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## The Gospel of Matthew 5—Commentary Notes\*

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### A. Introduction

Matthew chapters 5 through 13 is the third section of Matthew's Gospel that describes Jesus's early public ministry. Among them, chapters 5 through 7 specifically record the first of five of Jesus's sermons. They are generally known as the "Sermon on the Mount" because Jesus often taught on the mountainsides of Galilee. Parts of these teachings resemble Luke 6:17-49, which describe the principles of kingdom living. In the history of humankind, Jesus was the greatest teacher who taught with the greatest authority because He was sent by God and given the Holy Spirit (John 3:34). All who heard His words were amazed for "he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" (Matt 7:29).<sup>1</sup> The "Sermon on the Mount" records the words of Jesus to the disciples whom He called to be the salt and light of the world. It contains the standard of righteous living that Jesus demands to all who belong to Him. Note that this is not the requirements for entering heaven. For sinners, it is absolutely impossible to consistently reach the level of righteousness and perfect holiness that Christ required of them from the inside and out. We must acknowledge our need for the help of the Holy Spirit and depend on Him in order to live lives as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

The Sermon on the Mount serves only as a plumbline, which points out the crookedness of a surface that cannot be leveled. The Sermon on the Mount is limited in that it shows us how our lives deviate from the truth, but it is unable to fix it for us. Even though the Lord Jesus revealed His standard for Christian living here, He had not yet instructed us how to live it out. That part of His teaching will be revealed later (John 7:37-39). The source of strength for righteous living will have to come from the Holy Spirit.

The Sermon on the Mount can be separated into five segments:

1. The Characteristics of the Blessed God: The Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-12
2. The Calling of God to the Blessed—Matthew 5:13-16
3. Comparing the Standard of Christ to That of the Pharisees—Matthew 5:17–6:18
4. Everyday Deeds—Matthew 6:19–7:12
5. Watch Out for Falsehood—Matthew 7:13–29

Today's lesson will focus on the first, the second, and a portion of the third segment.

### B. Outline

- I. 5:1-12 Jesus taught His disciples about characteristics of the citizens of heaven.
- II. 5:13-16 Jesus taught His disciples about God's calling to Christians.
- III. 5:17-48 Jesus used examples to teach His disciples about principles for living as citizens of heaven.

### C. Content

- I. **5:1-12 Jesus taught His disciples about the characteristics of the citizens of heaven.**

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\* Translator Note: These Commentary Notes were originally compiled in Chinese and translated into English for use by Chinese Christian Fellowship International's (CCF International's) English classes. All sources listed in the table (only listed in English when applicable) at the end of these notes were used and consulted in the original Chinese compilation. Please refer to the table for the references of each numbered annotation. For more information on the sources consulted, please contact CCF International. All biblical references are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

By this time, the news about Jesus had already spread throughout Galilee because of His powerful teachings and miracles of healing (Matt 4:22-23). Jesus desires that His followers not only follow Him for physical benefits, but that they also learn from His teachings in order to live a life fit as citizens of heaven. Therefore, Jesus taught them the Sermon on the Mount with authority.

These eight beatitudes exemplify “the blessed life lived out by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Clear and detailed teaching can be found on each of these principles in the New Testament. In the earlier public ministry of Jesus, He did not yet teach about the Holy Spirit because His audience was not yet ready. These beatitudes are a series of “blessed” promises. The word “blessed” suggests congratulations. Yet, these blessings, along with the character traits mentioned of a Christian, are all despised and rejected by the world. The world emphasizes blessings that are earthly, external, and materialistic. Citizens of the heavenly kingdom, however, are not so. Their focus should be on the heavenly, internal, and everlasting.<sup>2</sup> In fact, when looking at the English translations of this passage, each of these statements begins with the word “*blessed*.” These signify that they are proclamations that emphasize that citizens of heaven are greatly blessed by God.

