

# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew 5-7

## INTRODUCTION

This is the Great Sermon of Christ's earthly ministry. It isn't intended to be a social gospel or to bring an end to suffering, wars, and such. Jesus said often that "the kingdom of God is among you" (e.g. Luke 17). Thus, as the Holy Spirit converts us through God's Word, we become citizens of this heavenly kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount declares to us what we are to God through His Means of Grace working in our lives; and because of what we are what our relationship to the Law is. Therefore, we are not surprised that the entire sermon is all Law – Law to show us we cannot save ourselves; Law to contain sinful desires; and Law to guide us in true righteousness. The first section contains the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:3-16, these place the emphasis on what we are as opposed to what we do. Next, Matthew 5:17-48 deals with the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Law. Matthew 6 deals with our relationship with God, and Matthew 7 deals with our relationship with man.

### Matthew, Chapter 5:3-16 The Beatitudes

A – We must first note that Jesus is teaching His Disciples, not the world in general

B – To interpret Scripture properly we must follow these guidelines:

- (1) The understandable and natural meaning, in its proper context, is usually the correct interpretation.
- (2) If the interpretation contradicts the main point of Scripture – Salvation by Grace Through Faith – then it is wrong.

C – In v. 3-16 Christ list seven characteristics that make up the Believer's character. The eighth Beatitude deals with the reaction of the world to these traits. These characteristics are all interrelated and progressive. The Beatitudes are not natural characteristics, and they actually create a sharp distinction between the Believers and unbelievers in the things they seek after.

D - "Blessed" in the Greek means "very happy!" True happiness is a byproduct of a right relationship with God and cannot be discovered in any other way.

E – The first three Beatitudes have to do with our response to the revelation of God. This is a characteristic of the true child of God and is a foundation that God builds on. God cannot build upon pride, self-will, or our own ambitions. God's process is usually that of emptying before filling (see Luke 2:34; Jeremiah 1:10).

- F – Anyone who is truly poor in spirit will not be admired by the world. Why? Because "poor in spirit" indicates a willingness to surrender to the authority of God, so that He governs our lives. We will not make demands, because we're unworthy and undeserving. Poverty of spirit is a consciousness of our own sinfulness and spiritual deficit. Ironically, the way to happiness is just this poverty of spirit.
- G - The "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are used interchangeably by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament. The "kingdom of God" refers to God's absolute rule over the whole universe. There are two aspects to the kingdom of heaven. In the present world the kingdom of heaven consists of those who have been converted by the Gospel and thus are governed by Christ. In the future when Christ returns the Kingdom of heaven will then be on earth (Revelation 11:15). In both cases this Kingdom is made up only of Believers. Sometimes these two aspects of the Kingdom of God are spoken of as the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.
- H - The term "mourn" in Greek denotes the most intensive kind of mourning. It was used when Jacob thought that his son Joseph was dead (Genesis 37). Jesus was truly a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53).
- I – This mourning includes but is not limited to: A very bitter, deep sorrow for the loss of a loved one or a deep continuing sorrow from an great affliction resulting in a tremendous suffering; Mourning over the conditions of the world and having a feeling of helplessness to do anything about it as when Jesus mourned over Jerusalem, where He was also grieving over the sin of the world (Matthew 23); Mourning over our own sinful state which creates a sorrow over our own spiritual shortcomings and sins.
- J – Jesus teaches that Believer are comforted as God cleanses us of our unrighteousness and sins (Second Corinthians 7). We're also comforted by the sure and certain hope of the better world that is promised to us after Judgment Day.
- K - When we realize the truth about ourselves, our attitude towards others is one of meekness. Meekness is related to lowliness, gentleness, and learning the Word of God. In the Greek the word for "meek" means "a happy medium between two extremes." Meekness is moderation. A meek person can have anger when others are treated unjustly, but not be angry when he is unjustly treated. Another meaning for "meek" is "to domesticate a wild animal." A God-controlled life is meekness. The Jews didn't expect their Messiah to be meek. They were anticipating Him to overthrow the Roman government by force. Meekness is allowing others to see the truth about ourselves and giving honor to others. We have examples in the Bible of Believers who were meek: Abraham (Genesis 13); Moses (Numbers 12); David (First Samuel 24); Stephen (Acts 7); Paul (Acts 26).

