

THE
DISCOURSE
ON THE
MOUNT

*“That ye may be the Children
of your Father”*



**26th Australasian Christadelphian Youth Conference
Tasmania, Launceston 21st - 29th April, 2001**

FOREWORD

It gives us great pleasure to present these notes to you, and it is our earnest prayer that they will be a valuable tool for you in your studies of this vital section of Scripture.

A Brother that I knew as a child, who like many past Brethren, cherished the living Word of God, wrote the following words concerning this section of God's Word:

"The teaching and precepts of Jesus expressed in the clear symmetry of the Sermon on the Mount are not abstract ideals, as beautiful as mountain peaks and as remote, to be preserved and worshipped in devotional hours and ignored in the hurly-burly of daily living. They form a working philosophy of life, which is the only road a disciple can tread. A steep and difficult road truly, but one which Jesus himself was treading. Nor did he demand that his disciples should tread it alone. He reached out his hand and led them towards its summit.

Jesus was teaching the twelve and the multitude of disciples who should follow them how to live on his high level. The whole discourse forms a portrait of the Teacher himself. In it he reveals the secret of his life. Showing his disciples the way, he describes the fountain from which all his own actions sprang, disclosing a heart dedicated to his Father's will."

("A Life of Jesus" by Bro. Melva Perkis)

We chose this study because it is very practical. Anyone in any circumstance can gain much from the counsel of our Lord who not only spoke the words, he put them into practice in his own life. We all find it easier to take wise counsel if it is matched by example.

Please take the time to read through these notes alongside the gospel record, that we may all benefit from the preparation that each of us have put in. We encourage you to use the space provided for notes, to remind you of the things you have discovered, so that we can share them together during the conference.

May the object of our studies be that we may all be strengthened in our walk before our Father, as we look forward to that time when we truly will be His children, as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Brother Simon Bennet (Secretary)
On behalf of the Conference Committee

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CONCERNING THESE STUDY NOTES

Seeds to be planted

Our Lord said in this very discourse, *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”*. This is the aim of our study notes. To appeal to a wide variety of personalities, to encourage a deeper understanding of our Lord’s words so that we may know how to **do them** and ultimately **we may be the children of our Father**.

The Structure of the Notes

As you go through the notes you will find that they are organised into three basic sections.

Section One:

disciples	‘mathetes’ (3101) – a learner or a pupil.
☞	Matt. 21:6
☛	Deut. 33:3
📖	Wey: “for it is...”
?	Try and think of examples...

This is what we might call the analytical section of the notes.

disciples	All the key words in the verse are in bold text and underlined.
‘mathetes’	Next to that we have put in the Greek word as it is found in Strong’s Concordance. Sometimes the word is helpful when we can see where our English equivalent has come from.
(3101)	The number in brackets is the Strong’s Concordance number. With this number before us we can look up in the back of Strong’s the real meaning of the word under consideration. Other meanings have been taken from “The Expanded Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words”; “A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament” by Bullinger; “The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon”.
☞	Matt. 21:6 – Having the Strong’s number in brackets enables us to go to “The New Englishman’s Greek Concordance and Lexicon” and look up this number to find other New Testament passages where the same word under consideration is used. In the notes we have tried to restrict the quotes down to about three or four, however we are sure you will find many other passages that may be linked to that particular verse in the discourse. Remember to read the surrounding verses for the context!
☛	Deut. 33:3 – Next to this symbol we have put other Bible quotes which may be helpful in understanding the verse or which may have been quoted or alluded to by our Lord Jesus Christ.
📖	Next to this symbol we have given other Bible translations or versions which may help give us the sense of the verse.
?	Following a question mark there is a practical question for you to keep in mind while studying this verse.

Bible translations used are as follows:

Amp	The Amplified Bible
Diag	Diaglott
I/L	The Interlinear Bible –Hebrew, Greek, English by Hendrickson
JB	The Jerusalem Bible
LXX	The Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew Old Testament in English)
Moff	Moffatt’s Translation of the New Testament
NEB	The New English Bible
NIV	The New International Version
Roth	Rotherham Emphasized Bible
RSV	The Revised Standard Version
RV	The Revised Version
Wey	Weymouth New Testament in Modern Speech

PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR STUDY

Preparing the soil

The prophet Ezekiel had this to say: *“It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine”*.

Before any plant can produce good fruit the soil itself has to be thoroughly prepared. So it is in Bible study. Before the “seed of God’s Word” can be implanted in our minds we have to prepare ourselves.

Knowing when the conference is actually on enables you to prepare in advance and this is most advantageous as you can put together a study program that will help you make the most of your available time. Consider the following suggestions:

- ☐ Pick a free night each week that you can make your study night. Let all your friends and family know that you have chosen this night to study for conference and so you would appreciate it if you were not disturbed. By doing this in an enthusiastic way you may also encourage your friends to follow the same example.
- ☐ Choose the best possible place to study. Consider the words of Hosea when in the age to come, God will once again educate Israel: *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.”* (Hos. 2:14). Look at the AV margin for the word ‘comfortably’ – ‘speak to her heart’. Make your study area your own little wilderness where GOD can speak to your heart. Make the area free of any distraction and influence that will take your mind away from the meditation of the Bible.
- ☐ Before you start make sure you have all the necessary materials. Have your Bible ready and opened at the appropriate section of Scripture, have your pencils, pens etc. at hand. Have a special notebook to record quotes, questions and other themes to pursue when time is available.
- ☐ Gather together all the reference books you have access to. Some suggested reference books are:
 - Strong’s concordance (for Greek & Hebrew words)
 - Englishman’s Lexicons coded to Strong’s
 - Vine’s Expository Dictionary (good for meanings but not for doctrinal teaching)
 - Other translations such as Rotherham’s, RSV, Diaglott
 - Other study notes from previous conferences or youth groups (there are some circulating)
 - Pioneer writings such as Nazareth Revisited.
- ☐ Create for yourself a study timetable. Use the following study timetable as your own personal guide and try your best to stick to it. Experience shows that if you keep to your timetable then you will keep up your enthusiasm and maintain your momentum because you will be driven by what you have already achieved. However, if you allow time to overtake you and you fall well behind in your study you may find yourself depressed by it all and give up. One possible way to help you keep going is to listen to some good studies on the discourse available from various ecclesial taping services, eg. Enfield Ecclesial Taping Service and Rathmines Bible School.

THE FIRST STEP Breaking the soil

Start with Prayer

Before our Lord actually chose his twelve apostles he continued all night in **prayer** to God. *“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles”* (Luke 6:12-13). Before we open God’s Word it is vital that we approach our God in prayer. Seek God’s blessing in words that you understand and ask for those things that you really want. God speaks to us through His Word and so it is important that our communication back to God in prayer is in accordance with what we really hope to achieve from our Bible study. What sort of things could you include in your prayer?

Good Bible Study is Good Bible Reading

Having asked God for help and guidance, the next thing to do is to read all of Matthew 5-7 in one sitting. Read the section out loud if you feel that helps your concentration. By reading the whole section at once it will help you to get the overall picture and hopefully the overall message. As your study progresses it is helpful to repeat this exercise so that your overall understanding is continuously enhanced.

As you read, look for particular words or phrases our Lord used frequently and highlight them with a coloured pencil. For example, *“Blessed”, “I say unto you”, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time”, etc.*

Try and break up the verses into sections to help you understand the flow of thought.

Use Strong’s Concordance and Englisman’s Lexicon to find common words. If you do not know how to use these particular reference books then use this as an opportunity to involve others by asking someone who can use these books to help you and include anyone else who is interested.

Make notes and ask questions

As you go through the discourse use a notebook to write down questions and quotes that come to mind.

Take your notebook with you to the ecclesial meetings and start generating discussion with others about the discourse. Never be afraid to put forward your questions even if you feel that they are silly or simple. Remember the disciples on several occasions were afraid to ask our Lord the meanings to some of the things he said because of their pride. As a result they didn’t receive the answers!

Creating these sort of discussions can be infectious and hopefully you will encourage other young people to make the effort to study for conference.

- 5:43-47 God so loved the world and did all He could to save the unjust, therefore it is reasonable that we show love to others so that they too might be saved.
- 5:48 The Law of Moses is able to help us understand the character of God. Knowing what God is really like should produce in us a love of God. When we love God we will have matured (or be perfect) and we will really try to be like our Heavenly Father.
- 6:1-4 Why do we do things for others? Is it because we love our God and our neighbour?
- 6:5-15 Why do we really pray? Are our prayers structured to elevate self or are they founded on a great love of God and a recognition of His goodness? Does God's forgiveness towards us generate appreciation and therefore the same spirit of forgiveness towards our neighbour?
- 6:16-18 When we undergo deprivation and suffering for the Truth's sake do we let everyone else know about it? Why do we want everyone to know? Why do we endure this deprivation and suffering? Is it because we love God or is it because we love self and believe we are worth saving?
- 6:19-34 If we really love God then we will serve Him with singleness of heart and devotion. We will not allow anything else to come between us and our God. We, as Christadelphians would reject the doctrine of the Trinity and openly declare that God is one. How does the true doctrine of the oneness of God tie in with this singleness of devotion mentioned in this section? Are we caught up in materialism like all our work-mates? Are we trying to have what everyone else has? What are we really seeking in our life? Our Lord Jesus Christ shows us that if we love God then we will seek His kingdom and His righteousness and He will provide us with all we need.
- 7:1-5 Why have we been given the Bible? Is it so we can judge our brothers and sisters and condemn them? Or is it so that we can help each other to be wise unto salvation? If we love our neighbour then we will use the Bible to save and not condemn. We will also use the Bible to admonish ourselves and help us to be more like Jesus Christ.
- 7:6 Why do we preach to others? Is it because we are supposed to? Do we like to use the Bible to defend the faith no matter how belligerent our approach may be? If we preach the gospel to anyone as a means of projecting how great we are, what would happen when we preach to swine who have no desire to listen to the gospel?
- 7:7-12 As a result of our love of God are we constantly asking, seeking, knocking? Our God loves us and will give us those good things we need. Are we the same with our brothers and sisters and those outside the hope of Israel? Do we treat them in the same way as we wish to be treated? Consider this point in all the previous verses.
- 7:12 What is the law and the prophets? It is the whole theme we have been weaving through this overview.
- "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. 6:4-5)*
- "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." (Lev. 19:18)*
- This is the type of seed our Lord wanted to plant in his disciples' minds.
- 7:13-14 Are we prepared to narrow our lives down to please God? Are we prepared to make all the necessary sacrifices to show our God how much we appreciate His goodness?
- 7:15-20 Where our hearts are and what our desires are will eventually be seen in our way of life. All those that love God will show their love in every aspect of daily life including their dealings with others. Those who are sincere to their God will not be false prophets.

CHAPTER BREAK-UP

Plotting the ground for planting

Before starting the verse by verse study, it is quite helpful to break-up the chapters into smaller sections which can help you keep the overall picture in mind. Such an analysis requires careful reading and thought, but once this is done you will have before you brief summaries of each section of the discourse. Often such sections will naturally fall into place and at other times it may be difficult to determine where one section starts and another section finishes. Remember, it is not critical how you make your chapter break-ups. What is important, is that you can see why you have divided the chapters in the way you have. Such an analysis is very helpful when doing the daily readings, because within a very short time you can summarise the whole chapter just read in a way that all can follow.

To help you grasp this process of breaking up a chapter, we suggest you have a look at the Christadelphian book entitled "*Guide Book to the New Testament*", by Bro. H.P. Mansfield. In this book you will find all the epistles broken down and also suggested themes or key verses are put forward. Go through some of the epistles and learn to break-up the chapters.

Once this is done have a go at splitting up the discourse on the mount and then summarise each section you have made. Compare your chapter break-ups with the analysis below and then mark into your own Bible your final chapter break-up against the appropriate verses.

THAT YE MAY BE THE CHILDREN OF YOUR FATHER

5:1-12	The Blessings: Portrait of a Citizen of Zion
5:13-16	The Believers and the World
5:17-19	The New Law and the Old Law
5:20	Abounding Righteousness
5:21-24	The Law of the Heart
5:25-26	Be Humble in Error: Judgment and Mercy
5:27-32	The Thought and the Subsequent Action
5:33-37	The Thought and Giving Your Word
5:38-42	The Law of Love and the Way of Non-resistance
5:43-48	The Standard of Perfectness
6:1-4	Worship in Relation to your Neighbour – Alms-giving
6:5-6	Worship in Relation to God – Prayer
6:7-8	A Discipline in Prayer
6:9-15	The Lord's Prayer
6:16-18	Worship in Relation to Self – Fasting
6:19-23	The Magnet of the Heart
6:24-25	The Lord of the Heart
6:26-34	The Lord of Life
7:1-6	Judges or Judged for Hardness of Heart
7:7-12	The Father's Good Gift and the Son's Response
7:13-14	The Two Gates
7:15-20	False Prophets and How to Know Them
7:21-23	Deceived Self-seekers
7:24-27	The Two Builders and the Final Test
7:28-29	The Effect of the Discourse on the Disciples

Once you have marked into your Bible the chapter break-up you are now ready to start your verse by verse study of the Discourse on the Mount. The key to such a study is to follow a set schedule, try to stick to it and attempt only small sections at a time. If you have never embarked on such an adventure as this before then talk to others about how they Bible mark, how they study and finally choose a method that suits you the best. You have to be happy with your own approach so that you enjoy doing the study.

Discussion Group One

Matthew Chapter 5:1-12

The Development of a Godly Character



SECTION 1

Matthew 5:1-12 The development of a godly character.

Every verse from verse 3 to 11 commences with the word 'blessed'. Blessedness could be described as an inner state of true happiness and contentment that displays itself in outward manifestation. This kind of happiness can only come through knowing God and His Word. The main sense in which believers will receive the blessings is the future reward for those that are faithful and love God. Yet it is not only in the future that we receive blessings, but also from living a godly life now (1 Tim. 4:8). This verse tells us that if we have a godly character we receive blessings not only in the future but also now. The guidelines which God has set down for us in His Word provide the best way to live now. If we develop a godly character and act in a godly way, we receive spiritual blessings which the world around us do not. They may not always be direct blessings from God but are a result of a godly and honest way of life.

The first twelve verses of this chapter are a contrast between the suffering which we may experience now and the blessings which we will receive if we are faithful to God. Whatever situation we are going through in our life we need to remember the glorious future that awaits us if we are found faithful. As Solomon says "*where there is no vision the people perish*" (Prov. 29:18). If we keep our vision of the kingdom foremost in our minds it will give us the strength needed to "*endure unto the end*". Sometimes there can be a temptation to follow the things of the world but these things only lead to death while God's Word leads to life. Rather than "*enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*", we need to follow Moses' example (Heb. 11:24-26). Consider also Romans 8:18 where we read, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us".

Stop and think! The last line of each of these verses gives us a small vision of the kingdom. Think carefully about your vision of the kingdom based on these verses.

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,”

disciples ‘mathetes’ (3101) – a learner or a pupil. Bullinger: one who follows both teacher and teaching.
 ☞ Matt. 21:6; 24:3; John 8:31; 13:35; 15:8
 ☛ Deut. 33:3

The following five mountains are mentioned in the life of Jesus:

1. The Mountain of Temptation (Luke 4:5)
2. The Mountain of the Discourse (Matt. 5:1)
3. The Mountain of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2)
4. The Mountain of the Crucifixion (John 19:17)
5. The Mountain of the Ascension (Acts 1:11-12)

This mountain from which Jesus taught was somewhere in Galilee (Matt. 4:23) and no doubt specially chosen by Jesus, so that all who wished to learn of him might follow him there. In our own situation if we wish to learn of Jesus we must be prepared to follow him wherever he leads us (Rev. 14:4).

We must not confuse the term ‘disciples’ in this case with the twelve – they were not chosen until a later stage as we learn from Matthew 10:2-5. All of us, as disciples, are learners or pupils as we follow Christ into the heights above this present world.

The occasion was an intimate one, as we understand from the fact that Jesus ‘was set’, or seated before them. Therefore the total number who followed him into the mountain may not have been very great. But for those who made the effort there was a wonderful opportunity to hear the words of Jesus.





We still have a wonderful opportunity to learn whilst Jesus remains seated – “...*We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*” (Heb. 8:1). But that opportunity is limited. The time is coming when he will no longer be seated. “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.*” (1 Thess. 4:16)

Let us, then, whilst we have the opportunity, listen to what Jesus has to teach us.

Points to Consider

- What is required of us to be Christ’s disciples?
- Are we prepared to ‘ascend’ to spiritual heights to hear Christ’s words and follow in his footsteps as opposed to the multitudes who only wanted to see his works (cp. John 6:26-27)? In other words, are we prepared to make the personal effort to study the Bible regularly? Do we have a study program? How might we organise ourselves to climb that mountain and listen to the Word of God?
- We are about to consider words spoken by the greatest man who ever lived on this earth. How does Christ’s method of teaching compare with the methods used today and what has the most lasting effects? What should this compel us to do?

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.”

<u>Blessed</u>	‘makarios’ (3107) – supremely blest and by extension fortunate, well off, happy. Vines: from a root word which means large, lengthy. It does not refer to a passing joy but a continuing condition of heart.
	Amp – “Blessed – happy [that is, with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favour and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions].”
	Matt. 24:46; John 13:17; Jas. 1:25
<u>poor</u>	‘ptochos’ (4434) – from a word ‘ptosso’ which means to crouch and so it relates to a beggar who is one that cringes, a pauper. Vines: The word stresses a person’s poverty stricken condition.
	Mark 12:42; Jas. 2:5
<u>in spirit</u>	‘pneuma’ (4151) – a current of air, ie. breath. Thayer: the disposition or influence which fills and governs the whole person.
	1 Pet. 3:4

Here begins the section of Jesus’ teaching known as the ‘Beatitudes’. This is not a scriptural term, but a purely descriptive one, and is the Latin form of a word meaning a ‘state of blessedness, fortune or happiness’.

Although we find that in verses 3-11 the word ‘blessed’ is used nine times, verses 10 and 11 refer to the same blessing, therefore it is more accurate to refer to this section of Matthew 5 as the eight blessings.

It can be seen that Jesus is not bestowing blessings upon outward, or material things. Rather, these are blessings which will be bestowed upon such a character developed by God’s Word. These will be characters ultimately found worthy of the kingdom of God.

In all of the eight blessings there can be found an Old Testament background. In this particular case, our Lord is quoting from Isaiah 66:2 “...but to this man will I look, even him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”. Thus we can see that Jesus was not speaking of proud and self-willed people, but of those who can humbly accept and submit to God’s Word. To be poor in spirit is a quality of character. (Look up Psa. 34:18; 51:17; Isa. 57:15; 61:1).

The first blessing comes from an ACCEPTANCE of God’s way.

Discussion

- One who is poor in spirit is one with “a right estimate of self, the capacity to see ourselves as God sees us” (*Genius of Discipleship*, page 43). How do you see this definition offered by Bro. Dennis Gillett as affecting you?

Points to Consider

- Follow through Matthew’s gospel the theme ‘kingdom of heaven’.
- Follow through the word ‘heaven’ found in chapters 5-7.
- Why does Matthew refer to the kingdom as the ‘kingdom of heaven’, whereas all the other gospels refer to it as the ‘kingdom of God’?
- Go through verses 3-12 and highlight the word, ‘blessed’.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

mourn ‘pentheo’ (3996) – to grieve (the feeling or the act). Vines: to sorrow for sin.
 ☞ 1 Cor. 5:2; Jas. 4:9

comforted ‘parakaleo’ (3870) – to call near to one’s side. Thayer: to encourage and strengthen by consolation.
 ☞ Acts 20:12; 2 Cor. 1:4, 6; 2:7; 7:6
 ☛ Job 5:11; Psa. 38:6; Isa. 57:18; 61:1-3

This does not apply to an outward form of mourning such as displayed by the Pharisees (Matt. 6:16). This mourning comes from an inner desire to realise the fulfilment of the divine purpose in oneself and upon the earth. The prophet speaks of “...*the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn*” (Isa. 61:2). If we consider carefully the context of Isaiah’s prophecy we find he is speaking of the gospel of Christ which is designed to free the captives of sin and execute righteous judgment upon those who refuse to accept the way of their maker.

The ‘poor in spirit’ (v.3) mourn the long passage of time before they will witness the fulfilment of the divine purpose. But there shall come a time when they are comforted, and granted an invitation to enter God’s kingdom, no longer burdened by sin (Matt. 25:34; Rev. 21:4).

Present mourning in this sense can be a sign of faith or looking forward to better things. Therefore in verse 4 we find the first usage of the key phrase that now occurs six times in the eight blessings, “*for they shall...*”. This is indicative of a future fulfilment of the promises of the gospel.

This is rather like ascending the mountain to hear Jesus – a certain amount of effort is required before the goal is reached, for none of these characteristics of which Jesus speaks is something that comes naturally to human nature.

The second blessing comes from a DESIRE to see God’s way.

Points to Consider

- The faithful will be comforted when Christ returns but there are also many things that can give us great comfort now. What are some of these? Contrast these to the “comforts” the world has to offer to those that mourn.
- Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 7:2, “*It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting*”. Why?

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

meek

‘praus’ (4239) – mild, by implication humble. Vines: it is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is that tempered spirit that is neither elated or cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all. Bullinger: meek, gentle, enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender of spirit.

☞ Matt. 21:5; 1 Pet. 3:4; Only used 3 times in N.T.

☛ Psa. 37:11

True meekness is a very rare characteristic, yet it was something possessed by the truly great men of the Bible. That great type of Jesus, Moses, was “...*very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth*” (Num. 12:3). Whilst the world thinks that meekness is weakness, on the contrary, it is to possess a Christ-like character which is strong in its convictions. Therefore to possess meekness is to possess a Christlike spiritual attitude. Psalm 25:9 captures the true quality of being meek – meekness is the key to teachableness. “*The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he **teach** his way.*”

This is a very important principle to understand. Upon achieving the quality of meekness, which leads to teachableness, then and only then can the second portion of this blessing be obtained, that being an inheritance upon the earth.

