

Chapter 7

SERMON ON THE MOUNT 2

MATTHEW 5 - PART 1

Introduction: In Chapters 7 through 12 we will be looking at Jesus' teachings about life from the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew Chapters five through seven. For each of these three chapters of Matthew we will break the teaching into two lessons or chapters of this book. As we go through the Sermon on the Mount we will take the specific truths Jesus taught and consider what they mean and how they should be applied in our lives today.

SECTION 1: Salt and Light - The Quality of Influence (Matthew 5:13-16)

- I. Jesus' statement that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world refers to the Quality of Influence - we have the privilege and responsibility of representing the Kingdom of God to our generation. The Bible says that "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time (his generation)." Noah represented the Kingdom of God in his generation, but we are God's representatives in our generation. For some people, we are the only representatives of God and His kingdom they have contact with. (Genesis 6:9)
 - A. Jesus tells us that our influence is like the influence of salt and light.
 1. Salt's influence is an inward-working kind of effect. Salt does its work by mixing into some other substance, usually food, to give it flavor or to preserve it.
 2. Light's influence is an outward-reaching kind of influence. Light shines into darkness to illuminate, to expose that which is hidden, to show the way forward, and to illuminate beauty.
 - B. Each of us influences other people more than we realize. There is a natural progression of influence through relationships. First we influence those we are closest in relationship to and those we have authority over; parents influence children, brothers and sisters influence each other. Then we influence those who see us day by day; friends, extended family, church, people in school and work. Then we influence people in the wider community and the world. Fewer people have very widely extended influence which usually comes through fame, achievement, popularity, politics, and the like. But for all of us, the degree of our influence for good or evil is much greater than we realize.
 - C. Influence is more significant because of what we are than what we say. What we are gives credibility to what we say. Jesus' teachings had greater influence because of His deeds of kindness and power. The first Christians were given credibility by their deeds first and then by their words.
 - D. The quality of salvation that we are experiencing and manifesting will greatly affect the impact of our message. We all as believers in Jesus Christ have salvation by grace through faith. But the quality of life (righteousness, peace, and joy) we are living will either limit or enhance our Christian influence.
- II. Salt of the earth. Our inward-working influence on the world around us (our personal world)

through words, attitudes, and actions.

- A. Salt is a preservative. When salt is mixed with food such as meat which needs to be preserved, it retards decay. Salt has a purifying effect. For many centuries, until modern means of preservation through refrigeration and chemicals became available, the use of salt was the primary preservative for food. A little salt can preserve a large mass of food if applied properly.

In the Genesis account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19), God tells Abraham that despite the terrible sin of the place, He would have preserved it if only ten righteous people could have been found there. We often feel that we are living in a decadent society today, but where would it be without the Christian influence? Consider how many righteous there are today.

- B. Salt gives flavor. How tasteless and flavorless the life of the world is without Christ. People are constantly seeking for fun, pleasure, thrills - anything to give taste to life. The people of the world are eating spiritual, emotional and intellectual junk food! So many have never tasted the good flavor of Christ and don't know what they are missing. When a seasoning is left out, you may not know what's wrong, but you know something is missing. Our salty Christian life must be full of joy, full of purpose, full of significance, or it will have no more appeal than flavorless, bland food. We must be sure that we are not "salt that has lost its saltiness."

III. Light of the world. Our outward-reaching influence on those around us. The influence of light is much farther-reaching than the influence of salt. But this is a different kind of influence. We are the light of the world, something reaching into and touching the world but not totally part of it. We (the church, the believers in Christ) are the only light that shows the right way, that exposes the things hidden in darkness, that reveals true beauty. Light shows the way, gives direction. A light set on a hill becomes a beacon for travelers. Light brightens up a room; it "adds life."

- A. Light is positive influence and darkness is negative. We must never forget that light is the creative thing and that darkness is merely the absence of light. Light is more powerful than darkness, truth more powerful than error, and love more powerful than hate. Light always dispels or drives back the darkness.
- B. Christ in us is the light source. We are simply the vessel containing and emitting the light. Jesus said, "Let your light shine...", not "make it shine." We do not influence as the light of the world through self-effort or straining, but through allowing His light to burn in us and simply yielding to His life and light and letting it reach out to others through us. Just as in a kerosene (paraffin) lamp it is the oil that burns to produce light, not the wick. The wick is only a conductor of the oil from the inside to the outside. If the oil runs out, wick consumes itself and just smolders. We are simply to stay full of Christ's oil, clean the lamp chimney, trim the wick, and allow the light to shine.
- C. Don't hide the light under a bucket or basket, but put it in a prominent place where it can be seen by all. There is a tendency for us as Christians to separate ourselves and hide away from the very people who need our light most desperately. Jesus said that we are to "Let our light shine before men...", not hide it away under a sort of "Christians-only" bowl or basket. This presents its own difficulties and conflicts, but we must not ignore the commands of Jesus and the needs of the world for our own comfort.