- L - A meek person has already inherited the earth because he is a satisfied person; satisfied with what God has given him. A meek person has learned that happiness doesn't consist in his possessions, but in a relationship with God. In the coming Kingdom when Jesus reigns, the meek, i.e. Believers, will reign with Him.
- M – The first three Beatitudes were the emptying process. Starting with v.6 we come to God seeking to fill our spiritual emptiness and helplessness. This verse speaks of desiring, not just a portion but all of the true righteousness of God. The primary purpose of Christ's Church on earth is NOT to take care of symptoms of sin such as starvation, poverty, and crime, but to bring the Gospel to men so that they will hunger and thirst for this righteousness. Righteousness cannot be achieved in our own strength; it is a standing before God. God has imputed righteousness to the world, and Believers recognize and enjoy this status only because they believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. There are two types of righteousness spoken of in the Bible: Of the law, which at its best leads to self-righteousness and results in judging others; Righteousness seen as being given by God freely by grace. This is the righteousness of Christ. We cannot improve upon this righteousness, and it leads to thankfulness and praise. Righteousness is being right with God and our fellow man. We're not to hunger and thirst after happiness, but after righteousness. Therefore, blessed is the one, who understands he is not righteous in himself, but who hungers and thirsts after righteousness.
- N – Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we don't deserve. After being filled, we become the next three Beatitudes. Because we have received the mercy of God through repentance, we can be merciful. If we aren't merciful, we haven't actually received God's mercy. Those who have received forgiveness show forgiveness. The Greek word for "mercy" has its root in the Hebrew word meaning "to get inside someone else's skin." This means that you can totally identify with what he's seeing, thinking, and feeling (Ezekiel 3). God came into the skin of man through Christ to be able to identify with us. If we're merciful, then others will be merciful to us (First Corinthians 11).
- O – The word "pure" in v.8 refers to a purity that is the result of washing. The heart is the center of one's being, the throne of the spirit. The Pharisees were concerned with the outward observances of righteousness (Matthew 15). God is concerned with the inner heart (Jeremiah 17). The heart needs to be cleansed (Psalms 51). Being "pure in heart" is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Christian has a renewed heart in an unrenewed body (Romans 7).
- P – We can see God in His creation, in the events in history, and in our daily lives. In the future we shall see Him face to face (First Corinthians 13 & 15).

Q – The Jews were longing for the Messiah to lead them in war, to conquer all Gentiles, especially the hated Romans, and to rule the world. Theirs was merely an earthly peace – to live without anyone over them. But peace is more than a passive existence; it's a very positive state of being and doing good. A peacemaker is more than one who stops quarrels; he brings good into other people's lives. A peacemaker might become involved in conflicts. As long as the forces of evil prevail, there is no way to have peace except by destroying them. Peacemakers deal with the corrupt evil-doers so that there can be a real state of peace. Jesus was fighting against the corrupted religious system and for peace between man and God (Matthew 23). Real peace can never be found in a compromise with evil. There can never be a peaceful coexistence with sin (First Corinthians 5). Peacemakers bring others to God. The basic problem with people that destroys peace is that they need to be reconciled to God.

R - "Called" means "chosen." "Children" means "sons." A good translation would be "they shall be chosen as sons of God." God was the One Who initiated peace with mankind. We should have this same desire (Romans 5). When Jesus comes again to the earth, He will be called "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9). Even within our own lives, God will never make a pact with sin. Sins must be dealt with!

S – In **v. 10** Jesus is quite honest and upfront in telling us that we will suffer and that the world will not react in love and kindness towards us. Another aspect of being righteous is to be Christlike. We'll be blessed for being persecuted because we're righteous, not because we're fanatical or foolish in outrage. The horrible false teaching that Believers only go through suffering and afflictions if they don't have enough faith is completely inconsistent with Scripture. (see Second Kings 13; Second Corinthians 12; Philippians 2; and First Timothy 5 among many others). The religious people were the ones who persecuted Jesus, because they were challenged by Him. Indeed, quite often persecution comes from so-called religious people. Just look at the life of Luther as one prime example of this trend in Church History!

T – As Christians we should face persecution in a Christ-like manner. V.12 gives us a kind of check-list of responses:

- (1) By not retaliating against our persecutors;
- (2) By not holding resentment against them;
- (3) By rejoicing in the fact that this proves that we are God's children and understand that we have a great reward in heaven.

U – Because we're God's children, our position in His kingdom is secure. We are His ambassadors on earth, and we represent Christ. The prophets were persecuted. All of the apostles were persecuted. They persecuted Christ Himself. Persecution has often strengthened the Church.