We must allow ourselves to be taught these principles which can help us to prepare for the kingdom. Meekness is an attitude of mind, in contrast to the Pharisees that Jesus has so much to say about in later verses. The truly meek are those who are prepared to listen to and accept what Jesus has to say to them.

The third blessing comes from our TEACHABLENESS in God’s way.

Discussion

- How can we allow God and His Word to change our character? (Prov. 9:8-9; Col. 1:29 might help.)

Points to Consider

- Where in the psalms is Jesus quoting from? (Highlight all the references to ‘inheriting the land/earth’ in that particular psalm.)
- Meekness is a characteristic which is increasingly being scorned upon both at school, work and in all walks of life. We are taught by the authorities around us to be assertive, stand up for our rights, and not to be deterred from doing what we want to do. This is a far cry from the godly principle that we must display in our life if we want to inherit the earth. How do you believe this spirit of Christ will help you get a job in such an environment?
- Think of other characters in Scripture who were referred to as meek. What qualities did they possess?



“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

righteousness

‘dikaosune’ (1343) – Vines: it is the character or quality of being right or just. Thayer: correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting.

Phil. 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:11

be filled

‘chortazo’ (5526) – to gorge or supply food in abundance, to satisfy. Thayer: to fulfil or satisfy the desire of anyone.

Matt. 14:20; Mark 8:4



IL Margin: “Blessed are the ones **hungering** and **thirsting** after righteousness” (N.B. This is a continual process.)

The fourth blessing is now translated into something with which we can all readily identify. A truly hungry or thirsty person has a great craving for that one substance which will satisfy his desires and maybe even save his life. This blessing does not apply to natural food and drink. It is a blessing that follows immediately after Jesus’ promise that the meek would inherit the earth. Therefore Jesus is speaking of a hunger and thirst for those things which will lead to an inheritance in the earth.

Note that Jesus does not say, “Blessed are the righteous”, but rather, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness*”. In this way he is telling us that the righteousness which leads to life is something to be sought after, and must be worked at before it is imputed. It will ultimately be the result of our faithful actions and God’s grace that we inherit the kingdom.

There are some important examples of this in the Scriptures. The children of Israel had to gather their daily portion of manna to satisfy their hunger and likewise we must daily gather from the Word of God or we will become spiritually starved. Later Jesus said “*I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst*” (John 6:35). There must be a continual seeking after the things of Christ (Matt. 6:33), that we might be truly filled and satisfied. This will lead to that final feast when Jesus will eat and drink anew with his disciples in his kingdom (Luke 22:18).

It must be realised now, that in the fourth and fifth blessings we have reached beyond a mere passive involvement in the things of the Truth. These things now require a deliberate course of action. It is not a matter of just hungering and thirsting. Jesus said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst...*”. He is speaking of a deliberate choice to pursue a certain course of action. We will find the same principle in the next blessing.

The fourth blessing comes from a PARTICIPATION in God’s way.

Discussion

- Do we feel that we need God’s Word as much as our natural food and drink? Does it really mean this much to us? Just as we cannot survive without the natural food and drink we cannot survive without the Word of God (Psa. 42:1-2; Isa. 55:1). What changes do you need to make in your life so that you may personally hunger and thirst after God’s righteousness?

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

- merciful** ‘eleemon’ (1655) – actively compassionate, merciful. Vines: not simply possessed of pity but actively compassionate.
 ☞ Heb. 2:17; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.
- shall obtain mercy** ‘eleeo’ (1653) – to have compassion and pity on someone. Vines: to feel sympathy with the misery of another, and especially sympathy manifested in action.
 ☞ Matt. 18:33
 ☛ Psa. 18:24-27; 85:10; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 18:21-22

Mercy is also something which must be worked at. Unlike hunger and thirst this is not an attitude which comes naturally. It often requires a deliberate resolve of mind to demonstrate mercy in our lives.

The importance of mercy can be gauged from the fact that this is the only blessing where the characteristic required is matched by the reward given, i.e. *“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”*.

Why is it necessary to show mercy in all our ways? The answer lies in the contemplation of the unending mercy which God has shown to us. Three obvious examples are:

- Mercies revealed in daily life;
- Mercies extended through the sacrifice of God’s Son;
- The mercy that will be extended at the judgment seat.

Try and find quotes to prove these three aspects of God’s mercy.

It is necessary that we demonstrate to the best of our ability the same characteristics as our Heavenly Father. How can we expect divine mercy to be extended towards us, unless we are prepared to extend mercy towards others? The very first thing that Jesus wants to see in the lives of his disciples is mercy. *“...I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* (Matt. 9:13; Mic. 6:6-8)

Surely mercy must be the result of our attitude and teachableness in the things of God.

The fifth blessing comes from a DELIBERATE RESOLVE to manifest God’s way.

Discussion

- Look up Matthew 18:23-25. What do you think God is teaching us about mercy?

Points to Consider

- Compare this attitude with the instructions of Christ as to how we should pray in Matthew 6:12.
- Our attitude towards men will condition the Father’s attitude towards us (cp. Jas. 2:12-13). How can you improve your attitude?

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

- pure** ‘katharos’ (2513) – clean. Unmixed with impurities. Bullinger: pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject with which it is combined, free from every foreign admixture; clean, and free from every stain, odour, colour, or any useless thing whatever.
- John 15:3; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 19:8
- Psa. 24:3-6; 51:10; 73:1; Jas. 4:8

Here it would seem that Jesus is making his first reference to the law of Moses. Before an offering could be made it was cut open by the priests (to the heart). It was then carefully examined to determine that it was without blemish before sacrifice took place. From this teaching of the law, we find that Jesus is referring to the cleansing of the inner man. *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”* (Psa. 119:9) See also John 15:3; Hebrews 4:12.

Even Samuel had to learn that *“the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”* (1 Sam. 16:7). This, then, is a lesson in the control of the thoughts of the heart. Whilst the five previous blessings may include things which other people may observe, the heart is that which God alone can observe.

How can the saint see God? This is speaking of the kingdom age when Christ in God Manifestation will be enthroned in Jerusalem to reign over all his subjects. Is not Jesus called Emmanuel, or God with us? (Matt. 1:23). Also we have the prophecy of Isaiah which tells us, *“Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty”* (Isa. 33:17). This will be the fulfilment of the type of Esther 1:14 where it was a great privilege for the bride to behold the king’s face. What a great privilege it will be for us, in his mercy, to behold the king’s face in the future age!

The sixth blessing requires ACHIEVEMENT in God’s way.

Discussion

- The most important aspect of our service before God is to ensure it is from the heart. It is possible to do many of the things listed in these verses without a pure heart, just as the Pharisees did; but if our heart is not right we cannot please God. The word ‘pure’ means free from any form of corruption (Thayer). How do we achieve a pure heart like this? It is by constantly filling our mind with the Word of God so that we have no room for anything else. Read Hebrews 2:1 and note the A.V. margin. The parable Paul is drawing here is of a vessel with a leak in it. If it is not always being filled with water it will soon be empty. Our heart is just the same. To keep evil thoughts out we need to constantly fill it with God’s Word. This means regular prayer, study, reading and meditation every day. If our heart is not filled with God’s Word, other things will fill it very quickly! (Matt. 12:42-45)

Points to Consider

- What are some of the influences that cloud our minds with impure thoughts?
- How do we overcome these and replace them with spiritual concepts?

Suggestion

- Make a determined effort this week to fill your mind with the things of God. Read a section or number of chapters from a Scriptural work/Bible magazine/literature, listen to a Bible study on tape, etc. rather than falling to this world’s entertainments. Next week set yourself another goal. Slowly but surely, if you are motivated and determined enough, you will develop a mind that is more and more pure. (You will only remove the negative if you replace it with something positive.)

“The mind insensibly is affected by the stream of thought passing through it, and it is desirable to have the stream as pure as possible.” (Bro. John Carter)

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”



Wey: “...for it is they who will be recognised as sons of God”



Isa. 9:6; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14



Look up the phrase “God of peace”.

A peacemaker is not a person who avoids contention merely for the sake of peace. Jesus is here speaking of the person who seeks to establish peace on the basis of the gospel. Paul explains this kind of peace in 1 Corinthians 14:33. *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the ecclesias of the saints.”* The margin for ‘confusion’ says tumult, or unquietness which is always the product of an ungodly mind. Paul then continues in Colossians 1:20 with these words, *“...having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...”*. There is therefore only one way that peace may be achieved, and that is by casting off fleshly thinking and personal desire, and adopting a Christlike way of thinking (Jas. 3:13-18).

This has an interesting background in Isaiah 58:4. *“Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.”* The Jews were not being reprimanded for lack of religious observance, but the attitude with which they faced their religious responsibilities. This resulted in diverse ways of thinking which were not the ways of Christ.

True peacemakers are called the ‘children of God’. This takes us back to the time of Noah (Gen. 6:2) when the *“...sons of God saw the daughters of men...”*. In those days there was a great division between the ways of the flesh and the ways of God. There were only eight souls who manifested godly ways and found peace in the ark, and then finally became true children of God in a world cleansed from the effects of sin.

The seventh blessing requires UNITY in God’s way.

Points to Consider

- Look at Romans 12:16; Philippians 2:3.
Think of a situation at school/work where you could be a peacemaker. How would you go about it? How can we be at peace with God?
- Our natural parents require a certain behaviour from us, whilst we are children, so that we might grow to love and respect them and ultimately have an even more reverent love and fear of God as our Heavenly Father. What does God, as our Heavenly Father require of us as His children?

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”

- persecuted** ‘dioko’ (1377) – to pursue and by implication to persecute. Vines: to put to flight or drive away. Thayer: to harass, trouble, molest someone, to be maltreated.
- ? Does this word ‘persecuted’ occur anywhere else in the Bible?
- Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 5:4-10; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:12-19
- revile** ‘oneidizo’ (3679) – to defame, chide, taunt. Thayer: to cast words in one’s teeth. Bullinger: to assail with words of contempt.
- ☞ Matt. 27:44; Mark 15:32; Luke 6:22; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Pet. 4:14
- 📖 NIV: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”
- 📖 JB: “Blessed are you when people abuse you”.
- 📖 Wey: “Blessed are you when they have insulted and persecuted you, and have said every cruel thing about you falsely for my sake.”

This final blessing speaks of suffering and persecution. This has been the experience of many of the saints, and they must be prepared to appreciate that as Christ has suffered for them, they in turn must be prepared to suffer for him. Strange as it may appear, suffering and persecution for the name of Christ can lead to the peace of the previous blessing. An obvious background to this blessing is found in Isaiah 51:8. *“Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law: fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.”* Surely this was the approach taken by Jesus, and is also the one required of his disciples.

It is significant that this blessing is left until last, as Jesus knew that he would eventually be leaving his disciples. They needed to be prepared and strengthened to bear his light in a world of darkness, and carry his cross in a godless and cruel world. Therefore his final blessing concludes in exactly the same way as the first blessing, *“...for their’s is the kingdom of heaven”*. May we endeavour with all our might to apply these principles in our lives that we too might attain the kingdom of heaven.

The eighth blessing requires FAITH AND COURAGE in God’s way.

Discussion

- Do we really consider it a blessing to go through some of the things mentioned in these verses? Compare verses 10-11 with the parallel record in Luke 6:22-23. Do we rejoice and leap for joy when we are persecuted for righteousness’ sake because we know that our reward is great in heaven? This is the attitude that the apostles had (Acts 17:25; 5:41). The apostles were placed on trial, imprisoned and even killed for righteousness’ sake. Today the worst thing that happens to many of us is that we get laughed at by those we work with or go to school with, yet we still find it hard to remember that we are blessed when we go through these things.
- How does persecution help us? James 1:2-3 and Hebrews 12:5-11 might help think of other reasons too. How do we maintain a positive attitude during trial? It is easy to talk about but hard to do!
- When we compare our brief period of suffering to that of the Apostle Paul’s or the Lord Jesus Christ’s (2 Cor. 4:17-18), how could we deny our Lord and submit to the world about us when the reward is so overabounding in grace? Read Romans 8!

Points to Consider

Note that the reward of the kingdom of heaven is only for those who are persecuted for ‘righteousness sake’.

- In what way do we suffer persecution for righteousness sake today?
- What is the purpose of our persecution?
- How does the reward of the ‘kingdom of heaven’ connect with verse 3, and in what way does having a poor spirit link with being persecuted for righteousness sake?

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

- 2 Cor. 1:3-10; Jas. 1:2-4,12; 1 Pet. 1:3-9
- ? Try and think of examples of prophets who suffered and why.

What a wonderful rejoicing there will be for all those who attain the kingdom! The term does not say that the kingdom will be situated in heaven – rather it will be established upon heavenly principles. Its author is the great God who dwells in heaven. The principles of the eight blessings have been designed to apply now – in our day of probation – the result will be experienced in the future when the kingdom is established.

We must realise that if we are called upon to suffer for the kingdom of God’s sake there have been others who have suffered to a far greater extent than we, and Jesus mentions the experience of some of the prophets as an example. (See Heb. 11:36-40.) In another sense we must also be partakers of Christ’s sufferings (1 Pet. 4:13-14).

In the opening verses we noted five mountains in Jesus’ experience. There is yet another upon which he will appear when he returns. This is identified in Daniel 9:16 as “...*Jerusalem, thy holy mountain...*”. This will be the centre of the kingdom of God, and we too have been given an opportunity to appear there with him as “...*kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*” (Rev. 5:10).

The foregoing eight blessings establish for us the stepping stones which may guide us toward that place, and share with Jesus the eternal glories of that final mountain, even “*Jerusalem, my holy mountain*”.

Points to Consider

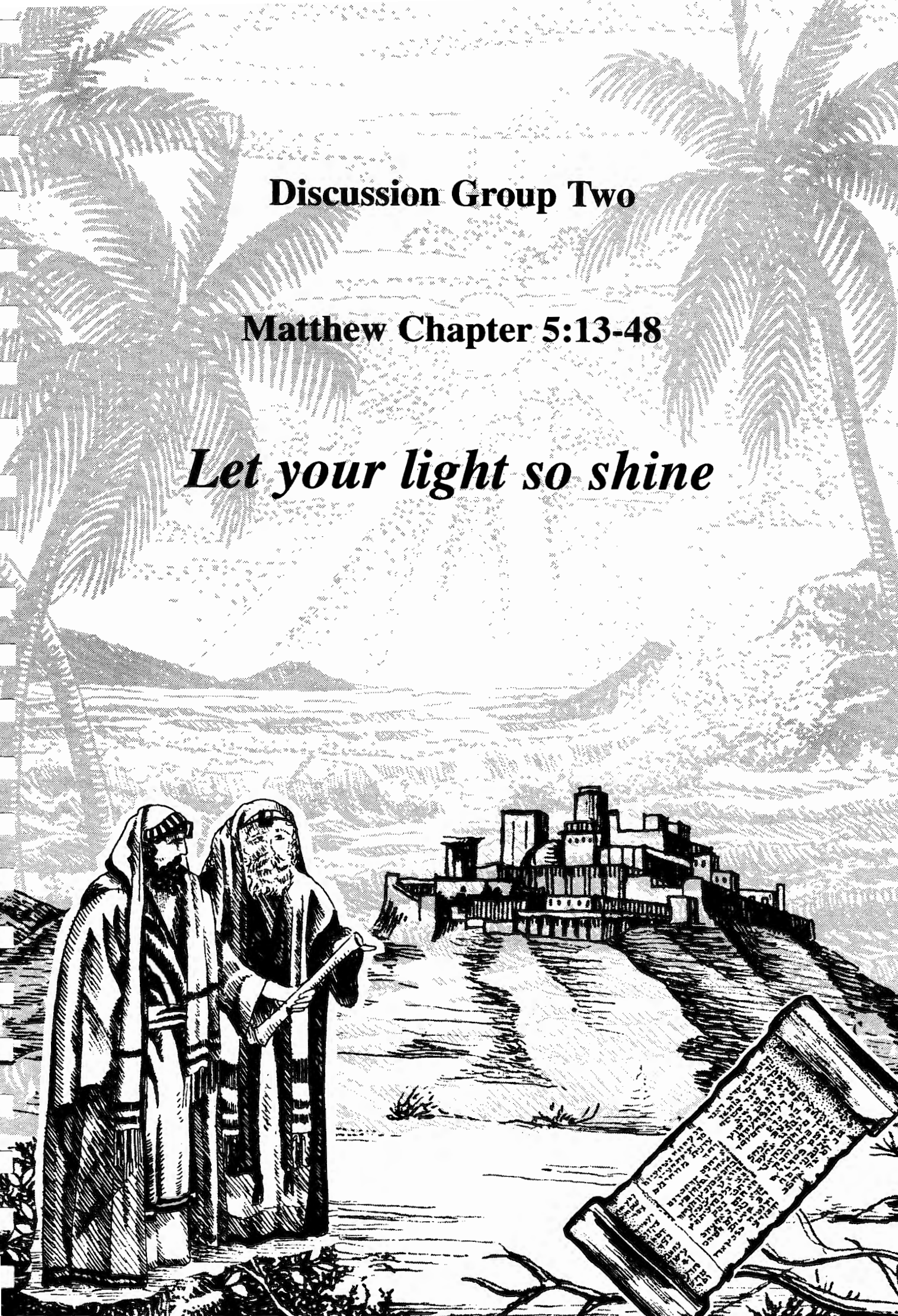
- In what way can we be joyful and exceeding glad? (Think of brethren and sisters perhaps in third world countries and compare yourself with them. Why is it that they are far happier and content despite their circumstances?)
- Are we responsible for having persecuted anyone else in any way?
- Who were these prophets?

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”
James 5:10-11

Discussion Group Two

Matthew Chapter 5:13-48

Let your light so shine



SECTION 2

Matthew 5:13-48 Let your light so shine.

At verse 13 we begin a new section. The eight blessings are now concluded and Jesus commences to illustrate how we might live our lives in practical ways that we might conform to the principles laid down in the beatitudes. The following principles are designed to help us develop characters which may reflect that of the Lord Jesus Christ and to prepare us for a place in His kingdom.

In the remainder of chapter 5 Jesus draws from scenes taken from daily life in his times, which may also relate to the common experience of us all. These scenes are taken from the home, synagogue and general society of the day. If we were to transpose the ecclesia for the synagogue we have the exact setting of our own lives. We then have the home, ecclesia and society about us. Once this is realised our studies will commence to open up some very important principles and lessons which we may all apply personally in the very situations in life that we all experience.

“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.”

salt	‘halas’ (217) – salt! Vines: Being possessed of purifying, perpetuating and antiseptic qualities, salt become emblematic of fidelity and friendship among eastern nations. Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34; Col. 4:6; Occurs 8 times in N.T.
have lost its savour	‘moraino’ (3471) – to become insipid or tasteless and lifeless. In a figurative sense it means to be a simpleton (or a weak, foolish person). Luke 14:34; Rom. 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:20; Occurs 4 times in N.T.
good	‘ischuo’ (2480) – to have or exercise force, to be able, to be of strength. Acts 6:10; 19:16; Phil. 4:13; Jas. 5:16
cast	‘ballo’ (906) – to throw with intensity. Matt. 3:10; 5:25, 29, 30; 6:30; 7:6, 19; 13:42, 50; 18:8, 9
to be trodden under foot	‘katapateo’ (2662) – to trample down or to reject with disdain (contempt or scorn). Matt. 7:6; Luke 8:5; Heb. 10:29 JB: “But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again?”

The Home

Here we are introduced to some scenes around the home which would have been everyday experience in the time of Jesus. It is in the home where the Truth is initially fostered and practiced.

But why would Jesus commence with the allegory of salt?

In Jesus’ day salt was an extremely valuable commodity in every home, so much so that sometimes it was even used as a currency. Its value can be considered from two points of view:

1. **Its practical value:** In every home salt was a necessity because it was used in food preparation as a seasoning agent, as a preservative of food stuffs and other goods, and in medicines as a cleansing and antiseptic agent.
2. **Its spiritual value:** Salt was also a very important commodity in the Law of Moses. It was a major ingredient of the meat offering (Lev. 2:13). It was a major ingredient in the preparation of the incense (Ex. 30:35 mgn). A covenant of salt was a covenant of particular sanctity and durability (Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5).

Therefore it can be seen that salt was very important to every Israelite. However the salt they possessed was of very poor quality, and had to be used very quickly, or stored very carefully so as not to lose potency and became insipid. To be of value the potency of salt had to be preserved at all costs.

To us the Word of God can be like this, and its potency must be preserved. Spiritual salt can do three things for us:

- It can give us spirit instead of insipidity or lukewarmness.
- It can provide incorruptibility instead of corruption.
- It can achieve faithfulness instead of faithlessness.

Therefore we can appreciate the power of Jesus’ words when he said “...if the salt have lost its savour... it is good for nothing”.

The lesson for us is to preserve within our homes and lives the potency of the salt of the Word.

Points to Consider

- How does the action of salt compare with our works in the Truth?
- Can you think of any other way in which salt is used?
- In what way could we lose our savour in the truth?
- What is the warning for us if we do lose our savour?

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”

- light** ‘phos’ (5457) – comes from an obsolete Greek word ‘phao’ which means to shine or make manifest. Vines: to give light.
 ☞ Matt. 4:16; John 1:4, 8, 9; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5
- world** ‘kosmos’ (2889) – an orderly arrangement. The world as the present arrangement of things.
 ☞ Matt. 13:38
- hid** ‘krupto’ (2928) – to conceal particularly by covering; to keep secret. Our English word cryptic comes from this word.
 ☞ Matt. 13:35, 44; 25:25; John 19:38; 1 Tim. 5:25
 ● Deut. 4:5-6; Luke 11:33-36; John 13:34-35; Rom. 13:11-14; 1 John 1:5-7

This verse presents the result of salt being preserved in the home. Light becomes visible. This is very important because light in the home is a sign of life. This becomes the evidence of Christ in one’s life. Did not Jesus say “...*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*”? (John 8:12).

