

Session 6 Harmony of the Gospels

INTRODUCTION

Verses 13-16. I'm just going to touch on it. We didn't look at it last week. He's going to tell you the impact of a man living in the kind of anointing, insight, and purity of verses 3-12. This is the type of impact he's going to have on the world.

“You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13). A man or woman walking in that kind of revelation and development of faith and maturity of soul shines with the light of God.

I put a verse in your notes—2 Corinthians 4:10—where Paul said that God will manifest His life through you. For God to manifest His life through you—I want everyone to get this. It's the life of God, the light of God, the grace of God, and the glory of God. Light, life, grace, and glory are four ways of saying the exact same thing in many ways. You'll have godly character and the power of miracles flowing through you to reveal God. You'll have an anointing of power on your life to minister to others. That's what it means to express God's glory. That's what it means to express His light; that's what it means to express His light and the grace of God.

Two things: your character will become very, very godly, in holiness, love, and humility. You'll move in such faith, and the knowledge of God will flow through you. People will know who God is because they come into contact with you.

A city, a city of lights, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden (Mt. 5:13b). That's a prophecy of revival. Here's what He's saying. If a whole body of people is expressing light, if God raises them up in revelation, it cannot be hidden. Revival must happen.

The key word in that verse is *cannot*. There's no way that the world or the enemy can prevail or surpass a body of people that have been exalted in revelation and purity, set upon a hill. It's a whole group of people walking in light. Revival must hit St. Louis when that happens. It cannot be stopped.

“LET YOUR LIGHT . . . SHINE BEFORE MEN”

“Let your light so shine before men” (Mt. 5:14). How? By removing the defilements that stop the light from shining. You have to remove the things that defile obedience and the things that defile faith. You have to walk in faith and obedience. You have to remove the defilement and your light will shine. That requires an aggressive lifestyle. People will glorify God.

BEYOND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

Verses 17-20. Now Jesus describes His relationship to the law. “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees had a tremendous outward righteousness. They ignored it inwardly in their hearts. He said, “If righteousness doesn't touch your inward heart, you don't have righteousness that's resulting from true repentance.”

If all you have is outward conformity and no reality in your heart, you've never been born again. You can't get into the kingdom. One of the greatest tests of being born again is that your inner life changes. You can't have

just outward form; you have to have inward reality. From here to the end of chapter 5, He's going to give six examples of how the scribes and Pharisees had an outward righteousness without the inward reality. He's going to say six times this little double statement. He's going to say, "You have heard it said... but I say to you." He's going to contrast their teaching to what is real. He'll say, "The people taught you these things, but this is the truth." Six times He says that. He gives six different illustrations about how it's not enough to do things outwardly. You have to catch the spirit of it and do it inwardly.

DON'T FOLLOW THE LETTER AND NEGLECT THE SUBSTANCE

I want to say one more quick thing about that. It's this. We always need to catch this, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. It seems like the very thing He warns us from is the thing we do. He says, "Don't pray with repetition" (Mt. 6:7, paraphrased). He gives the Lord's Prayer to teach us how not to pray in repetition. We use the Lord's Prayer to pray repetitiously. We're so prone to do the thing we aren't supposed to do. In every commandment of the Lord, in your zealotry, make sure you find out what the purpose of God was in that commandment. Fulfill the purpose without worrying so much about the literal meaning. Touch the reason He said that commandment, and you'll find that if you grasp the substance of the commandment, it will have many more implications to your inner life. Otherwise it's going to be much harder to obey it. It will go much deeper if you touch the purpose. Then you're not nearly so prone to extremes and doing wrong things in a fanatical way that's not reasonable.

Some people try to obey this by the letter of the law. He was teaching against obeying the letter of the law rather than the spirit. We obey the Sermon on the Mount in the letter and forget the purpose for which it was given. We become fanatical and extreme. When the Sermon on the Mount becomes impossible or ridiculous, then you haven't really grasped it.

DISREGARD FOR OTHERS: THE BEGINNING STAGE OF MURDER

Example number one. Now we're on the notes. He's going to show what He really meant when He gave the Old Testament command to not murder people. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Mt. 5:21-22).

Raca was an Aramatic word meaning "empty-headed" or "worthless fellow." If it comes from your heart, it expresses an attitude of contempt that disregards your brother as unimportant. You look at someone and say, "Ah, he's a fool." That's the infancy stage of the spirit that eventually matures and becomes murder. It's disregard for another man. It says, "Don't murder"; but if you can in your heart disregard a man, that's the very beginning stage of murder. You've disregarded a vessel God created on the earth.

He says, "If you don't murder, you think you're in good shape. I tell you, if you disregard or have disrespect for another human being, you've already started the process of murder."

The purpose of the law against murder was to prevent people from destroying each other. It gives men value. When you speak a word against a man, you're not killing him with a knife, but you're not placing value on him. "You thought you obeyed it by not killing people. By your very words you've disobeyed it."