## Matthew 5:13-20 The Relationship Between Believers and the World.

- A – Jesus tells Believers in v. 13 that we are the “salt of the earth.” He does this for very good reasons. Salt has several important qualities. At the time of Christ, salt was used as a preservative to kill bacteria and retard spoilage. The Christian needs to have a preserving type of influence. Salt is used to add flavor. Christians are to add life and flavor to people around them. We're to make every experience "taste" better because of our presence. Salt creates thirst. Christians seek to create a thirst within others to know Jesus Christ. Salt prevents infections from setting in. Christians are to have an antiseptic effect on the open sores of sin in this world. If Believers are not having a salty effect on this earth, we're good for nothing. Salt that is cast on the ground destroys vegetation. Jesus here is giving the ultimate result of not being salty. Either Believers will be a purifying influence or they will find themselves trampled down in a rotten and decaying society!
- B – In v. 14 Jesus now uses another common symbol, light, and applies it to Believers. At first this may sound odd to us, as we usually think of Christ being the “light of the world.” But following the example of salt, Jesus is emphatically saying that we are to be the light of the world. Simply put, the light of Jesus Christ is to be reflected in our lives. Again, like salt, light too has several functions. Light dispels darkness. Our lives should have such an influence that wherever we are, we dispel darkness. Light also reveals. The light of Jesus Christ reveals the darkness that is in others. And light shows the way out of darkness. We are to be leading others out of spiritual darkness through the work of God's love by way of the Word and Holy Spirit in our lives. People ought to notice that we are Children of God.
- C – This cannot happen if we try to hide our relationship with God. On the contrary, v.16 tells us that our good works done out of love and thanks to Christ will draw attention to God and lead others to glorify Him. As the old saying goes, “If we were accused of being a follower of Jesus would there be enough evidence in our lives to convict us?”!!!
- D – So then, what becomes the purpose of the Law for the Believer? Beginning in v.17 Jesus gives a very clear and direct answer: In short – to obey it!
- E – There has been a great deal of misunderstanding concerning this relationship between Believers and the Law. The life and death of Jesus Christ is the complete fulfillment of ALL the law – Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil. There is no more need for sacrifice. Jesus became the sin sacrifice for the world as the Lamb of God (John 1 :29). Jesus also became our sacrifice of burnt offering, the offering of consecration. And Jesus became our peace offering, making peace between man and God (Ephesians 2:14). Jesus also fulfilled the Sabbath law, which was the rest that God had given to

His people (Hebrews 4:9-10). While the law condemns all men to death and has no power to save, Christ's death upon the Cross fulfilled the righteousness of the law (Colossians 2:14-17). When Jesus came, He fulfilled over 300 prophecies from the Old Testament (Second Peter 1:16). There is NOTHING anyone has to DO to fulfill ANY part of God's Law.

F – At the same time, in v. 18 Jesus is saying that the Law is still to be obeyed. This and the next verse refers to the relationship the law has to the Christian. Our righteousness before God hasn't been established through our own actions; it is based upon Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Law for us (Romans 10). Christ has totally fulfilled the righteousness of the Law in every aspect. God has imputed that righteousness to ALL mankind, both believers and unbelievers, otherwise He could not be the One Who “take away the sin of the WORLD! (John 1) If righteousness could come by the law, then the death of Christ wouldn't have been necessary (Second Corinthians 5).

G – Because of our faith in Christ, God gives Believers the power to will and to do His good pleasure in us (Philippians 2). Unbelievers cannot please God in any way. But because of our Old Adam there is also a warfare going on between the Believer's renewed spirit and the flesh (Romans 7).

H – This is why Jesus says what He does in v. 20. The true intention of the Law was that we be perfect and thus exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Law is to govern men's attitudes as well as their actions. The Scribes and Pharisees were the most "religious" people in the country. The Scribes read and interpreted the Law of God for the people. After the Babylonian captivity, the common people could no longer read the Hebrew language adequately (aside from memorizing a small portion for their Bar Mitzvah), and thus they depended on the Scribes for the interpretation of the Law. The Pharisees were a religious sect who spent their lives endeavoring to live by every detail of the whole Law. They put the emphasis on the outward observances of the Law and ignored the inward Law of God. They obeyed the Law with the wrong motive – wanting to be seen and honored by the people.

I – The rest of Matthew 5 affirms the fact that God is most concerned with the proper attitudes that lead to the right actions. The Pharisees set certain standards of righteousness and sought to motivate others to conform to their standards through fear. Jesus is the true standard of righteousness. That righteousness is imputed to us through by a declaration of God sealed by His raising Jesus from the dead. (Romans 4). This righteousness is manifested by Believers through the fruit of love in our lives.

## Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus Was Not In Conflict With the Law

- A – Jesus disagreed with what the people were being taught about the Law. The Scribes and Pharisees were disobeying the true intent of the law. They were thwarting the very purpose of God; instead of being driven to despair through the Law, they were resting in a false righteousness. According to Christ then, certain principles need to be followed when interpreting the law.
- (1) The spirit of the Law is what matters most.
  - (2) The thoughts that lead to obeying of the Law are what must be judged.
  - (3) The true intent of the Law is to bring us into a positive relationship with God and our fellowman. It is wrong for us to take the illustrations that Jesus gives here and make a new law out of them.
- B – These Scriptures in the Old Testament have been cobbled together by the scribes and Pharisees, who weren't looking at murder as a sin against God as much as a sin against man. Therefore, in v. 22 the Lord goes back to the attitude of anger which perpetrated the action. "Raca" means "you vain fellow" or "you good-for-nothing." God doesn't want us to put down the value of an individual. "Thou fool" isn't referring to a person's ignorance. The man who says "Thou fool" with anger and hatred is the one who will be in danger of hell.
- C – In v. 23-26 Jesus teaches that bitterness can get in the way of worshipping God.
- D – Then, in v. 27 Jesus reminds us that God established marriage so that the family unit could be strong. The breakdown of the family unit would have grave consequences for the family and for all of society. We shouldn't be continuing in sin as Christians. If we're led by the Spirit, we're not under the law, but if we're concentrating only on not committing the physical act of adultery, then we're thinking as the Pharisees thought. Even the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," shows us that the desire for our neighbor's wife is wrong. The Lord is interested in what comes out of the heart (Matthew 12). Sin is born as we entertain sinful desires in our hearts (James 1). We're not to join in with the trend of thinking of this world (James 4). We should cleanse ourselves daily with the Word of God.
- E – Connected with our walk in God's Word, v. 29-30 stresses the importance of avoiding hell, even at the cost of losing a part of one's own body. We dare not do those things that arouse our fleshly desires. Thus, in dealing with temptation there are certain things we should remember:
- (1) Do not think we can handle it ourselves (James 4).
  - (2) Resist the devil (Second Timothy 2).
  - (3) Keep reading the Bible (Matthew 4).
  - (4) Stay close to God in prayer then He stays close to your mind and spirit (James 4).

