sexuality within the institution of marriage that He created. God and Jesus Christ hold sex and sexuality in very high regards as it pertains within Their beautiful design. Here, Jesus dives into the corruptive

nature of men lusting for women who are not their wives. The solution Jesus offers isn't the suppression of sexuality, but rather its proper ordering. Sex was God's idea. Attraction was God's idea. Marriage was God's idea. The problem Jesus is addressing isn't sexuality --- but selfishness. Lust takes something beautiful that God created to express covenant love and transforms it into self-gratification.

It's important to understand that this is written to men in this section. So it implies that there is something that occurs here that men are more prone to do (even while recognizing that if a woman were to do this it would be sin for her too). The practice of staring at a woman can be very unloving toward them. It objectifies women and it can feel creepy, uncomfortable and even unsafe. Some men use it as a power play (a form of domination). Women do not appreciate it. Therefore, it's unloving to them if we do it.

Verses 29-30 - Often, male lust has been framed through the lens of what the woman is doing or wearing and so the message being communicated is that it's her fault.

Jesus is really clear here that it's YOUR eye or YOUR hand that is the problem, and that YOU are the one responsible to handle and control your mind, thoughts and actions. It's therefore missing the point of this scripture to miss the seriousness of that and the responsibility and instead shift the responsibility to what the woman should do to avoid us sinning.

This isn't to say, that women do not have their own responsibilities to love their brothers in Jesus Christ and not to knowingly or thoughtlessly place stumbling blocks before their brothers. But that's not the focus of this scripture --- where Jesus is clearly wanting men to own their own behaviors, thoughts and responsibilities.

If we miss the focus of this scripture, we might think. “Oh, if women just covered up more, then I wouldn’t sin.” That thought process requires no action on the part of the person lusting. It shifts the blame and responsibility away from themselves and onto another person. Jesus is clearly placing the responsibility of the one lusting onto themselves (the one who is responsible for controlling their own thoughts and actions).

Jesus is clearly showing that there is something going on within our hearts that we have to deal with. Jesus Himself was a man, and so He knew well this responsibility, and took responsibility to avoid sin regardless of the actions of others.

When we look at the solution Jesus lays out here in these verses, I imagine we all understand that Jesus is not saying that we should literally cut off our hand or pluck out our eye. Afterall, Jesus has already shown this to be an issue of the “heart” that He is ultimately addressing (verse 28). If you have a heart problem, then what you do with one of your eyes or hands really doesn’t solve the problem. The two sayings are clearly metaphorical (exaggerated hyperbolic language). Jesus is very clearly articulating the seriousness of this heart problem. To fix this problem requires drastic measures.

In naming two parts of the body that we would naturally feel are indispensable (parts we feel we couldn’t live without), Jesus meant to make us look at our heart and ask, Is there something so engrained in how I think and behave that cutting it out would make me feel like I’m giving up something I can’t live without? Is lusting after women so important to me that giving it up would feel like giving up my hand or eye?

Jesus is trying to bring us to the place where we realize that living life in a way that is both pleasing to God and also produces the true happiness God designed, is more than worth it --- not only in this life, but also as it

pertains to its impact on our eternal salvation. Notice that the context here is about whether we profit --- or whether we die in the lake of fire (eternal death).

Before we move on, we should notice the use of “right” in regards to the eye and hand. The “right” side is used throughout scripture to symbolize strength, honor, favor, power and blessing. People at that time, like today, were predominately right handed --- and so the right eye and right hand would be viewed as the most important and useful of the two. Loosing them would be viewed as tremendously costly. Jesus is continually asking His disciples to consider “what am I willing to give up or surrender to become like the Father and Jesus Christ?” Jesus is not calling us to minimal obedience --- or even obedience to a long list of documented rules. He is calling us to a process of internal transformation where we will give up anything that gets in the way.