Likewise the figure of a lighted city is very apt. No doubt many of us would have had the experience of travelling at night and seeing the unmistakable lights of a distant city like a welcoming beacon to us. The pure light of Christ cannot be hidden – but in contrast the ways of the world are all in darkness (2 Pet. 1:9).

There is much conjecture about the city of which Jesus was speaking. Traditionally it is said to have been Safed, situated on a hill approximately 890 metres above the Mediterranean and approximately 1,000 metres above the Sea of Galilee. But it also could have been near by Nazareth, Jesus’ home town. However, like the mount itself, the actual identity of the ‘city set on a hill’ is not given. Another city set upon a hill is Jerusalem, and in the age to come the light shall shine forth from Zion’s holy hill and shall be witnessed by the whole world (Isa. 2:2-3).

The most important point is that our light should shine forth in such a way that it cannot be ignored.

Points to Consider

- A light is impossible to hide. Even a small light is very easy to see from a long way off. If we stand out as being different we need to remember that we are being watched by other people. If our actions are not consistent they will notice and it is not our reputation that we are harming, but God’s (see v16). Do we stand out like this? Can people in the world see that we are different?
- Are we always looking for opportunities to tell people about our hope?
- What are the characteristics of light? (Find a Scriptural proof.)
- How do we manifest light? (Eph. 5:8-16; 1 John 1:5-7)
- Do we ever avoid situations that provide an opportunity for us to let our light shine? Think of a specific situation where you have allowed your light to be hid. How should you have acted and how will you now act in the future?
- In what way can we ensure our light continues to shine?

The first thing that God created was light. He did this by dividing the light from the darkness. Therefore we learn light and darkness or truth and error cannot be mixed (2 Cor. 6:14). So in being the light of the world the two cannot be compromised together. The world must be able to see clearly that we are displaying characteristics of our Heavenly Father (which is the doctrine on God-manifestation).

“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. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

- light** ‘kaio’ (2545) – to set on fire, to kindle or to consume.
☞ Luke 12:35; John 5:35; Rev. 4:5
- candle** ‘luchnos’ (3088) – a portable lamp or other illuminator. Vines: a hand lamp fed with oil.
☞ Matt. 6:22; Luke 8:16; 12:35; John 5:35; Rev. 21:23; 22:5
- bushel** ‘modios’ (3426) – Vines: a dry measure. It was a measure commonly used in commerce, particularly in the trading of various grains.
☞ Mark 4:21; Luke 11:33; Only used 3 times in N.T.
📖 JB: “No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub”
📖 NEB: “When a lamp is lit, it is not put under a meal-tub”
- candlestick** ‘luchnia’ (3087) – a lampstand.
☞ Heb. 9:2; Rev. 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1, 5
- giveth light** ‘lampo’ (2989) – to beam or radiate brilliance; to shine.
☞ Matt. 5:15, 16; 17:2; Luke 17:24; 2 Cor. 4:6
- good** ‘kalos’ (2570) – beautiful, valuable or virtuous, honest. Thayer: Applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be pleasing.
☞ Matt. 3:10; 7:17, 18, 19; 26:10; Luke 14:34; John 10:32; 2 Cor. 13:7; Gal. 6:9; Tit. 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; Jas. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:12
- works** ‘ergon’ (2041) – to toil in effort or occupation; an act or deed. Vines: it can relate to work or employment.
☞ Matt. 11:2; 23:3, 5; 26:10; Luke 24:19; John 6:28, 29; John 14:10-12; Acts 9:36; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10; 6:18; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 10:24
- glorify** ‘doxazo’ (1392) – to render or esteem glorious (in a wide application). Vines: to ascribe honour to God, acknowledging Him as to His being, attributes and acts.
☞ Matt. 9:8; 15:31; Luke 18:43; John 15:8; 1 Pet. 2:12; 4:11, 14, 16

By contrast these verses depict a situation where the light of the Word does not sufficiently illuminate a household. A Galilean household was built without windows, and therefore some form of lighting was an absolute necessity. In a typical home this lighting was provided by a three branched lampstand. Likewise the tabernacle of old was completely windowless, but was illuminated by a seven branched lampstand which provided a beautiful golden light typifying the Word of God.

But should this light be covered over? It would be illogical to light a candle and then put it under a bushel. The bushel (or ‘modios’) was a container used to measure out wheat, grain, or similar items of commerce. Hence we have a figure warning us not to let our light become overshadowed by other things such as business. Mark 4:21 adds an additional factor to this figure. *“Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?”*. The bed is a symbol of laziness or pleasure and we cannot use the excuse of either business, laziness or pleasure for the failure of our light shining forth for all to see.

The candle is also a very important figure. It is from the Greek word ‘luchnos’ meaning a portable illuminator. We also have our portable illuminators in the form of our Bible. We dare not go without our Bible unless we be found in darkness. As the wise man says, *“The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out”* (Prov. 13:9).

The neglect of our light may ultimately lead to the everlasting darkness of death.

Points to Consider

- What other things could cause our light to be hidden? What is the solution if something is hiding our light?
- What should our motivation for serving God be? Contrast this to the attitude of most people in the world today and even most other religions.
- Which of the characteristics listed in verses 3-12 are essential for developing the kind of attitude described here?
- What are your reasons for preaching the gospel to others?

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

Think ‘nomizo’ (3543) – to deem or regard. Vines: to suppose; this word also signifies to practice a custom. Thayer: to follow custom or usage.

☞ Matt. 10:34; 20:10; Acts 16:27; 1 Tim. 6:5

destroy ‘kataluo’ (2647) – to loosen down and disintegrate, to demolish, to overthrow. Vines: it is an intensive word and means to destroy utterly. To undo.

☞ Matt. 24:2; 26:61; Acts 5:38, 39; 6:14

law ‘nomos’ (3551) – the law especially the Law of Moses.

☞ Matt. 7:12; 11:13; 23:23; Luke 2:22-24; 10:26

fulfil ‘pleroo’ (4137) –to accomplish, complete. He is the body to the shadow.

The Synagogue

The short section which deals with scenes which Jesus takes from around the home introduces the longest sub-section in the Discourse on the Mount. Verses 17-37 introduces scenes which could have taken place in the Synagogue. Whilst Jesus does not specifically mention the Synagogue by name, he is nevertheless dealing with many aspects of the Law of Moses which at the time were obviously not in the hearts of those who opposed Jesus. To them the law was conveniently kept in the dusty scrolls of the Synagogue.

In this section Jesus demonstrates how the Word of God should be a vibrant motivating force in the life of each disciple. It is a lesson to us that the Truth must mean something far more than merely conforming to the way of life required by the ecclesia. **On the contrary, the whole spirit behind the teaching of the Word of God should be fully manifest in every aspect of our lives.**

Jesus was emphatic in his statement that “...*I am not come to destroy the law...*”. Rather his mission was to ‘fulfil’ the law. The term comes from the Greek word ‘pleroo’ which means ‘to complete’. In other words he was going to demonstrate the correct relationship which the law bore towards the kingdom of God. The law was not to be fulfilled until all the principles of the gospel were completed in the kingdom of God. For example, in Mark 12:29-31 where Jesus speaks of the two great commandments, love of God and love of one’s neighbour he shows how closely the principles of the law and gospel are bound together: Mark 12:29-30 quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Mark 12:31 quotes Leviticus 19:18.

In turn, these two sources embody the two main principles of the ten commandments. A love of God and a love of one’s neighbour. Self is never mentioned.

This teaches that the Word of God requires careful examination.

Points to Consider

- Note the phrase “*I am come*” and compare it with Psalm 40:7-8. What did Christ come to do?
- Can you as a young person see the spirit behind the ecclesial standards you are asked to fulfil or do you see them as old rules made to be broken to keep up with the times? Make up a list of your ecclesial standards and see if you can understand the principle behind them.
- Are your standards at ecclesial activities consistent with the way you act, speak and dress elsewhere?
- Is it possible to live the law today without living the spirit of the law? How?
- They had lost the true spirit of the law and so many of the people were only concerned with the ‘outward appearance’, but what is God interested in? Find some quotes to support your answer.

“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.”

- verily** ‘amen’ (281) – It comes from the Hebrew word ‘amen’ which means sure or faithfulness. It conveys the idea of trustworthiness.
Used some 78 times by our Lord.
- pass** ‘parerchomai’ (3928) – to go away. Vines: to go by.
☞ Matt. 8:28; 14:15; 24:34, 35; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:1
- jot** ‘iota’ (2503) – Thayer: equivalent to the minutest part.
☞ Only used here.
- tittle** ‘keraia’ (2762) – something horn-like, especially the apex for a Hebrew letter. Thayer: “not even the minutest part of the law shall perish”.
☞ Luke 16:17; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.
- in no wise** ‘ou me’ (3364) – it is a double negative strengthening the denial; not at all.
☞ Matt. 5:20, 26; 10:42
- fulfilled** ‘ginomai’ (1096) – to cause to be or come into being, to accomplish. Vines: to take place.
☞ Isa. 51:6; 65:15-19; Psa. 102:25-27; Matt. 24:34-35
📖 JB: “not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the law until its purpose is achieved”

It is easy to come to the opinion that the law was to be abandoned by Christ, and whilst it is true that certain ceremonial rituals were to be done away with, **the true spirit of the law was to remain**. Bro. Roberts writes, “...*General sentiment... apparently being unaware, or at all events without giving due weight to the fact, that Christ was a zealous upholder of the Law of Moses... declaring with emphasis that ‘that not one jot or one tittle’ would pass from the law till all was fulfilled...*” (Preface to Law of Moses, 1st edition).

Jesus now illustrates how completely the law would be fulfilled – to the last jot and tittle:

- Jot:** The 10th and smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Pronounced as yod, and written thus י – just like a little comma, and to our eyes easily missed.
- Title:** An ornamental curl, or curve to a letter which would distinguish it from another similar letter. The word comes from the Greek ‘keras’, meaning a hair.

With such attention to detail Jesus was demonstrating how completely the law was to be fulfilled. But in Old Testament times the law was mainly observed on the basis of external things. **Jesus was to go beyond that and closely examine the heart**. The emphasis was now not on the ritual washings, but the cleansing of the heart. Rather than the sacrifice of bulls and goats, the sacrifice of the evil impulses of human nature was now required. Judgment was not on the basis of the outward act, but on the inner thoughts which govern the outward act.

In this verse is the first use of one of Jesus’ key phrases, “*Verily I say unto you...*”. This phrase is used five times in Matthew 5-7, and literally translated means ‘Amen’, or something firm, trustworthy and sure. Jesus is the only one who uses this term in the New Testament. He describes himself as the ‘Amen’ in Revelation 3:14.

At this stage in our studies we are being prepared to closely examine our own inner thoughts and motives, the law of our hearts.

Bible Marking Exercise

- Colour in the phrase “*I say unto you...*” throughout Matthew 5-7.

“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.”

shall break ‘luo’ (3089) – to loosen, relax, break up, dissolve.

☞ John 2:19; 7:23; 10:35

☛ Matt. 23:2-3; Jas. 1:22-25

This verse teaches the importance of the relationship between our appreciation of the Word of God, and the kingdom of heaven. Twice in this verse the ‘kingdom’ and the ‘commandments’ are shown as being closely related to each other. This emphasises their close connection. How can we attain to the kingdom without fully appreciating what the commandments are teaching us? Paul teaches that *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...”* (2 Tim. 3:16).

Therefore we must be able to understand what God’s commandments are teaching in their entirety. This is what Jesus now proceeds to do. He is teaching his disciples in such a way that they might not only fully understand the letter of the law, but more importantly understand its spirit also.

An acceptable understanding of God’s Word is a most important requirement if we are to be found worthy of God’s kingdom.

Points to Consider

- Many today declare that the law is no longer binding and therefore only the commandments of Christ are to be followed. Does this mean that what Jesus taught is different to what the Law of Moses was teaching as it relates to daily life?
- Are we responsible for attempting to water down some of the principles upheld by pioneering brethren in days gone by in order to make our service simpler or move up to date?



“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.”

righteousness (1343) – See verse 6

shall exceed ‘perisseuo’ (4052) – to superabound, be in excess, excel, increase.
 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 8:7; Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:1, 10
 Matt. 23:2-3; Rom. 3:21-26; Phil. 3:9

Again Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven, but now he adds another factor which is necessary before it can be attained – **righteousness**. Compare Isaiah 60:20-21. Now Jesus commences to draw a picture between the righteousness God requires and the supposed righteousness he saw around him. We would term it self-righteousness. An illustration is given of two classes of men who were recognised for righteousness in Jesus’ day:

The Pharisees: They were the Rabbinical class, the professional jurists and lawyers of their day. They devoted their time to the study and interpretation of the law from every possible angle.

The Scribes: It was their duty to record the findings of the Rabbis and interpret them to the common people. They had detailed knowledge of the Scriptures and were diligent in their work.

Make no mistake, both classes of men were experts in the Scriptures and among them there was no neglect of the Word, or attraction to idolatry. These were righteous men – **but** – Jesus says his disciples must ‘exceed’ the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Paul, the ex-Pharisee illustrated exactly what Jesus meant. Read carefully Romans 10:2-3; Philipians 3:4-11.

So Paul lays bare the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It was a righteousness composed of the zeal of self-gratification, or self-righteousness. But it was in ignorance of the real issues of God’s righteousness, and these were the people to whom the nation looked for spiritual guidance. They continually exercised their minds in the outward ritual with its many purifyings and hair-splittings over minor issues, but as Jesus said later they “...*have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith...*” (Matt. 23:23).

There may possible be a little bit of the Pharisee in each of us that needs to be taken away.

Points to Consider

- Why do our beliefs differ from other churches?
- How can we avoid making the same mistake as them?

Brain Teaser

- How can two brethren come to the same meeting both dressed in respectable suits yet one is glorifying self and the other is glorifying his great King in the heavens? What does God see which may please or displease Him?



“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:”

<u>them of old time</u>	‘archaios’ (744) – original or ancient. Vines: a good while ago or in our speech, “what was said in the old days”. This is a reference to the contemporaries of Moses; that is, Jesus is contrasting what was said in scribal tradition which had watered down the Law of Moses. Used 3 times in this discourse; Matt. 5:27, 33; Acts 15:7, 21
<u>in danger of</u>	‘enochos’ (1777) – from another Greek word which means ‘to hold a grudge’. To be liable or subject to. Vines: bound under obligation. Used 4 times in this discourse; v22; Mark 3:29; 14:64
<u>judgment</u>	‘krisis’ (2920) – a decision or by extension a tribunal. Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 1 Tim. 5:24 Wey: “You have heard that it was said to the ancients” Ex. 20:13; 21:12; Deut. 5:17

We are now introduced to three sub-sections within the overall idea of the Synagogue. There is, in effect, three courtroom scenes wherein Jesus, the righteous judge, examines these fastidious keepers of the law in an attempt to establish the true meaning of righteousness. Was it merely the keeping of the technical commandments, or did it require something else? In turn Jesus examines the crimes of murder, adultery and swearing falsely.

The Trial of Murder

The Scribes and Pharisees were clearly aware of the sixth commandment, “*Thou shalt not kill*” (Ex. 20:13). They also knew that the penalty for murder was death (Ex. 21:12). But was Jesus merely reminding them of the Law of Moses, or was there a deeper meaning to Jesus’ words? The first murder was when Cain killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8-12). There was no-one present to witness that murder except God who was able to see far more than the physical act and to judge upon the motive that was in Cain’s heart. That motive had been anger (Gen. 4:5).

The law of Christ is concerned with the seed or motive before the fruit or act is made manifest. (This is like salt, you cannot see it but eventually you know its there!)

We must remember that God can see into the human heart where all sin begins.

Bible Marking Exercise

- Colour in the phrase, “*Ye have heard....*” throughout Matthew 5-7.

“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.”

is angry

‘orgizo’ (3710) – to provoke or enrage.

Matt. 18:34; Luke 15:28; Eph. 4:26

Prov. 16:32

without a cause

‘eike’ (1500) – idly, without reason, in vain. Vines: to no purpose. Thayer: inconsiderately. Bullinger: without plan or purpose. Many of the reliable translations have left this phrase out of the narrative.

Raca

‘rhaka’ (4469) – from the Chaldean language (see Strongs 7386: ‘reyq’) empty or worthless.

Judg. 9:4; 11:3; Prov. 12:11; 28:19

It is like saying that someone who God has called is brainless and an idiot.

Jas. 3:9

council

‘sunedrion’ (4892) – a joint session, specially refers to the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Matt. 26:59

fool

‘moros’ (3474) – insulting a man’s integrity and character, whilst Raca is a phrase of contempt.

Rotherham: “Rebel”

Matt. 23:17, 19; 25:2, 3, 8

hell

‘gehenna’ (1067)

Matt. 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33

Roth: “every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment”.

Jesus now commences to probe deeply into the human heart, and begins to devastatingly analyse all those thoughts and desires which can culminate in human sin. In this case we find that he is dealing with the development of a manslayer, and shows that it is not just the final act of slaying which makes one guilty, but also the unlawful reasoning of the human heart which leads up to it.

For this reason he uses another key phrase which occurs eight times in Matthew 5, “*But I say unto you...*”. In using this phrase Jesus is showing that his reasoning is now going deeper than their technical interpretation of the commandment “*Thou shalt not kill*”. The Law of Moses had laid the basis for this as Leviticus 19:17-18 clearly shows. It is not hate, but love that we must entertain within our hearts towards our neighbour.

Therefore Jesus examines a three-fold process of the heart which may be directed towards one’s neighbour before an act of physical violence is used. Each of these is wrong.

1. **Anger:** This is the opposite of love. The Greek word ‘orgizo’ means to become provoked or enraged. This is a loss of self control, or to become needlessly angry. Such malice in the human heart is like leaven, and so it continues to froth and bubble until the problem becomes magnified beyond its original proportion. This leads to the second section of Jesus’ analysis.
2. **To call one’s brother Raca:** From the Greek ‘Rhoka’ – to be empty or worthless. One’s tongue is now out of control, and one’s inner feelings are being expressed in an outward and hurtful form. If we find ourselves in this situation, perhaps we should pause and consider that such words might even be a reflection of our own hearts. Note there are no apparent witnesses to this accusation Jesus illustrates, but the law allowed for such instances, and if such an accusation was made without witnesses, the judges of the nation were required to make a decision (Deut. 19:18-19). This is what Jesus meant when he said the accuser would be in danger of the council.
3. **To call one’s brother a fool:** Greek ‘moros’ (English ‘moron’) meaning dull, stupid, heedless, a blockhead. Now unbridled emotion has gone even further. The law may have said “*Thou shalt not kill*”, but Jesus is pointing out that such angry accusations against our brother really amount to character assassination! Such accusations often have a lasting and detrimental effect upon the person to whom they are directed. Therefore, as in the previous illustration, such an action is deserving of judgment. In this case it may even be the more serious issue of divine judgment, which is the lesson implied by ‘hell-fire’. There is a great Judge before whom we all must stand who has power over life and death (Matt. 10:28). The fires of hell, or gehenna, refer to the continually burning fires outside the Jerusalem walls, where the refuse of the city was consumed. Into these fires were cast the bodies of condemned murderers.

On the day of judgment we may be required to answer for any ill will we have borne towards our brother.

Points to Consider

- How can we avoid making such rash statements when we may find ourselves in 'heated' situations? (Find a Scriptural proof.)
- How might you go about preventing the heated situation in the first place?
- Look at examples in Scripture of men and women who did not practise self-control and the consequences they suffered.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

gift ‘doron’ (1435) – a present, sacrifice or offering.
 ☞ Matt. 8:4; Luke 21:1, 4; Heb. 5:1; 11:4

ought ‘tis’ (5100) – something.
 ☞ Matt. 21:3

☛ Mark 11:25

☞ Wey: “you remember that your brother has a grievance against you”

☛ 1 Cor. 11:28-29; Prov. 21:27

go thy way ‘hupago’ (5217) – to withdraw or retire (as if sinking out of sight). Vines: to go away slowly or to withdraw oneself, often with the idea of going without noise or notice.
 ☞ Matt. 8:4; 18:15; Mark 10:21

reconciled ‘diallasso’ (1259) – Vines: to effect an alteration. Bullinger: to change one’s own feelings towards another, so that he changes his. Only used here.
 Note one occurrence in the Greek Old Testament: Judg. 19:3
 ☛ 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Psa. 66:13-18

These two verses demonstrate that if one is guilty of such thoughts towards another person, that there is a way for the guilt to be erased before it is brought to judgment. It is a way that may require considerable humiliation and possibly considerable courage, but as Jesus points out one cannot acceptably approach God unless an attempt is made to reconcile the wrong in a godly manner.

Therefore Jesus speaks of bringing one’s gift to the altar, the lesson being that the altar can be approached only in an acceptable fashion, and not as Cain the manslayer who approached only with hate in his heart.

In Old Testament times there had only been the Mosaic altar, which was often approached with a purely outward show, but now there is Christ the anti-typical altar (Heb. 13:10), who must be approached in purity of heart, and not after the way of Cain. To ensure that we approach our altar in the correct frame of mind we must be prepared to reconcile with **the one that we have wronged**, if this is the case. Reconcile means to ‘change thoroughly’ from the Greek ‘diallasso’. This may prove to be a very searching lesson in human relationships.

This means that before we approach God – or leave our gift on the altar – we must seek out the one against whom we may have entertained wrong thoughts, or intentions, and make a reconciliation. This may mean an apology, or coming to some agreement over differences that are seen to exist. In this way guilt can be erased and then the defendant at the court of murder will have no charge to answer, because in His mercy God has shown the way whereby sins may be forgiven.

Let us recognise our sins and seek forgiveness as soon as possible.

Points to Consider

- If we have a disagreement with someone we need to resolve it. We cannot love God and at the same time hate our brother (1 John 3:10). Think of examples in Scripture of people who acted in the correct way to resolve their differences. Do we always do this in the ecclesia today?
- What is Paul’s advice concerning resolving disputes or disagreements immediately?

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, while 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.”

adversary

‘antidikos’ (476) – an opponent in a lawsuit.



Luke 12:58; 18:3; 1 Pet. 5:8; Only used 5 times.