- D. "Let your light shine ... so that men will see your good works and glorify God." Jesus

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makes two things very clear about letting our light shine: 1) It is our good deeds - deeds of kindness, compassion - deeds that genuinely help others in both spiritual and natural ways - that allows our light to shine before men, and 2) The desired effect is not glorify the works, or us, or an organization, but to glorify or praise or acknowledge God as the source of the light and goodness in us. (James 1:27)

SECTION 2: Righteousness - The Fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

- I. Jesus sets a very high standard of righteousness for us as His disciples. He tells us that our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the most religious people in order for us to be "Kingdom-dwellers." The righteousness of a Christian believer begins on the inside, in the heart, and works its way to the outside in word and action. The righteousness of the religious person is an attempt to speak righteous words and perform righteous deeds in an effort to make the inside (the heart) clean and righteous. To understand the quality of righteousness Jesus spoke about, we must understand the two-fold reality of "Kingdom of God" righteousness.
 - A. Righteousness begins for the Christian believer as "Positional Righteousness." The Bible clearly teaches us that our righteousness is obtained by grace through faith. Jesus, who was perfectly righteous, took upon Himself our unrighteousness and took it to the cross and into the grave. Jesus then offers to us His perfect righteousness if we will receive it by faith as a free gift of God's love. Repentance and faith provides us with full justification in God's sight, right standing with God through relationship with His son Jesus Christ, and positional righteousness because of what Jesus has done. (Romans 3:21-22; 8:1-11; 10:4-10; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 3:9)
 - B. Positional righteousness provides a basis for us to develop "Functional Righteousness." We must have proper perspective on this area of righteousness. Because the Kingdom of God works from the inside out, if we have been made truly righteous by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, that righteousness will begin to work its way out and become visible in attitudes, words, and actions. Standards of righteous behavior are essential, not "every man setting his own standard" or "everyone doing what seems right in his own eyes." The ability to live a righteous life is also by faith. It is the result, not the cause, of righteousness. We do because we are! This is the functioning of the new nature in deeds and actions. Functional righteousness is the out-working of positional righteousness. It is religion becoming reality. The Word becoming flesh in us. This is faith in action. (Judges 21:25; James 2:14-18)
- II. There must be a proper balance between our emphasis on Positional and Functional Righteousness.
 - A. An over-emphasis on positional righteousness tends to place all emphasis on God's responsibility. This can cause us to focus only on the future ("Someday by and by I will do better"), and offers little motive to live redemptively and responsibly towards those around us who need to see a real demonstration of Kingdom of God life. It can become a kind of "Greasy Grace" emphasis where one accepts no responsibility for attitudes, words, or actions and expects to just "Slide into heaven someday on God's Greasy Grace!" This leads to a religion of Dead Faith.
 - B. If we put all our emphasis on functional righteousness the tendency is to over-emphasize personal responsibility to the point of placing works over grace and developing into

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another form of legalism, or attempting to win God's favor by a rigid code of conduct usually focusing on the bad things one must not do, rather than on the good things that one can do to demonstrate the grace and power of God to the world around us. This leads to a religion of Dead Works.

C. A healthy balance between the emphasis on Positional and Functional Righteousness produces the Christian lifestyle. If we are out of balance on this or any other truth, we will become ineffective to the extent of our imbalance. One way to check ourselves is to honestly examine our motives: why do we do right? Jesus said, "If you love me keep my commandments." The proper motive for doing right and living right is not fear, not obligation, not strife, but love.

III. Jesus had conflict with some religious laws and men's interpretations of laws which had become traditions that hindered and obscured the Law of God, but there is no conflict between Jesus and the Law of God. Jesus said "*...I am come to fulfill the Law, not destroy it.*" (Matthew 5:17)

A. Jesus said that Christian righteousness, the righteousness which is by faith, must exceed in its outworking the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (the letter of the Law) both in quantity and quality. (Matthew 5:20, 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43 "*You have heard it said...but I say unto you...*") Jesus looked at the intent of the Law and not just the "letter of the law."

B. Righteousness is a positive quality, not merely the absence of evil. Jesus' emphasis was on "Do, not Don't." Righteousness, like light, is a positive influence. Unrighteousness, like darkness, is a negative influence. Just as light dispels darkness, righteousness dispels unrighteousness. If we will concentrate on righteousness, we will have less time to be concerned with unrighteousness.