Day 798 – MONDAY: July 20th

Matthew 5:31-32

Daily Deep Dive:

We now come to another section of the Sermon on the Mount that deserves a lot of time and careful consideration --- as it deals with marriage, divorce, covenant faithfulness, human hardness of heart, and the protection of vulnerable people. Before we dive into this, it’s also worth understanding where this fits into the greater narrative. Jesus placed this right after reconciliation, and having faithful eyes and heart. We will again see here that Jesus is moving from what can you technically do by law, to what was God’s ultimate design --- and are you in alignment with that design. Notice that unlike the last two sections, where Jesus quoted one of the ten commandments and then exposed the human heart, here Jesus does not quote a commandment. Instead He refers to a common legal provision. The question that Jesus is examining here is “under what circumstances can a man dissolve his marriage”.

Jesus would have been very aware of a famous first-century debate that centered around the words “some uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 where it says, “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce...”. In the first century, two main ways of viewing this scripture had passed down through the disciples of two rabbis, Hillel and Shammai. Their rabbinical interpretations would then pass down through their disciples and continue down through time, through subsequent generations of disciples. With regards to the Deuteronomy 24 debate, the house of Shammai believed divorce was only appropriate in cases of serious sexual misconduct by a wife. The house of Hillel believed divorce was permissible for much broader reasons. Some later rabbinic writings include examples such as if his wife burns his food or he finds another woman more beautiful. Later in Matthew, specifically in Matthew 19, we find in verse 3 that Jesus is asked “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?”. This is the debate that is going on between the house (schools of thought) of Hillel and Shammai. They want to know where Jesus falls out on the debate. Jesus responds by taking them to Genesis and showing Their design saying: “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,’ and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

It’s important for us to understand by God’s design that was the intention. Divorce was never what God wanted. There are some things that came to be because of man’s failures and hardness of heart that were never God’s intention (biblical slavery falls into that category). In Matthew 19:7 they press Jesus further saying: “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted

you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

It's important for us to understand that these men are asking "what is permissible"? In other words, how easy should it be for a man to divorce his wife? Jesus responds in Matthew 5:32 by saying: "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

Now let's notice a few things here. Who is placed at the center of responsibility here? The man! He's ultimately responsible before God for ending the marriage for a reason other than "sexual immorality" and is responsible for her committing future adultery (if she would marry someone else in the future). --- notice "causes her". Women at that time were often far less educated and often had limited economic and social options. A man at that time could essentially dismiss his wife for some trivial reason and effectively force her into a situation where getting re-married became necessary for her survival. Jesus makes it clear that a man who casually discarded his wife was not morally innocent. He bore responsibility for the consequences of his actions.

The Greek "sexually immoral" is "porneia – πορνεία). It means "sexual immorality", "illicit sexual relations", and "sexual unfaithfulness". It's broader than just adultery. It would include any unlawful sexual conduct. It's important to note that Jesus has just been talking about "adultery" specifically --- but here did not use the same word for adultery. He shifted to a broader sexual immorality term.

We understand that a common mistake of understanding the Bible is to lift a single section out without understanding additional principles that are included elsewhere in the Bible. This is one of those cases where the Bible provides more information in other places on this topic.

For anyone wanting to do a deep dive into the topic of “Divorce and Remarriage” you can find the UCG study paper here:

<https://www.ucg.org/study-papers>

I will lift out just one section of this paper where towards the end it states:

“Only the following two reasons can (but do not necessarily have to) dissolve a marriage in which a believer is involved.

- “porneia” or sexual immorality. This would include, in the broader sense, all cases of sexual deviancy, adultery being an example. The implication is habitual sexual misconduct, but is not limited to this.
- Not pleased to dwell. Paul explains in the book of 1 Corinthians that if an unbeliever is not pleased to dwell and departs that a Christian is not “under bondage”. An individual may express his/her displeasure in a number of different ways—habitual misconduct such as immorality (refers back to implications of porneia), criminality, addictive behaviors, abuse, desertion or willful failure to provide physical support (1 Timothy 5:8). In such cases it may be appropriate for the “believer” to initiate the proceedings.

Additionally, the study paper states:

- A marriage may be annulled or put aside if either party was deceived by the other partner prior to marrying. Fraud or deception should be acted upon at the time of discovery.

I want to now shift to ask “what was Jesus really opposing and addressing here in Matthew 5:32”? Jesus does not appear to be trying to dive into every conceivable divorce scenario. He appears to be confronting a growing casual attitude toward divorce. It appears that a number of men were looking for permission to get out of their marriages, and were asking essentially “under what circumstances may

I get out of my marriage”. When we understand Jesus taking us back to the original design of Genesis and His own approach to covenant faithfulness, the better question would be “what does covenant faithfulness require?”