We have the picture of a man who has a long-standing debt and the man he owes the money to decides to sue for complete recovery of what he is owed.

quickly

‘tachu’ (5035) – without delay.



Psa. 130:3-4; 103:10



RSV: “Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.”

One must always be ready to reveal the spirit of humility which admits wrong doing with a view to complete restoration.

Here Jesus gives an example of the importance of seeking early forgiveness. In this we are reminded of the words of the prophet, “*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*” (Isa. 55:6). Jesus is now applying the same principle by telling us to “*...agree with thine adversary quickly...*”. This implies a recognition of our own faults (not the faults of others) as soon as we possibly can.

If we are not prepared to do this, then we must be prepared to recognise that we may have to stand in judgment because of our action – or lack of action! Following judgment we are cast into prison. Prison is symbolic of the sentence of death, the result of unrepentant sin.

Let us be prepared to recognise the seriousness of our own sinful actions.

Points to Consider

- Do we insist we are right without giving our adversary an opportunity to express his view? (If we believe we are right often it is better to agree with them to keep the peace than to be too proud to accept defeat.)
- How do we react when we are clearly at fault?
- Look at the example Jesus showed in Isaiah 53. Because of his disposition he was “*...taken from prison and from judgment...*” and released from his bondage (Isa. 61:1-3).

“Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”



JB: “I tell you solemnly, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.”



Job 4:8; Gal. 6:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:5-7

What we sow is what we reap. Let us examine our motives and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

In verse 26 the sentence for unrepentant sin is prison. The term of the sentence is “...till thou has paid the uttermost farthing”. How would we ever be able to pay a sentence like that? The terms of an imprisonment like that imply that there would never be a release. If we be found guilty of an attempt on the life of another, even though it may only have been within our own mental desire, then our own lives may be in forfeit. Remember Daniel 12:2, “*Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*”

Here we conclude Jesus’ first illustration of what our own trial might be like, and upon which we may be called to answer before we are granted an invitation to enter the kingdom of heaven. In so doing Jesus has established two major points:

1. By acknowledging our sins and our selfless actions, by showing humility and seeking to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace and monitoring the thoughts of our hearts, we can enhance our opportunity of eternal life.
2. Jesus logically demonstrates that rather than dealing with the effect of sin, we should attempt to deal with the cause – where it all begins, in the human heart.

The great lesson is to control the human heart through the love of God and His Word.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:”

commit adultery ‘moicheuo’ (3431) – to have unlawful intimate physical contact with another’s marriage partner.
 Matt. 19:18; Rom. 13:9

The Law of Moses was concerned way beyond mere external acts. It penetrated deep like the sword of the spirit to the inner motives of the heart. The Jews believed that to overcome lustful desire they could legally exchange their wife for the new object of their affection.

Every single thought is the seed of a fruit or a potential action. To avoid corrupt fruit the seed or thought must be removed at the source.

We now commence another sub-section which also resembles a trial in the Synagogue. In the previous sub-section Jesus has demonstrated how in certain circumstances it is most difficult to control the human heart. One characteristic we must learn to leave behind before we are found worthy of the kingdom is **hate**. Now Jesus moves into an area which may be even more difficult to control, **lust**. It is hard to say which is the more difficult of these two emotions. Perhaps it varies with individuals, but neither have a place in the thinking of the true disciple.

The Trial of Adultery

As in the trial for murder Jesus again prefaces his illustration with the words *“Ye have heard that it was said...”*. We find that this trial is a logical progression from the trial of the manslayer. The first trial was based on the sixth commandment, *“Thou shalt not kill”*. Now we have an illustration based on the seventh commandment, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”*. Maybe in this case we can also see a relationship to the eighth and tenth commandments as well which respectively teach *“Thou shalt not steal”*, and *“Thou shalt not covet”*.

There is an important relationship between all God’s commandments.

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

looketh ‘blepo’ (991)
 ☞ Luke 9:62; Acts 1:9

to lust after ‘epithumeo’ (1937) – to long for, to covet.
 ☞ Acts 20:33; Rom. 7:7; 1 Cor. 10:6; Jas. 4:2

already ‘ede’ (2235) – even now, by this time. This is the key point. Without making any move whatsoever, a man in such a situation has been convicted by the unlawful lust of his heart!
 ☞ 2 Sam. 11:2; Psa. 51:10; Prov. 4:23; 6:25

When Jesus introduced his previous trial in verse 21, it was also prefaced by the phrase “...of old time...”. This trial is now prefaced by the same words (v.27). Once again we are led to understand that Jesus is taking us back to the Edenic standard. In the beginning the principle had been established that when a man and woman came together it was only as man and wife, a fact that was emphasised by the divine statement that they would be ‘one flesh’ (Gen. 2:24). This principle was not breached until Lamech boastfully took unto himself two wives (Gen. 4:19).

Jesus now demonstrates that adultery is a travesty of the divine standard, and like his previous example shows that the sin goes beyond the mere physical contact. This can be demonstrated in understanding the Greek word for ‘looketh’. It is from the Greek ‘blepo’ meaning not only to look in the physical sense, but to keep on looking even though nothing is seen, ie. mental contemplation. Likewise ‘lust’ which comes from the Greek ‘epithumso’ means to set one’s heart upon.

Jesus is conveying the idea of setting one’s desires deliberately upon something which is unlawful or forbidden, thereby again establishing the foundation for sin, and the true principles of discipleship are neglected.

We must learn to keep a tight reign on the thoughts of the heart.

Points to Consider

- The world today is constantly trying to promote this kind of thing through its books, newspapers, magazines, movies, TV and the internet. This is why these things are so dangerous. Although we may think we know what is right, and these things don’t effect us, everything we see or read has an impact on our mind, even if we don’t realise it. All the world’s entertainments reflect their distorted and ungodly morals. As disciples of Christ we should be avoiding these things completely even if they seem harmless, because they **do** effect our mind although we may not realise (1 Cor. 15:33). Instead we need to fill our mind with the things of God (Phil. 4:8).
- How do you think God feels if we idolise people in the world like sports stars, actors, singers etc? We are aware that most of these people live a lifestyle which is abhorrent to God. Read Romans 1:32.
- Think of examples in Scripture who ignored God’s command and reaped the consequences of such an action, for example David’s sin with Bathsheba. Compare this with the example of Joseph in Genesis 39:7-12 (Jas. 4:7).
- Who was the very first person in Scripture who gave way to the lust of the flesh, eyes and pride of life?
- Are we guilty of thoughts that we may dwell on, that are as abhorrent as the action itself?

Brain Teaser

Consider the following practices as examples:

- Seeing the last video or movie.
- Following worldly fashion which is far from modest.
- Going to disco or night club and drinking it up.

Is the **contemplation** of these things sin, even though you never put the thought into action? What can be done? See verses 29-30.

“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. 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.”

- offend** ‘skandalizo’ (4624) – to entrap or snare and therefore to entice to sin, to cause to stumble. That which leads you personally astray.
 ☞ Matt. 18:6-9; Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 8:13
- pluck** ‘exaireo’ (1807) – to tear out. Vines: with determination and promptitude, we are to strike at the root of unholy inclinations, ridding ourselves of whatever would stimulate them.
 The hand is to be used constructively, to utterly remove that which will inflame the wrong desires.
 ☞ Matt. 18:9; Acts 7:10
- cast** ‘ballo’ (906) – to throw, thrust or hurl. Thayer: to throw with a purpose.
 ☞ Matt. 13:42; 21:21; 1 John 4:18
- profitable** ‘sumphero’ (4851) – an advantage, expedient.
 ☞ John 11:50; Acts 20:20; 1 Cor. 12:7
- hell** ‘gehenna’ (1067) – see verse 22
- cut it off** ‘ekopto’ (1581) – to cut and strike off with a blow.
 ☞ Matt. 3:10; 18:8
 Drastic action is required to overcome the thought and act.
 ☞ Rom. 8:13; 13:13-14; Gal. 5:24; Col. 3:2, 5

These two verses can be considered together, as they are a virtual repetition one of the other, and possess an identical summary which emphasises the importance of the principle being considered. The difference between these verses lies in the fact that one deals with the eye and the other with the hand.

In both cases it is either the ‘right eye’ or ‘right hand’, just as it is the ‘right cheek’ in verse 39. This is symbolic of a leading or controlling member of the body. (Hand = Action; Eye = Desire.)

The Eye: The usual Greek word for vision and perception, ‘ophthalmos’. The sin of adultery can begin with the eye. This is where the object of the lust is first conceived and so Jesus says, remove the eye. However, a man with one eye can be just as guilty of lust as a man with two eyes. What does Jesus mean? Obviously he is not talking about some form of self mutilation as is sometimes taught by heathens, or some extreme Christian groups. This is confirmed by Paul in Colossians 2:23 (RSV).

Jesus is really teaching that the real cause of this wrong desire must be removed. This may be a certain circumstance or association that may need to be avoided – or we may need to remove ourselves from the source of temptation, even as Joseph had fled from Potiphar’s wife. If this is not done it may lead to the next step.

The Hand: Greek ‘cheir’, that which grasps. Note the progression of action – the eye sees, but the hand grasps what the eye sees.

The use of the hand means that the perception of the eye has gone a stage further, and because it was unchecked the whole body becomes involved in sin and can be destroyed in hell.

The use of hell, or gehenna, is interesting because this was the valley where such Kings as Asa, Josiah and Hezekiah destroyed the images of idolatry to which God’s people had been joined at various times in their history. The lustful speculation of the human heart is but another form of idolatry which can lead to the same results that were suffered by God’s wayward people of former years.

The evil passions of the human heart which are allowed to run free can lead to a stage of sinfulness that results in everlasting death.

Points to Consider

- If we have a problem in our life we must remove it completely. This is why it is so important to avoid the worldly influences mentioned in the previous verses. If we know that we have a problem, are we prepared to remove it from our life as completely as Christ tells us we should?
- We can see from the symbols used in this verse that to remove these problems in our life will cause pain and will mean making big sacrifices from the service of God. Are we prepared to do this or do we only serve God when it is easy? Ask yourself what are some of the bad habits that I have removed from my life recently. What should I be removing?
- When we are baptised we should crucify the flesh, how does that fit in with these verses?
- Are we guilty of offending our brother because of our own foolish actions? (Prov. 6:16-19)

“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 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.”

shall put away ‘apoluo’ (630) – to free fully, send away, divorce.
 ☞ Matt. 1:19; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2; Luke 16:18

writing of divorcement ‘apostasion’ (647) – It literally means a standing from. Think of a scene where two children cannot get on and they turn their backs to each other and stand away from each other signifying they were no longer friends and reconciliation was not wanted!
 ☞ Matt. 19:7; Mark 10:4; Only occurs 3 times.
 ⚡ Gen. 2:21-25; Mal. 2:11-16; 1 Cor. 7:11

saving ‘parektos’ (3924) – besides, except.
 ☞ Acts 26:29; 2 Cor 11:28; Only occurs 3 times.

fornication ‘porneia’ (4202) – to indulge in unlawful lust either adultery or incest.
 ☞ Mark 7:21; Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19

The fact that Jesus commences this verse with “*It hath been said...*” is important. This expression is used to highlight the liberal application of a section of the law which was being made by the scribes and Pharisees, when in so many other areas they were so fastidious about the correct application of the law. The fact is they were guilty of manipulating the law to suit themselves.

In New Testament times the vast majority of the Rabbinical class allowed the ‘putting away’ of one’s marriage partner for almost any reason at all, whereas the law in Deuteronomy 24:1 only allowed a ‘putting away’ for the most limited of reasons and subject to strict regulation. But this strict regulation in the law had been liberalised by the incorrect thinking of the scribes and Pharisees, because this was what they wanted!

They wanted to practice adultery – only it wasn’t called adultery because they thought that they could cover it by a legal interpretation. But in the heart it remains the same and that is where God always looks, despite the interpretations we might invent to cover the outward act.

We must take care with God’s Word, and not wrest it to suit our own thinking. (Psa. 56:5; 2 Pet. 3:16)

“*But I say unto you...*”. This is an expression which Jesus now uses four times. This reveals that he is giving his explanation in contrast to the explanation of the scribes and Pharisees. He is therefore able to place this misconception which they had created in its correct setting. To do this he quotes from the section of the law which had been misused. Compare Deuteronomy 24:1.

It can be seen that only part of this verse is being used to support the ‘putting away’ which is what divorce really means. But this law was only allowing for a ‘putting away’ if there had been a case of extreme unfaithfulness in the marriage relationship. Even then it does not say that a divorce must take place. Jesus’ use of this verse places the real motives of these people under very close scrutiny indeed.

Bro. L.G. Sargeant in *The Teaching of the Master* (page 132) has this to say. “*The law in Deuteronomy 24:1 regulated morals by requiring a legal process of divorce, but even this was a concession to the standards of the time which fell below the standard required in the account of creation. Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12.*” Note that the Jerusalem Bible in Matthew 19:8 translates ‘hardness’ as unteachableness of heart.

This ‘hardness’, or ‘unteachableness’ had led to a corruption of godly standards, and Bro. Sargeant continues, “*Jesus strips the practice of bare pretence: those who re-marry during the former partner’s lifetime are morally adulterers*”.

Surely, if the true principles of God are honestly followed, the motives which lead to adultery or divorce and many other sins will cease to exist. As disciples, learners, or those who would follow the way to the kingdom, we must learn to fully appreciate the righteousness of all the divine principles that Jesus is teaching in all the circumstances of our lives.

The way of Christ requires purity and uprightness, and continuous seeking for reconciliation.

Points to Consider

- One husband or wife for life is what God instructed. This is very different to the world's attitude now, where marriage is not even considered necessary, and a third of marriages do not last. When we look at the world's attitude and the problems it leads to, we can see very clearly that God's way is best. Discuss the reasons why.
- Why does Jesus use the words, "*It hath been said...*", as opposed to "*Ye have heard...*", in this instance? What does this mean to you personally?
- Before making a marriage commitment, one must be totally convinced of its seriousness and of the principles governing such a covenant before God. Whilst you may still be very young and not considering marriage, it is for your own future benefit that you are convinced now that the qualities you desire in a husband or wife are acceptable before our Heavenly Father.

Brain Teaser

- Why did **God** separate from Israel but made provision to have her back (Jer. 3:1), yet He gave a law to Israel that if they put away their wife they could **not** have her back (Deut. 24:2-4)?

As young people with the potential to marry, we have some very helpful and positive advice tucked away in these sayings of our Lord and bridegroom. In any relationship between people, and none is closer than male and female in Christ, let us learn to curb anger (v22). Let us refrain from calling our spouse names and shouting things which we may regret when the heat of the moment has gone (v22). Let us make every effort to be reconciled with the one we have offended, humility is desperately needed (v23-25). Be determined to make up as quickly as possible so that nothing festers (v25). Keep your eyes on the one you love and always think of his/her "good" qualities (v28-30). Always do what you can to help your spouse fulfil his/her role in Christ so that you both may enter the kingdom (v31-32). Remember these 12 words: I was wrong; I am sorry; Please forgive me; I love you! (This is GOD manifestation, because this is how GOD reacts towards us.)

“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:”

forswear thyself



‘epiorkeo’ (1964) – it literally means against an oath. Thayer: to swear or make an oath falsely. Only used here.

oaths



‘horkos’ (3727) – a limit and therefore a sacred restraint. Vines: is primarily equivalent to ‘herkos’, a fence, an enclosure, that which restrains a person; hence an oath.



Matt. 14:7, 9; 26:72; Luke 1:73; Heb. 6:16, 17; Jas. 5:12



JB: “You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord.”



Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 23:21

Consider the last phrase of the verse. Could it be interpreted as meaning that only oaths sworn in Yahweh’s name had to be performed?

We are now introduced to the third sub-section dealing with court-room scenes in the synagogue – a trial of perjury. The previous two trials, whilst outwardly dealing with crimes of murder and adultery, have actually probed deeper into the human heart and exposed the evil passions of hate and lust. This final trial may even go deeper than that. We may not feel guilty of the former two crimes, but the third is surely one which effects everybody. Everyone of us at some time likes to make a good impression upon others which may even sometimes go to the length of creating a false impression.

The modern crime of perjury is to bear false witness in a court of justice. Do we at times seek to magnify ourselves in front of our fellows or try to make ourselves appear better than we really are? Such an attitude can be a partner to hate and lust; it is called **pride**.

So once again Jesus is exposing the falsity of human thinking, and reminding us that the day will come when we must all stand before the greater Judge. Who would dare stand before the seat of judgment and declare that he is without sin?

The Trial of Perjury

The key word is ‘forswear’, from the Greek ‘epiorkeo’. This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament and means to commit perjury. Jesus is teaching that once an oath is entered into it must be carried out. Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 is emphatic about the divine view of oath taking, or making a vow. Once it is made it is unbreakable. Oath taking was permissible under the Mosaic Law (Deut. 6:13), and was an appeal to the one true God to witness to its truth, not an appeal to God to condone perjury.

In the very beginning Adam and Eve had sought to deceive God by sewing fig leaves together, but God easily saw through those fig leaves and beheld the enormity of human sin. In the sight of God it is impossible for man to cover his sins and appear righteous.

In this section of the Discourse on the Mount, Jesus is making an appeal to our **honesty and faithfulness**. Let us not pretend that we are something that we are not, but rather cast ourselves upon the mercy of God in faith and trust that He might grant us salvation from sin through the sacrifice of His Son on the great day of judgment which we all must face.

The only covering for sins that can be found is through the righteous sacrifice of God’s Son.

“But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne:”

Swear ‘omnuo’ (3660) – to take or declare an oath. Vines: to affirm or deny by an oath or promise as we would understand it.
 ☞ Matt. 26:74; Heb. 6:16; Jas. 5:12
 ☛ Psa. 11:4

If we have to place varying guarantees on what we say then we must imply that what we say has varying degrees of success! We are drawing up a contract with loopholes.

Although taking of oaths was permitted under the law, it is evident that the privilege was abused. Therefore the way of wisdom is to refrain from unwise oath taking. Jesus says “*Swear not at all...*” from the Greek ‘omnuo’ = to take an oath. Very often the capabilities of a man do not match the ambition of his oath, and Scripture gives some dramatic examples of this:

- One was Jephthah (Judg. 11) whose unwise oath cost him his daughter.
- Another was Peter (Matt. 26) whose unwise oath cost him his self respect.

Therefore in verse 34-36 Jesus proceeds to give four examples of an oath that can lead to perjury and also illustrates the enormous presumption sometimes entertained in the human head.

1st Example: “*Swear not at all: neither by heaven for it is God’s throne.*” ‘Throne’ = Greek ‘thronos’, or God’s seat of power. Who are we to call upon this, over which we have no control? How can we call upon the very centre of divine power to witness or affirm something which very often amounts to our own foolishness? We cannot do it now, and much less will we be able to do it when called before the great seat of judgment to be stripped bare of all our self-deception and self-righteousness.

How important is the basic lesson of honesty and integrity?

“Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.”

☛ Psa. 48:2; Matt. 23:16-22

2nd Example: *“Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool”*. It is impossible for us to swear by the earth because it is part of God’s creation, and we have had no part in either its making or its maintenance. The statement that the earth is God’s ‘footstool’ is a very obvious quotation from Isaiah 66:1-2, which should be considered.

The contrast with verse 34, which speaks of heaven being ‘God’s throne’, should be carefully noted. This emphasises the great difference that exists between God’s dwelling place and the inheritance of man. They are entirely separate places and emphasise the doctrinal point that the lot of men is not in heaven, but on earth centred in Jerusalem where Jesus will be the great king.

3rd Example: Swear not *“...by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great king”*. This is the only example of this expression in the New Testament, and is based on Jeremiah 33:16. The principle involved in this expression is the same, and is relating to the Sovereign power of God over the earth, again something over which we have no control, but which in God’s mercy we may be able to share in the coming age.

God’s great power is not ours to use; we are in subjection to it.

“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.”

Jas. 4:13-15

If a person has integrity before God and man, he does not have to go about proving it; his way of life is evidence of what is in his heart.

4th Example: *“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head”*. This has reference to a common form of oath taking of the day. Such expressions as ‘by my head’ or ‘by my hand’ being commonly used. We may think such expressions are harmless and use similar expressions in our daily communications.

However we must realise that even this illustration is given in the same setting as the previous three examples, and even an expression as simple as this is speaking about something beyond men’s control. We cannot change the colour of our hair, or the appearance of one’s visage. Jesus points out in Matthew 10:30 *“...the very hairs of your head are all numbered”*. This then, is another example of something quite beyond our ability to control.

Such methods of communication are merely a way of attempting to cover up or conceal the things we cannot fulfil.

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

<u>communication</u>	‘logos’ (3056) – something said including the thought. Also it deals with ones reasoning and motive. ☞ Matt. 8:8; 12:37; Eph. 4:29; Jas. 3:2
<u>Yea, yea</u>	‘nai’ (3483) – strong affirmation. ☞ 2 Cor. 1:17-20; Jas. 5:12
<u>Nay, nay</u>	‘ou’ (3756) – the absolute negation, NO!!!
<u>evil</u>	‘poneros’ (4190) – hurtful or evil in effect and influence like a disease. ☞ Matt. 7:17; 12:34, 35; 15:19; Rom. 12:9
<u>☞</u>	JB: “All you need say is ‘Yes’ if you mean yes, ‘No’ if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”
<u>☞</u>	Roth: “And what goeth beyond these is of evil.”

In the previous verses Jesus has commanded us to “*Swear not at all...*”. The wisdom of placing ourselves in a position where we do not take oaths can be readily seen – we are placing ourselves in a position where we cannot readily perjure ourselves, and distance ourselves from further sin. Oath taking can also lead us into a position where we might take the name of the Lord in vain, no matter what terms we may use.

How more suitable is the simple **yea** and **nay** of the servant of God?

An oath didn’t make any difference in the case of Peter when with much swearing and cursing he denied that he even knew the Christ. In the end it only led to great remorse and bitter self examination because he had perjured himself in this most important situation.