5:1-2 – “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them. He said:”

1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (5:3). This is the first characteristic of someone blessed as Jesus defines. It can even be said to be the foundation of all heavenly blessings. The English translation for this phrase “*poor in spirit*” also appears in Isaiah’s prophecy concerning how the Messiah will preach the good news to the “poor” (Isa 61:1). Feeling “poor in the spirit” and thus unable to stand before God is an acknowledgement of true humility.<sup>3</sup> Even though material poverty was prevalent among Jesus’s audience at that time, the people’s desire for spiritual matters and their need for God ran even more deeply in their hearts. Such “poverty” caused them to seek God and His truth with humility, obedience, and gratitude. Jesus said, “For theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven.” The verb “is” implies that the kingdom of heaven is not occurring in the “future” but now. Those poor in spirit are at once elevated to the present status as citizens of the heavenly kingdom and they enjoy all the blessings that the kingdom of heaven has to offer its people (Eph 1:3). In other words, all who are citizens of heaven share a common trait: they all feel “poor” in their spirits.<sup>4</sup> When we believe in the Lord, recognize our sins, and acknowledge our spiritual lack and needs, God imputes His righteousness to us and makes us coheirs with other saints. Unless we are like a child, and confess that we have nothing and simply believe that God is willing to grant us everything we need, we cannot enter the kingdom of God (Matt 18:3). As godly as he was, even Nicodemus recognized his own spiritual poverty and lack, and his need to be born again in order to see the kingdom of God (John 3:5).
2. “Blessed are those who mourn” (5:4). The one who acknowledges his spirit’s poverty and the one who grieves and mourns for his sins and weaknesses are blessed.<sup>5</sup> The reason is because the Lord Jesus will comfort and heal his broken and contrite heart (Ps 34:18; 51:17; 56:8). “Will be comforted” is in the future tense and this implies that they will surely be comforted in the days to come. Jesus Himself will comfort us with His Word through the Holy Spirit in our prayers and worship, and as we draw near to Him. The Lord said that we who mourn “will surely be comforted” because He Himself will “wipe away all our tears” in eternity that is coming (Rev 21:4).<sup>6</sup> If we receive this declaration of Jesus by faith, even if we are tried and mistreated to the point of grief and broken heartedness, we will be greatly comforted knowing that we will be with Him forever when He comes again. The thought of that wonderful future will lighten and overwhelm our present pain and suffering.
3. “Blessed are the meek” (5:5). Meekness is not being cowardly nor is it being passively enduring mistreatment. Meekness is with principle and purpose. It is the opposite of pride and rebellion. It is contrary to strong subjective opinions that want to do things according to one’s own way. Moses was an example of meekness in the Bible. Scripture describes him as “a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth” (Num 12:3). However, when he

led the Israelites in their fight for freedom from Pharaoh, and when he fought many battles, Moses was extremely brave and strong. Isaac is another example. Genesis 26 records that he was persecuted by the locals every time he dug a well. However, in each occasion, Isaac retreated and faced oppression with meekness rather than with force. Jesus Himself also said: “I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matt 11:29), yet who can accuse Jesus of being a weak coward? God promises the meek that they will inherit the earth (Ps 37:11). This promise has two possible meanings. On the one hand, it may mean a promise of tangible blessing—land. People who are gentle and meek may be lacking in material possessions because of their refusal to fight for it. And in those days, apart from the wealthy few, Jews were rarely ever landlords. On the other hand, it may also mean that they will be co-heirs with Christ in eternity (Ps 37:11; Rom 8:17) and be given heavenly inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Either way, these people know that God is their portion. They seem to possess nothing, yet they have everything (2 Cor 6:10).

4. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (5:6). God’s people should hunger for God’s righteousness (Isa 61:3). However, the fall not only corrupted and defiled life itself, humans also lost their “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” They no longer have any appetite for the truth or for justice. “Hunger and thirst for righteousness” is doing what is right and just in God’s eyes. The people of God ought to desire God’s holy righteousness for the world and refuse to follow the opposing standards of the world. God will Himself satisfy those who thus hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God and do what is right in His eyes. From another angle, this blessing includes a question that is also a challenge. It asks: how much do you long for God? Do you desperately need Him like one who suffers from famine and is in need of food? Or like a dehydrated dying individual who needs water? How strongly do we really desire God?<sup>8</sup> The Lord says that such individuals who long for Him are blessed, for they will be filled, and “whoever drinks the water that [the Lord] gives will never thirst” (John 4:14).
5. “Blessed are the merciful” (5:7). “Merciful” means to show sympathy and to give aid to those who are less fortunate. It also means to be considerate, forgiving, and loving towards those who are weaker than us. The first four beatitudes point to the self while the last four relate to others. When Jesus spoke of being merciful, He referred to actions done to others who have needs. By doing so, one will be shown mercy from God. When the Scriptures speak of God’s mercy, it often mentions His love as well (Ps 86:15; 103:8; Prov 14:21). If God was not full of mercy, sinners would have perished long ago. We often forget that God has cancelled our debt of “ten thousand talents,” but we may remember and refuse to forgive our brother’s debt of only “a hundred denarii” (Matt 18:23-30). It seems that those who show mercy do so not because others deserve it, but rather because they themselves will be shown mercy if they show mercy to others. Being merciful to others does not mean being tolerant to sin. God shows mercy to sinners but hates sin. One who is merciful is a spiritually experienced person. On the contrary, those who are not spiritually mature only desire others to be considerate to show them patience, but they are unable to do the same to others. Therefore, mercy is a character that is a fruit of maturity, love, and abundance of life. Those who are merciful will be shown mercy. The Lord Jesus guarantees this. He will surely remember how we showed mercy to others and show mercy to us when we need it.<sup>9</sup>
6. “Blessed are the pure in heart” (5:8). “Pure in heart” speaks of a heart that is pure and without deceit (Ps 24:3-4). It also means “cleanliness” of the heart, which Jesus emphasized. People generally judge others externally, but God sees the heart. When one’s heart is clean, his actions will follow suit. One who is both clean inside and out will surely see God. To the pure in heart, there is only one motivation and one purpose: to love God only and to serve Him by loving others. The “double mindedness” mentioned in James 1:8 is the exact opposite of purity in heart. The Lord promises that the pure in heart will surely see God. The Jewish rabbis at that time emphasized outward cleanliness, but God focuses on the inward cleanliness of the heart. Now we “see” God by faith while on earth (i.e., in the spirit; Exod 33:19-20). Just as David said, “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple” (Ps 27:4), and

“As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness” (Ps 17:15). We also shall see the Lord face to face in heaven.

7. “Blessed are the peacemakers” (5:9). The work of the Lord Jesus on the cross is to reconcile man to God and to tear down walls between men, so that all barriers of race, gender, social status, and culture may be destroyed (Eph 2:14). The Son of God, Jesus Christ, came to the world, and became “our peace” (Eph 2:14). The salvation that He accomplished on the cross has brought us peace—man with man and man with God. This was the great and wondrous thing that the only begotten Son of God accomplished for us by coming to the world. Therefore, if the people of God are peacemakers, then they shall be called the sons of God. As children of God, not only do we need to be ambassadors of peace for God and man, we must also “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” among believers (Eph 4:3). The opposite to “peacemaking” is “stirring up conflict” (Prov 6:14, 19). We need to lay down our own opinions and wholeheartedly seek unity with fellow Christians (Ps 34:14). The Lord says, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” for by doing so, they prove themselves worthy to be called the children of God.<sup>10</sup>
8. “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness” (5:10). One who wholeheartedly pursues after God’s righteousness and sincerely follows the Lord will surely be persecuted, slandered, and suffer for the Lord’s sake because the world is at enmity with Christ (John 15:19; 17:14). “No servant is greater than his master.” Our Lord suffered great opposition and persecution while on earth. Likewise, we who belong to Him will inevitably encounter persecution as well, just like the Apostle Paul who was often persecuted for the sake of the Word (1 Pet 2:21). The cause for this suffering and unjust treatment is our desire to be obedient children of God. On that day, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are persecuted for God’s righteousness. The Lord has even greater promise and reward for us: if we trust the Lord when we are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, we will surely experience His presence and comfort. Furthermore, we will also share in His glory if we share in the Lord’s suffering (Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 1:5; 4:17-18; 1 Pet. 4:13-14).