In a world that talks about “falling out of love” and ending their marriage, we understand that marriage was never designed to be treated as a disposable contract.

In Jesus' day, many religious discussions about divorce had shifted from protecting marriage to identifying acceptable reasons to end it. Jesus redirects the conversation back to God's intention for marriage as a covenant relationship marked by faithfulness. Just as He moved beyond murder to address anger and beyond adultery to address lust, He now moves beyond legal divorce procedures to address the deeper question of covenant commitment. Kingdom righteousness is not concerned with finding the minimum requirements for ending a marriage, but with cultivating the faithfulness, purity, and love that reflect God's own covenant relationship with His people.

Day 799 – TUESDAY: July 21st

Matthew 5:33-37

Daily Deep Dive:

Before we started into this Sermon on the Mount in this deep way, I used to simply think that Jesus was taking us from not only not committing sin, such as adultery, in some outward action, to also working on our thought process, so that we didn't allow ourselves to sin in the mind as well. And while I think that is true, to stop there is still incomplete and not the full picture of what Jesus was trying to get us to become.

The more we go over this Sermon on the Mount, the more I see that Jesus is moving us to think and become like Him (and the Father). Not

only don't murder, and don't hate in your heart, but become a reconciler and one who actively creates peace. Not only don't commit adultery and think lustful thoughts, but have a pure heart towards those made in God's image. Not only don't get divorced for any reason, but come to deeply value covenant faithfulness.

In other words, even controlling our thoughts is not the true end goal, it's learning to not have the wrong thoughts in the first place because our whole way of thinking has been remodeled/transformed.

So now we come to oaths.

Verse 33 – As a background to making oaths, let's consider a few verses.

- Leviticus 19:12 states "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD."
- Numbers 30:2 states "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."
- Deuteronomy 23:21-23 states "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth."

The common thread through these verses is if you make an oath before God you must keep it.

Due to the hardness of mankind's hearts and mankind's propensity to try to cheat, lie and get out of their oaths, by the first century an

elaborate system had developed regarding oaths. What really made an oath binding? What oaths were less binding? What oath formula specifically made you obligated to fulfill your oath. Where were the loopholes. Similar to other sections we've covered here, man is looking for minimum requirements and a way out of doing what is right.

By the first century, Jews didn't say God's name for fear of taking God's name in vain. Therefore, instead of swearing by His name, they would swear by things closely related to God. For example, one might swear by the temple. By swearing by God's temple, one would understand the oath was serious and the person would keep his or her word. But what if someone then broke their oath and didn't keep their word? Well based on my studies, they might come back and say, "I didn't swear on the gold of the temple". They had created loopholes out of their oaths. Which oath was binding? Swearing by heaven? Swearing by Jerusalem? Swearing by my own head? All of this was a heart problem. Don't ask what is minimum truthfulness required of me? Don't ask what allows me out from keeping my word? Instead become a truthful person whose word can be trusted always!

In verses 34-36 Jesus leads them through a thought process to show that no matter what you might swear your oath on, none of it really belongs to you anyway. Everything ultimately belongs to God!

Many commentators and Bible scholars don't believe Jesus is saying we can never make an oath in verse 34. Their argument is that God swears oaths throughout scripture, that Paul uses oath-like language in the New Testament (such as "God is my witness..."), and that Jesus Christ was put under oath by the High Priest (compare Matthew 26:63). They argue the issue isn't formal oaths, but instead the greater problem that had developed of loopholes --- and not keeping one's word was the real issue Jesus was addressing.

Verse 37 – It's clear that Jesus brings this all down to one simple point. Keep your word! Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' There wasn't any formula defining which oaths were binding and which were not. The simple principle of God is that we are expected to do what we say. In Psalm 15:4, one of the qualities listed of someone who pleases God is "He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;". Notice it says to his own hurt. The word hurt means "to spoil" or literally "by breaking into pieces". It can be translated "afflict" or "harm". The point is that when we give our word, even when we say 'yes' or 'no', God expects us to keep our word --- even when it costs us something --- even when it's difficult --- even when we suffer to do so. To have to make it more complicated than this so that our word can be trusted is evil (For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.). Our word should be enough. We should be people who when we give our word, someone can take that to the bank and know that we won't ever break our word. Are you truthful? Are you trustworthy? This is another way we can become like the God Family who always keeps Their word!