We may even perjure ourselves in ways which do not even involve the spoken word. This is revealed by a key word in this verse, ‘communication’. This Greek ‘logos’ meaning reasoning, logic, topic, thought. This emphasises that the reasoning and thoughts of our hearts, as well as our words can condemn us.

So, the issues of judgment have been fully placed before us. Whether we be found guilty, or not guilty when we finally stand before the great Judge of all men, is yet to be revealed. To be acquitted of sin on that great day of judgment depends entirely upon our response now, in this day of opportunity, to what Jesus is teaching us.

Is our communication based upon such virtues as honesty, sincerity, truth and absolute trust in God?

Points to Consider

- Christ says that there is no need to swear by things when we say something. We should always carry out our word (v37). What is the most important promise that all of us make in our lives?
- Notice how this follows on from marriage and the covenant associated with this. A promise made by God’s name **must** be kept.
- Why are promises so dangerous to make in the first place?
- How can we avoid making promises that we end up breaking? (Cp. Eccl. 5:2)
- What are we in effect doing when we swear or make an oath by heaven? Let us remember we are such lowly, insignificant creatures, before an almighty all-powerful Creator.
- If an oath involving God is broken then we are declaring God does not even exist. If a person is truthful he needs no proof of his claim. His or her sincerity will become obvious in any dealings with others.
- What promises have you broken before and how could you have ensured these were carried out?
- What changes could you make to ensure such an undertaking is fulfilled?

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 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.”

☛ Deut. 32:35; Prov. 20:22; 24:17, 28, 29

resist ‘anthistemi’ (436) – to stand against or oppose or to set oneself against.
☛ Jas. 4:7

evil ‘poneroterōs’ (4191) – see verse 11

smite ‘rhapizo’ (4474) – to slap with the palm of the hand or the clenched fist.
☛ Matt. 26:67; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.

Note the word ‘rhapisma’ (4475) which is the noun and where it is used: Mark 14:65; John 18:22; 19:3; Only occurs 3 times

☛ Isa. 50:6; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; 3:9

Remember it requires great strength of character to refrain from retaliation!

Relationships with society around us

The final section of Matthew 5 now takes us to the end of the chapter, and demonstrates the Abrahamic principle of dwelling as strangers and pilgrims in a land not our own. This section of the chapter also demonstrates that the world in which Jesus lived belonged not to the Jews, but to Rome. Jesus is therefore showing us what our reaction should be to certain circumstances which can take place in our daily lives. It is particularly impressed upon us in this section that we have no legal retribution over our fellow men, even though we may feel that we have been wronged by them. Because of this Jesus commences by giving us three examples of how the disciple may have to suffer lack of justice in this world whilst he awaits the ‘King of Righteousness’ to establish true justice upon the earth.

1st Example: Personal Assault

Verse 38 is a quotation from the law (Ex. 21:24). This command was given to Israel as a safeguard against the excesses of human nature. For example, if somebody knocked your tooth out, you were forbidden to knock out two of his teeth in return. Better still don’t knock any out! It is the natural reaction of human nature to take vengeance when one feels that they have been wronged. But in Jesus’ day the Rabbis had turned this law around and were using it as an excuse to take vengeance to the maximum.

So then, what happens if someone smites “...*thee on the right cheek*”? Literally it means to be slapped on the face! The natural reaction might be to return the slap, but then we have immediately lowered ourselves to the level of our adversary, and the scene is set for an ugly dispute to take place. That is man’s justice.

But such a thing is not the way of Christ. Consider how Jesus’ tormentors treated him when he was brought to trial (Matt. 27:26). He didn’t react in the way that flesh normally reacts, and the Jews should have realised this, because it had been prophesied of him in Isaiah 50:6. “*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*”

It is interesting that Jesus speaks of the ‘right cheek’ being smitten. This means that the smiter had to use his left hand, which is Scripturally the weaker hand. Such a person is revealing the weakness of the flesh, whereas the disciple of Christ can always act from a position of strength. Let us remember that whilst we may be called upon to suffer for Christ’s sake, it is only a temporary indignity which we may suffer. Yet for our sakes Jesus has borne immeasurably more of this world’s insults than we ever will.

The way of Christ is not to act in the way that this world acts.

Points to Consider

- Vengeance is Yahweh's, He will repay. Think of people in Scripture who had this attitude, our Lord being the greatest example. (He was smitten on the cheek, Isa. 50:6; cp. Matt. 5:39. He had his coat taken, Matt. 27:35; cp. Matt. 5:40. He was forced to carry his cross, Matt. 27:31-32; cp. Matt. 5:41.)
- What are the three main references Jesus is quoting from the law?
- Think of a situation you have been in recently where you were very tempted to retaliate, or may have even done so. Christ instructs us to turn the other cheek, which is not natural for us.
- How do we overcome our pride in allowing someone else to get the better of us and instead suffer ourselves to be defrauded?
- What is our response if:
 1. We are "ripped off" in a supermarket?
 2. We are involved in a car accident that was not our fault and the person in the wrong refuses to pay for damages?
 3. We experience vandalism of our property?
 4. We make a late payment of an account and are charged interest?(Think of other examples with which you feel you may be been treated unfairly.)

“And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.”

sue thee at the law ‘krino’ (2919) – to distinguish or decide and therefore to try or condemn someone.
 ☞ Matt. 7:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:1-3, 6

coat ‘chiton’ (5509)
 ☞ Luke 3:11; 6:29; John 19:23

cloke ‘himation’ (2440)
 ☞ Matt. 11:8; 27:31, 35; John 19:24
 ☛ Jas. 5:4

We must be prepared to yield all in our undivided loyalty to Christ.

2nd Example: Personal Oppression

No doubt we often feel oppressed by the society in which we live and sometimes complain loudly about prices we have been charged for various goods, or taxes we have to pay. The Law of Moses forbade the Jew to oppress his fellow country-man (Ex. 22:26-27). The reason for this was that they were not to indulge in self-seeking at the expense of their fellow, and in like manner it follows that the disciple should take care that he does not engage in self-seeking at the expense of the world in which he lives. As strangers and pilgrims we do not belong to the world in which we live, and therefore cannot take anything from it.

Jesus is making the important point that if the world requires something of us, as it often does, then so long as it does not conflict with any of his teaching, then let us willingly comply and if necessary give a little extra to that which is required of us. This is an attitude which will be displayed by the ‘poor in spirit’, the ‘meek’, or the ‘pure in heart’.

Note that Jesus says that if we are sued at law we may be required to surrender our coat. This was the ‘chiton’ or less costly undergarment. But to surrender this it required that the ‘cloak’, or ‘himation’, the outer garment, be removed first. Therefore the removal of both garments was required in any case. The lesson is that in all our dealings with the world let us not be afraid to reveal what we really are underneath – humble, faithful, obedient disciples who care not for this present world, but desire that kingdom to come.

Eventually all will be uncovered by that great Judge who will lay bare all the motives of the heart.

Points to Consider

- In today’s terms, what is required of us when we are instructed to give away our cloak in addition to our coat?
- What legal rights do we have as servants of Christ?

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”

shall compel thee to go

‘aggareuo’ (29)

☞

Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Only occurs 3 times

☛

Matt. 22:21; Acts 4:19; 5:29; Tit. 3:1

3rd Example: Personal Humiliation

Nobody likes to be humiliated, but this was a common occurrence in Roman occupied countries. This is made obvious by the use of the word ‘compel’. This is the Greek ‘aggareuo’ which means to be a courier, and is a direct reference to the Roman law of ‘aggareuein’ wherein any citizen could be impressed into the service of Rome at any time. For example, if a Roman soldier wanted a document delivered he could immediately call upon a passer-by to deliver it, and they could not refuse, no matter what their circumstances may have been. An excellent example of this is found in Luke 23:26 where the Roman soldiers “...*laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian... and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus*”. This was an idea copied from the Persian law which is referred to in Esther 8:10.

Once again, if they do not conflict with Christ, there are certain things in society to which we must willingly submit, even if not cheerfully. We are sometimes even required to enter into some of these things in the pursuit of our daily bread. Consider carefully Romans 13:7-8 and 1 Peter 2:13-17.

The things of the present world will shortly pass away, and with it the injustices we presently experience.

Points to Consider

- Verses 39-41 deal with our attitudes to different classes of people:
 - v39 Those around us who may mistreat us because of our belief
 - v40 The legal system
 - v41 The authorities

In all of these situations are we prepared to “*turn the other cheek*” and “*suffer ourselves to be defrauded*” if necessary? Which verses out of the first twelve would be helpful in developing this kind of character?

- Think of examples of people in Scripture who gained respect and even brought people into the Truth because of the godly attitude with which they approached their work and treated others. How can our attitude at school or work have the same effect?
- Does our performance at school or work decrease when our teacher or boss is not present? If yes, why?
- How can we be motivated to perform to the best of our ability as “*unto the Lord*”?

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

that asketh ‘aiteo’ (154) – to ask or beg. Vines: it more frequently relates to the petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made.
 ☞ Matt. 6:8; 27:58; Acts 3:2; 1 Pet. 3:15

borrow ‘daneizo’ (1155)
 ☞ Luke 6:34,35; Only occurs 3 times
 ☛ Lev. 25:35-38; Prov. 3:27-29

After these three examples of personal indignity comes a simple request concerning which there is no compulsion – How will we react? One of our fellows would like to borrow something from us. Natural reaction can often be selfish and we may even refuse a case of genuine need. But the law was quite explicit about helping those who have a greater need than ourselves (Deut. 15:7-8). This tells us to “...*open our hand wide...*”. We cannot miss the point that Jesus has certainly opened his hand very wide for us. Deuteronomy 15:9-11 then goes on to repeat this principle of opening one’s hand for the benefit of others, and that we should not grieve our hearts in doing so.

The word ‘borrow’ is important. It is the Greek ‘daneizo’ which means to borrow with interest. This emphasises that the one who wants to borrow something has a genuine need, so much so that they are willing to pay back more than they have borrowed.

What do we have that our fellows genuinely need? We have the gospel in our possession which has the power to “...*save a soul from death*” (Jas. 5:20). We therefore have power to give to others with interest, but not to receive with interest. This can be an antidote to our natural selfishness, to be able to give as much as we possibly can for the benefit of our fellow men.

By giving to others in a Christlike spirit we can be made spiritually richer (Prov. 10:22).

Points to Consider

- What are some reasons why we should give to others? Give quotes to back up your reasons.
- Think of what God has done for us.
- Do we try to avoid being asked if something can be borrowed from us (especially from certain people)? If so, why?
- Are we more eager to lend something to someone over another and what are our reasons? (cp. Luke 6:30-35; Matt. 7:12)


Brain Teaser

- How does 2 Thessalonians 3:10 fit into the teaching of this verse?

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 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;”

☛ Prov. 24:17-18; 25:21

N.B. The way our Lord joined these two phrases together highlights a powerful lesson for us. The first clause has been correctly taken from Leviticus 19:18; however, the second which was used to support Jewish prejudice was inferred from Deuteronomy 23:6. When a clear and fundamental divine principle is married to a philosophy produced from the carnal mind, a perversion of divine truth will be the end result.

- love** ‘agapao’ (25) – In this context it is a love not based upon sentimentality and affection for, but upon a knowledge of the word and will of **God**. It is a love that seeks the greatest positive response in the one it is directed towards.
☞ Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; 1 John 2:10
- bless** ‘eulogeo’ (2127) – to speak well of! We should treat them, and act towards them, as we would in the case of someone with whom we enjoyed a pleasant relationship.
☞ Acts 3:26; Rom. 12:14; 1 Cor. 4:12
- curse** ‘kataraoimai’ (2672) – to detest utterly, or in our words, “wish you were dead!”
☞ Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:14
- good** ‘kalos’ (2573) – do well, be honest or do that which is ethically good, right. Thayer: act uprightly.
☞ Matt. 12:12; Heb. 13:18
- hate** ‘miseo’ (3404) – to detest
☞ Matt. 10:22; 24:9; John 15:18; 1 John 3:13
- despitefully use** ‘epereazo’ (1908) – from another word which conveys the idea of threats. To insult or slander and falsely accuse.
☞ Luke 6:28; 1 Pet. 3:16; Only occurs 3 times in N.T.
- persecute** ‘dioko’ (1377) – see verse 10
-  Roth: “But I say unto you, Be loving your enemies, And praying for them who are persecuting you:”
? Did the disciple Stephen pray for the Apostle Paul? (See Acts 7:58, 60; 8:1; 9:5)
☛ Psa. 66:10-12; Rom. 5:8-10

Here we have a classic example of the way the Pharisees misapplied the Word of God. Leviticus 19:18 clearly commanded “...*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself...*”. But nowhere do the Scriptures teach, “...*thou shalt hate thine enemy*”. Leviticus 19:34 and Deuteronomy 23:7 clearly taught that they should not hate. Clearly the oppression of the Roman yoke had led to the extreme that if they were to love their neighbour, then the opposite must apply towards those whom they classed as enemies.

The Jews also misunderstood who their neighbours might be. In Leviticus 19 ‘neighbour’ was the Hebrew ‘reya’ and in Matthew 5 the Greek equivalent ‘pelas’. On both occasions it refers to an associate who need not necessarily be one’s fellow countrymen; it could be anybody. Therefore when the lawyer asked Jesus “*And who is my neighbour?*” (Luke 10:29), Jesus replied by relating the parable of the Good Samaritan, who was from a race normally despised by the Jews. If we look upon all others outside the immediate circle of our associates as enemies, it is not possible to preach the gospel effectively. Remember the patience of Jesus when speaking to the Samaritan woman in John 4.

Jesus’ example had been to show understanding to these natural enemies of the Jews. The overriding principle being that God had expressed a love for the whole world in his willingness to sacrifice His Son for their sakes. “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*” (John 3:16).

As God has given to all men, so we must not despise the opportunity to share with them our most precious possession, that they too might join us in the hope of the gospel. The supreme example in giving in love is Jesus, even though his enemies put him to death (Luke 23:34).

Christ's love can elevate us above the selfish instincts of our human nature that others might be saved.

Points to Consider

- God shows love to all and is not willing that any should perish. In trying to become his children now, do we do the same?
- Can you think of some people that prayed for those who persecuted them even unto death?
- Maybe we can pray for our enemies or even try to speak kindly to them, but how do we actually come to love them?
- Can you find a quote in the law that says anything like verse 43?



“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.”

<u>That</u>	‘hopos’ (3704) – in order that, to the end that. All these commandments are for a reason, they are given to achieve a result!
☞	Matt. 5:16
<u>children</u>	‘huios’ (5207) – See verse 9
<u>Father</u>	‘pater’ (3962) – See verse 16
<u>good</u>	‘agathos’ (18) – ‘good’ in any sense. Vines: describes that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect.
☞	Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 6:45; Rom. 2:7; Col. 1:10
<u>just</u>	‘dikaios’ (1342) – innocent, righteous, holy
☞	Matt. 1:19; 27:19; Luke 1:6; John 17:25; Gal. 3:11
<u>unjust</u>	‘adikos’ (94) – wicked, treacherous. Vines: not in conformity with the righteous.
☞	Luke 18:11; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Pet. 3:18
☛	Deut. 32:1-6; John 3:16; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20; 1 John 4:8-11

God’s goodness and kindness is a witness to His Truth, such should be our personal testimony if we are the *“children of our Father”*.

The lesson of the previous verses is continued. The same prime **physical needs** such as sun and rain, without which there can be no life on earth, are bestowed by the Heavenly Father upon all, regardless of creed, or race. Therefore who are we to deny the **spiritual needs** of this same people? To demonstrate this point Jesus uses the figures of sun and rain to good effect.

The Sun: Whilst symbolic of the ruling powers of the world, is particularly symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ who is to eventually be manifest to the whole world as the ‘Sun of Righteousness’ (Mal. 4:2) when he will be king over the whole world.

The Rain: Symbolic of the Word of God which is necessary for the production of spiritual fruit upon the earth. *“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass”* (Deut. 32:2).

Therefore as all the world benefits daily from the sun and rain, it too can profit from the knowledge of the Son of God through His Word. However, how can they know of these things if the disciples treat them as enemies? (Rom. 10:11-15). Jesus is teaching a very powerful lesson for us to be aware of this great need of our fellow men, and be prepared to give *“...an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet. 3:15).

Such an attitude can well help us to be the ‘children of God’ which takes our thoughts back to verse 9. The ‘peacemakers’ are to be called the ‘children of God’. What better way to become a peacemaker in this world than to learn to love our enemies on the basis of preaching the gospel?

***This is a most important duty of disciples, whilst still remaining strangers and pilgrims.
How can we preach the gospel effectively if we have an aggressive attitude?***

Points to Consider

- What does it really mean to be the children of God and how can we attain sonship?
- How is God like a father to us? Make a list of those qualities found in Scripture.
- If we are not the children of God, who is our father and what is his gift (1 John 3:8-10)?
- If we deliberately disobey our earthly father, what feelings of disappointment does he experience and why? Now think of your answer as it relates to our Heavenly Father?

Why do you think this is an appropriate theme for a Youth Conference?

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?”

reward ‘misthos’ (3408) – See verse 12

publicans ‘telones’ (5057) – a tax-farmer, ie. a collector of public revenue. Thayer: The tax-collectors were, as a class, detested not only by Jews but by other nations also, both on account of their employment and of the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they prosecuted it.

♂ Matt. 9:10, 11; 10:3; 18:17; Luke 18:11

📖 JB: “For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not?”

♣ Prov. 29:13

salute ‘aspazomai’ (782) – to enfold the arms, to embrace or to welcome. Thayer: prop. to draw to one’s self or to pay respects to.

♂ Acts 20:1; 2 Cor. 13:12; 3 John 14

brethren ‘adelphos’ (80) – a brother or near kinsman. Vines: in the plural, a community based on identity of origin or life.

♂ Matt. 5:22, 24

publicans ‘misthos’ (5057) – Some manuscripts have the Greek word ‘ethnikos’ meaning Gentiles. See notes below.
? Our Lord desires that we reveal an attitude towards others which is based on far higher ideals than what we can get in return. Who do we identify with in the ecclesia, and how do we treat others in the meeting we do not see eye to eye with (cp. v9)?

It is **natural** to extend love and warmth, even sacrifice to those who do the same to us. What **God** requires of us is to extend agape love to those where the only return we receive is the honour of **God’s** name and the hope of a response to the gospel.

These two verses demonstrate the uselessness of confining our love just to our own kind. The publicans – that despised section of Jewish society – did exactly the same. In verse 47 both RSV and RV translate publican as gentiles. So even publicans and gentiles could show love to each other and as we know there are those in the world today who execute very commendable works of love and charity towards each other. On this basis our own works may be no different to their’s.

But verse 20 has told us our works must “...*exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees...*”. They were a very introspective and exclusive group of people, and we must take care that we do not fall into the same category. If Jesus had restricted his teaching only to his immediate group of disciples the gospel may not have become the force it is today. Remember Jesus’ final comment was “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...*” (Mark 16:15). That is the greatest service of love we can render whilst we remain sojourners.

We must manifest a difference to the world around us.

Points to Consider

- Why is this kind of love worthless? (cp. Luke 6:31-35; Eccl. 9:2-3)
- If we love only to the extent to which we are loved, could we expect anything more?
- How do we extend our love to others over and above that which is not natural to us?
- Friendship in the world revolves around self. We may feel that we have friends in the world when things are going well for us, but how many people in the world would be prepared to stick by us if we were in severe difficulty? Contrast this to the attitude we should find in the ecclesia.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

perfect ‘teleios’ (5046) – Bullinger: what has reached its end, term, or limit; hence complete, perfect, full, wanting nothing, with special reference to the end for which it was intended.
 ☞ Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 4:12; Heb. 5:14; Jas. 1:4; 3:2
 ☛ Lev. 19:2; Deut. 18:13

The grand objective of the Truth is to change men and women mentally, morally, and ultimately physically, into manifestations of the one true God, ie. God manifestation.

The final verse is both a summary and an exhortation which epitomises all the principles of Matthew 5. The key word is obviously ‘perfect’, which is used twice. It comes from the Greek ‘teleios’ and is akin to the well known Hebrew ‘shalom’, the meanings being almost identical. The idea is to be whole, undivided, entire, complete. Here are principles which can help us belong undividedly to Christ. Hence the same word is used in Matthew 19:20-21 when that young man came to Christ asking what he “...lacked yet”. Jesus’ reply was to seek to be ‘perfect’, meaning that he should endeavour to divest himself of worldly riches, ambition, pride and even hate and lust, all of which could undermine the resolve of the saint to prove themselves worthy of a place in the kingdom of God.

The underlying theme throughout Matthew 5 is that we empty ourselves from all those promptings and desires of human nature which deny the Christ-like character we are endeavouring to achieve. It is also a wonderful exhortation to godly living, and for us to display these wonderful Christ-like characteristics in our personal lives, even as he displayed unrestrained mercies towards us.

“Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments...” (Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple, 1 Kings 8:61).