God’s kingdom is presently being realized among Christians and within God’s house. Even though we do not see the full manifestation of these wonderful traits by all Christians, when Christ appears, it will be tangibly, visibly, and perfectly brought to fruition. Romans 8:2-4 says that only through Christ can the law be fulfilled in those of us who follow not after the flesh but the Spirit. If we wish to live out the Christian beatitudes in our personal lives, we must first experience three things. First, we must be redeemed from our past sins and failures by believing in what Christ accomplished on the cross (Matt 26:28; Rom 3:20, 24-26). We will then receive the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Eph 1:13) and become a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:24). Second, we must be teachable through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14–3:4). Third, we must depend on the Holy Spirit to help us exercise these principles so that our minds may be transformed and become more and more like Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

We might feel that the standard in the Beatitudes are unreachable because “deep in my core, I am not that kind of person.” Yet God has promised us: “I can do all things through him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:13). Are you willing to trust in the Lord, to gradually take off the old self, and move toward the goal marked by these wonderful characteristics?

Jesus told us that the kingdom of heaven is different from that of the world. In the heavenly kingdom, wealth and power become insignificant. We are citizens of heaven. Therefore, we should also pursue the blessings and eternal rewards that our Lord has promised with an attitude different than that of the world. We can examine ourselves. Are our attitudes the same as those of the world—selfish, prideful, and craving after power? Or do we value our status and honor as people of God’s kingdom? Do we live out the meek and self-sacrificing characteristics of our Lord Jesus?<sup>11</sup>

## II. 5:13-16 Jesus taught His disciples about God’s calling to Christians.

The task of a Christian on earth is to be salt and light, so that the dark and corrupt world may see the life of Christ manifested through us and give glory to God.

1. “Salt of the Earth” (5:13). The “salt” mentioned here are the very characteristics in the Beatitudes: poor in spirit, one who mourns, etc. Our impact as believers comes from the manifestations of these eight characteristics. Therefore, the people of God “are” salt. The flavor is “outward deeds.” The people of God should naturally exemplify the fruit of these characteristics. If not, perhaps we need to examine whether we are truly saved—if we are not yet a child of God. All in all, our impact comes from our inner lives and is manifested in our daily lives. Furthermore, salt has these three functions: (1) Salt causes thirst. Like salt, the followers of Jesus cause others to be thirsty for the gospel and want to know more about it. Whenever people observe the difference in the conduct of Christians, they will naturally want to know about the underlining reasons. (2) Salt adds flavor. The gospel that Christians preach will renew the strength and hope of those who are frustrated and bent under pressure, if and when they are willing to believe in Christ. (3) Salt preserves. Christians preserve by opposing the sins of this world. We cannot only preach on God’s love and forgiveness of sins because that is what is pleasing to the ears of man. That would be offering false optimism. Instead, we must clearly explain to everyone concerning the righteousness of God and the consequences of sin. We must rightly expound the truth according to the Word of God.<sup>12</sup>

How can a Christian truly impact the world? If Christians only interact and mingle with other Christians, they are like salt in a container that does nothing for the world. We might disappointedly say that “I am the only saved person in my household,” or “I am the only Christian in my workplace,” or “There are no other Christians in my neighborhood.” We might feel useless because we are alone. Yet, be comforted to know that even if you are the only grain of salt, because Christ is in you, you can “add the flavor of saltiness” to others around you. God’s great command is for us to walk out of our comfort zones and walk into this world—our homes, our communities, and our workplaces—in order to accomplish God’s commission to us (Matt 28:18-20).

2. The Light of the World (5:14). The Lord has called Christians to be light of the world and to shine in its dark corners by bringing hope to those who are lonely and suffering (Phil 2:15-16). Christians are the light of the world. The impact should be visible like a city on a hill or a lamp upon a stand. A lamp hidden under a bushel (an earthen vessel used to measure grain) is useless.<sup>13</sup> When is our light hidden? For example: (1) keeping our silence when we should have spoken up for justice, (2) compromising with the world’s ways and concepts, (3) tolerating evil instead of stopping or correcting it, causing light to be darkened, (4) having no courage to witness for the Lord or proclaim our faith to others, and (5) being selfish and neglecting the needs of others. The Lord desires that we become the lighthouse of truth that brings Christ to the dark lives of the world.<sup>14</sup> Can others see any difference between you and those of the world? Can they see that you are a Christian?