F – In v. 31-32 Jesus discusses the very vexing problem of marriage and divorce.

Because the hearts of the people had very quickly become hardened to God's ideal plan for marriage, God wanted to establish this law to finalize divorce. There were two schools of thought in regard to this law –

- (1) The major belief was held by most Scribes and Pharisees. They interpreted "uncleanness" as meaning anything that was not pleasing to the husband. This deprived the woman of her rights as the husband could not be divorced against his will.
- (2) The other belief was that this law referred to moral "uncleanness." Jesus is teaching that there can only be one cause for divorce. God's intention for marriage is that they be no longer two, but one flesh (Matthew 19). While the sin of adultery is always pardonable. However, this doesn't mean that we can use the grace of God to cover our own sin fullness.

G – God also gave the law to prevent chaos and for our own benefit. To bear false witness is to lie. So often we lie to ourselves, to others, and to God. This leads to distrust, so that people have to swear to affirm that they are telling the truth. In Exodus 20:7 God said we shouldn't take the name of the Lord in vain This made an oath binding, and one had to abide by what he had said. In v. 33 Jesus points out that the Pharisees had created a legal way of lying, and they became clever in their speech. Therefore, v. 34 doesn't mean that we cannot take an oath ever under any circumstances, but that God wants us to be trustworthy and always speak the truth.

H – The principle in v. 38 was given to instruct judges in what they should mete out in judging their cases. The scribes and Pharisees were incorrectly teaching the people that it was a personal duty to retaliate. As children of God we often have renounced our personal rights. A servant or bondsman was a steward over his master's possessions, but he had no right to possess anything of his own. Agape love is giving without asking for return. Phileo love is a reciprocal love. The Greek of v. 39 means "resist not the evil person." We're not to seek to get even in a personal way with the one who has wronged us. We can, however, seek justice by going to the proper authorities. In addition, we're to be able to take insults. As an example, a Roman soldier by law could compel a non-soldier to carry the soldier's gear for a mile. We often need to go the "extra mile" and be courteous, considerate, and helpful.

I – In v. 43-45 Jesus reminds us that the Old Testament taught that we should love our neighbor, and that nowhere does it say to hate our enemies. In this way we'll be different from the people in the world. We'll be Christlike and our actions will show that we're children of our heavenly Father. God doesn't bestow special blessings through nature just on Believers. God is good and rich unto all.



H – Jesus teaches in v. 46 that we don't have the right to get even. If we seek to defend Ourselves in a wrongful way, we cannot expect God to defend us.

I – Finally, v. 48 sets out God's ideal requirement for all people in their relationships with each other.

## **Matthew 6 The Believer's Relationship With God**

A – "Alms" here means "righteous acts." Jesus often taught by stating a principle and then giving examples to make His intent clear. The gift of eternal life is the foundation upon which our righteous works are based. Our motivation for the works we have done will be tested (Second Corinthians 5:10).

B – There are three classifications of righteous acts:

- (1) giving,
- (2) prayer, and
- (3) denial of the flesh

C – Our giving concerns how we relate to others, our prayer concerns our relation with God, and fasting concerns our relation to ourselves. Our priorities must be ordered so that the spiritual things we want to do take precedence over physical things. God knows our physical needs and will see that they are met, if we put Him first. Jesus reminds us that we should be constantly conscious of God's presence, for He observes and evaluates all of our actions (Acts 17:28).

D – We need to guard ourselves against pride. The pride of mind causes us to think more highly of ourselves than we should. It makes us think we're better than others. Pride of will causes us to be discontent with our circumstances, thinking we deserve more than we have. It causes us to strive and be contentious. We "take heed" by:

- (1) self-examination,
- (2) realizing the disastrous consequences of pride,
- (3) remembering Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane when He submitted His will to the Father's.

E – In v. 2 Jesus teaches that any kind of giving that draws attention to the giver and draws the praise of men is the wrong kind of giving. Following up in v. 3-4 He says that the right kind of giving is a private matter between God and each individual.

F – About prayer Christ reminds us in v. 5 that many people think that the purpose of prayer is to get our will done and to persuade God to give us what we want. The true purpose of prayer is to get God's will done when we ask according to His will (First John 5:14).