As a recap: The problem Jesus addresses in this section isn't primarily oath-taking, but truthfulness itself. By the first century, discussions about oaths had increasingly become discussions about loopholes—which promises were truly binding and which were not. Jesus refuses to participate in the debate. Instead, He asks His disciples to become the kind of people whose character makes elaborate assurances unnecessary. Kingdom of God righteousness isn't concerned with discovering the minimum amount of truthfulness God requires, but with becoming so honest and trustworthy that a simple "yes" or "no" is enough. The goal is not merely keeping our promises—it is becoming people whose words reliably reflect the truthfulness of our Father in heaven.

Day 800 – WEDNESDAY: July 22nd

Matthew 5:38-39

Daily Deep Dive:

We now come to a section of Scripture that I believe is often misunderstood and has been used to encourage Christians to be doormats for abusive behavior. Many have believed and taught that Jesus is instructing us to be such good Christians that others can mistreat us and we shouldn't stand up for ourselves --- but should instead should let them. Is that what this section of Scripture really is saying?

Verse 38 - When people consider sections of Scripture such as Exodus 21, Leviticus 24 and Deuteronomy 19, that deal with “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”, some have wrongly concluded that God is encouraging revenge. However, we should understand that in a world full of retaliation and wrongdoing, God was placing limits on revenge and ensuring that punishment and response fit the crime. In response to injury, mankind has often responded in ways that were even worse than the original action. These Scriptures were primarily judicial language that encouraged those seeking justice to hand down punishments that were in alignment with the original wrong. However, by Jesus' day, these were being applied on an increasingly personal level. The discussion had become, “What am I allowed to do back to the person who hurt or wronged me?” This is right in alignment with what we've already been covering. How angry can I get? How much before I can divorce? Which promises do I actually have to keep? Now, the question is “How much can I do back to someone?”

Verse 39 – It's important that we understand the word the NKJV translates “resist”. In Greek it is the word *antistēnai* (ἀντιστῆναι). This word literally means to “stand against”. It has a fairly broad range of meanings --- such as oppose, withstand, resist, confront, set oneself against, and withstand in battle. As we look at how this word is used elsewhere in Scripture, we see James' use of this word in James 4:7 is that we are to “resist the devil...”. In Ephesians 6:13 we are to take up

the whole armor of God so that we can “withstand” in the evil day. And Peter used this again about Satan in 1 Peter 5:9 --- that we are to “resist him, steadfast in the faith”.

It becomes even more interesting to me when we see how this word is used in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint - the Bible that many in the first century were very familiar with). This word is frequently used in a military context (armies standing against armies, one person opposing another). It’s often used in connection with armed opposition, violent resistance and military confrontation.

Jesus clearly instructs them “do not antistēnai an evil person”. The clear context that Jesus just setup is that they were used to this idea of returning evil for evil (an eye for an eye) and Jesus is clearly teaching Don’t respond in kind. Do not set yourself up against this person in the same manner they set up against you. Do not retaliate against evil with an opposing force. The ERV translates it this way “don't fight back against someone who wants to do harm to you.” The CEV translates it “I tell you not to try to get even with a person who has done something to you.” The BBE “Do not make use of force against an evil man”.

So if we don’t retaliate and respond in kind, what do we do? Jesus is about to set up four different scenarios. It’s important that we understand the cultural background of each --- and that in all four cases, Jesus did not say “take it and do nothing”. In each case there was a response --- and that response or action is important to understand.

CASE 1: “whoever slaps you on your right cheek” – Let’s first notice, this is a slap. The Greek is clear that this is an open hand, not a closed fist. This action was not one of someone trying to hurt you physically as much as insult you. We should also notice the specific detail that he slaps you on your “right” cheek. In their culture, most people were

right handed and even someone who was naturally left handed was taught to use their right hand because using the left hand in social interactions was socially unacceptable. Why? Because in the ancient world there was no toilet paper and indoor plumbing. And so the left hand was reserved for personal hygiene. It was socially unacceptable to eat with your left hand, greet someone, touch someone or give a gift using the left hand. This detail that was included is very important --- because if I'm using my right hand to slap you, but I'm slapping you on your right cheek. How can I do that? I would have to give you a backhanded slap.