It says that you'll be brought before the supreme court. In other words, you'll receive a measure of judgement. If you say, "You fool," you'll be brought under judgment in this life, according to the degree that an angry spirit dwells in you. When you say "you fool" to a person, you're brought before judgment of God. The judgment that you'll suffer is that you're quenching the Spirit of God, and you won't enter into the fullness of God. You have the infancy stage of murder in your heart. You might not think it is, but Jesus said it is. The Spirit of God is leaving you and you'll lose revelation of God when you're doing that. You're brought under judgment by your own words and attitudes.

Any anger whatsoever is bad news. Any foolish word or word that disregards a brother is quenching the Spirit of God. It's the beginning of the spirit of murder.

We say, "Why are there no signs and wonders in the Church?" People are quenching the Spirit of God because they have a spirit of murder and don't even know it. Yes, even good, old charismatic people like us—good, old Assembly of God folk.

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there 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" (Mt. 5:23-24).

This isn't you having something against your brother; this is your brother having something against you. Here I am before God and Harry is mad at me. I'm singing and God says, "Don't take communion and offering," which are essentials. "Go make sure Harry isn't mad at you."

"Lord, I didn't do anything."

"Yes, but you provoked anger in your brother. You're provoking and stimulating a murderous attitude in him. Go make it right." That's how important this thing is. God says, "Don't even be responsible for provoking that spirit of murder in someone else. That's how dangerous it is." It really is heavy.

We're starting to find out why the power of God isn't flowing at a greater measure in the Church. I get up to minister having provoked another person, not realizing I'm stimulating murder in the Body of Christ. I took that very lightly. This thing is breaking me.

YOU BECOME STAGNANT IN GOD WHEN YOU HAVE AN ANGRY SPIRIT

Verse 25. "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison" (Mt. 5:25). He says, "Truly I say to you, you won't come out until you pay the very last cent" (Mt. 5:26, paraphrased). He's talking about the spirit of anger, the spirit of murder—disregarding people, calling them foolish.

You say, "Oh that fool, he told me to do that." You had better get that straight in your heart if you don't want the Spirit of God quenched. It says to make friends quickly with the opponent. Your opponent is the enemy that causes anger in your heart. "Make friends" means deal with your anger and forgive that brother. Come to reconciliation with that brother who is your opponent. It says, "Do it quickly." It emphasizes the urgency of it, because it's destroying you, not your enemy. You're on your way to be delivered to the Judge. The Spirit of God is striving with you.

You can touch these things for a very small amount of time. You can get angry for a second and the Spirit of God has enough mercy that He will strive with you for a few hours before you start losing out on God because it. While you're on the way to the Judge, while the Spirit of God is still striving, before you actually get in trouble, get it right immediately, quickly. Come to grips. Make friends with your enemy. The Spirit of God is striving with you. You're on your way to court. You'll end up in judgment, stagnation, or prison. The prison it says you'll be thrown into is a spiritual prison. The Lord isn't going to give you the revelation He wanted to give you. He may give you revelation, but not like He wanted to. God is still going to use you, but not like He wanted to. You're in prison; you become stagnant in God when you have an angry spirit. Every one of us is held in prison when we fall into anger or call someone foolish.

When the Spirit of God is striving, when you're on the way to that prison, make friends, repent, and deal with that thing. Jesus says, "Once you've quenched the Spirit to that measure, truly I say to you, you won't come out until you have repentance to the very bottom of your heart. You won't go forward in God until that happens."

I tell you, that's an awesome thing. Why is the Church not moving in power? You just have to read the Sermon on the Mount. You won't go forward in God until you get it squared. If you're calling your boss a fool, you had better repent of it and get your inner life right or you'll be in prison. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, you'll be in prison." The fear of God comes over me.

ADULTERY OF THE EYES LEADS TO ADULTERY OF THE HEART

Let's go onto the next one: adultery. They thought they obeyed the law because they didn't commit outward adultery. Jesus told them they were committing inward adultery. I think there are too many people who commit heart adultery by doing adulterous actions by proxy. People are living in adultery by watching the TV show or having the affair on the thing. Or they're reading the magazine article about Olivia what's-her-face, and they say, "Oh, ahh!" and they live in adultery by proxy.

Jesus says, "You haven't done it outwardly, but you've done it on the inside. You enjoy those things. You give yourself to them. You had better stop that if you want to stop defiling the Spirit of God in your life. I say to you that if you look at a woman in lust, you've committed it in your heart" (Mt. 5:28, paraphrased).

Here's the principle: eye adultery—looking at the thing that promotes it, whether it's a movie, a woman, or a book. Eye adultery leads to heart adultery that may lead to physical adultery. It begins in your eyes and then goes to your heart. Then it gets into your actions. Anyone who commits physical adultery has already committed it hundreds of times in the heart.

Joe Blow commits adultery. People say, "He was doing so well." No, he wasn't. He was committing eye adultery and heart adultery long before he actually did it. When you have that thing in your heart, deal with it. It's adultery and will quench the spirit of God so quickly.