G – The term in v. 6 sometimes translated as "closet" here means "secret place." Jesus had a secret place where He went to talk with God. It is important that we also find a quiet place so we will not be distracted to our speaking to God. We shut the door on the noise outside, and we shut ourselves in with God. We don't have to pray with closed eyes, folded hands, or kneeling down. Prayer isn't a position of the body. Some people pray better when they are walking around.

H – Yet in v. 7 Jesus teaches that we need to avoid repeating phrases or words, because it tends to allow our minds wander during prayer. God wants our full attention when we converse with Him. We don't need to use a certain tone of voice for prayer nor do we need to use formal Elizabethan English. A normal conversational tone and plain language are fine. Speaking aloud, though not loudly, helps us to keep our minds on what we are saying. It also helps us to verbalize our feelings. We are also reminded in v. 8 that when we pray we're coming into the presence of the Creator of the universe. We should be conscious of His power to do anything that we might ask. Faith is vital for effective prayer. We can make our requests to God boldly. for we are His beloved children, and He delights in giving to us. The name Jehovah in Hebrew is a verb which means "The Existing One"; God becomes whatever we need Him to be. One of the keys to Abraham's faith was that he believed that God could do what He had promised to do (Romans 4:21). We need to remind ourselves of Who God is when we approach Him with our requests, so that we ask in faith (Ephesians 3:20).

I – All the elements of true prayer are found in this prayer that Jesus gave us beginning in v.9 upon which to model our prayers. Prayer has three forms:

- (1) Adoration. We can praise God for what He is and for what He has done. We can talk to Him anytime we need or want to – as we go about our duties, eat our meals, drive our cars, or whatever we're doing (First Thessalonians 5:17).
- (2) Petition. We have to receive from God ourselves before we can give to others. He wants us to bring our needs to Him. People who refuse to ask God for the things they need are being foolish, not more noble, or spiritual.
- (3) Intercession. We usually begin to pray for loved ones after ourselves and then move to people further from us. We can touch the world for God through prayer.

J – People who choose to shine in this world have their reward here in the recognition of men; those who choose a heavenly reward will shine forever (Daniel 12:3). The first prerequisite of prayer is a right relationship with God. We have fellowship with God through the work of Jesus for us and in us (First John 1:7). The name of Jesus gives us access to God and relation with Him (John 14:13).

- K – We note in v. 11 that the first request Jesus made was for our physical needs. He asked for bread for one day at a time only. God wants us to trust Him to supply what we need each day, rather than relying on what we have set aside.
- L – Jesus asked God in v. 12 to forgive our huge debt to Him (First John 5:15). God Wants us to have a forgiving attitude toward others. Jesus often emphasized the importance of forgiveness in His parables (Matthew 18:21-35). This verse is a petition for the needs of our souls.
- M – Jesus turns in v. 13 to our spiritual needs. The phrase "Lead us not into temptation" does not indicate that God tempts us to do evil (James 1:13). God leads us into trials and tests to show us that our strength is in Him (Genesis 22:1-19). The request here is that God will not allow us to get into areas where He knows our weakness would cause us to stumble and fall from faith. Tests and trials are important in our walk with God. They are necessary for our spiritual growth (James 1:2-3). Jesus doesn't ask that we not be tested, but that God would overrule us when we try to take on a spiritual challenge for which He knows we aren't ready.
- N – It is important to note that the term "evil" is "the evil one" in the original Greek. This is the way Luther translates this word. Evil in the Bible is not merely something painful or unpleasant, but rather being cut off from God through all eternity. This is the goal of the "evil one," that is, the devil. Thus, we ask God to keep him from gaining the victory over our saving faith. Going to hell forever is the ONLY true evil there is!
- O – Our prayers are sometimes selfishly motivated. We should be aware of why we ask for something to better understand why God grants some of our requests and denies others (James 4:3) Prayer is the greatest outlet for spiritual power that we can have. The other outlets of spiritual power are: the witness of our godly lives, our words about God, our service for God in the world, and our time, treasure, and efforts invested in God's Kingdom.
- P – The essence of prayer is warfare. Prayer puts us on the offensive in spiritual battles. While prayer is not a Means of Grace, our prayers become a spiritual force that fight the evil forces of Satan. Satan blinds men's eyes and dulls their perception of spiritual things. We can free people from their bondage to evil through prayer (Ephesians 6:11-18). Our prayers can travel any distance to do battle for God anywhere in the world. Prayer is often the deciding factor in spiritual battles. The tragedy is that the enormous power available to us through prayer is so often wasted because we do not pray.
- Q – The ending of this verse, referred to as the "Doxology," is not contained in some copies of the Book of Matthew and is not found in Luke's version of Christ's prayer. However, it is most certainly Biblical correct and a beautiful ending to any prayer!