The Jewish community was a "status" community. Your reputation mattered greatly. A backhanded slap was less about inflicting pain or injury and more about insult, humiliation and social dominance. Masters did this to servants, and soldiers did this to those who were their inferiors. It was meant to communicate their elevated status over you and to communicate for you to "know your place". By law because one's reputation was so important in that society, you could actually sue someone for a backhanded slap because of the personal injury to your reputation that would result. So what does Jesus tell us to do if we have been publicly insulted? Slap them back? Return evil for evil? Don't suffer a hit to your pride and reputation?

Equally important he didn't say walk away and take it? He says "turn the other to him also". - which would be the left cheek now. Why is this important? By turning the other cheek, you are choosing to put this person who just tried to lower you into a difficult position --- exposing his behavior in an interesting way. Some Bible scholars say that a slap on the "left" cheek was meant for someone who you considered your equal. So perhaps one of the radicle ideas being presented here is that not only as a Christian do we not respond in kind (with evil) to get even and save our reputation, even if by man's laws we can.

By turning your other cheek to the individual, in a position of strength you cause this person to have to make a choice. In front of those who just saw this person “lower you” through a backhanded slap, you give them an opportunity to slap you again, but perhaps this time in a way that makes them acknowledge you publicly as a cultural equal (or at very least in a way that shows them to be a bully by striking you a second time).

If they don’t hit you again, perhaps they storm off instead, upset that they didn’t get the best of you. You presented yourself as strong and confident enough to not only take their attempt to humiliate you, but to stay there and still not become like them --- and instead show your strength, humility and control in not defending your own personal honor --- and also in showing them mercy by not taking them to court for the insult.

This should force us to consider how we respond when we are insulted? What about online when our church is insulted? What about when someone insults our family? Jesus Christ often was very counterculture. We have been called to respond in radically different ways than the world around us.

Day 801 – THURSDAY: July 23rd

Matthew 5:40-42

Daily Deep Dive:

CASE 2: Verse 40 – Here we are continuing with a line of thought that we began yesterday. In teaching us not to respond in kind and retaliate, Jesus is showing us how to respond in radically different ways that force injustice to be exposed --- and from a position of strength to force others to examine their own evil behavior.

“If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic” -

The context here again is often misunderstood. This is not about someone stealing from you --- and you just allowing all of your stuff to

be taken by a criminal. Here it says they want to “sue you” and take away your tunic. The average Jewish man did not have a full closet of clothes as many of us have today. They possessed very few articles of clothing. For a poorer individual, their entire wardrobe may have consisted of a tunic, a cloak, sandals and a belt or sash. That was about it.

The tunic was the inner garment that was worn next to the body. It was something like a long shirt --- usually extending to the knees or below. You might think of it like a long shift, a simple robe or a modern hospital gown that is sewn together. Average people owned one, sometimes two. The Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ tunic at His crucifixion.

A cloak was the outer garment. It was much larger and more valuable. It functioned as a blanket at night, a coat when cold, protection from weather, and sometimes a pillow or a carrying bag. For poorer people it was indispensable. In Exodus 22:26-27 we see that God’s law protected the cloak. Notice it states “If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that *is* his only covering, it *is* his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I *am* gracious.” Think about how compassionate God is in ensuring His people are kept warm during their sleep at night. Even if someone owes you money, don’t take away his humanity and basic needs. So now let’s try to fully understand what Jesus is teaching.

Someone literally wants to sue you to take the “shirt off your back”. Jesus says if someone is so petty, so greedy, so intent on taking from you, don’t stop there. Offer them your cloak also. Now what would that leave you wearing? Sandals and perhaps a belt. Essentially nothing. And that’s the shocking imagery and radical exposure of injustice that Jesus is setting up. If they want to sue you for the shirt off your back and you also say, “you can have my cloak too” --- they are in

an awkward position. If they take everything, they leave you standing publicly naked with nothing. This exposes them as greedy and heartless. Again, here Jesus is teaching Christians to be strong and stand against social injustice --- not by responding in kind or in ways that embarrass us --- but in ways that expose greed and injustice, and place those who behave in such a way at a crossroads so to speak (likely embarrassing them). Will they continue down a path that shows their real nature or will they relent and yield? No violence, no retaliation, simply allowing the exposure of their evil to be observed publicly by their own doing.