### **III. 5:17-48 Jesus used examples to teach His disciples about principles for living as citizens of heaven.**

When the crowd heard Jesus speak of the blessed, they might have contemplated how these teachings connected with those of the Old Testament, which they had received.<sup>15</sup> Many thought that Jesus’s teachings were new, and that He was doing away with the teachings of the Old Testament (of the Law and the Prophets). Jesus, however, corrected such false thinking and said that “I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17). Why so? Because the teachings of the Old Testament were from God and so are the teachings of Jesus. God’s precepts and statutes do not change with time, nor does His standard of righteousness shift with age. The Lord Jesus was born under law. He obeyed (perfected) the Law by His actions and lived a sinless life (Gal 4:4-5; Heb 4:15). He also fulfilled all the laws concerning sacrifices by becoming the atoning lamb and dying on

the cross (Heb 10:1-10). In addition, the Lord Jesus also fulfilled (perfected) all the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him (Luke 24:27).<sup>16</sup>

5:18a – “For Truly I tell you.” “Truly” means “Amen(!),” which emphasizes a serious proclamation that the audience must pay close attention. This sentence appears thirty-one times in the Gospel of Matthew (while in John’s Gospel, He used doubles in Greek: “Amen! Amen!”).<sup>17</sup>

5:18b – “[N]ot the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law...” In Hebrew script, when a letter or a stroke is taken away, it can completely change a word to mean something else. Jesus meant that the Law will be kept in its entirety.<sup>18</sup> After clarifying that the Law must be fulfilled, Jesus went on to demand that the righteousness of His disciples must “surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law.” The mistake that the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (or those who are self-righteous today) made was that they misinterpreted the true essence of the law. They thought that by not committing outward crimes such as murder, adultery, and bearing false witness, they fulfilled the law. As for internal anger, impurity, sexually immoral thoughts, and selfishness are not considered as sins as long as they are not carried out in action. That is why Jesus used six examples to explain the righteousness that God demands, which differs drastically from that of the Pharisees. The righteousness that God requires is not superficial but a life that is holy and sanctified inside and out. These are His six examples:<sup>19</sup>

1. Manifested in Response to Hatred (5:21-26). Anger is different from a bad temper. Anger is a neutral emotion which can produce right actions, such as Jesus’s righteous anger in cleansing the temple (John 2:13-17). However, it can also lead to criminal actions. The Old Testament law stated “do not murder” (Exod 20:13). The teaching of the Pharisees focused on the outward crime of murder while the Lord Jesus pointed to the deeper level of this command—not only the act itself but the heart of hatred behind the crime. Therefore, to hate is to murder (1 John 3:15). In addition, anger with jealousy (as it was with Cain and Joseph’s brothers) and with contempt of a brother by saying “Raca” (i.e., a useless man) or “You fool” (i.e., a foolish one, words that damage reputations) to him (any such slander that come from a vicious heart) is in danger of the judgment of the fire of hell. The remedy Jesus suggested for sins that result from anger is to have this “angry” and “bitter” person go and ask for forgiveness and reconcile with his brothers. Otherwise, his prayer and service to God will not be accepted by God. Even when the one whom we have sinned against has wronged us more, we still need to be proactive in making peace with him without arguing over what is fair. Imitate our Heavenly Father who first sent His Son to the world to die for us while we were yet sinners (Rom 5:6-8). Our Heavenly Father first demonstrated this ultimate proactive act of reconciliation to us (5:23-26).<sup>20</sup>

A bad temper is a negative characteristic and temperament. It causes one to lose control and can result in violence, hurtful feelings, and increased mental stress. It is not pleasing to God. We need the Lord to set us free from our sin of bad tempers. We need to first be sensitive to sin (5:25), and know also that when God judges, we will be held accountable to Him. We need to confess our sins to God and submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. God will then grant us the fruit of the Spirit such as kindness, joy, and peace as we pray in faith and with total commitment. As we continue to bring our weaknesses to God, He will transform our bad tempers as we live in submission to Him.<sup>21</sup>