- R – Jesus returns to the concept of forgiveness in v. 14-15 and reminds us that forgiving others is an act of faith and something God wants us to do. Anyone who refuses to forgive others shows himself to be an unbeliever and cannot possess the forgiveness of God!
- S – In v. 16-18 Jesus turns His attention to another facet of our relationship to God and one that was very common and often abused in His day – fasting. Some people are so concerned with themselves that even in their worship of God they seek to draw attention to themselves. Our motivation in doing righteous acts must be pure, so that God receives the glory for our good works (Matthew 5:16). The motivation for any spiritual activity is to be prompted by our relationship with God. He should be central in our minds as we go about our service to Him. If we would feed our spirits as much as we feed our flesh, we would be much better off! Fasting is not wrong and can be useful to focus our attention on God and His will, but it can often turn into an attempt at work-righteousness. It must be done with care and a right attitude.
- S – In the previous verses Jesus was teaching that our spiritual activities should be done with the thought of pleasing God. Beginning now with v. 19, with the rest of chapter six Jesus teaches that our physical activities should also be done with God uppermost in our minds. The "treasure" Jesus refers to here isn't necessarily money. An earthly treasure can be a career, a home, a car, or anything that hinders our walk with God. Jesus wants us to realize that material things are of transitory value while spiritual things are of eternal value. Therefore, we should esteem spiritual things above everything else (First Peter 1:4).
- T – It is so difficult to know our own hearts (v.21, Jeremiah 17:9). If we examine what we consider our treasures we'll find out whether our hearts are in spiritual things or in earthly things. How do we lay up treasures in heaven? Jesus commended the wisdom of the man who planned for his future by using his position to his advantage (Luke 16:1-12). In the same way, we should use what God has entrusted to us and the places He puts us in for spiritual enrichment rather than for temporal gain. We're not to put our trust and security in our earthly possessions, for they're so easily lost. Instead, we're to trust God to provide for all our needs while we devote ourselves to the things of the world where we'll spend eternity.
- U – In v. 22-23 Jesus says that our eyes are the windowpanes of our bodies. If the glass through which we look is clean, then we see the world as it is. If the glass is distorted or dirty, then our view of the world will be distorted. "Evil" here means "stingy, grudging, greedy." We should examine ourselves to determine whether we're generous or stingy, not only with material things but also in our attitudes. If we're generous, then we're filled with light, but if we're stingy, then we're filled with darkness.

V – Jesus lays out a great principle in v. 24, namely, no man can be a slave to two lords. Wealth, or literally "Mammon" was originally a person to whom one entrusted one's funds. The meaning changed to become a trust in the power that money provides. One of the pagan gods of Old Testament times was called Mammon. A slave had no rights and couldn't own anything. He had no time of his own, for he was always on call for his master. His master could work him 20 hours a day or have the slave beaten if he chose to. We cannot be a slave to God and be devoted to material things. There isn't enough time to serve both.

W – In v. 25 "Take no thought" here means "take no anxious thought" or "don't be worried." Jesus isn't suggesting that we do nothing to meet our physical needs, but that we keep our needs in the proper perspective and trust God rather than worrying about them. We should do our best and commit the rest to the LORD.

X – In his instruction Jesus next gives two examples to demonstrate the futility of worrying in v. 26-30. Birds get along just fine without worrying about what will happen tomorrow. The term "hour" is not in the original Greek. It has "cubit." A cubit is about eighteen inches. Jesus is using it as a unit of measuring the length of one's life. We cannot add even a split second to our earthly existence by worrying! And as for clothes; people have often attended church more conscious of fashions than conscious of God. Since God so beautifully clothes the grass, which soon withers and is burned, then He will certainly clothe us. The birds and the grass are God's creations, but we are more – we are His very children!

Y – The term "gentiles" in v. 32 refers to unbelievers. God is aware of our needs. He wants us to trust Him and put Him first in our lives, rather than worrying about how we'll provide for our fleshly needs. When the flesh rules over us, it's a tyrant. It causes us to live in a constant state of lust and frustration. Even if we glut our flesh, it always demands more.

Z – Finally, in our relationship with God, Christ reminds us in v. 33-34 that worldly people are controlled by the flesh and are always seeking to satisfy its demands. When we're born again, we give the spirit the priority in our lives and put our flesh and emotions under the control of the spirit. We establish our priorities by:

- (1) Deciding what is most important to us. For the Christian, the primary concern must always be his relationship with God (Philippians 3:10).
- (2) Reordering our time, energies, and thoughts around that which is most important to us. How to do this:
  - (a) We need to examine our lives to see where we're wasting time that could be spent developing our relationship with God. Our thoughts and energies are so often concentrated on the material and physical concerns of life (First Timothy 6:8).

- (b) We can see where our hearts really are when we carefully consider where we have been expending our time and energies.
- (c) We need to recognize our need of God's power and righteousness to help us organize our lives around spiritual things.
- (d) The result of properly adjusted priorities is that God will take care of all our physical needs. Or else He will take us to heaven to be with Him in perfection. Either way – we win!

Thus, Jesus teaches us to live one day at a time without worrying about tomorrow (Deuteronomy 33:25).