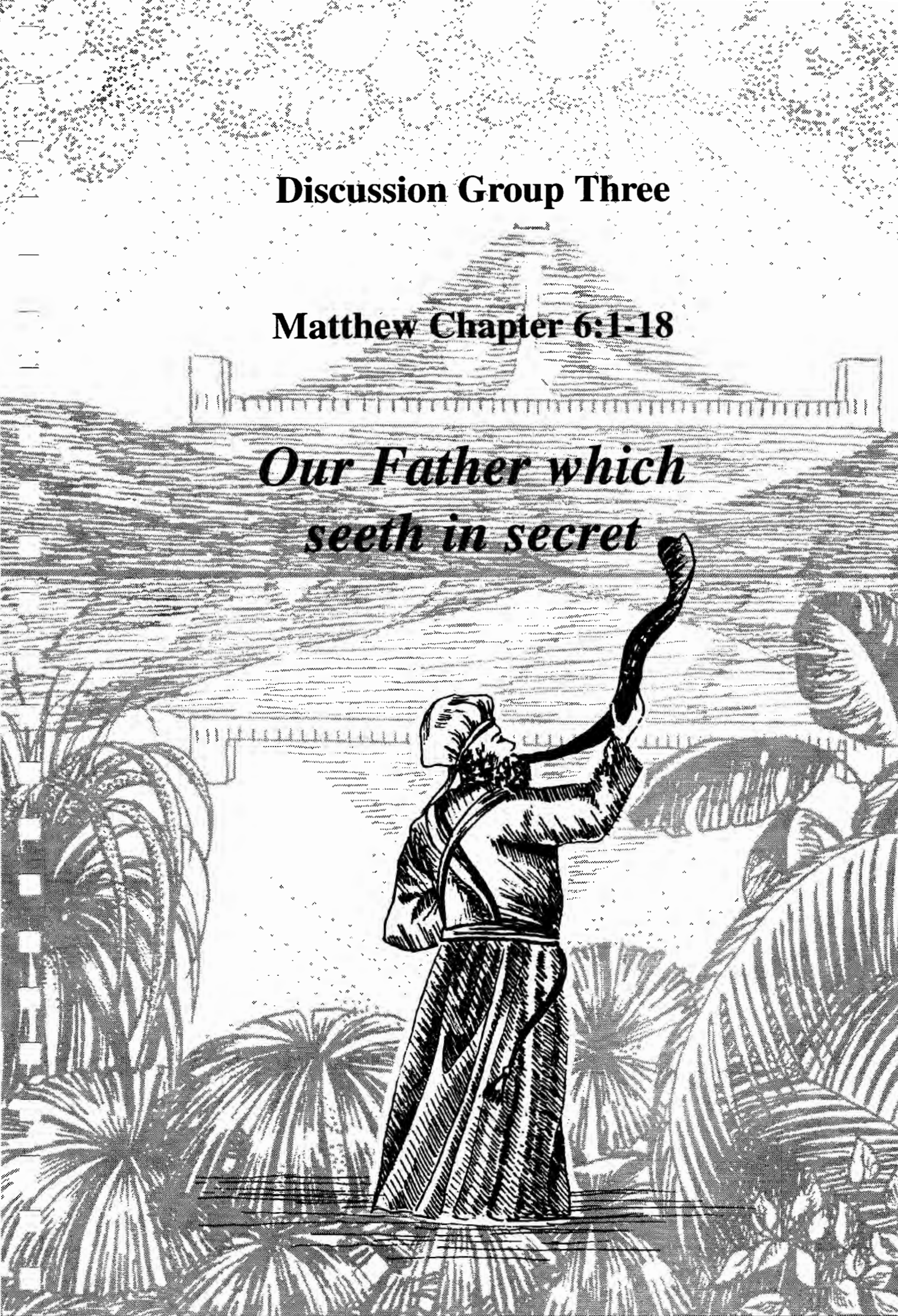
Points to Consider

- Where else in Scripture do we find this principle of perfection?
- It is possible to serve God without a perfect heart (2 Chron. 25:2). How can we serve God with a perfect heart?
- What did James mean when he used the word ‘perfect’ in James 1:4?
- Again we are reminded to manifest our Father’s characteristics. Summarise in a list from chapter 5 of some of the characteristics you need to improve upon in order that you may be a child of your Heavenly Father.

Discussion Group Three

Matthew Chapter 6:1-18

*Our Father which
seeth in secret*



SECTION 3

Matthew 6:1-18 Our Father which seeth in secret.

Matthew 6 is similar to chapter 5 in the fact that it is also based on some of the customs of the times. However, we must now view the customs in a different way. In chapter 5 Jesus explained how we should view many customs of the world, and only become involved in them when they do not come in conflict with the teachings of the gospel. But now in chapter 6 Jesus illustrates how the world may watch us as we endeavour to fulfil our role as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Accordingly in the first half of the chapter Jesus deals with three customs of the Pharisees which we can also relate to our own lives. Remember that Jesus said that our righteousness should “...*exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees*” (Matt. 5:20).

Verses 1-4 The custom of alms-giving
Verses 5-15 The custom of prayer
Verses 16-18 The custom of fasting.

We may translate these three customs into our own lifestyles in the following way:

1. Almsgiving – Represents our genuine concern for others
2. Prayer – Represents our approach to God
3. Fasting – Represents our own personal self-denial.

In each of these situations other people may watch us very closely. To the Pharisee of the time, the world was a stage, and he walked upon that stage constantly seeking the applause of others for his piety and righteousness. But the disciple also walks that same stage, and he must be sure that he walks upon it in an entirely different way to the Pharisee. The disciple’s walk must “...*exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees*”. The disciple cannot be seen as endeavouring to gain the acclaim of his fellow men, but rather to glorify his God and gain the approval of his Father in heaven who sees ‘in secret’ but will “...*reward thee openly*”.

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”

Take heed ‘prosecho’ (4337) – to pay attention to, be cautious about, beware.

☞ Matt. 7:15; 10:17; 16:6

📖 JB: “Be careful not to parade”; RSV: “Beware of practicing”.

alms ‘eleemosune’ (1654) – compassionateness as an exercise towards the poor.

Vines: mercy or pity particularly in giving alms. Note: In Matt. 6:1, the R.V. translating ‘dikaiosune’ according to the most authentic texts, has ‘righteousness’ for A.V. ‘alms’.

☞ Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 9:36; 10:4

‘diakaiosune’ (1343) – righteousness as translated in some texts. See Matt. 5:6, 10, 20; 6:33

Are we fooling ourselves and only attempt to do that which is “right” in front of other Christadelphians?

to be seen ‘theamai’ (2300) – to look closely at. Vines: in earlier Greek usage it was used in the sense of a wondering regard.

☞ Matt. 23:5; Acts 8:18; 1 John 1:1

📖 N.E.B. “Be careful not to make a show of your religion”. Roth: “to be gazed at by them”. Moff: “Take care not to practise your charity before men in order to be noticed”.

reward ‘misthos’ (3408) – See Matt. 5:12

☞ Matt. 20:8; Luke 10:7; Rom. 4:4; 2 Pet 2:13

☛ Matt. 5:16, 20; 1 Cor. 13:3

Almsgiving

The opening section of chapter 6 suggests that Jesus may have had the theatre in mind as he made this part of his speech, reminding us that much of our service to God is performed in the public eye. In Jesus’ day there was a large Roman Theatre in the centre of Jerusalem adjacent to the Temple enclosure, and even if the Jews did not patronise it they would certainly be aware of its function. In the first two verses there are two key words which suggest the underlying idea of a theatre:

Verse 1 ‘Seen’, Gk = ‘theamai’: In the personal sense this means to be a subject that is looked upon with admiration and desire. This was the word used of actors as they sought the applause of the audience!

Verse 2 ‘Hypocrites’, Gk = ‘hupokrites’: means an actor, or stage player.

Therefore Jesus is making a comparison with those who walked the stage seeking the admiration and applause of other men. The disciples of Christ do not seek to cultivate the public eye in this way when they are called upon to serve God, and particularly when called upon to help others less fortunate than themselves.

Here we are being taught that such works cannot help us to achieve any justification in the sight of God, and when unmixed with faith such works cannot help us to achieve salvation. Also we must remember the lesson of chapter 5, that God makes His judgment upon His examination of the inner recesses and motives of the heart where the eyes of man cannot see (Heb. 4:13).

If we desire the praise of men there is “...no reward of your Father which is in heaven”.

Points to Consider

- Can you think of another verse in this discourse which tells us the real reason why we should do good works?
- Which is the most important – what we give or the attitude shown in giving? Explain why.
- When we do duties in God’s service do we tell others about them? If we do this who are we really serving?
- Where in James are we told to confess our faults one to another? This is the opposite to the attitude spoken about in these verses.
- Should the reward be the main motivation in our service to God?
- Can you think of times when you have performed deeds to be seen and admired by others? What were they?
- Do we perform ecclesial duties with a disposition of humbleness and willingness to serve our Heavenly Father, or do we carry them out when we know others may be watching?
- What is the reward we would miss out on?

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

<u>thou</u>	The use of this pronoun clearly shows that all disciples of Christ must do or perform alms, but with the right motive; glory to God and desire to help those in need.
<u>alms</u>	‘eleemosune’ (1654) – compassionateness (See verse 1).
<u>sound a trumpet</u> ☞	‘salpizo’ (4537) – to sound a blast, ie. to call everyone’s attention! 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 8:6
<u>hypocrites</u> ☞ ☛	‘hupokrites’ (5273) – an actor under an assumed character, a stage-player. Matt. 7:5; 15:7; 23:13-15, 23, 25, 27, 29 Matt. 25:40; Luke 16:10; 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5 (Examine our motives!)
<u>glory</u>	‘doxazo’ (1392) – See Matt. 5:16
<u>reward</u>	‘misthos’ (3408) – See Matt. 5:12
☞	JB: ‘to win men’s admiration’. NIV: ‘to be honoured by men’.

This continues the theatre scene, and emphasises how hypocritical human behaviour can be unless it is modified by the Word of God. The scene is now introduced by the “...*sound of the trumpet*...”. This phrase is a composite term from the Greek ‘salpizo’, which refers to the fanfare in the theatre of the time which introduced the first act of a play wherein the actors invariably appeared wearing masks. This meant that the audience did not know who they were!

What a sobering lesson can be gained from this! Is it possible for us to wear a mask also? If we do wear a mask, our fellow men may be deluded into believing that we might be righteous, generous, and doers of good, when in fact we may only be coveting the applause of our audience. The requirements of the disciple are those basic characteristics of humility, honesty and integrity. (Compare Matt. 5:3-9.) In this way both God and our fellow men can see us exactly as we are. Unfortunately this hypocritical action which began with so much fanfare does not even consider the poor man who was in need of the almsgiving. Such actions were designed to direct attention to the one bearing the alms who was really a victim of his own self-righteousness and pride.

But it is interesting to note that even such an action can bring its reward. It will be noticed that three times in this chapter we find the phrase, “*They have their reward*”. This occurs in verses 2, 5 and 16. Jesus uses this same expression in relation to almsgiving, prayer and fasting. This emphasises that every action, whether good or bad brings its reward. This is an interesting term adopted from the Greek business world. ‘Reward’ is the Greek word ‘misthos’ which indicates that payment has been made for a service, either good or bad. In using this language Jesus is teaching that even the hypocritical actions he has been illustrating will bring their own reward. They will receive the applause of those looking on – **but no more**.

The rewards of this world are very short lived indeed. After a few moments of applause all falls silent and there is nothing more. On the other hand, there is another reward, which is to be everlasting. Surely our choice must be obvious.

Points to Consider

- What alms can we give today?
- In what way could we be 'sounding a trumpet' before others? Have we ever boasted about how busy we are in the Truth to others? (eg. how much study we might be doing, how many nights out we are involved in ecclesial activities, etc.)
- Why do hypocrites already have their reward?
- What do you consider the difference between the reward of the hypocrites and us?
- The kind of person we may portray to those we associate with is one thing. James 1:22-24 should be a constant reminder to us all how we should be living the Truth.
- We have considered the opinion others may have of us. What about God's opinion?
- Consider 1 Samuel 16:7, "...for Yahweh seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart". Also Isaiah 66:2, "...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word". Can you think of other quotes that teach the same thing?
- Read Matthew 23:12. What attitude of mind should we have?
- Do we ever get upset when people question our motives, especially when we think that what we are doing is right? Should we feel like that? (Prov. 9:8-9)

There are two ways that we can spend this life: either serving God or serving self. Serving God offers us a reward both now and in the future. If we choose to serve God in this life, then we have a purpose in life, we have God there to help us when we need Him, and the kingdom to look forward to. Above that we have a future reward in the kingdom of God, promised to "all them that love his appearing". Sadly there are many people that choose to serve themselves. When we are young this can be a big temptation, whether it is by seeking the praise of men, building up riches or just living life doing what we want with no regard for God. The only reward we have is what we achieve in this life, and no matter how much we are able to achieve in this life, it is nothing compared to what has been promised for the saints in the future (1 Cor. 2:9; Phil. 3:8). At death all that we achieve is gone, it is of no more value. The only one who can give us something which endures after death is God. And we also need to remember that even within the ecclesia it is possible for us to be serving ourselves, not God. We need to look very carefully at our motives and remember that if we really love God, He will be the one we serve.

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:”

When you perform faithful acts do not think about what **you** have done otherwise pride will carry out its evil work, get on with the work and avoid dwelling on achievements **God** will reward accordingly.

☛ 1 Chron. 29:11-14

Jesus now commences to pull back the actor’s mask. This was a bit like Jezebel painting her face and tying her hair. In such a way she believed she could influence Jehu who was the vehicle of divine judgment. But James captures the true spirit of the disciple who has cast away the actor’s mask. *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another...”* (Jas. 5:16). This is what God wants us to do because this is what He sees – our weaknesses as well as our strengths. How much better it is to approach our fellow men in such a way that they can recognise us as truly God-fearing men and women. In this way we may not only pass on to them the material blessings which they may need, but also the spiritual blessings of which they are most surely in need.

Therefore Jesus’ exhortation once the mask of human hypocrisy is removed is *“...let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth”*. In the Scriptures the left hand is often used as a synonym of human weakness, whereas the right hand is a synonym of strength. The lesson must be learned that we should not to be deluded into believing that such self-righteous actions can be accepted as pleasing to God. Whatever duty we may be called upon to fulfil in God’s service we must endeavour to do from a position of God’s strength.

Let us remember that God fully understands all our motives, better than we understand them ourselves.

Point to Consider

- Think about the symbology of the right and left hand as found in the Bible. Can you find some quotes to support their symbolic meaning?

“That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

secret ‘kruptos’ (2927) – concealed, private, (inwardly). From this word we have our English word ‘cryptic’.

☞ Matt. 10:26; Rom. 2:16, 29; 1 Cor. 4:5

thy Father Only God’s true children act in this way.

shall reward ‘apodidomi’ (591) – to give away or to give back, (to recompense). Vines: to render.

☞ Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim. 4:8, 14; Rev. 22:12

📖 Roth: “will give it back to thee”

☛ Psa. 37:5-6; Matt. 7:21-23; Phil. 4:17

This is the climax of Jesus’ argument concerning almsgiving. We have a God in heaven that sees all things, even though we cannot see Him. *“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (Heb. 4:13). Therefore vain outward show can be of no value to us at all. It is easy for us to forget that whatever we do, God *“...seeth in secret...”*. ‘Secret’ is the Greek ‘kruptos’ = private. The most important word in this verse is ‘seeth’. This is the Greek word ‘blepo’, meaning a mental contemplation. This tells us that unknowingly all our ways are divinely considered and weighed in the balances, so that finally we may receive our just reward openly.

This will not be a play-actor’s reward which is also received in public, but which is finished almost as soon as it is received. The reward of the faithful has already been presented to us in Matthew 5:12, *“...for great is your reward in heaven”*. This will be a public reward, which will be witnessed by the angels in heaven, and all that wondrous cloud of witnesses who will be immortalised in the kingdom of God.

Paul’s advice in 2 Corinthians 9:5-8 regarding giving to the needs of others should be carefully considered.

Let us strive for the eternal reward of the kingdom of God.

Theme

- *“Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”* All men can see is our actions, but God is concerned with our motives. The only works which please God are those motivated by a love for Him (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Those around us may not be able to see what our motives are now but God sees what no-one else sees and at the judgment our real motives will be revealed. Those who have served God with a ‘pure heart’ will be rewarded. Think of examples of people in Scripture who served God with good and bad motives.

Points to Consider

- Make a list of ‘alms’ that you can engage in more in the future; but remember the reward for doing alms is not one that can be deserved.
- How will you ensure that these are done in secret?
- Can you visualise yourself being granted such a reward from your Heavenly Father?

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

prayest ‘proseuchomai’ (4336) – See Matt. 5:44; N.B. The Greek word has the prefix ‘pros’ which means towards or in the direction of, hence prayer towards **God**.

love ‘phileo’ (5368) – Not sacrificial, but it means to have an affection for, ie. a personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling.
 ☞ Matt. 23:6; Luke 20:46; 1 Cor. 16:22

may be seen ‘phaino’ (5316) – to shine. Vines: to cause to appear, in the active voice, to give light or shine. Thayer: to meet the eyes or strike one’s sight.
 ☞ Matt. 23:27-28; Phil. 2:15
 📖 Roth: “that they may *shine* before men”.

? Compare with Matthew 5:16 and consider why one verse is good in God’s sight and one verse is hypocritical in God’s sight.

📖 NIV: “I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”

Prayer

Here we enter a most important aspect of our service – all that we do might be summed up in our approach to God. In this verse Jesus compares the approach adopted by the Pharisee, to that of the actor which was designed to attract the applause of men. In the times of Jesus, public devotions were commonly practised, and these allowed the public to witness the ‘righteousness of the Pharisees’ (Matt. 5:20). Just how important these public devotions were to them is revealed in the Jewish Talmud. Here the question is discussed as to whether it was possible to receive the salutations of one’s fellow, whilst engaged in public prayers. It is even revealed that street corners were deliberately chosen for these public devotions so that their audience could be doubled.

However, this raises an interesting point – if they were to receive the salutations of others whilst praying in public it also means that they must have been watching with one eye to see who was looking at them! What possible value can this type of approach be either to God, or to the individual? Such an approach to worship must be an offence to God, and is designed to achieve nothing more than the gratification of the flesh.

Have we ever found ourselves watching to see if anyone else is looking at us, and then adjusted our actions accordingly? May we always recall the words of Peter, “*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*” (1 Pet. 3:12). The exhortation of this verse is plain – all our sincere efforts will be seen and heard of God.

We can never conceal our real motives from God.

Points to Consider

- When praying on behalf of the ecclesia, what is the purpose of our prayer?
- Think of some examples of prayers that were an expression of a genuine love of God.
- In what situations could we be found guilty of praying on the street corner? (This may not necessarily always apply to prayer either.)
- Do we use language and clichés to impress others in our public prayers, rather than a sincere, humble supplication to our Heavenly Father?
- Are our prayers to God or to man?

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

closet ‘tameion’ (5009) – a chamber on the ground-floor or interior of a Middle-Eastern house used for storage or privacy, a spot for retirement, that is to remove oneself from distraction.

☞ Matt. 24:26; Luke 12:3, 24. Only occurs 4 times in N.T.

📖 JB: “But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.”

☛ 2 Kgs. 4:33; Psa. 139:7-13; Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16

Both the Pharisees and the faithful receive a reward, but how do they differ?

Clue: Look at the Greek words used for each and consider.

In contrast to this self-righteous approach to God, which was practised by the Pharisee, Jesus advocates private prayers – delivered from the heart. This way we will not be bothered with who is looking at us, and will gain neither man’s praise or his misunderstanding. But when Jesus speaks of entering the closet to pray he is not recommending that we go into some dank and dark cupboard, but rather that we seek our privacy. The word he uses is ‘tameion’ which simply means a place of privacy. Prayer needs to be a time of communication with God when all other distractions can be completely avoided. Then only can we speak to God without any impediment. What greater place of privacy can there be than our own hearts?

This is demonstrated in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:11-14). The Pharisee prayed ‘with himself’ (verse 11). Yet the publican was very conscious of his great need for God’s mercy as he smote upon his breast (heart). The prayer of the publican was therefore the private prayer between God and himself, but the Pharisee was praying, ever conscious of his audience. Out of the two it was the prayer of the publican that was heard by God (verse 14).

The lesson is that the sincere, private prayers of the saint will bring their reward (Jas. 5:16). Although we have seen that hypocrites and men-pleasers have a reward (verses 2, 5-6), this is only the final short-lived pleasure that the ways of the flesh might bring. But there is also the other reward offered to the saints. To them Jesus says, the Father shall “...reward thee openly”. This is also a theme and is used three times (verses 4, 6 and 18). It is quite a different reward than the one experienced by hypocrites and men-pleasers. It comes from the Greek word ‘apodidomi’ meaning something given away, a gift. This reminds us of Paul’s comment in Romans 6:23, “*The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*”. This gift, even though we may be undeserving in many ways, is to be given ‘openly’. This is another important term, ‘phaneros’, meaning something shining and apparent or public. This is to be the eventual reward of the saint who desires not the applause of men, but rather the everlasting praise of God.

Only by casting off the desires of our human nature through the power of the Word, can we create a correct approach to God.

Points to Consider

- What does Christ mean in today’s terms when we are instructed to ‘enter into thy closet’?
- Find examples where Jesus separated himself from the distractions around to wholly focus on His Father when he besought Him in prayer. How seriously do we engage in prayer like our Master did with his Heavenly Father? (And the Lord Jesus Christ was a man who knew no sin!)

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

- repetitions** ‘battologeo’ (945) – to stutter or to prate tediously. The word prate means to talk much and to little purpose!
Only used once here in the N.T.
- shall be heard** ‘eisakouo’ (1522) – to listen to. Vines: to hear and obey or to hear and answer.
☞ Luke 1:13; Acts 10:31; Heb. 5:7
- much speaking** ‘polologia’ (4180) – loquacity (which means the gift of the gab or babbling, noisy or talkative). Vines: literally “much speech”.
☞ Only used once here in the N.T. and it is also only used once in the LXX in Prov. 10:19.
JB: “In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do”. NIV: “do not keep on babbling like pagans”.
- like** ‘homoioo’ (3666) – to assimilate or to become similar, resemble.
☞ Matt. 7:24; 11:16
Here is the irony of life. In Luke 18:11 the Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men and yet it would have been better if he was just like that publican in attitude (Luke 18:13-14)!
☞ Wey: “Do not, however, imitate them”.
We are called to be separate from the world and followers (Greek ‘mimic’) of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).
- need** ‘chreia’ (5532) – requirement, necessity or necessary. Thayer: such things as needed for sustenance or for the journey.
☞ Mark 2:25; Acts 2:45; 20:34; Rom. 12:13; Phil. 4:19
- ask** ‘aiteo’ (154) – See Matt. 5:42
☞ Psa. 37:25; 55:17; 1 Pet. 5:6-7

Verse 7 commences with the words ***“But when ye pray...”***. This indicates that there is a correct approach to God in prayer. In Jesus’ day the formal prayers of the synagogue and the temple had degenerated into nothing more than meaningless ritual. For example, it is recorded that on the Day of Atonement some 40 different varieties of address to God were used, followed by some 70 different petitions for mercy. By this we can understand what Jesus meant when he spoke of the ‘vain repetitions’ of the Jews. We remember the prayers of the Baal worshippers of Elijah’s day, *“O Baal, hear us”*, repeated continuously from ‘morning until noon’ (1 Kgs. 18:26), or the worshippers of Diana who called out for the space of two hours, *“Great is Diana of the Ephesians”* (Acts 19:34). These vain repetitions achieved nothing.