C. The spirit of righteousness which we have received by grace must produce a quality of behavior that is above and beyond minimum requirements. The emphasis on minimum requirements produces an attitude which says, "How much do I have to do to be alright with God?" or "How much can I get away with and not incur God's anger?" As Christian believers, our old nature is crucified and buried with Christ. If we by faith will receive this and concentrate on our new righteous nature, our deeds of righteousness will increase.

D. When Jesus fulfilled Law, He fulfilled it by going beyond its requirements. Jesus was fully righteous - no sin in Him - therefore His deeds were fully righteous. When one exceeds the requirements of the letter of the law, he is released from its demands. When we live by faith, we exceed law's requirements. When we don't live by faith we then fail to surpass the requirements of the law.

IV. Here are some important Righteousness Facts.

A. **Righteousness is essential in the life of a Christian.** We must be righteous by faith (Positional Righteousness) and we must do righteous acts (Functional Righteousness), the quality of which must exceed the quality of the deeds of all the legalists who ever lived. Real righteous acts produce purity of life, growing out from a pure heart. Real righteous acts are positive in relation to God and others instead of negative. (John 8:31; 13:35; 15:8; Romans 6:18)

B. **Righteousness should find its true expression in good works.** People should be able to observe our lifestyle and behavior and know we are Christians. Our good works

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are to be a testimony to those who speak evil of Christianity. Our good works should bring glory to God, not religious pride to us. (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 3:16)

- C. **Our righteousness should influence others toward righteousness.** We are to influence others to do the right thing. If we are living it in our daily lives then we will have credibility when we talk about it and we will be a positive example to others. Jesus equates this with greatness in the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 5:19)

SECTION 3: Anger, Murder, and Human Emotions (Matthew 5:21-26) (See Luke 12:58-59)

- I. The Law of Moses said that anyone who committed murder was guilty and would be punished accordingly. The law stated that the punishment should fit the crime, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life." Jesus emphasizes the distinctions between Law and Grace, the Old Covenant (Tables of Stone) and the New Covenant (Tables of the heart). In this teaching we see Jesus' continual emphasis on attitudes of the heart and not merely on outward acts, good or bad. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)
 - A. Jesus makes it clear that the act of murder is a consequence of uncontrolled anger and that anger can escalate into more and more severe behavior, beginning with an emotional reaction, then moving into name calling and attacking the person with words, and then can progress to physical attack.
 - B. The anger may appear to be justified or it may be causeless anger due to an imagined offense, unnecessary sensitivity, or placing blame unfairly. Sometimes we don't have the facts or we become angry for the wrong reasons. But we need to deal with our anger at this point, before we begin any response or reaction.
 - C. When we feel anger at a person, it is at first only a feeling. If we don't deal with the feeling we will begin to try to hurt the person by calling names (Stupid - Empty Head!), shame him (You Fool!), get even, show him how we feel - "give him a piece of our mind!" It is very easy to begin to lose control even at the name-calling stage. The danger after this point is that anything can happen - angry words become violent actions using whatever is at hand; fist, knife, gun. All it takes is opportunity! Jesus says this puts one in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:22)
- II. Emotion and emotional reactions are great indicators of our values. Much can be known about a person and his or her values by what stirs the emotions of anger, pleasure, or disappointment.
 - A. The things we value are things that produce strong desire in us. What do we crave or constantly desire? If we get the things we desire it gives us pleasure and satisfaction. Watch out for lust, covetousness brought on by desiring the wrong things. Don't allow yourself to become a pleasure-seeker or thrill-seeker. Some Christians become spiritual thrill-seekers.
 - B. When things we value highly are lost or threatened this can provoke anger in us. Which will anger you most quickly and most severely; if someone scratches your car or if someone insults your wife or criticizes your child? Do we become angrier over what happens to our possessions or what happens to people?
 - C. It is important that we cultivate in ourselves a greater valuing of people and relationships and that we keep our valuing of material things in perspective. A healthy relationship with God is a key to proper values. Right relationships with the people around us will help us

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to keep our values right and our emotions keyed to the right things. People are more valuable than material things. God says, "...if you don't truly value others then you don't truly value Me."