### **Matthew 7 The Believers Relationship with Others**

- A – Beginning with v. 1 Jesus gives us the characteristics of the true Believer and contrasts them with the hypocrisy of the religious people. We're not to put on an affectation of spirituality to impress others. We should seek God's approval rather than man's admiration.
- B – Throughout this sermon the Pharisees were used as examples of religious hypocrisy. They had established a righteousness of works and of law. People who judge the most are those who feel superior on the basis of their self-righteousness. On the other hand, Believers -
  - (1) Will not judge presumptuously (Romans 14:4).
  - (2) Will not judge another's motives.
  - (3) Will not judge hypocritically (Romans 2:1).
  - (4) Will not judge hastily or rashly (John 7:24).
  - (5) Will not judge according to our own non-scriptural convictions (Romans 14:2-3).
  - (6) Will not judge unfairly or according to prejudice.
  - (7) Will not judge unmercifully.
- C – The judgment that is prohibited in v. 2 is judging the person rather than the action (First Corinthians 13). When a scriptural principle has been violated, we can acknowledge the fact of the sin without damning the person (First Corinthians 2:2); we seek repentance and forgiveness for all. Every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-12). The way we judge others sets the standard for the way we'll be judged. We're to restore those who fall into sin with meekness, knowing our own frailty (Galatians 6:1).
- D – In v. 3-5 Jesus tells us we may have a 2-by-4 in our own eyes, but judge our brother for the sliver in his eye. We're so ready to condemn others but we excuse our own sins.

- E – Only God is qualified to judge men, because He alone can see into men's hearts and knows their motivations (Romans 2:2). Our judgment is perverted by our prejudices (the beam in our eyes) that make others' sins look so much worse than our own.
- F – At the same time Jesus sets another principle in v. 6. Though we're not to judge people, we are to discriminate between those who have a reverence and appreciation for spiritual things and those who do not. We're to protect the holy truths God has given to us from unnecessary exposure to ridicule and blasphemy (Jeremiah 15:19). It's also important to maintain discipline in the Church by separating the wolves from the sheep. Those who spread heresy need to be weeded out so that the damage they would do is minimized. There are people who sit in church services and hear only what they want to hear. They reject the things that convict them of their sins and misuse the teachings of grace as an excuse to go on sinning. In our personal witnessing we should be guided by the Holy Spirit to discern between those people who are ready to hear what we have to share and those who will only reject and ridicule it. Men who are worldly-minded aren't able to understand spiritual things (First Corinthians 2:14-15).
- G – Jesus reminds us in v. 7 that God gives us the opportunity to come to Him through Jesus if we believe in Him as our salvation (John 6:29) God still wants to see our lives come into conformity with His standards of holiness. Once we believe in Jesus, He gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live the godly life. We're to be persistent in our prayers. In the Greek this verse tells us to continually ask, seek, and knock. To continue to pray for something when at first we don't receive it tests our faith (Hebrews 11:6) and builds our patience (Psalm 27:14).
- H – In v. 8-11 Jesus gives us the promise that our loving heavenly Father will answer our prayers and bless us with good gifts. The key is that we ask God through prayer (James 4:2).
- I – The word "therefore" in v. 12 refers us back to the preceding verses in order to understand the context. We shouldn't be quick to judge or condemn. Instead, we should be understanding, sensitive, and quickly responsive to the needs of others. This commandment is a positive rule for our behavior, for it suggests action that we can take. The ten commandments told us to refrain from certain actions. The first three commandments concerned our relationship with God. The other seven concerned our relations with man. If our relationship with God is right, then we can get our relations with man in order. If our relationship with God isn't right, then our other relations will not go well either. Our relationship with God always comes first. If we treat others the way we want to be treated, then we're acting the way God wants us to act toward our fellow man.

- J – This is truly the summary of the teachings of the Law and Prophets. But to practice this guideline, we need the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Our love and devotion for God are reflected in our attitudes and actions toward others (First John 4:20-21). The Holy Spirit does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He loves others through us.
- K – In v. 13-14 Jesus is the strait gate we must go through to enter the Kingdom (John 10 & 14). We start on the path to the Kingdom by denying ourselves (Matthew 16:24). Our flesh doesn't die easily. It's a painful, continuous struggle to keep the flesh under the control of the spirit (Luke 13:24). Many people do not like the concept of a narrow path to God. They choose to believe that many roads lead to God, but Jesus says that the broad path leads to destruction (Romans 8:6). It isn't in our human nature to live the life of self-denial. Crucifying our flesh is a slow, agonizing death (Romans 6:6). The Holy Spirit enables us to endure the struggles with the flesh so we can walk in righteousness (Galatians 2:20).
- L – Jesus now turns to the problem of false teachers beginning in v. 15. It isn't easy to discern a false prophet. We cannot decide whether or not a man is a false prophet by the way he looks. He may look like a meek and mild sheep (Second Corinthians 11:13-15), but in reality he is a vicious soul-hungry animal. A false prophet doesn't always tell outright easily seen lies. He often says many things that are true, but he doesn't give people enough truth to bring them to the light. He'll often emphasize a partial truth and neglect the teaching of salvation through Jesus Christ (Second Peter 2:1-2) One way to determine whether a man is a false prophet is to watch the emphasis he puts on money and material things. The man who seeks gifts and money from the people is simply making money off of them (Second Corinthians 4:18) People should give to God out of love for Him, not out of duty or pressure.
- M – Another way to recognize a false prophet is to listen to his teachings to learn whether he offers special privileges or favors from God if you will follow his particular advice. False teachers draw people to themselves. True teachers give out the Word of God in simplicity and draw people closer to God rather than to themselves.
- N – Jesus teaches in v. 16-20 that the fruit of a man's ministry helps us to determine whether he is a false prophet or not. If the fruit of a ministry divides the Body of Believers, then that minister is working against the will of Jesus Christ for His Church (John 17:11). If the effect of doctrine makes the Body unfruitful, then that sterile doctrine is false (John 15:2). If the fruit of a ministry is strife or contention, then that fruit is bad. The good fruit of a true prophet's ministry is love. When the members of the Body of Christ love one another, then they are walking according to the Holy Spirit (John 13:35).