By way of contrast Jesus also used repetition in prayer, but it was not vain. He used repetition in private prayer (Matt. 26:36-44; Luke 6:12; 18:1). Three times in the garden he used the same words, but that was to be heard of God, and not men. The prayers of men had been notorious for their ‘much speaking’; the word ‘speaking’ coming from ‘polologia’ meaning tiresome or long winded. Surely this is no way to approach God and in verse 8 Jesus says quite clearly we must not be like them. Let us remember that God has knowledge of our needs even before we ask Him in prayer. This principle is demonstrated in Daniel 9:19-22.

It is important for us to appreciate the value of a humble, sincere and disciplined approach to God in prayer.

Points to Consider

- In what way could we use vain repetitions in our prayers today?
- Is the length of a prayer important? Think of some very short but meaningful prayers in the Scripture.
- Does this mean that it is not important to spend a large amount of our time in communication with God? (cp. Psa. 119:145-148)
- How do we make our prayers more personal and varied so as to avoid using the same terms and phrases we become so familiar with (“parrot fashion”)?
- As well as considering how often we may be repetitive in our prayers, how does God feel when we offer the same prayers repeatedly?
- Do we repeat ourselves when we pray? What are some ways we can vary our prayers so they do not become ‘vain repetitions’? (Think of what you usually tend to pray for, the time of day you usually pray, what else you could be including in your prayers, etc.)
- If God knows all our needs, what are the reasons for praying? Make a list of some of the reasons. Think carefully because the Bible gives many reasons.
- Note that our Father knoweth our needs, not our wants. How do we tell the difference between needs and wants?

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”

After this manner ‘houtos’ (3779) – in this way or on this fashion.
 ♂ Mark 13:29; 1 Pet. 3:5

Hallowed be ‘hagiozo’ (37) – to make holy or to regard with respect and reverence. Vines: to set apart. It is opposite to ‘common’.
 ♂ 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:21

name ‘onoma’ (3686) – a name which conveys authority or character. Vines: a name implies authority, character, rank, majesty, power excellence and for GOD it expresses His personality or character.
 ♂ Matt. 7:22; John 17:6, 26; Acts 15:14
 ? Do we just say the words “Hallowed be thy name” as an opening to our prayer? How should our approach and attitude reflect the sentiments of these words?
 ♣ Mal. 1:6; 3:16-18; Rom. 8:14-17; Deut. 32:5-6; Psa. 103:13

The Lord's Prayer

This is a perfect example of a disciplined, humble approach to God in prayer. In contrast to the ‘vain repetitions’ this prayer can be delivered in less than a minute, and yet covers all those areas that are necessary when we approach God. It is also important to understand the composition of this prayer. It can be divided into three sections:

- Verses 9-10 are addressed to God.
- Verse 11, 12 and part of 13 address our own personal needs.
- The final section of verse 13 is again addressed to God.

Thus the composition of this prayer is **God, Man, God, or God first and last**. Our own requirements must fit into this pattern. (Remember this is a sample prayer that can be repeated, however one would advise that it not be used all the time.) Remember also that Jesus later instructed his disciples to make their petitions through his name (John 14:14; 16:24, 26). The words of this prayer are a beautiful contrast to the customs of the times, and later on when the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he repeated the words of this self-same prayer (Luke 11:2-4).

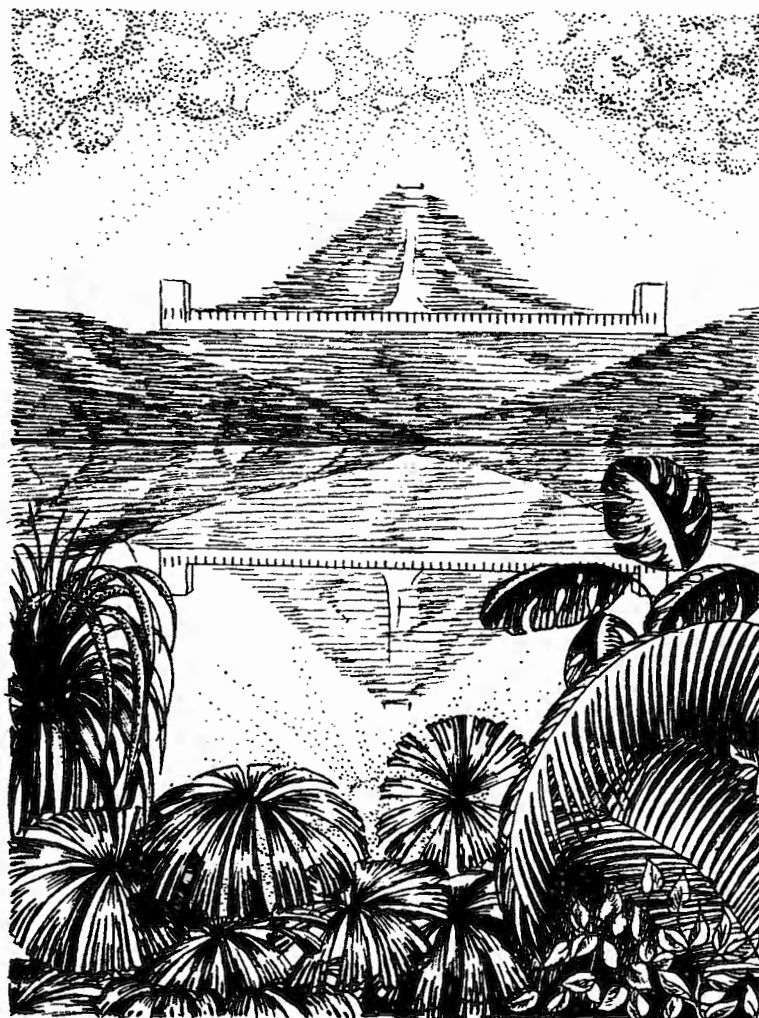
“Our Father which art in heaven” Jesus’ prayer commences with recognition of the absolute supremacy of God. There can be no questioning this fundamental supremacy. The reference to heaven is not just to the dwelling place of the Father, but also to the power and vastness of His creation, with heaven also being a symbol of the earth and the nations that dwell thereon. Therefore this prayer rightly commences with emphasis on this great being who is both Father and Creator of all things.

It is also important to recognise that Jesus commences with the words, *“Our Father...”*, thereby acknowledging that this was his God, as well as our God, which immediately overcomes any problem concerning a Trinitarian God. He is God and Father of Jesus Christ, as well as us all. The opening words of this prayer help us to understand the God to whom we should pray. It is possible that this opening phrase is based upon the words of the prophet, *“O LORD, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand”* (Isa. 64:8).

“Hallowed be thy name” Importantly, this follows the opening statement. Our understanding of the total supremacy of our Heavenly Father governs our relationship with Him. He is to be ‘hallowed’, which means to venerate, consecrate, make holy, or sanctify – from the Greek ‘hagios’. To hallow God’s name therefore goes far beyond a form of words which we might use in prayer. God must be hallowed in all our thoughts, emotions, and every action of our daily lives. This surely must provide the answer to many questions we may entertain regarding our relationships to many situations in life, such as the standards of behaviour and dress that we should adopt, and our approach to our fellow men.

Points to Consider

- “*After this manner*”. What does that tell us about how this prayer should be used?
- Where do you find a similar prayer to this in the Old Testament?
- God is our Father. Think carefully about what this really means and how it should influence the way we speak to God.
- Study the prayer carefully. Do we really understand what we are praying about when we approach God. Are we genuine in our prayers or do they become so ‘familiar’ to us, that we miss the impact of what we are praying about?
- What can you note of interest about the structure that may help you in your prayers?
- Why does Christ address God as “*Our Father*”?
- Is the great God who has created the earth so that you might be part of His glorious purpose, really **your** Father?
- Why begin with “*Our Father, which art in heaven*”? Isn’t this obvious?
- Read Ecclesiastes 5:2. How insignificant does this make you feel before Him and therefore obligated to respond to the offer He has made to you?
- We have considered that in declaring God’s name to be hallowed He must be hallowed in all our thoughts, emotions and every action of our daily life. How do we ensure that we are being governed daily in our words and actions by hallowed principles?



“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

will ‘thelema’ (2307) – a determination, inclination, desire or pleasure. Vines: desire or pleasure.
 ☞ Matt. 7:21; Luke 22:42; Acts 13:22; Rev. 4:11
 📖 RV: “As in heaven, so on earth”

It is of little profit to pray fervently for this future time if we are not striving to fulfil **God’s** will or desire now, such is self-delusion.

“Thy kingdom come” This is an expression of our desire that all that God has promised might come to pass as a fulfilment of the gospel message. The eventual establishment of the kingdom gives a tangible hope to all our prayers, and an object for our faith, and things we have come to believe concerning the teaching of the Scriptures. After all, what is the point of all the sacrifices of a godly life if, after death, there is to be nothing but oblivion? To pray for the coming of His kingdom is an expression of our belief and confidence in all that God has promised us.

The very core of the gospel is the establishment of God’s everlasting kingdom on earth. This kingdom will be given to those who worship Him on the basis of true faith (Dan. 7:27) as outlined in Matthew 5-7.

“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” We now begin to see a logical pattern of thought in this prayer. If we acknowledge the coming of the kingdom, we must also acknowledge the necessity of God’s will being done, because that is the basis of attaining to the kingdom. There is no disobedience in heaven where the angels appear in God’s presence and carry out His will. Likewise this pattern will be repeated upon the earth when the kingdom is established. However, for the saints who desire to be part of God’s kingdom, obedience to the divine will must be demonstrated **now**, as they prepare for the coming of their kingdom.

Such thoughts will also carry with them the lesson that whilst we may pray for the divine will to be accomplished in all its various manifestations, we are all still under the bondage of sin and death. Therefore, there is a very great need for us all to seek the divine strength to accomplish His will in our lives. We must continually pray for this strength, realising that in our own strength we can accomplish nothing.

These thoughts complete the first “godly” section of Jesus’ prayer. We have now progressed from a statement concerning the supremacy and sanctity of God, to an acknowledgment of His great purpose with humanity and our dependence upon Him for spiritual strength and deliverance from this evil world into the glorious kingdom of the future.

Points to Consider

- Do we really think that we desperately need the return of Christ and that the world in general does? If we don’t, we need to think very carefully about the things which we consider to be important in our life.
- To pray “*Thy kingdom come*” is to pray for a number of things. Think of some of these things and how they may affect your life now and what you are currently doing. What hobbies/interests would you currently be engaged in if you knew Christ was to return today? What activities do you wish to be found doing at Christ’s return?
- Think of people in Scripture whose greatest desire was the return of Christ.
- Do we always remember to pray for what is God’s will not our own wishes and desires, like Christ who said “*not my will, but thine be done*”?
- Are we earnestly and eagerly sincere in our request for the kingdom to come or does this become a matter of habit in our prayers?
- Read Isaiah 62:6-7. Is our desire for the kingdom to come as determined, consistent and eager as Isaiah’s? If not, why?
- Do you think a better vision of the kingdom will help? If so, how are you going to go about this? Write down your ideas of the kingdom and find quotes to support them?
- How is God’s will “*done in earth, as it is in heaven*” at the present time?

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

daily ‘epiousios’ (1967) – for subsistence, needful. Look at your own Lexicons and see the couple of different meanings ascribed to this Greek word and see if the principle can be taken from both.

☉ Luke 11:3

☛ Isa. 55:1; Prov. 30:8-9

? Although we live in a land where food on the table is not a worry, do we anxiously worry about making sure we feed on the Bible every day! Do we ask **God** to give us wisdom and understanding every day when we place His food before us?

“Give us this day our daily bread” May we never forget that we are truly dependent upon God for our daily bread. When Paul was in Lystra, he taught that God “...*left not himself without witness... and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*” (Acts 14:17). This is an acknowledgment of a basic fact of life – God **does** give us our bread every day. We have the example of the wilderness wanderings of Israel when God fed the nation on a daily basis with bread from heaven (Deut. 8:1-3). Every morning they went out and found upon the ground that small white substance called manna which formed the basis of their diet for 40 years. Jesus later used this lesson to point out that the physical provision of daily bread was a figure of the spiritual sustenance which is also provided for us by our Heavenly Father (John 6:32-33).

Therefore we pray, ***“Give us this day our daily bread”***, and we remember that we have need of God to provide both physical and spiritual sustenance, without which we would surely perish. When we use such terms in prayer we also have to remember that we have no need to pray for present comforts, but only the real necessities of life. Other things can distract us and lead us away from God. Let us realise that man by nature is far moved from God and needs all the spiritual strength he can get as he stumbles through this wilderness called life.

Points to Consider

- What do we believe is the most important kind of ‘daily bread’? Does your daily life back this up?
- Are we inclined to ask God for our wants? Think of some of the things you may have asked God for recently. Which category do they fall into?
- Matthew 5:45 says God sends rain on the just and the unjust. If God is providing food, raiment, shelter, etc. to those who are ignorant of Him and His ways, as well as those who strive to serve Him, why is there a need to pray for our daily bread when He will provide it anyway?
- Christ emphasises the need for our physical and spiritual daily sustenance. There is very rarely a day we go without physical food. Do we ensure we are receiving our daily intake of spiritual food and make it a matter of prayer? If not, discuss with others some of the habits we can develop to ensure we are feeding daily.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

- forgive** ‘aphiemi’ (863) – to send forth. Vines: primarily, to send forth, send away (‘apo’, from ‘hiemi’, to send), denotes to remit or forgive.
- ? Can you think of an Old Testament reference that relates to the meaning of this word and fits the context of Matt. 6:12?
- ☞ Matt. 9:2; 18:21, 27, 32, 35; 1 John 1:9
- debts** ‘opheilema’ (3783) – Vines: that which is legally due (Rom. 6:23), metaphorically, of sin (Luke 11:4) as a debt, because it demands expiation, and thus payment by way of punishment.
- ☞ Rom. 4:4; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.
- debtors** ‘opheiletes’ (3781) – an owner or one indebted. Vines: one who owes anything to another.
- ☞ Matt. 18:24; Luke 13:4; Rom. 8:12
- ☞ Mark 11:25-26

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” The term ‘debts’ figuratively means sins from the Greek ‘opheilema’ meaning something owed or due, or a fault. We are all at fault in the sight of God. Likewise ‘debtors’ figuratively means someone who we feel may have sinned, particularly against ourselves. It is from the Greek ‘opheiletes’ meaning one who owes something to another, a delinquent, or a transgressor.

This section of the prayer is about more than merely asking for forgiveness of our own sins; it is also about proving our worthiness for forgiveness! One way that our worthiness can be proved is by our ability to forgive the sins of others. This may not be an easy thing to do, particularly as the requirement is that we must be prepared to forgive from the heart those who have sinned against us personally. No doubt if someone has genuinely wronged us we feel a strong desire for justice to be done, or maybe even revenge. But even if we have been wronged we must realise that all men are sinners, **including ourselves**, and therefore the person who may have wronged us is no different from ourselves.

We have, then, a basic lesson in humility. We must forget that we have been wronged, forgive our adversary, and then ask God for His forgiveness of the things **we have done** that are wrong in His sight. So important is this principle, that it is repeated by Jesus after the conclusion of this prayer (verses 14-15).

The principle of forgiveness is very important in our relationship with God. If we cannot forgive the faults of others, how can we expect God to forgive us our faults? This is an extremely important principle and is fundamental to true Christ-like living, and to our own salvation. These things are a logical development to the things taught in the Beatitudes (chapter 5). *“Blessed are the meek”, “the merciful”, “the peacemakers”* and those who are *“persecuted for righteousness sake”*.

Points to Consider

- Will **God** forgive us all our sins if we gladly forgive everyone their transgressions? Is this verse teaching such an equation?
- Compare what we have just considered in Matthew 5:38-45
 - Are we prepared to forgive others to the extent God shows mercy to us?
 - Do we hold grudges against someone when they have wronged us and then seek forgiveness from our Heavenly Father for our own shortcomings?
 - If we have a problem with a brother do we heed the advice of Matthew 18:15-17 or do we gossip to others about the wrong that has been done and never take steps to resolve the issue?
 - Consider the words in Colossians 3:12-14

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

lead

‘eisphero’ (1533) – to carry inward, bring in.
Luke 5:18,19; 11:4

temptation

‘peirasmos’ (3986) – a putting to proof or to test; by implication, adversity. Vines: trials or temptations, divinely permitted or sent.
Matt. 26:41; Luke 4:13; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Pet. 2:9

deliver

‘rhuomai’ (4506) – to rush or draw (for oneself), ie. rescue. Vines: to preserve. Thayer: to draw to one’s self.
Matt. 27:43; Luke 1:74; Rom. 7:24; 2 Tim. 3:11; 4:17-18

evil

‘poneros’ (4190) – See Matt. 5:11
Diaglott: “and abandon us not to trial, but preserve us from evil.”



Jer. 15:20-21; John 17:15; Phil. 4:13

In asking **God** not to lead us into temptation there must be a real desire on our part not to lead **ourselves** into temptations which are indeed a trial.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” Here is a recognition of our own weaknesses and sins in the sight of God. Here we might make a request that God delivers us from circumstances wherein our own foolishness might lead us into ways of sin. It is also a recognition that we always need divine guidance to direct our ways.

We must always recognise that there are many things with which we come in contact on a daily basis that can have an adverse effect upon us. Whilst God will not grant us immunity from these things, He can always grant us the strength to help us overcome them. It is in the overcoming that we can build up the character that God wants to see in us, and also hallow His name in our personal actions. Whilst we may pray for the forgiveness of our sins, it is equally important to keep away from circumstances that might offer temptation to sin. We must always place the kingdom before our personal desires, and act in ways that will bring glory to the name of God, and honour the great purpose set before us.

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.” This is like a summary of all the things Jesus has mentioned in his prayer and is a mini-statement of the whole purpose of God:

- “Thine is the kingdom”: God’s sovereignty, past, present and future.
- “Thine is the power”: God’s capability to perform all things.
- “Thine is the glory”: The omnipotence and majesty He alone possesses.
- “For ever”: Meaning eternity. There is no end to God.

Each disciple who earnestly prays according to the sentiments of this prayer is identifying with the eternal purpose of His God. Also he is acknowledging and desiring that the purpose of God be fulfilled for the everlasting benefit of the earth, as well as for himself. Such a disciple will demonstrate that future hope and desire by living out these principles now in this day of opportunity.

“Amen.” Signifies that all that has been spoken is trustworthy and true beyond doubt. All who pray in this manner must be in agreement with everything said. We know that God has revealed His purpose, and we know that He has laid down the principles by which we, as mortal sinners, may find a part in this eternal purpose, and to all these things we say ‘Amen’.

Brief though the Lord’s Prayer may be, there is contained within its words a foretaste of the kingdom, and the way that it may be attained. Prayer must always remain an important avenue of maintaining a correct and close personal relationship with God. May we therefore perceive the matter of prayer as a very important personal responsibility, and never neglect the opportunity of pouring out our hearts to God, in both thanksgiving and praise, and also in seeking forgiveness of our sins in humble submission to His will. The eventual fulfilment of the gospel promises is sure – the only thing unsure is our personal response. Surely we owe it to ourselves to build up our relationship with God through His Word and the means of prayer, and in so doing make our *“...calling and election sure”* (2 Pet. 1:10).

Brain Teaser

- Many of the current translations such as the RV, RSV, Roth, Weymouth, JB omit all words in this verse after evil. Would you agree with this omission? Clue: Our Lord builds his words and sayings on those he has read before in the Old Testament.

Points to Consider

- If we mix with the world more than necessary or enjoy its entertainments and activities, how can we then ask God to lead us not into temptation when we are actually bringing temptations into our lives? Remember no-one is strong enough to overcome the temptations of the world, we need to avoid them. (Prov. 4:15; Rom. 12:9; 2 Tim. 2:22)
- What is the same about the beginning and ending of this prayer?
- Colour in the words 'thy/thine' and 'us/our' in the prayer.
- What is the main point of the prayer?
- When we pray, what should be the main focus of our prayer?
- We have considered a suggested prayer by the Lord Jesus Christ. What else could we include in our personal prayers?
- In what way could you expand upon this prayer, for example, think of who you are praying to, are you praying for things according to the Father's will, who else could you pray for, etc.
- List difficulties you have in prayer and why? What are ways you can overcome these?

Does this imply God could lead us into temptation? James 1:13 states, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man". But here we ask God not to lead us into temptation. What is the answer to this apparent contradiction? Could you expect God to prevent a car accident occurring if you are driving over the speed limit?

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

trespasses ‘paraptoma’ (3900) – a side-slip (lapse or deviation). Vines: a false step or a blunder. Thayer: a fall beside or near something.

☞ Matt. 18:35; Rom. 4:25; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:16

☞ 2 Sam. 22:26-28; Prov. 21:13; Eph. 4:31-32; Col. 3:12-14; Jas. 2:13

“If we harden our hearts against our fellows we shall harden our hearts against God also and thus prevent his forgiveness reaching us.” (*Prayer: Studies in Principle and Practice*, page 55)

? Do we strive for an artificial peace or forgiveness by glossing over differences but harbouring grudges?

These last two verses should provide us with an incentive to carefully consider our relationship with our brothers and sisters, and to strive to remedy our attitude towards others where necessary. On the other hand, in this closing age when the concept of **love** is emphasised beyond Biblical parameters, we must never lose sight of the balanced teachings of the law (see Lev. 19:17-18). Both these verses reveal how we do love our neighbour!