- III. What is the key lesson to be learned from Jesus' teaching concerning anger and human emotion?
- A. Your emotions are part of your person, personality, and your nature. They are not to be suppressed in an unhealthy manner, not to be ignored, but neither should they be allowed to run wild and dictate your attitudes, words, and actions. Live as an emotional being.
 - B. Emotions are triggered by your values. We must examine ourselves, examine our values, and then open our minds and hearts to God's Word and make the necessary adjustments.
 - C. The key is to learn to control your emotions and not be controlled by your emotions - to develop spirit-controlled emotions. Recognize your emotional strengths and weaknesses and learn to walk in the spirit so that you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Proverbs 16:32; Proverbs 25:28; Galatians 5:16)

SECTION 4: Adultery and Moral Purity (Matthew 5:27-30) Scripture List: Proverbs 6:24-29; Luke 6:43-46; Ephesians 4:22-24

- I. Jesus' teaching on adultery deals with the issue of moral purity, not only in behavior but in the attitudes that produce behavior.
- A. God has set the standards of Righteousness, Holiness, and Morality. These are absolute standards set by God himself for man. It is not an "adjustable" morality on a sliding scale to accommodate the trends of a culture or society. God's standards are clear-cut, well-defined. "Thou shalt not!" "Thou shalt!" God's moral standards teach us that right is right and wrong is wrong because God says so!
 - B. God's standard of moral purity is not just to be "goody-goody," but to be holy. True holiness is being sanctified or set apart for a special purpose. True holiness is not merely passive (not doing wrong) - it is active (doing right, living purposefully).
 - C. Purity is the purpose of God for every believer. Purity means to be unmixed, unpolluted, clear, clean. God purposes for us to have pure motives, pure worship, pure speech, pure commitment, and pure moral behavior. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit and the temple is to be a holy place. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- II. Jesus used moral and sexual purity to teach and illustrate the Law of Purity.
- A. Human sexuality is divinely created to be joyfully fulfilled. God created the sexual desire of man and woman and purposed that desire be fulfilled.
 - 1. Human sexuality is to find fulfillment within the boundaries established by God Himself. The lifetime marriage covenant between a man and woman is to bring joy and satisfaction, and to "be fruitful and replenish the earth."
 - 2. Mutually fulfilling and satisfying sexual behavior within the marriage relationship is wholesome and good.

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- B. Bible view on sex: Sex is created for procreation, intimacy, and for pleasure and fulfillment in the marriage relationship. Sexual behavior outside the marriage relationship is a violation and perversion of God's plan. This wrong sexual behavior includes:
1. Premarital sex; fornication
 2. Extra-marital sex; adultery
 3. Homosexuality; along with any other forms of sexual activity that are a perversion of human sexuality.

III. How to develop and maintain moral purity.

- A. Deal with past sexual impurity and sins. Moral impurity is one of the root causes of confusion, conflict and failure. Repent, confess, receive forgiveness and cleansing.
- B. Write the law of God on your mind and heart. Know what God's word says is right and wrong in a real applicable way.
- C. Learn to guard your thoughts and actions.
1. Watch out for the temptations of the eye and the hand. Jesus said pluck out the eye, and cut off the hand that causes you to stumble. The point is not that Christians should become one-eyed cripples, but to recognize the seriousness of sexual impurity and sin and its consequences. (Matthew 5:29-30)
 2. Learn to control your sexual thoughts and desires. Avoid sexual fantasizing. Don't dwell on potentially destructive thoughts.
 3. Avoid placing yourself in situations and exposing yourself to influences that prompt wrong behavior. If you soak yourself in temptation, don't be surprised if you sin.
- D. Paul in his instruction to the Philippian believers about growing into Christian maturity says "*think about these things...*" (Philippians 4:8)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

1. Whatever is true. Truth is what God says. Hear it, believe it, and respond to it.
2. Whatever is noble. Uplifting, stirring proper emotions and feelings, challenging us to growth and accomplishment.
3. Whatever is right - fair - equitable - righteous. Television programming and other popular entertainment often presents sin as humorous; sexual sin as normal and acceptable. This influences our attitudes and can ultimately influence our behavior.
4. Whatever is pure: that which upholds godly values, is holy, separated unto God,

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refined, tested, unmixed. Consider your tastes in entertainment, literature, music, conversation.

5. Whatever is lovely and admirable. Learn to appreciate higher things. Learn to appreciate music, art, literature, poetry. (Genesis 19:16; 2 Peter 2:7-8)
6. Whatever is excellent and praiseworthy. Things that represent excellent quality and have a good reputation. By their fruits you shall know them. Check things out before you expose yourself to them.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 7 Sermon on the Mount 2: Matthew 5 - Part 1

1. This lesson presents Jesus' statement, "*You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world*" as the law of influence. Salt is inward-working and light is outward-reaching. How can we maximize our influence on those we come in contact with and what are the things that would hinder us from effectively being "salt and light?"
2. Think about "Positional Righteousness" and "Functional Righteousness". Which do you feel is more important? What happens if we focus too much on "Positional Righteousness?" What happens if we focus too much on "Functional Righteousness?" How can we avoid getting "out of balance" on these two characteristics?