2. Manifested in Response to Lust (5:27-32). The Old Testament law forbade the sin of adultery, but the Lord Jesus commanded us to also deal with the lust in our hearts and minds. Proverbs 4:23 says: “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” The temptation of lust is one of the hardest temptations to overcome. Temptation itself is not a sin, for you will not sin if you choose not to subject yourself to it. On the contrary, if we allow our thoughts to remain and entertain impure imaginations and feelings, then we have already sinned against God. The sin of adultery is difficult to guard against because it comes out of human’s lustful inclinations from birth. Even though Christians have been given new life after believing in the Lord, we still live in the corrupted flesh. Therefore, we can never underestimate the

overwhelming power and danger of lust. Hence, the Lord Jesus proposed these secrets for Christians to guard against adultery:

- 1) Begin by preventing lustful thoughts by running away from it and pursuing holy living from the heart (2 Tim 2:22).
- 2) Take strong precaution against falling into temptation. If your “right eye” or “right hand” causes you to fall, sacrifice it so that you will not fall into sin. This means to run from temptation at all costs. Jesus used a very exaggerated example in this passage. He did not meant for us to actually gouge out our eyes because even the blind entertain lustful thoughts. What He wants to emphasize is the serious attitude we need to oppose sin, leaving no foothold for sin whatsoever. Even if we must suffer the temporary pain of letting go of certain people or things in order to get rid of a harmful and sinful pattern or to prevent from falling deeper into sin, it is still better than for us to suffer the ultimate judgment and punishment that sin brings. If we let sin roam freely in our lives, it will ultimately destroy us.<sup>22</sup>
- 3) Commit to loving only our spouse. Let our spouse meet and gratify our emotional and physical needs.

Some think that since lustful thoughts are already sin, so why not just act upon it? This is very dangerous thinking because it gives excuses for committing sins and continuing in sin. He who truly loves God will also hate sin. We ought to refuse watching any films or reading any literature that might arouse lust, for such will grieve the Holy Spirit within us. Habitual sins of the mind are difficult to get rid. When temptation comes, we must: (1) loudly read or recite passages, such as 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 10:13, (2) resist the devil in Jesus’s name, and (3) focus our attention on the Lord Jesus. All these are effective tools in helping us to be freed from such sins.<sup>23</sup>

3. Manifested in Response to Divorce (5:31-32). “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Here, Jesus emphasized God’s perspective on marriage. Unless one’s spouse has committed sexual immorality, divorce is forbidden. Even if adultery is committed, divorce is not the necessary or only outcome. Forgiveness and reconciliation can still be sought through the help and the might of the Holy Spirit.

4. Manifested in Response to Words (5:33-37). “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all.” The Pharisees were known for their swearing. Their words do not match their hearts. They believed that as long as the name of God was not invoked, then swearing was permissible. Therefore, they would swear by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or on someone’s head. However, God is One who sees the heart. Therefore, they are still bound by their vows. The Lord Jesus forbade Christians to prove the truthfulness of their words by swearing. Instead, they ought to prove their trustworthiness by their character. Every word spoken by the people of the kingdom of heaven should be reliable. Swearing does not increase its trustworthiness. Therefore, the Lord commanded them, saying, “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”
5. Manifested in Response to Love and Not Retaliation (5:38-42). “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” This quote came from various places in the Old Testament (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21). The purpose for establishing such a law was to protect the innocent (the defendant) and to limit the punishments to fit the crime. It was not used in interpersonal relationships.<sup>24</sup> The Lord gave five examples, not commands, to explain the principle: striking the cheek (shaming), suing (taking the tunic), forcing (going), begging, and lending. All five examples speak of one principle, that is, not to resist the one who is evil, but to treat those who hate you with kindness. We

cannot treat hypothetical scenarios as commands and obey them word for word. If we do so, they lose their true essence. We are to obey the truth, which these examples aim to explain and not the examples themselves. In John's Gospel, when the Jews wanted to stone Jesus (when His life was threatened), He slipped away (John 8:59). When the High Priest questioned Jesus and one of the officers standing by struck Him, Jesus pointed out his wrong, and did not turn the other cheek for him to strike again (John 18:22-23). Christ teaches us to win others over with peaceful measures without counting our losses, to be reconciled with our opponents, and not to gain back what was lost by any means possible. We are to leave the right of vengeance to God (Deut 32:35).