A MAN IS DEFILED BY WHAT COMES FROM HIS HEART

Job made a covenant with his eyes never to gaze at a young woman again (Job 31:1). He cut it off in the beginning. He wouldn't have eye adultery in any way. Whether it's a woman or a magazine or anything else, control your outward actions by controlling your inward thoughts, controlling your eyes and tongue. When you get right confession, when you bridle your tongue, then you'll control your heart, and then you can control your outward actions.

Mark 7:21-23 gives us a list of twelve or fourteen things. Fornication, envy, jealousy, all these things defile the man and prevent him from going forward in God. I think that verse gives enough revelation of why there's not revival in the Church. Our faith is defiled. We're allowing adultery in the heart, both men and women alike, and there's no power flowing through the Church today in a very high degree. They can't walk in revelation with such defilement in their heart. Jesus made that point.

The third one is difficult. I don't like this one. He tells us to cut off our hand instead of being thrown into the ocean, into the bottom of the sea. A man's right hand and his eye are very precious possessions. He isn't saying, "Go and cut your hand off." That's not the point. Touch the principle of what He's saying. Take the most precious possession you have, your right hand. Get rid of the most precious thing you have if it causes you to commit adultery. Destroy the relationship; do whatever it takes. The most precious thing you possess, your right eye, get rid of it. Don't go poke your eye out. Touch the purpose of what He was saying. People do that kind of stuff. I read in the newspaper where someone poked his eye out.

"WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN SEPARATE"

Verse 31. "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'" (Mt. 5:31). That was a gross perversion of Scripture. "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" (v. 32).

Let me explain it. This is difficult, but everyone pay close attention. It's simple. In God's sight, when a couple gets married legally, they're not yet married. They get married when they're joined physically. That's when heaven registers it. That's when heaven recognizes it. The man gets tired of her and divorces her legally. Still they haven't yet broken the physical covenant. Five years may go on and they still haven't even touched another person. The guy lives single and so does she. As far as they're concerned, they've been divorced five years. As far as heaven is concerned, the covenant hasn't been broken.

The guy moves to Africa and she never hears from him again. He still lives single, his whole life, never touching a woman. Ten years go by and she forgets about the old guy. Heaven hasn't seen the covenant broken yet.

She goes and gets married. She breaks the covenant.

God says, "Heaven has called you an adulteress now."

"I haven't seen the old guy for ten years."

"The physical vow has never been broken yet."

So the problem going on in this case was this: only men could divorce women in those days. Only men had authority to do it. Women in that society couldn't go and find a job. A woman who had five kids and no husband was sunk. She had to go get married or starve, she and her kids. The guy would divorce her. She was out there. She was righteous, and he was an unrighteous guy. He just didn't like her, and all those kinds of things. Her kids were starving.

A man comes along and says, "I'll marry you and feed your kids; I love you."

He's in a sense forcing her to get married. Because she's starving and so are her kids in that society. In that way, when she did that, she's the one who committed adultery although he was the one promoting the thing in the beginning.

He isn't saying, "You're making her commit adultery," but, "You're potentially making her." She could starve to death and not commit adultery. That was another alternative. The point is, you were forcing her into a situation of having to remarry before you broke that vow first.

Now, let's look at another example. Two people get married. They get legally divorced. Six months go by and one of them gets joined to another person. That's adulterous. This one isn't free to go and get remarried, because the vow is broken.

This may freak you out, too. This one can get married too, but he committed adultery. He can't get married without committing adultery. The key when someone comes to me and says, "Can I get remarried?" is this. I want to know, has adultery been committed first.

"No, I haven't touched anyone, and neither has my husband."

"You can get married, but you'll commit adultery."

They think, "No, I don't want to do that."

"Then you can't get married."

"I have to wait until the old guy goes out and gets a girlfriend? Right."

The vow isn't broken yet. Sounds kind of carnal, but that's what He was getting at. If you marry that divorced woman, even though she is pure and righteous and forced by hunger and children to get married, you're forcing her to commit adultery.

Here's a couple who's been as unfaithful as anything. Adultery has been committed sixteen times over. They get divorced and are all bent out of shape. The vow has been broke a thousand times over. They come to me and say, "I can't get remarried." Of course they can. They're an adulteress. They did it. Of course God will forgive them. I don't want to be forgiven of adultery personally. I don't want to walk into it as a believer. I would rather live single than go commit adultery. That's just how I would rather do it.

One of my last statements here is this: once adultery is committed, both parties are free to be remarried since the vow has been dissolved in heaven.

The one who did it can't do it honorably. He did it in a dishonorable way, but the vow is broken. A believer should remain single until the other mate commits adultery by being the first one to be joined to another person. The key is that the first one joined to another is the first one who commits adultery.