CASE 3: Verse 41 – “**whoever compels you to go one mile**” – Roman soldiers could legally compel someone to carry their equipment/gear. Rome understanding that this could be abused and get out of hand, placed a cap that a Roman soldier could only make a man carry his gear for one mile. At the end of one mile the man could put it down and walk away --- likely upset at the oppression of having to go out of his way for a mile --- now tired and exhausted. All who heard this understood the background to Jesus’ teaching. Imagine this situation where at the end of the mile, you don’t just drop the gear, or the soldier says, “okay, you can be done” --- but by your own choice you say “No thank you. I got you. I’ll go another.” Perhaps this makes the soldier uncomfortable. He may now be afraid that he might get in trouble for “unlawfully” compelling the man to go further than allowed. Or perhaps this was meant to again show the radical strength and mindset of a true Christian. What you meant to force me to do, I show to be a joyful choice to assist you even further than what the law requires. No retaliation, no violence, certainly no weakness, but a radical response that reclaims dignity and shows personal freedom over actions.

CASE 4: Verse 42 – “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away” – We must be careful not to view this passage through giving what one doesn’t have to give. Consider that Peter didn’t give what he didn’t have (Acts 3:6). The emphasis here is on generosity instead of selfishness.

Consider how in all of this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has increasingly pressed us to become like the God Family --- and therefore to think very differently. How generous is God? To whom does God give rain and good gifts? Does God only give to those who give back to Him? Who can repay God all that He gives them? Consider John Gill’s commentary on this verse: “**Give to him that asketh thee**,.... To every man, whether Jew or Gentile; friend or foe; believer or unbeliever; a good, or a bad man; worthy or unworthy; deserving or not, that asketh alms, whether food or money; give it freely, readily, cheerfully, according to your abilities, and as the necessity of the object requires” and against “**And from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away**; refuse him not, turn not away from him with a frown, or without speaking to him, or with a denial; look upon him with a pleasant countenance, cheerfully lend him what he wants, whether he be a Jew, from whom it was not lawful to take usury, or a stranger, from whom it, was lawful to take it, yet take it not; lend him freely, "hoping for nothing again", which must not be understood of not hoping for the money lent, for then it would be giving, and not lending; but of not hoping for any reward for lending it: and indeed the money itself is not to be hoped for again, when the circumstances of the borrower are such, that he is not able to make a return.” [END QUOTE]

As we bring this section to a close, we see that all of these examples would model to everyone watching that Christians are different. They respond differently and not in kind. Christ wasn’t teaching us to be doormats or weak. He was teaching the right way to resist evil. Not with violence and not in kind. In Romans 12:21 we are told “Do not be

overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Also, in Romans 12 we are told in verse 17 to “Repay no one evil for evil” and in verse 19 “do not avenge yourselves,”. Instead of being sucked into evil behavior, Christians are called to be courageous, truthful, merciful, generous and faithful. There is tremendous strength in Matthew 5.

Jesus is not calling His disciples to become weak, passive, or perpetual victims of abuse. Rather, He is teaching them to reject retaliation, while courageously exposing evil through radical righteousness. In every illustration Jesus gives, the disciple refuses both revenge and submission to evil's methods. Turning the other cheek, giving one's cloak also, and going the second mile are not acts of cowardice but of tremendous strength and self-control. Kingdom of God citizens neither become what their enemies are --- nor allow their enemies to determine who they will become. They overcome evil, not by returning it, but by reflecting the character of their Father. Jesus shows mankind throughout Matthew 5 that the question is not: "What am I am entitled to do?" --- but Jesus refocuses them (including us) to ask: "What kind of person am I becoming?" “Am I becoming like God?”

Day 802 – FRIDAY: July 24th

Preparation Day

Daily Deep Dive:

Day 803 – SATURDAY: July 25th

Sabbath

Daily Deep Dive: