

Matthew 5:1 ¶ And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
Matthew 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

As I read through the gospels, I am struck by the fact that Jesus is often followed by the multitudes. This chapter picks up after we have been told of the call of the disciples, and chapter 4 ends with these verses.

*Matthew 4:23–25 “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. **And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.”***

Point is made that there is a great multitude from many areas of Israel that are following Him because of his miracles. Verse one sounds as if Jesus was trying to separate Himself from the multitudes for an opportunity to teach His disciples, and I believe that was His main intent. By the end of this discourse, as recorded at the end of chapter 7, you become aware that at least a part of the multitude had followed them and heard His instruction.

Matthew 5:3 ¶ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

After doing a phrase search, I found that the phrase “kingdom of heaven” is unique to the gospel of Matthew. I think in context with the flow from chapter 4, this is the term Jesus used in reference to “the kingdom,” the time the Jews were looking for when Messiah would rule on the throne of David. I think it will become clear that the kingdom is composed of those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior because the character expected from its citizens as detailed in this teaching needs supernatural empowerment (from the Holy Spirit). I’ve often heard this section described as the “be attitudes,” or attitudes that should characterize the life of every believer.

Blessed in the Greek references “extremely blessed, fortunate, well off, happy.” At first read it seems an odd word to use with some of these character traits until you recognize the eternal spiritual benefit that accompanies such character.

The poor in spirit are those who realize their need for a Savior. They realize that they are spiritually destitute without God’s provision for their healing, for forgiveness of their sins. I liked the way Chuck Smith put it: “That is what poverty of spirit is. It’s a true evaluation of myself, not in the light of man but in the light of God, where I see the real truth about me and it brings me to that, oh God help me. I need help.”

Those who look to God as Lord will inherit the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom in which He is acknowledged as King. We know from other scriptures that this kingdom will be established on earth and will continue for time without end.

Isaiah 9:6–7 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Daniel 6:26 “I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.”

Luke 1:31–33 “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

I think it is also interesting to note that those who are poor in spirit are often those who are truly poor in this world. Those who are poor seem more willing to recognize their need before the Lord than the rich. Why? I think it is because it requires humility to admit you are a sinner. The rich often mistakenly account their wealth as God’s approval on their life. Others who are rich are bound by pride in what “they” have accomplished. Scripture declares this truth elsewhere.

James 2:5 “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”

Matthew 19:24 “And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

Recognizing that you are poor in spirit leads naturally into developing the character traits that follow: mourning over sin, meekness, a hunger for righteousness, showing mercy, having a pure heart, being a peacemaker and being willing to suffer for faith in Christ. In fact, you can’t develop the following traits with first becoming “poor in spirit.”

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

It’s easy to want to interpret this verse out of context; but I think that sandwiched between the *poor in spirit* and the *meek*, you would have to connect this *mourning* to that which depicts repentance and sorrow for sin. Everyone who turns to God in faith and repentance will be comforted. Paul declared in his letter to the Corinthians that godly sorrow leads one to salvation and life, and earthly sorrow leads one to death.

2 Corinthians 7:10 *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”*

The Greek for *comforted* includes “to call near.” That is exactly the term used by Paul in his letter to the Romans in connection with being chosen as part of God’s family.

Romans 8:30 *“Moreover whom he did predestinate, **them he also called**: and whom he called, **them he also justified**: and whom he justified, **them he also glorified.**”*

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The Greek for *meek* defines it as “humble.” Webster defines it as “Mild of temper; not easily provoked or irritated; patient under injuries; not vain, or haughty, or resentful; forbearing; submissive.” I’ve often heard it described as strength under control. This verse appears to be a quote from one of the psalms.

Psalm 37:11 *“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”*

Another clue as to what is meant might be found in another psalm.

Psalm 149:4 *“For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.”*

(2/09) In God’s eyes, those who are meek are those who have accepted the gift of His salvation by faith. One who has been saved has had to humble himself and admit his need for a Savior and has yielded himself in submission to the Lord.

Salvation is a reference to “deliverance, preservation and victory.” This is another promise of enjoying the blessings of the kingdom. It gives credence to my thoughts that our heaven will include enjoyment of the “new earth” upon which Jesus will rule His kingdom for time without end.

Isaiah 65:17 *“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”*

2Peter 3:13 *“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”*

Redeemed man will then enjoy the earth as God had intended for him from the beginning.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

This is obviously not a reference to physical hunger, but to spiritual hunger. Scripture clearly declares that God will be found by those who seek Him and that He will give us the desires of our heart if we acknowledge Him as Lord in

our life. Only those who hunger for spiritual nourishment will be seeking the Lord. (2/09) When we acknowledge Him as Lord, the desires of our heart will be centered in His desires for us.

Deuteronomy 4:29 "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

Psalm 9:10 "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

Psalm 34:10 "...they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

Psalm 37:4 "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

I think it is interesting to note that the desire for righteousness results in being *filled*, which the Greek defines as being "gorged...supplied in abundance...satisfied." In other words, the provision will be overflowing, far more than we need; *satisfaction* is a reference to contentment and fulfilled desire.

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

This verse again seems to be taken from the psalms.

Psalm 18:25 "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright...."

The Greek defines *mercy* as compassion, and Webster defines it as "Forbearance to inflict harm under circumstances of provocation, when one has the power to inflict it; compassionate treatment of an offender or adversary."

This would fall into the category of reaping what you sow.

Galatians 6:7-8 "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Showing mercy should be the natural result of having been shown mercy. Every person who has accepted Jesus as Lord has been shown amazing mercy; He became the sacrifice for our sin to redeem us and provide our salvation. When we accept that salvation, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are empowered to sow the things of the Spirit in our lives. One of those things is to show mercy to others.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

To be *pure* is to be clean and free from moral defilement, to be innocent and genuine. This speaks to me of our motives. It's ministry or service without expectation. It's kindness for the sake of being kind and sacrifice from a heart of love. Scripture tells us that the heart is deceitful and wicked.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

In this body of flesh we will continue to struggle with its influence on our lives, but as believers we are new creations in Christ; we have new hearts. I can't wait for the day that we completely shed this body of flesh and are clothed in incorruption as described by the Spirit through Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.

1Corinthians 15:51-53 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

When that happens, we shall see God; we will glory in His presence.

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

A peacemaker is one who seeks to bring about reconciliation where there is division and promotes unity in hopes of preventing division to begin with. It's interesting that this trait follows that of having a pure heart, because I think only those with pure hearts can really bring about peace. Their interest is other-centered rather than self-centered. In context with the rest of the passage, I would think that the focus of these efforts would be toward bringing about reconciliation between sinful man and his Savior. Most effective in this effort would be a focus on influencing by example and developing the character traits being identified in this teaching. Why the reference to being called "the children of God?" I think it is because that was also the ministry of the Lord Jesus, to reconcile sinful man with God. Scripture is clear that we become sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ when we accept Jesus as Savior.

1John 3:1 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

Romans 8:16-17 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Persecution can reference suffering that ranges from harassment to being grieved to being put to death. I am reminded of the words of Jesus recorded by John.

John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...."

Righteousness is a reference to being holy and pure; and we established in verse 6 that this is descriptive of those who are seeking God and striving to live godly lives. These are they who will be allowed to enjoy the benefits of God's Kingdom.

Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Now the Lord Jesus makes it clearer. Choosing to follow Him will possibly result in your being taunted, insulted, harassed, grieved and/or killed "for my sake." He is declaring that He is righteous, pure and holy, which carries the implication that He is God. The sad part is that people will even resort to telling lies about those that follow Jesus to justify their wicked actions. Then, far beyond our normal way of thinking, we are to rejoice with great joy when we are persecuted in that manner. Why? Because it will result in great reward in heaven. Then Jesus reminds the disciples that this type of treatment towards God's messengers is to be expected since the prophets of old had been persecuted in the same way. Again, Jesus is identifying Himself as God and comparing His followers with the prophets.

I'm always amazed when I think about any type of reward in heaven. Just getting to go to heaven and live in the presence of the Savior is beyond my imagination, but to think that there is a possibility of even more. The difference seems to be that our salvation is a gift offered for the taking. The rewards given to believers, however, will be earned by righteous living.

1Corinthians 3:13-15 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Matthew 5:13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

"Ye" – A reminder that Jesus is talking specifically to His followers.

The Lord now compares those that choose to follow Him in faith and obedience to salt. What is the benefit of salt? It's used to enhance the flavor of food and as a preservative for meat. If, however, the salt no longer gives the desired benefit, it is good for nothing. As believers, we are responsible to show people the

benefits of following the Lord in faith and obedience, how to truly enhance their life experience. We are technically preserving life by spreading the gospel and leading others to faith and eternal life. Spiritually speaking, we are the living among a world of dead people.

I think there are many churches today that are more (if not totally) focused on providing for the physical and social needs of people than on providing for their spiritual needs, that which affects / determines eternal life. This reminds me of the words that the Lord had for the church at Sardis.

Revelation 3:1-2 "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

Matthew 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Matthew 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Jesus is still directing His words to His followers. This time He describes His disciples as "the light of the world." You can't hide a city on a hill, because a city necessarily has lights, and light illuminates and facilitates vision. The intention of a light is to reveal what is in the dark. A candlestick doesn't just give light to one person; it gives light to everyone in its presence.

The Lord then makes the application. The "good works" or moral/virtuous actions of the disciples form the light that shines before men. Those same "good works" glorify God the Father in heaven. The only works that truly qualify as "good" are those done in obedience to and in honor of God; they are done to bring glory to God and not to self. Unless what we claim to believe is evidenced by how we live, our message will have no effect on those around us. There are many scriptures that equate light with good and darkness with evil.

Job 30:26 "When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness."

Isaiah 5:20 "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

2Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

That is why James was so careful to declare that faith without works is dead.

James 2:17-19 "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

True faith will be evidenced by the works of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Those works serve as a light to the dark world around them and give evidence of the life that is available through Jesus Christ. Paul also teaches this truth using the same example of light.

Ephesians 5:8-9 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"

I am also reminded that a candlestick isn't self-lit; it has to be lit from another source. Each person of faith is lighted, so to speak, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He is the source from which our light is able to shine.

Matthew 5:17 ¶ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Matthew 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

I think the Lord is beginning a transition statement with these verses as He prepares to talk about the true intent of the law. His presentation will present an application to the heart of a person that goes beyond the legalistic observance of the law that the disciples had been taught. Jesus is careful to point out that He has come in fulfillment of the law and the message of the prophets. In fact, God's law, His word, will be fulfilled to the tiniest detail. I believe "till heaven and earth pass" was an idiom that emphasized that truth.

Jesus fulfilled the law by succeeding in every point in which we fail(ed). Scripture teaches that disobedience to the law results in death.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death...."

James 2:10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Jesus fulfilled the law by living a sinless life and laying His life down as the sacrifice for our sin so that we could be declared sinless as well. That is the truth that Paul declared in his letters to the Galatians and Corinthians.

Galatians 3:10-13 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that

doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree...."

2Corinthians 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Matthew 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The thing that stands out in this verse is that there will be those in "the kingdom of heaven" who will break these commandments and teach others to do the same, and those who will obey the commandments and teach others to do likewise. This would obviously have particular application to Messiah's 1000-year earthly kingdom which the Jews were so anticipating, since there will still be those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as LORD at that time.

I think there is also application to be made to believers until that time regarding the rewards we earn now as part of His kingdom. If we disregard God's instruction in any area of our life and teach others to do the same, we will be among the least in the kingdom. If, however, we pay careful attention to God's word and try to follow its instruction as we make daily choices and teach others to do the same, we shall be recognized as among the elite in the kingdom. I think note has to be made of the fact that we teach by example just as surely as by words; in fact, I think our example speaks to others much more loudly than the words we say.

Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This verse would have carried a certain amount of shock value to Jesus' followers. The scribes and Pharisees were recognized as the spiritual elite among the people. Jesus is declaring that unless your life is more moral and holy than those who are recognized as the most spiritual, you won't even get to enter the kingdom. It was a statement of fact that left no room for debate. Now He is ready to explain His statement and instruct them regarding the heart of the law—a teaching that was totally different from how the religious leaders taught it.

Matthew 5:21 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Matthew 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

“danger” = liable to (a condition, penalty or imputation):—in danger of, guilty of, subject to.

The first law that Jesus uses to explain His teaching is the commandment: Thou shalt not kill. The penalty for murder—death. This was the judgment according to God’s instructions; it wasn’t determined by man.

Exodus 21:12 “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.”

In defense of the religious leaders, this would seem to be pretty cut and dried. Jesus explains, however, that if you are even angry with your brother without cause you are guilty and subject to judgment as well. Jesus is wording it so that unjustified anger is equivalent to murder. **Raca** is a term that was basically designating someone as worthless; disgracing someone in that way is also wrong and is subject to judgment by the “court,” which in that time was the Sanhedrin. Calling someone a fool makes you subject to condemnation in hell.

This is pretty heavy teaching. I found as I read on in Exodus 21, there was a clue to this extended application of this commandment.

Exodus 21:13-14 & 17 “And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die....And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.”

These verses imply that intent/motive is to be considered in applying the law. I think we all know that anger unchecked can lead to murder. Showing contempt for another is a silent way of saying, “The world would be better off without you.” As I looked further, I found that both of these attitudes were clear infractions against the commands given in Leviticus.

Leviticus 19:17-18 “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”

I have not done a study on the laws God gave in light of this sermon, but I am sure there is more enlightenment to be found as I apply myself. Jesus was clear in stating that it is what is found on the inside that defiles a man.

*Matthew 15:17-20 “Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth **come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”***

Matthew 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

Matthew 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

“Therefore” – Based on what I have just said....

My paraphrase—If you find yourself at the altar to give a voluntary offering to the Lord and you suddenly remember that someone has a reason to be mad at you, you should leave your gift at the altar and go make reconciliation with that person, and then come back and make your offering. In other words, make sure your heart is right with the Lord before you present Him with a sacrifice that would be hypocritical. If we really love the Lord enough to make voluntary sacrifices to Him, we should be honoring Him in our lives with obedience. When we knowingly disobey His word and then give a public show of obedience, it is hypocritical.

Matthew 5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Matthew 5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

The NLT gives a good understanding of these verses:

Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and you are dragged into court, handed over to an officer, and thrown in jail. I assure you that you won't be free again until you have paid the last penny.

This is very timely advice considering today's “sue happy” culture. The implication in these verses is that the person being sued has actually done something to deserve it since the assumption is that not making reconciliation will put him in jail.

I must admit that this seems out of place to me except that it does connect to getting reconciled with one who may be mad at you as was discussed in the previous verses. In this instance, however, this would seem to be referencing a known dispute—not something that would have just popped into your mind on the way to the altar. This goes along with the teaching to be at peace with all men whenever possible.

Romans 12:18 “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Matthew 5:27 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Matthew 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Jesus next deals with the command not to commit adultery. Then the bombshell—If you have even looked at someone with the desire to do so, you are guilty in your heart. I don't think any other explanation is necessary.

Sad to say, today's culture feeds this temptation constantly in so many ways—from fashions, to entertainment, to businesses whose success is dependent on appealing to our lusts through advertising. You have to be so careful to guard your eyes as well as your heart.