Two unbelievers come to me, and they want to get married. The guy is divorced. I wouldn't marry any two unbelievers under any circumstances because they're in blatant adultery towards God anyway. They're in darkness; they're under the dominion of the devil. Adultery is the least of their problems! They've been doing it

their whole life. They're still under judgment. They're going to hell. I'm in no quandary over marrying unbelievers who do that.

That's the key. Has the vow been broken yet? You say, "No, it's not, but I want to get married." You'll commit adultery if you do.

"Yes, it has been broken. He broke it."

Then you're free to be married and he's the adulterer. Not that you point the finger at him, but that's the principle.

LET YOUR REPUTATION OF HONESTY SPEAK FOR YOU

Oaths. Verses 33-37. In the oath-taking, here's what happened. There was a measure of dishonesty in Israel. God came up with a new system that said this: "I don't like your dishonesty, but no one can trust anyone." They were dishonest people, but for a season they had a little fear of God. He said, "You make an oath before God's throne."

Men were just beginning to grasp this. When they made an oath, they had the fear of God and wouldn't break it. An oath promoted honesty in those guys. Even a guy who told a white lie every now and then would never break his oath towards God. He says, "I can lie a little, but not with God's name. Forget it! I'll tell the truth."

Then they started having different levels of oaths. "You have to obey this one, but not this one; not this one, but most of this one."

Jesus said, "The whole reason the Father gave oaths was because you were dishonest and they were to promote honesty. You've used oaths to promote dishonesty by telling them you can make an oath by the temple and don't have to obey it. What a bunch of hypocrites. The thing I used to produce honesty, you use to promote dishonesty."

It's not the fact of the oath but the fact that they used it wrongly. He came and said, "No oaths from this day forward." He said, "Let your reputation of honesty speak for you" (Mt. 5:37, paraphrased).

BECOME A PERSON OF SUCH INTEGRITY THAT OATHS ARE UNNECESSARY

Here's the problem. When I as a believer come up to you and say, "This and this and this," but then I tell another story and I follow it up by saying, "I *swear* on this one!" what have I just told you about the last three stories I told you? They may not be true stories because I have to swear on the fourth one. Whenever you have to swear on anything, you're calling into question the validity of the previous stories. Jesus says your own use of an oath will condemn you.

"Man, you can believe me on this one." Can I not on the other ones? What's the implication? He says your own use of oaths condemns you. Jesus wants us to display such a quality of truthfulness that oaths aren't even necessary. An oath would be degrading for a new covenant believer. You have the Spirit of God, and every time you fudge, the Spirit of God says, "Eeee!" You shouldn't be telling lies. Go clean those things up. It's an appeal to total honesty in everything. We want to be people who have reputations for honesty.

Listen, this is where people go wrong. They won't take an oath in court. That's not even the point. It's not like if I take an oath I've violated heaven. Jesus wants me to be a person of integrity so that it's not necessary. In a legal setting, those guys don't know you and couldn't care less. They don't even believe in that stuff about God. It's just a procedure. If people get condemned, they miss the whole purpose of this rule. The rule was to force you to quit making oaths between your friends and acquaintances in business deals because your character wasn't pure enough. We take this to extremes.

The Quakers would never take an oath. They missed the purpose of that law. They took it to an extreme that wasn't necessary. I'm sure God honored it, but that wasn't the point. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Anything beyond that, and you're condemning yourself.

JESUS LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE SPIRIT OF NON-RETALIATION

The next example, in verses 38-42, involves retaliation. This is a good one. Let's read this quickly. "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (Mt. 5:38-42).

Here's the principle: "Don't resist an evil person." Now He's going to give four examples of that principle.

Number one: whoever slaps you on the one cheek, turn to him the next. Number two: whoever sues you, let them have the other thing. Number three: go the extra mile. Number four: give to him who asks. Don't resist the evil man. That's the principle with four illustrations. These are some very, very important passages.

Most people take this thing out of context in a fanatical way, or they disregard it because they can't understand it. The Law said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth of a tooth" (Ex. 21:24, paraphrased). The reason that law was given was to restrain retaliation, not to promote it. Men were getting mad at each other. They were doing gross things to each other: beating them up, burning their barn.

God said, "Here's the new rule. This rule is to be carried out by the magistrates, the judges and lawyers in the land." It wasn't a rule to be carried out by the common people. It was a rule to the judges. It was a rule to restrain an unnecessary retaliation. When a guy came to court, he could say, "This guy killed my oxen." The judge said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

They never poked a man's eye out. It was always a just retribution for what that guy did. "Don't have an exaggerated retaliation for a small crime." That was the point of the law: to restrain retaliation. Only the judges could do that. Why? So they could rule the land in justice. As time went by, they took it out of the court and made it a law for the common people. They started taking their own revenge. They started acting as though it was a command to take an eye for an eye—as though God insisted that you go take an eye. "God's Word says, 'Take an eye!' Hate to do it brother. Plop!"

