



The Gospel of Matthew

Outline 14

The Inner Life

Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. Matthew 5:44

This final section of chapter five essentially focuses on the higher righteousness which flows out from a saved heart and not mere external religious practice. The church today is filled with nominal Christians who have a form of religion but no inner substance. Jesus was challenging His followers to go higher than the religious leaders of that era.

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20

He then differentiates between their popular teaching and His; ***you have heard that it was said... but I say to you...!!***

Murder is not only committed by a physical action but even from the roots of anger. The Lord was saying emphatically; you can commit murder just by thinking about it!!

The remedy? As you go to church and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24.

If you don't forgive quickly or work in the spirit of reconciliation you will be subject to judgement, both natural and spiritual. Our own attitudes imprison us. What we sow is what we reap!

You have heard that it was said to those of old "you shall not commit adultery" but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:27-28

This implies that even though many of the Pharisees had not committed legal adultery, they had broken the rule mentally and were therefore guilty. In our modern times where pornography thrives as an acceptable norm within society many are committing adultery even though they can claim being faithful to their wives.

Our Lord further drives the nail into the coffin of nominal religion by touching on the "D" word.

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. Matthew 5:32

Phew..! Tough words for the times of Jesus, and also for our own contemporary times. Not much has changed in heart attitudes towards God's covenant standards. We will discuss this much more fully when we get to chapter 19.



...do not swear at all. The whole purpose of swearing was to give weight to our words and convince others that we were telling the truth. It was considered a terrible and damnable thing to swear by a deity or God and not tell the truth. This however does not rule out official and solemn oaths while taking up an office or giving evidence in court which are duties of good citizenship (**Rom 13:1,7**)

Let your yes be yes... Jesus was emphasising the principle of telling the truth regardless. We do not need any external context to prove we are telling the truth. Another extension of this for which many of us are guilty is exaggeration. Expanding the facts or juicing up the story to impress or deceive. Holding back some facts, adding to the detail, changing the story or embellishing your tale are all extensions from the father of lies, the devil.

Whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also. Jesus is not advocating insipid pacifism but rather an attitude of Love so full and robust, even evil would not be able to cripple it. He was also saying that if your enemy had a genuine need, help them even if your natural man was struggling with blessing them.

Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

²⁰⁻²¹Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good. Romans 12:19-21(**the message**)

¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for [God's] wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (requite), says the Lord.^(A)

²⁰But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.^(B) ²¹Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but overcome (master) evil with good. Romans 12:19-21 (**Amplified**).

This kind of heart attitude does not come naturally and therefore we need to ask the Lord to help us to start behaving in these ways. You cannot do these things in your own strength and once you admit you need help and are too poor in spirit, the Lord supplies His ability and power.

Ask the Lord today to help you. Openly confess your selfishness, lukewarmness and weaknesses. Tell Him to strengthen you in Love towards that difficult person, your boss, and spouse or loved one.

The mind of man is the battleground on which every moral and spiritual battle is fought.

J Oswald Sanders