“Give to the one who asks from you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (5:42). This is not meant to be an unchanging principle or law. Jesus wants us to love and be sympathetic towards those with needs, but this does not mean that we are to meet all their demands without question. We should offer assistance according to what each deserves. We should never partner in their sins. If someone borrows money and pretends to have no way out when he has spent it all on gambling, drugs, or in other inappropriate ways, a Christian should not lend them money anymore.<sup>25</sup> The principle that our Lord Jesus has laid out for us is that we do all things in love. Whether we reject or give, we do so in love, regardless of whether the other person's treatment or demand is reasonable or not.

6. Manifested in Response to Praying for Our Enemies (5:43-48). In addition to loving our enemies with deeds, God further commanded Christians to “pray for your enemies” in secret (5:44). We should not only ask the Lord to grant us strength and wisdom to love our enemies. We should also pray that our enemies will repent and return to God. It is not unusual to see someone who used to strongly oppose God and later on become someone who loves and honors the Lord more than most. The Lord Jesus demanded that Christians manifest a kind of love that is above others—to love our enemies! Just as God “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good,” the Lord teaches that a “son of God” should act in the same pattern. The Lord is not asking us to make no distinction between right and wrong, nor is He telling us to tolerate or enable others in their sins. Instead, He wants us to become like our heavenly Father, who loves sinners, even though He hates sin. We must learn to love whom God loves and forgive whom God forgives. We love, not because they are good and worthy, but because we love God. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Therefore, when people have needs, we will extend mercy and lend help so that others may see God's great love and power, and be drawn to know Him. This is not easy to do. It requires determination and God's grace in order to carry it out.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5–7 is not the foundation for our salvation. Instead, it is the standard of our living. Furthermore, it is not directed at non-believers, but at the disciples (5:1). We must understand this crucial order: If we do not lead others to first put their trust in Christ and be redeemed from sin and be born again, but only teach them to abide by and live out God's righteous standard, it will be absolutely impossible for them to follow! This is why most people mistake Christianity to be like other religions that teach people to do good. In that regard, it would be no different. The order according to Biblical teaching is to first believe in the Lord Jesus, and be born again and be saved. Then comes the mighty power of the Holy Spirit to help us to live out the good and wonderful characteristics that God desires.<sup>26</sup>



## List of Sources Consulted

Sources Consulted	Series/Publisher	Annotations
#1. 天國君王	宣道	1:#14.p59–62
#2. 基督生平	校園	2:#9.p17
#3. 巴克萊每日研經叢書	基督教文藝	3:#15.p1346
#4. 天道研經導讀	天道	4:#20.p11
#5. 作個忠心者	學園	5:#17.p9
#6. 摩根解經—馬太福音	活泉	6:#1.p69
#7. 認識你的王	播道	7:#3.p32,33
#8. 漁夫查經系列—天國子民	更新	8:#3.p34
#9. 馬太福音研經材料	校園	9:#1.p70–71
#10. 主耶穌的生命與事奉	更新	10:#1.p70
#11. 詹遜自助研經課程	種籽	11:#16.p11
#12. 聖經書卷系列—馬太福音	浸信	12:#16.p9
#13. 基督生平	華神	13:#15.p430
#14. 基督生平中的關鍵時機	活泉	14:#1.p72
#15. 中文聖經啟導本	海天	15:#1.p72
#16. 聖經靈修版	國際聖經協會	16:#1.p73,74
#17. 信徒聖經註釋	角聲	17:#1.p74
#18. 經文分析排版—馬太福音	聖經信息協會	18:#1.p76
#19. 聖經預言圖解	聖經事奉協會	19:#3.p38
#20. 聖經全書註釋	瑞福	20:#17.p12
#21. 新約默想-摩根	更新	21:#4.p23
#22. 聖經串珠註釋	福音證主	22:#3.p43
#23. 摩根解經	更新	23:#4.p24
#24. 聖經串珠註釋	福音證主	24:#17.p12