- O – The evidences of love in a ministry are unity and a building up of the Body (First Corinthians 8:1). There should also be joy, peace, and other aspects of the love the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)
- P – An important truth is revealed in v. 21-23. No one will enter the Kingdom who doesn't acknowledge Jesus as Lord, but not all those who call Him "Lord" will enter heaven either. Jesus is the Greek word for the Hebrew name Joshua, which means "God is Salvation." Christ is the Greek for the Hebrew word for Messiah, which means "The Anointed One." The name Christ signified His mission, for He was the One that God had promised to the Hebrews. We must be committed to Jesus as the Lord of our lives. As His servants, it's up to us to find His will for us and to obey it (Philippians 2:5-11). Many people mistakenly believe that it's enough to know about the Lord. Knowing about Him or knowing the right things about Him isn't enough; we need to have a faith-born relationship with Jesus (John 3:1-3). If we call Christ our Lord, then we're implying that He is the Master of our lives. We will give ourselves to Him each day to lead us where He pleases. It's not up to us to decide what good works we should do for God. We're to submit ourselves to His will and obey His commands.
- Q – Jesus ends His sermon in v. 24-27 by giving a warning to us about the foundation upon which our faith is built. The testings and storms that come show us the strength of our foundation. The structure we build, our relationship with God, is what others see. Sometimes we're fooled by a carefully maintained exterior, and we think that someone is solid and secure; but the testings of life prove whether the foundation is stone or sand. The firm foundation has been set deeply in the rock where the groundwork was laid. The house on the sand has been built without any preparation for the foundation (Luke 6:47-49). The foolish man is impatient. He wants to hurry and get his house built without waiting to lay a foundation. He doesn't listen to the advice or counsel of others who have been there for a longer time (Proverbs 15:5).
- R – Many so-called christians are like the foolish man. They claim to be Believers before they have taken the time to study God's Word and learn basic doctrinal truths. The wise man carefully prepares his land and digs deep to lay the foundation. He gets the advice of those who know more than he does and follows their counsel in building his house.
- S – We build on the sand when we base our relationship with God on experiences that don't have a scriptural basis. Many people have had life-changing experiences that weren't inspired by God. We build on the sand when we build our houses on other men's ideas or other men's philosophies. Men who live by other men's philosophies are easily led. These are the men who commit inhumane and irresponsible acts. They

have built their structure on shifting sands and they don't have any moral absolutes to guide them (First Corinthians 3:11-15).

T – When our relationship with God is based on His eternal Word then we have a solid core to hold us steady in any storm. When we have thoroughly studied the Bible and are established in the Word, then we can rest in the strength of our foundation (Matthew 16:16-18).

U – In v. 28-29 we see the reaction of the people to Jesus' sermon. The scribes' teachings were mostly quotations from other rabbis. The scribes themselves didn't often make strong declarations. But Jesus spoke with authority and power. He made positive declarations from a position of His awareness of Who He was. Jesus said He was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He was the only Man who could ever say that. He knew that He alone could obey the law as God meant it to be obeyed. He knew that the prophecies of the Old Testament were written about Himself (Matthew 5:17). Jesus contrasted the way the law had been taught, as rules that governed men's outward behavior, with the way God intended it.

V – The teachers of the law had become self-righteous because they obeyed the law outwardly. Jesus taught that if a man broke the law in his mind, then he was guilty of sin. The law was never supposed to make men feel self-righteous, but to show them how impossible it would be for them to keep the law as God required. If the law could make us righteous, then God wouldn't have sent Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins (Galatians 2:21). These teachings were a direct challenge to the religious establishment because Jesus was denying the very basis of their righteousness.

W – To summarize this sermon:

- (1) Jesus warned that even good works aren't righteous, if the motivations prompting them are fleshly.
- (2) He taught that our flesh wants attention and admiration from others, but the praise of men will be our only reward when our flesh motivates our good works (First Corinthians 9:27).
- (3) He told us that we're to respect and reverence God enough to give Him our total consciousness when we pray (First Corinthians 14:15).
- (4) He promised that God would supply all our needs if we put Him above everything else (Matthew 6:32-33).
- (5) The Sermon on the Mount is to be believed as well as praised, applied as well as applauded, and practiced as well as preached.

Here Endeth the Lesson! Amen.