They totally missed it. God wasn't insisting on it. He didn't even want them to do it. He was restringing them with that law. He says, "Here's what I want you to do. This is what I was getting at with that law. I'm not telling you a new law; this was the point in the Father's heart when He gave it: don't resist him who is evil. Don't take retaliation into your own hands. Leave it in the hand of the judges."

“Don’t resist evil” is the same commandment. They had perverted it grossly in the old covenant. He said, “That’s not the point. Don’t even have retaliation.”

“WHOEVER SLAPS YOU ON YOUR RIGHT CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO”

Now He’s going to give four examples in life of how we have retaliation. These concepts must never be applied mechanically, but rather applied in a way that secures God’s purpose and God’s way being fulfilled. You can get really mechanical about this idea. If your application is ridiculous or impossible, you’ve applied it wrongly. This isn’t a rule against having a police force. You’re taking it too far. That’s not the purpose. A number of groups have actually taken it that far. They’re against armies and police forces. They’re against anything coming against evil in society. They said, “But it says, ‘Don’t resist evil.’”

Jesus said, “You’re missing the whole point of what I’m getting at.” His words have been butchered. Verse 39. These attitudes remove all sense of self-retaliation. That’s the key word. The application may vary to each circumstance. Jesus said to flee when persecution arose, not to submit to it unnecessarily. Whenever persecution came, Jesus left town (Mt. 10:23). He isn’t saying, “Stand there and have a guy beat on your cheek.” The whole spirit is, “Don’t take retaliation into your own hands, but entrust it to the Father to do it.”

Example number one. If a man slaps you on one cheek, turn to him the other. Now this isn’t referring to someone breaking your jaw. It was a great insult. It’s an insult, not a physical injury He was talking about here. That’s how the people in the eastern world insulted people: they came up and slapped them in public. That was a great insult. He didn’t even really mean turn your other cheek. He says, “Don’t be stupid about it. The point is, don’t resist that man. Leave that setting. Don’t come against him in your heart, but let God deal with him.” Willingly receive that insult. Don’t try to fight the guy. That’s the point.

I remember a buddy of mine. We were sixteen years old, both newly saved. The guy was a total fanatic. I used to live with him. He was a real muscle man, weight-lifter type guy, who went to college on a football scholarship. Everyone knew he was a Christian. He was at the pinball place, and these guys came in who didn’t like the fact that he was a Christian. They said, “Hey Smally, get out of here.”

He said, “No.”

They slugged him in the eye. His eye was so swollen, it was almost shut. He couldn’t see out of his right eye. It was black and blue. He stood there, and his eye was bleeding out of the corner. This was a big, tough guy. Smally thought he should turn his cheek. The other guy busted him in the eye, and his other eye was worse than the other one. He couldn’t read or anything for fourteen days. His whole face was black and blue.

The guy hit him one more time in the jaw and split his lip wide open. He picked this guy up physically and threw him. He “I just couldn’t handle it anymore.” He picked this guy up and started screaming and lifted him over his head. This guy was an absolute muscle man and threw him across the table. It broke the table and tore the guy to pieces. He came to me the next day and said, “Man, I really blew it.”

I said, “It looks like something happened.” His face was so mutilated. He was into slapping and turning the other cheek. Even if a man insults you, don’t turn around and say, “Insult me again.” Have an attitude of non-retaliation. That’s the point.

“If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.”

This is talking about a legal procedure. If the court rules in the other man’s favor, give what you owe and don’t seek to harm the guy who won the case. Don’t blow up his car or give him a bad name. Let him have it. Let go of your possession without any retaliation in a lawsuit. Jesus and Paul both questioned legal actions. Both of them had a circumstance where they were accused, and they asked the question, “How can you do that to me?” Paul did that once and Jesus did it once. They both desired their rights when they were before the court, but they didn’t insist upon them. When it was clear that they were going to be unjustly treated, they submitted and rejoiced in God.

It doesn’t say throw the coat in. “Hey by the way, you won a million dollars; how about the house?” He’s talking about when they’ve unjustly defeated you in court. It was wrong. You don’t know this, but in Deuteronomy, it was illegal to take a man’s outer garment. A lot of you know that who have studied the Old Testament. When he went to bed at night, that was his blanket. You couldn’t sue a man and take his outer garment. Jesus said, “Even if he takes it legally, it’s unjust and against the rules. Don’t retaliate; back away and rejoice in God. Say, ‘The will of God be done now.’”

Do you understand? I don’t mean once you lose you don’t appeal, because Jesus and Paul both appealed. When it’s clear that you’ve lost, you’re to go out rejoicing in God, even if it was illegal. “So be it!” You’ve been ripped off royally. Don’t retaliate. You’re not to resist one who is evil. You’re not to go after him. You can go too far trying to do that without understanding the purpose. The people He was speaking to knew what He was getting at here.

Example number three: “He who forces you to go one mile, go with him two.”

This was a governmental issue. This was legislation in the country. This was a tax rule. The Jews were subservient to Rome, but this happened all over when a conquering nation came in. This was always the rule: whenever the armies came into town, the conquered people had to carry their luggage. They didn’t have taxis or cars. It was a big thing. They could make you stop whatever you were doing. This was legal.