In checking out one of the commentaries, I found a verse that clearly details this truth. In context, God was explaining the reason for the fringes they were to wear on the borders of their garments.

*Numbers 15:39 "And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and **that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring...."***

Matthew 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Matthew 5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Based on my comments above, I think it is quite understandable why these two verses follow the previous two. It is through the eye that the seed of temptation to commit adultery is planted. Jesus is making the point that it would be better to go through life handicapped than to yield to the temptation to live a life of sin and end up in hell.

Matthew 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

Matthew 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

The next issue addressed is divorce. The book of Deuteronomy is the first place that I could find instruction regarding divorce. Later in Matthew Jesus explained why that instruction was given.

*Matthew 19:8 "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: **but from the beginning it was not so.**"*

God's intention was for marriage to consist of one man and one woman; they, in fact, before God became one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Jesus added the truth that God yokes them together in the flesh.

Matthew 19:6 "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Jesus now declares that the only acceptable reason for getting a divorce is because of adultery. If the guilty part remarries, he/she is causing the one they marry to commit adultery as well. If you divorce for any other reason and remarry, both parties are guilty of adultery. The gospel of Mark makes it clear that the application is to both male and female-initiated divorce.

Mark 10:11-12 "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

In 1Corinthians Paul teaches that a person who has divorced should remain unmarried or be reconciled to his/her spouse.

*1Corinthians 7:10-11 "And unto the married I command, **yet not I, but the Lord**, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."*

(2/09) I know these words will cause anger in the hearts of some who read them, but I see no other way to understand them. It breaks my heart to think how many families have been destroyed because of lack of commitment and an easy out available through the legal system. Sad to say that even in the "church" the divorce rate is said to be no better than that of the rest of the world. More important in the life of the believer, this is evidence of lack of submission to God's will and/or lack of faith in the power of God to be able to heal his/her marriage.

Matthew 5:33 ¶ Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

Matthew 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Matthew 5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Matthew 5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

Matthew 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

I thought it was interesting that this section should follow that on lack of commitment in marriage. Up until recently I believe that most wedding vows were taken as an oath before the Lord.

This instruction is a bit confusing since I found places in the Old Testament where instruction was given to swear by God's name.

Deuteronomy 6:13 "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."

Deuteronomy 10:20 "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name."

It was also clearly taught that vows to God were considered very serious and were binding.

Numbers 30:1-2 "And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."

It would seem that by invoking God's name you are making a vow to Him in the process. The Lord continues to explain that there is really nothing you can swear by over which God is not sovereign. You don't even have control over the true color of the hair on your head, God does. In other words, since you are really without authority over anything you might use to swear by, you should limit your response to either "Yes" or "No."

If you swear in God's name and don't follow through on your promise or you are proven false, then you have taken God's name in vain in addition to the sin of lying.

(2/10) Nehemia Gordon shed more light on this section in his book The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus.

"What Yeshua is saying in the Hebrew is not to swear falsely!"

This corresponds exactly with Leviticus 19:12.

Leviticus 19:12 "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD."

Back to Nehemia Gordon:

"It seems that some Pharisees took this as permission to swear falsely as long as the name of YHWH was not used....Yeshua protests that it is forbidden to swear falsely by anything....Any vow 'by anything' is binding. If you say, yes, I swear to do such and such, no matter what you vowed by, you must keep your word."

Matthew 5:38 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matthew 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

Matthew 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Verse 38 is another quote from the law.

*Exodus 21:23-25 "And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, **Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.**"*

The principle in this instruction is that the punishment should fit the crime. Jesus is declaring that those in His kingdom should be more concerned about showing love than getting justice. It's the same principle found in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:21-22 "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

This type of response is so unexpected that it could cause the wicked person to be ashamed and provide an open door to share with him the things of the Lord. This type of response goes totally against the flesh. Only those who are acting with the empowerment of the Spirit, those who have accepted Jesus as Lord, can hope to respond in this way.