Jesus talks about going the extra mile. It doesn’t mean, “Hey, I would love to be inconvenienced here. I’ll take it a second mile.”

He says, “Have an attitude of willingness. If this is a law, submit to it.”

This law comes out about taxes. It doesn’t say, “Don’t oppose it in a righteous way with right motives,” but if you lose, pay the thing joyfully.

Don’t be angry against governmental legislations. Verse 40: don’t be angry against legal legislations in court. Verse 39: don’t be angry when men insult you and take advantage of you. “No retaliation” is the point. It’s an attitude of going the second mile. Therefore I joyfully pay the tax. I will joyfully drive the speed limit. I’m not really into that. Maybe I should be into it. I do it. Never mind. We ought to joyfully do that. Go the second mile. They cut it down to forty miles an hour.

“That raggedy idiot!”

No, that's a spirit of murder. You're quenching the Spirit; you're not respecting the value of a man God created. It will quench your faith, your obedience, the flow of God, your revelation of the Word of God. In every one of the attitudes that you go against, you're hurting your own development in God.

“FROM HIM WHO WANTS TO BORROW FROM YOU, TURN NOT AWAY”

Verse 42: “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

Now this is absolutely not an encouragement to aid frauds, drunkards, and those kinds of people. I have a bunch of Scriptures where the Word of God says that a man with no diligence should go hungry. If a man doesn't eat, he starves. That's his own business. By his own standard it is given to him. He's talking about a legitimate brother coming to you and you having a selfish heart towards him. You're not holding back because he's violating principles of discipline; it's because you're selfish. Unless I had a word from God, if I had a million bucks and a guy was starving in front of me, I wouldn't give him a piece of bread if he violated discipline. It wouldn't work. I've had people come and ask me. I would let them sleep in the car in twenty-degree weather instead of in an empty bedroom in my house because they refuse to work. It's absolutely against Scripture to support a man that's violating God's rules in life. I wouldn't do it; I don't care how much access I have.

IF A MAN DOESN'T WORK, HE SHOULDN'T EAT

Here's what He's getting at. If I'm hurting and another brother is hurting, but I have a little more to give to him and I can make it without being disrespectful to my children eating, I need to give it to him. This is a shot against self-centeredness. I tell you, I don't even flitter at saying that. I would let a guy starve to death in front of me if he wouldn't work. That's what the Word of God says. I'm not wiser than God is, nor am I more loving than God. A lot of Christians need to grow up in wisdom and quit being stupid on those kinds of things. That's really the facts. They're ripped off in the name of love, in all this emotionalism and lack of wisdom and the fear of man that's afraid to say no. It's not love, just emotionalism. You're afraid they'll be mad if you say no.

I'm not wiser, or smarter, or more loving than God. God says if he doesn't work, don't let him eat (2 Thess. 3:10). Period. If God speaks to me specifically, I'll do it. It has to be something from God. I'm not into supporting the undisciplined. His own life will discipline or chastise him. God forbid that a man would live undisciplined and you would get the judgment of it because you sacrificed to support the man. You're getting his chastisement. You're a fool if you're doing that. That's how our poor fund works, on those principles. We strive to have mercy and be able to hear from God. We aren't more loving than God. Those are God's rules. Look them up in the Bible. I made a decision a long time ago that I was going to stop being wiser and more loving than God. His way is smarter than my way, whether I like it or not.

WALK IN ALL THE LIGHT THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU

Verse 48. “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). Here's what this means: walk in all the light that God has given you. Walk in the same light that God has given you, in the same way that Jesus did. Jesus walked in all the light He had. Just progressively walk in the light God has given you. You have a whole lot of light tonight you haven't had before. Walk in what God is showing you and you'll walk perfect.

Walking in perfection is a progressive thing. It's not perfection in the absolute sense, but in the relative. It's not perfect compared to God. Jesus walked in everything He knew. He knew everything and was perfect in the absolute sense. I'm to walk in every ounce of light I have.

A PICTURE OF THE SAINT LIVING HIS LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Chapter 6. This introduces us to a new theme. Here we have a picture of the saint living his life before the presence of God. The theme of Matthew 6 is living your life unto God: living with the knowledge that God is watching you all the time. The great emphasis of chapter 6 is that we should do all things as unto Him and as in His sight to gain His approval instead of as unto men and in their sight to gain man's approval.

That's the whole point of Matthew 6. Matthew 6 reviews our life as a whole and divides it in two ways. Verses 1-18 talk about our spiritual life as living it unto God, and verses 19-34 describe living your natural life as unto God. The key of this is living as you know you are in His sight, that His eyes are on you.

THE UNWISE MAN AVOIDS CONFRONTATION WITH HIS WEAKNESS

Matthew 6 is a very searching and probing chapter. There's no chapter more calculated to promote self-humiliation than this one. The unwise man avoids confrontation with his weakness. I want God to show me my weakness. This teaching, like Matthew 5, is given by way of contrast with the Pharisees. Matthew 5 contrasted the Pharisees' teaching with godly teaching. Now we're going to contrast the Pharisees' lifestyle with a godly lifestyle. Their teaching was chapter 5 and their lifestyle chapter 6.

DON'T PARADE YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IN FRONT OF MEN

Verse 1 gives a general principle which Jesus illustrates in three ways. Here's the principle: "Don't display your righteousness before men" (Mt. 6:1, paraphrased). Jesus is going to touch every aspect of our spiritual life in these eighteen verses.

Number one: our giving to God and to others. Whether it's our money or our time, it's the area of giving to others. He calls it alms, or the giving of your tithes and offerings. It also affects giving your time to serve others.

The second aspect He talks about is our private life with God. He calls it *prayer*: your time in the Word, your time in worship. The third thing He talks about, He calls *fasting* here, but it's the mortification of the flesh in the promotion of holiness—however that manifests itself. He's talking about the way you give and minister to others, the way you touch God, and the way you mortify your flesh in the pursuit of holiness. Those are three aspects of spiritual life. Every area of spiritual life comes under those three categories. He's going to tell you in every one of those three different categories not to miss the principle in verse 1.

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 6:1, NASB). Whether it's giving your money, your prayer time, your worship time, or your devotional life, you're strutting and bragging about it.

I have three rules. Jesus is concerned to point out three things about each of these three aspects. Number one: do it as unto God for His praise and His approval, not for man's.

Number two: do it for the promotion of God's purpose. Never minister or pray or put your money or your time in because someone is nagging you. "OK, OK, I'll give. Here!" Or, "OK, OK, I'll minister to the guy. The guy is on my back. I'll minister it him."

Do it as unto God to fulfill His purpose. Do it because you love God, not because you want to impress people or to get the burden off your back. A number of times I've counseled people in the wrong spirit. I counseled them to get it over with. God says, "You haven't yet done it as unto Me." I wasn't doing it as unto men. I wasn't showing off, but I wasn't doing it with a keen sense of fulfilling God's purpose. God says, "Do it as though I was sitting there."

That's the second thing. Do it as unto God, or you'll have no reward if you do it grudgingly. Don't do it just to do it, but do it with gratefulness, because it's unto Him you're doing it.

DON'T BE INWARDLY PROUD OF YOUR SPIRITUAL ACHIEVEMENT

The first one is to get praise from men. The second one is doing it with complaining in your heart. The third is this: don't sound a trumpet. Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing (Mt. 6:3). Don't sound a trumpet so others will see you; don't take a record of it within yourself so that it becomes an issue of deep, subtle pride. Don't be inwardly proud of your spiritual achievement. Be grateful for the grace that God has given you and be a bondservant.

It's not that you're ungrateful to God. You're not doing it grudgingly, but you're proud as punch. He says, "Don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Don't let that spirit of pride think you're achieving anything because of your own discipline. It's not you; it's the spirit of grace that operates within you. You're a servant of God and it's required of you anyway."

Those are three principles to concern yourself with every time you apply the three aspects of your spiritual life: giving, your devotion to God, or your fasting.

The first one, almsgiving, is self-explanatory. The second one is prayer. You can figure this stuff out yourself. I just want to make one statement in verse 8. He's talking about prayer now. "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him" (Mt. 6:8). When you pray, you're not telling God your need as though He didn't know it. Your knowledge of your need isn't what moves God. He knows your need. Faith moves God and obedience; not the knowledge of your need. He already knows it.

THE SPIRIT OF THE PRAYER THE LORD TAUGHT US TO PRAY

Look at verses 9-13. This isn't meant to be a form of prayer. It's a spirit of prayer. It's an attitude of prayer you should have with every prayer request you make. Every one of these eight ingredients ought to be there. Anytime you pray for anything, these ought to be in your heart.

Number one: "Our Father" (Mt. 6:9). You're praying to a God that you're convinced loves you. Revelation of the love of God is essential if you're going to be effective in prayer.

Number two: "Hallowed be Your name" (Mt. 6:9b). Though you're intimate with God, He's not your buddy in a sloppy way. He's the Most High, Majestic, Holy One. He's intimate. He's your Father, but He's still the Holy One. Treat Him with reverence.

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done" (Mt. 6:10, KJV). It's a statement, a declaration. It's not asking God to make His kingdom come. It's a person moving out in faith declaring that His kingdom is going to come. You're not asking that, but you're declaring it.

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt. 6:11). God will give you daily bread. He will meet your needs, body, soul, and circumstance in a daily way. He didn’t ever promise you that He would give you two weeks worth of bread. He would give you daily bread. Don’t worry about direction for two weeks from now. You may get it, but He has only promised daily bread. You’re praying out of a conviction that God wants to meet your needs.