Is Jesus saying that it is wrong to defend yourself? I don't think so. Scripture is full of times when God's people have defended themselves against their enemies. In none of the examples in this section of verses did there seem to be an indication of severe injury or a threat to life. They seemed to example times of heated argument or insult or unfair laws. I think the principle is that it is better to trust God for your defense and to avoid physical violence or confrontation whenever possible. The psalmist declared this truth time again.

Psalm 59:17 "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy."

Psalm 62:2 "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved."

Psalm 89:18 "For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king."

Psalm 94:22 "But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge."

I think it is also important to note that the application was mistreatment of the individual. It is not addressing defense on behalf of another, of those you love or those that are weaker.

Matthew 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

This verse really goes with the previous section, but is a little different in that the reference has nothing to do with mistreatment or unfair laws. This is addressing a choice you have to make any time you are approached by someone who wants to borrow from you. The law was clear that you should not refuse to lend to the poor.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth."

Considering the context, I don't think that is the main application here. I think the principle is that everything we have has been given to us by God. We are only stewards of what we possess. In that regard we should be willing to share whenever we have the opportunity. I think it falls under the category of "you can't outgive God." I know that whatever we give to anyone else in honor of Him while trusting Him for our needs will never go unrewarded. Again, I believe that living according to that principle is only possible through the empowerment of the Spirit.

Matthew 5:43 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Matthew 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

As quoted previously, Leviticus 19 records the instruction to love your neighbour, but it does not say "and hate thine enemy." This must be an addition of the religious teachers in which they were adding to God's word and making an incorrect inference. Also as quoted previously, the closest quote I could find that mirrored this teaching was from Proverbs.

Proverbs 25:21-22 "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Again, Jesus is giving instruction that goes totally against what they had been taught. It goes against how we would naturally want to respond and feel justified in our response. These were not empty words from the mouth of the Lord; during His ministry He exemplified this very truth.

- He said, "Love your enemies," and you seeing Him healing the ear of one of those who had come to arrest Him and going to a cross for those who had rejected Him.
- He said, "Bless them that curse you," and you hear Him speaking words of encouragement and comfort to a disciple who cursed Him.
- He said, "Do good to them that hate you," and you see Him performing miracles without respect to person for the masses who will later turn on Him.

- He said, “Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,” and you hear Him asking the Father to forgive those who had Him crucified.

What motivation does the Lord give for living such a selfless life? To be counted among “the children of your Father in heaven.” Living by this whole higher standard boils down to what we treasure most—the pleasures of the flesh and this world for a season or the pleasure of the Father for eternity. It’s as hard and as simple as that. The Lord’s love for man is unconditional. He created the sun, and it rises on those who do what is evil and those who do what is good; He sends rain on those who are righteous and those who are unrighteous.

Matthew 5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Matthew 5:47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

The Lord makes the application to His unconditional love quite clear in these verses. To love those that love you is no spiritual achievement; even the publicans, the tax collectors, those considered lowest in society, do that. To embrace and be friendly to your brother, those that are dear to you, is no spiritual achievement; the publicans do that too.

Matthew 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The standard against whom citizens of the kingdom are to measure themselves—God the Father (as exemplified before men in Jesus, God in flesh).

I am reminded that the Lord never asks us to do anything that is impossible for us to do. He is not being unreasonable in His request. This would seem to be an impossible instruction to those listening to Jesus that day, but the Lord doesn’t lower His standards. He knows that He is going to empower them to live according to His teaching. After His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell each and every believer and empower them to live obediently. Even as I write these words, I am ashamed of my own failures. I have no excuse for sin of any kind.

Lord, please make me constantly aware of the presence of your Spirit, and strengthen me to yield to His leadership and direction in every choice I make every day. Humble me and strengthen me to become perfect, spiritually mature, and follow the example of your Son Jesus. Whatever it takes, Lord, in my life; I’m yours.