NOTHING WILL QUENCH THE SPIRIT MORE QUICKLY THAN ANGER AND UNFORGIVENESS

Verses 14-15 talk about unforgiveness. There’s nothing that will throw you into the prison of stagnation and barrenness like unforgiveness and anger. Nothing will quench the Spirit of God more quickly than that. Jesus was absolutely intolerant of a man being angry at another man when God’s anger subsided and He forgave you. He’s totally intolerant of that. Your prayers won’t reach the top of the ceiling if you have anger in your heart toward your husband or wife, your children, people at your job or anywhere. You need to treat it with violence, or you won’t go anywhere in God. Jesus throws that out whenever He has a chance: “Oh yes, I want to throw this out again.”

ACHIEVING HOLINESS THROUGH DENIAL OF FLESHLY DESIRE

Verses 16-18 describe fasting. This refers to all aspects of achieving holiness through denial of fleshly desire. Fasting is just the one He pointed out. These are the three areas of spiritual life, and He was just highlighting each one with an example. The subtle desire to have men know and respect your fasting eliminates its effectiveness before God. What a drag to fast and lose the benefit of it before God! How many of you just relish the thought of fasting for seven days? Good, you’re all normal. Imagine gutting out a seven-day fast because the Spirit of God has led you to do it. You tell everyone and it’s worthless. Oh man, all those milkshakes you passed up for nothing. Think how terrible that is.

Fasting is a New Testament practice. I want to say that categorically. It *is* a New Testament practice. Matthew 6:17 says, “*When* you fast,” not, “*If* you fast.” Fasting is a humbling of your soul before God to receive greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Let me read that sentence again. Fasting is a humbling of your soul before God so that you can receive greater sensitivity to the Spirit so that the blessing of God can flow to you or through you to others. These verses will tell you that fasting is a humbling of your own soul. When you do it, you’ll get wisdom and knowledge from God. This is what fasting is. This is a definition of fasting.

Here’s what I think fasting is. It’s a special season of giving your spirit an unnatural preeminence in order to make it sensitive to God. So normally you want your spirit to be preeminent. You want your spirit to rule your body and your soul. When you’re fasting, you’re giving it an unnatural preeminence. You’re putting it even in a more preeminent state in an unnatural way. You can only do it for seasons of time. You can’t do it all the time. It’s an unnatural setting aside of your normal, God-given appetite to give a greater preeminence to your spirit.

What’s the point of doing this? It will enable you to see great revelation from God. It will enable you to receive insight into many things. It makes you sensitive. It doesn’t hurt anything, but in the Old Testament when the nation of Israel fasted, the whole nation fasted, and the reason the Spirit brought reform is because everyone fasted and became sensitized to God, and everything changed. I don’t get excited about national fasting days, because my fasting doesn’t change you and the nation and the president.

My fasting makes me sensitive. If a fast is going to cure a nation, the whole nation has to fast. You get two-tenths of 1 percent of the nation fasting. Let's say we have a nation of 250 million. The only thing it will do is enable you to pray with more sensitivity for the nation. We have this funny idea that if I fast, Joe is going to get saved over there. No, if I fast, I may get sensitive and receive from God some more insight through praying and warfare under the anointing; then I can break a power in his life. My fasting doesn't do anything for Joe. It makes me effective in prayer. Only in that sense does fasting change a nation. The people of God change in their hearts.

It has to be people with a sincere prayer life. If you fast one day a year, and have a five-minute devotion time, that kind of fasting isn't going to change the nation. Fasting is a very, very important tool to an intercessor. Any man who is serious in intercession is serious in fasting. It's a very heavy tool to make you sensitive to the burdens of the Lord to pray. That way you can change things.

What is fasting? It's not changing another man. It's changing me, making me sensitive. I've given an unnatural exaltation of my spirit before God. I can receive the burdens of the Lord. Then maybe I can change it that way. I admit, that way it changes people. Jesus said that kind of demon only comes out when you fast (Mt. 17:21). You know why? Fasting without praying is worthless. It's just a diet! Some people fast all day when they have to work all day. That's crazy! The point of fasting is to get alone with God so that your spirit gets sensitive. Fasting just to go without food isn't fasting.

EVERY COMMAND IN THE BIBLE CARRIES THE PROMISE OF ITS OWN ENABLING

I want to say another thing. The command to fast is a promise that God will enable you to fast. If God commanded you, He will enable you and give you grace in fasting.

Say, "God teach me about this." I tell you, fasting is dynamite. You'll get revelation from God; you'll get burdens in prayer. You'll be able to grow in your spirit.

I'm going to make a strong statement. I believe fasting is essential in the life of any believer who wants to grow in prayer and faith. I can't conceive of a life without regular fasting, not for a serious saint who wants to press into God. It's absolutely essential. I truly believe that. If you really want to be the type of person who lays hold of God in a serious way, fasting is essential. The Lord Jesus submitted to it for forty days.

Any questions on fasting? No, we have to quit. Save it for next week.