At the conclusion of his prayer, Jesus again singles out the matter of forgiveness for special attention. He points out that if we are unable to exercise forgiveness towards others for their trespasses, we cannot hope to have our own trespasses forgiven. The term is the Greek ‘paraptoma’ meaning a lapse, or deviation and is used sometimes for either intentional or unintentional errors. The term is obviously related to debt or debtor used in verse 12. Perhaps Jesus has re-introduced this fact to remind us that no matter how often we may pray for strength or forgiveness, we will lapse into error from time to time. We are never to overlook this fact in either our personal prayers, or our continual dealings with our brethren and sisters, or our fellow men.

Forgiveness of our sins depends on more than merely asking – it also depends upon a correct attitude towards the mistakes of others.


Brain Teaser

- Why has our Lord placed verse 13 in between two verses that deal with forgiveness?

Points to Consider

- Can we expect God to forgive us for all the sins we have committed if we can’t forgive those who have done small wrongs against us?
- When we genuinely repent of what we’ve done wrong and ask God for forgiveness, He removes our sins “*as far as the east is from the west*”, they are never held against us, even at the judgment seat. Is this how we forgive others?
- Make a list of things that we need to do to gain forgiveness from God.

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

<u>fast</u>	‘nesteuo’ (3522) – to abstain from food, not eating. Luke 18:12; Acts 10:30; 13:2, 3 Isa. 58:3-14; Zech. 7:4-6
<u>sad countenance</u>	‘skuthropos’ (4659) – of a gloomy or mournful appearance. Literally it means gloomy or sad eyed. Luke 24:17; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.
<u>disfigure</u>	‘aphanizo’ (853) – Vines: primarily means to cause to disappear, hence to make unsightly. Thayer: to deprive of lustre, render unsightly. Acts 13:41; Jas. 4:14; Only occurs 5 times in N.T.
<u>may appear</u>	‘phaino’ (5316) – ‘to lighten (shine), ie. show, to appear’ in contrast to the word above which means to disappear! The Pharisees made themselves unsightly that they may be sighted!
	Roth: “of a sullen countenance, for they darken their looks”. Moff: “do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they look woebegone”. JB: “they go about looking unsightly”.
?	Do we perform our spiritual activities for the sole purpose of ensuring that others come to recognise just how ‘spiritual’ we are?

Fasting

One thing above all else that is necessary in fasting is self-discipline, driven by a love of God. This requires the control of one’s natural desires, which is often the hardest thing of all for us to do. But it is quite fitting that this requirement is now demonstrated by Jesus immediately after his example of discipline in prayer, as we must be able to discipline ourselves in every aspect of daily living as well as in prayer. However, this principle of self-discipline had been lost in Jesus’ day as the hypocrites of the time made sure that everyone knew that they were fasting by reason of their sad countenances and disfigured faces. In other words, the thinking of the human mind had taken control even in this most important aspect of their service, and they were still most desirous of receiving the acclaim of men, rather than the acclaim of God. Jesus said, “*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward*”.

It has been noted by commentators that the Jews, at this time, had institutionalised their public days of fasting in Jerusalem to coincide with the market days. This meant that those who wished to make a public spectacle of their fasting had a maximum audience in the same manner as those who made public prayers on the street corners (verse 5). It is little wonder that Jesus called them hypocrites.

However, the great day of fasting under the Law of Moses was the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:29). How different were the lessons on that day regarding one’s approach to God! It was a day for the afflicting and humbling of the soul. Every aspect of our approach to God must be disciplined so that we maintain a humble and reverent attitude in the realisation that our ultimate eternal reward can only be achieved in the control of these natural desires of our nature.

It is not the outward show of discipline that counts, but rather the inward control of the heart by the power of the Word, which is seen by God.

Brain Teaser

- All of us need ‘self-discipline’, however from a Biblical point of view is this the same as will-power?

Points to Consider

- Where else in Scripture do we read about people fasting?
- How can we apply the principles behind fasting in our lives today?

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

anoint ‘aleipho’ (218) – to oil with perfume.
 ☞ Mark 6:13; Luke 7:38,46; Jas. 5:14

wash ‘nipto’ (3538) – to cleanse especially the hands or the feet or the face.
 ☞ John 9:7; 13:5-14
 ☛ Ex. 25:2; Luke 16:15; Acts 5:41; 2 Cor. 9:7

A believer in God should learn to walk in the ways of God, not because of the reward but because of the love of God and the desire to please God. The driving force behind all these things is not seen but is found in the inward parts written upon the fleshly tables of the heart.

Jesus’ counsel is to refrain from this outward show practised by the hypocrites. If the disciple genuinely wants to fast, or practise self-discipline in the name of God, then there will be many areas that he will need to consider. The least of these will be a gloomy visage, which is merely calculated to attract the attention of others. An example of such self control over such wicked impulses has already been given in Matthew 5:29-30.

The admiration of one’s fellows is probably the most coveted of all the desires of the flesh and can have an attraction more powerful than personal riches or power. However, this is not the way of Christ – it is how we appear in the sight of God that counts the most. Any other way must be carefully avoided. Paul sums it all up in very few words in Galatians 6:3, *“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself”*. We cannot deceive God, so why bother trying to deceive others? By way of contrast *“...great is the reward in heaven...”* for that disciple who in all humility, honesty and integrity does not seek for glory of men, but instead desires the honour and glory of God to be manifest in mankind.

Let us never forget that God observes what men do not see.

Points to Consider

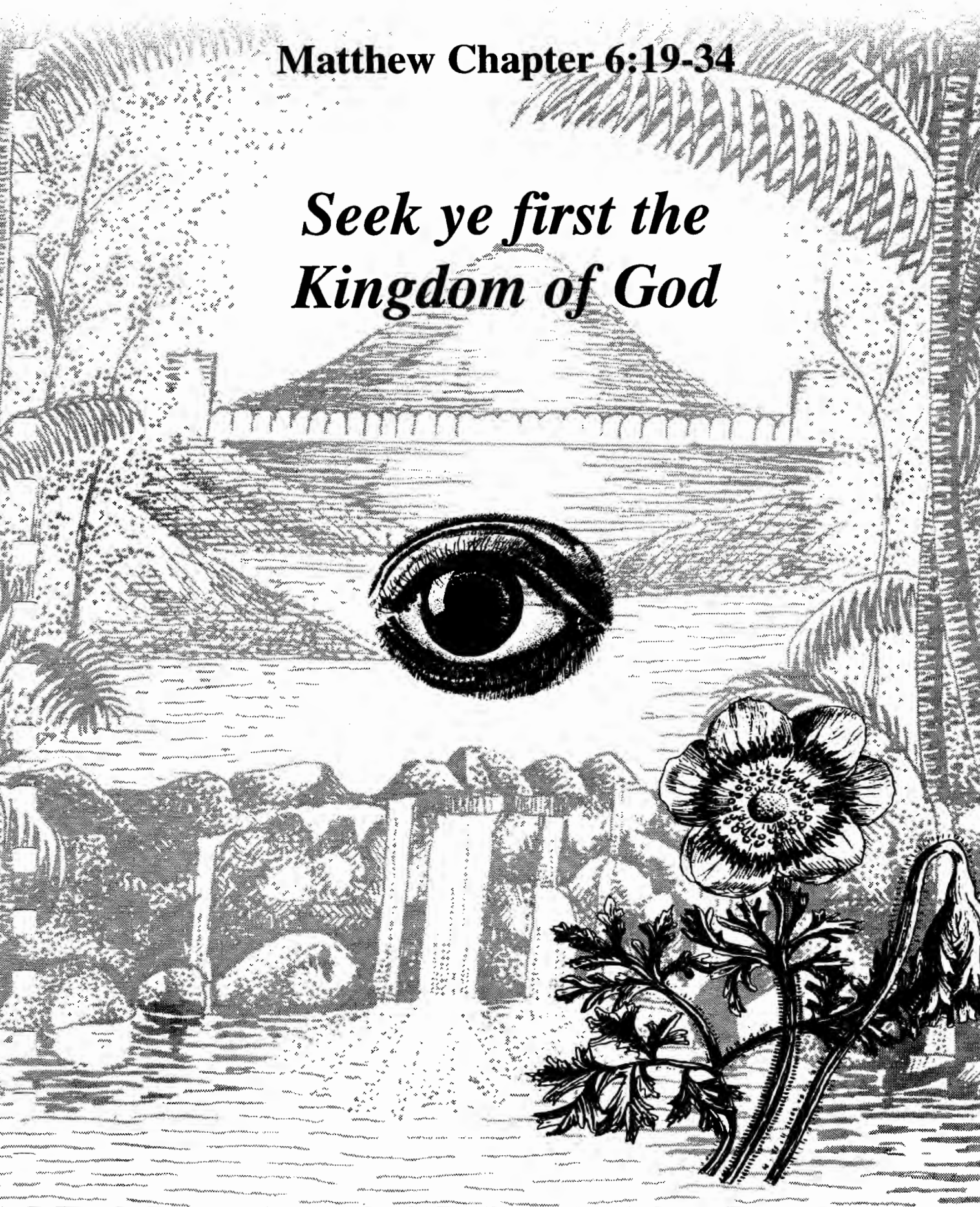
- When we are faced with difficulties, do we thrive on self-pity and burden our woes on others to receive their sympathies and appraisals?
- What was the purpose of anointing and washing? Why does Jesus suggest it here?
- Who is the only one to whom we can turn when experiencing trials?

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”
Psalm 55:22

Discussion Group Four

Matthew Chapter 6:19-34

*Seek ye first the
Kingdom of God*



SECTION 4

Matthew 6:19-34 Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

The remainder of Matthew 6 now goes on to speak of more down to earth issues and therefore they are issues with which we can readily relate:

Verse 19-23: The attainment, or hoarding of worldly wealth: Our treasure is in heaven.

Verse 24-26: The provision of our daily meat and drink: As we feed, so we develop, both physically and spiritually.

Verse 27-34: The outward adorning of our person: Like the outward show of the Pharisee this can sometimes be window dressing in an attempt to impress others who may be watching.

These are all common everyday things which affect us all to a greater or lesser degree, but sometimes they are sufficient to reveal where our true values really lie in our present period of discipleship. Therefore the disciple is once again placed under examination to see where he stands in relation to either the curse of materialism or the love of his God.

We should ask ourselves just how much worth we place in the things of this present world. Sometimes a lack of "worldly" values may prove to be of great benefit on our way to the kingdom. Often we place value upon our worldly assets which are far beyond their real worth. In these verses Jesus shows how these things can become an alternative god called Mammon. He then goes on to show how a Mammon worshipper is unable to qualify for the kingdom of God.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:”

Lay not up

‘thesaurizo’ (2343) – to amass or reserve, to heap up or to treasure.
 Luke 12:21; Jas. 5:3

treasures

‘thesauros’ (2344) – a deposit, ie. wealth. Vines: it conveys the idea of a place of safe keeping or a storehouse.
 Matt. 19:21; Col. 2:3; Heb. 11:26

moth

‘ses’ (4597) – Vines: denotes a clothes moth. In Job 4:19 “*crushed before the moth*” alludes apparently to the fact that woollen materials, riddled by the larvae of moths, become so fragile that a touch demolishes them.
 Matt. 6:20; Luke 12:33; Only occurs 3 times.

rust

‘brosis’ (1035) – this word comes from the base of ‘bibrosko’ which means to eat. It conveys the idea of eating or consuming. Hence it is rendered rust because rust consumes and eats away the material it is found on. It is usually rendered as meat or eating.
 John 6:27; Rom. 14:17; Heb. 12:16

corrupt

‘aphanizo’ (853) – to render unapparent, to disappear or destroy.
 Jas. 4:14

break through

‘diorusso’ (1358) – to penetrate as a burglar. Vines: literally it means to dig through.
 Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39



JB: “Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth”
 Job 31:24, 25, 28; Isa. 51:7-8; Matt. 8:20; Col. 3:2; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; 1 Pet. 1:4

? What do you think Ecclesiastes 5:10 is teaching in relation to the comment: “If only I earned just a little bit more money each year?”

Jesus now commences to contrast covetousness with the true riches of life and to make a test which will establish where our true values really lie. We have previously seen how the Pharisees, in their self-righteous exhibition of play acting, were shown to be very shallow in their motives. Now in like manner a pointless accumulation of worldly riches in whatever form is also shown to be of no value. Jesus shows that many of the things which we place great value in, really only give us a very false sense of security.

Fine clothing and similar materials can be damaged by the moth. Other materials can be “...*eaten away until they are nothing...*” (literal translation) and then if there is anything left they can still be taken away from their owner. In those days a thief could actually dig through the mud walls of a building, or the covetous taxman (publican) could claim exorbitant amounts which were sent to finance the Roman Empire, and sometimes to line the taxman’s own pockets.

These things bear a resemblance to our own society. Sometimes we may be forced into a whirlwind of spending just to try and keep up with the rest of society around us, and it is of no avail at all. These things bring no lasting satisfaction, but only added frustrations. No matter what advantages the accumulation of worldly wealth may seem to have over the way of Christ, they cannot last.

The thoughts of this verse could be well based on those of the prophet Isaiah: “*Behold the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up*” (Isa. 50:9). The prophet then continues “...*but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteous shall not be abolished*” (Isa. 51:6). The things of God present to us an absolute guarantee which far exceeds any riches that the present world may offer to us.

We must be very careful to establish where our true values really lie.

Points to Consider

- Is Jesus talking just about money here? What other things could we call earthly treasures?
- Do you think that it is the amount of money we have that is the problem? Find verses and examples in Scripture which tells us what the real problem is.
- What are your most valued possessions? Which ones could you do without?
- What do you think should be your most treasured riches in the Truth?
- Do you place as much value on the Word of God as you do your most valued possessions? How does your daily life reveal this?

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

- 📖 JB: “But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven”.
- ☛ Prov. 2:1-5; 15:6; Psa. 31:19
- ? The great challenge for us is to actually make the things of God seem a ‘treasure’ to be sought after with great zeal, desire and dedication. Why is it that some brothers and sisters just love to meditate or study the Bible and others don’t? Is it to do with the way we are naturally?

This verse contains some of the most important advice in Scripture. What is our choice to be – worldly treasure, or heavenly riches? Proverbs 11:4 holds the key to what Jesus is saying: *“Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death”*. Although our worldly riches may accumulate a great store of attractive things in this present life, let us not overlook the fact that they could be accumulating something else as well – wrath in heaven – ‘the day of wrath’ referring to the day of judgment at which we must all give account for our actions. In contrast, our lack of desire for these earthly riches may be offset by the fact that great riches of the type that do not rust or corrupt may be accumulated for us in heaven.

Paul also takes up the same thought in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 exhorting us not to put our trust in *“...uncertain riches, but in the living God...”*. This principle had been previously demonstrated by Peter when he healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. *“Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”* (Acts 3:6) Peter possessed things of minimal value in the eyes of the world around him, but what a great gift he was able to give to that unfortunate man! But it is such as Peter, who have forsaken worldly treasures, that will become a treasure themselves, and will be numbered amongst spiritual Israel of whom God had said at Sinai *“Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine”* (Ex. 19:5). In the day to come the saints will become the ‘jewels of God’ (Mal. 3:17).

Which category of people would you like to belong to?

1. Those who have neither silver or gold – and nothing else.
2. Those who have much silver and gold – but nothing else.
3. Those like Peter who have no silver and gold – but faith and hope in Christ. Such are rich unto God.

Let us really value God’s treasures.

Points to Consider

- *“Godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Tim. 6:6). What does this verse tell us about our attitude to money?
- Read what Solomon has to say about worldly riches in Ecclesiastes. Why does he constantly say that there is no **profit** in these things? What is the one thing in which there is profit?
- What treasures should we be storing?
- How is it that it is not possible for these treasures to rust, corrupt or be stolen?

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

The natural reaction of most of us if we were accused of letting something else stand in the way of the Truth, would be one of either denial or horror. Bro. L.G. Sargent deals with this problem in an interesting fashion which he calls the “magnet of the heart” (*Teaching of the Master*, page 235). His illustration of how certain things have an irresistible draw upon the human heart is classic.

He likens the human heart to a compass needle which always points due north. But if a magnet is produced, all control over the compass needle is lost, and it will irresistibly point to wherever the magnet is found. Therefore this verse is saying that the heart will always follow wherever the magnet is placed. May we therefore honestly ask ourselves what the true magnet of our hearts really might be. For example, after a valuable ecclesial study do we go home and watch TV, or read a glossy magazine, or just waste time in empty talk? Or on the other hand do we go home to mark up our Bibles or consider some of the points which the study has produced? Once again the lesson is very clear. The magnet of our heart must always be the wonderful Word of God.

This exhortation is actually an epilogue to Matthew 5:29-30. That is if our ‘right eye’ or ‘right hand’ offend us they should be plucked out and cast away. This is the only way that we can prevent our hearts being drawn off course, and thus cause us to lose direction in our journey towards the kingdom of God. In Philippians 3:20 Paul reminds us that “...we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”. It is essential that we are always looking in the right direction, and that the magnet of our hearts is the power of the Word of God which can overcome all the other forces to which we may be subject in today’s evil world.

We must always be sure of our direction in life.

Points to Consider

- This verse needs no great exposition but lots of honest contemplation. All of us can answer the penetrating question: What do we spend most of our time doing and thinking about?
- What is the magnet of **your** heart?
- What hobbies, activities, etc. occupy your spare time? How often do these tend to dominate your thoughts?
- Do you ever think about the way you conduct yourself as being a reflection of how your heart thinks? Consider the way you speak, dress, act before others etc. With this principle in mind, think of some examples in Scripture.
- Are such attributes Christ-like characteristics our Father desires to see in us as we strive to be His children?

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”

light

‘luchnos’ (3088) – See Matt. 5:15
 Luke 12:35; Rev. 21:23; 22:5

single

‘haplous’ (573) – prop. folded together, ie. single (fig. clear). Vines: simple, single. Singleness of purpose keeps us from the snare of having a double treasure and consequently a divided heart. Thayer: simple, single, (in which there is nothing complicated or confused; without folds), sound.
 Luke 11:34; Only used 2 times in N.T.

full of light

‘photeinos’ (5460) – Vines: bright.

Matt. 17:5; Luke 11:34, 36; Occurs 5 times in N.T.

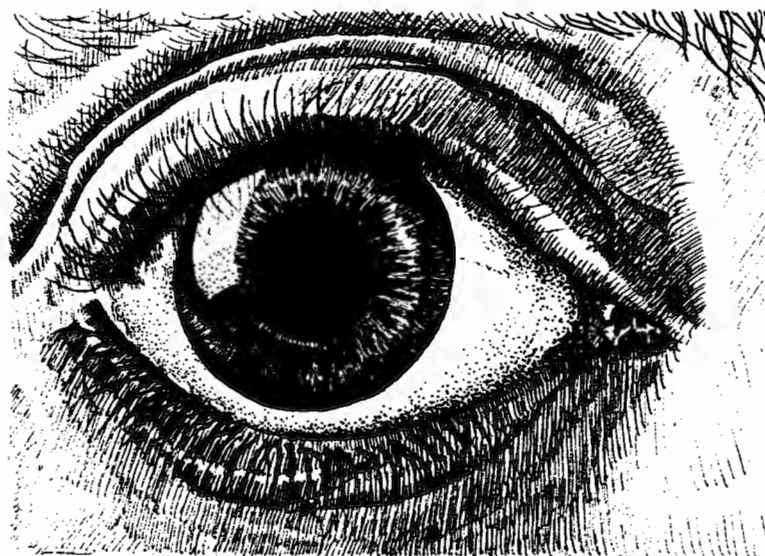


JB, RSV: “The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light.”

In previous verses Jesus has spoken about the most important organ of the body which is the heart. Now he goes on to speak of what could well be the second most important organ of the human body, and that is the eye. What the eye sees controls the desire of the heart. **What the eye perceives, the heart conceives**, and so we have the process described in James 1:14-15 which describes the way in which the individual may fall into sin. We have, then, a very important exhortation – be very careful what penetrates our eye. It is only when light penetrates the eye that we are able to see what is around us, and avoid any obstacle that might be in our path. This ‘light’ is very important. In Greek it is ‘photeinos’ (hence English ‘photograph’ etc) and means lustrous, or well illuminated.

Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world”* (John 8:12). We too need our path to be well illuminated by the Word of God. A similar lesson can be found in Matthew 5:15-16 which speaks of the candle, Greek ‘luchnos’ meaning a portable illuminator. Our portable illuminator is of course our Bible which is very easily carried around with us and should never be very far away from our side. It is not surprising that the second time that light is used in verse 22 it is this word ‘luchnos’. May we interpret this as saying that **our whole body should be full of the Bible**. If this is so we will find that our eye will be single – we will become ‘singled minded’ in the things of God.

If our minds are filled with the light of the Word of God, there is no room for darkness.



“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

- evil** ‘poneros’ (4190) – See Matt. 5:11
- full of darkness** ‘skoteinos’ (4652) – opaque. Vines: full or covered with darkness. The group of ‘skot’ words is derived from a root ‘ska’, meaning to cover. It is the opposite of ‘photeinos’, full of light, Matt. 6:22.
- ☞ Luke 11:34,36; Only used 3 times in N.T.
- darkness** ‘skotos’ (4655) – shadiness, ie. obscurity. Thayer: ‘metaph’, of ignorance respecting divine things and human duties, and the accompanying ungodliness and immorality, together with their consequent misery.
- ☞ Matt. 4:16; John 3:19; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11; 1 John 1:6

Where our treasure is, will determine what light source we expose our minds to and this will determine whether we are walking in light or in darkness. Again we see the simplicity of our Lord’s teaching. We are either full of light or full of darkness, there are no half-measures. If we are not continually taking in the light of God’s Word then our thinking will be natural, and how great is that darkness and how deceived we will be.

This is the contrast to verse 22. It speaks of an eye which will not allow the light of the Word to penetrate into the heart and mind. Such is called an ‘evil eye’ and has a defiling influence upon the whole body. In Deuteronomy 15:9 we find that an ‘evil eye’ is equated with a wicked heart. Likewise Proverbs 28:22 equates an evil eye with a person who hastens to be rich. Many years later John no doubt remembered all these things when he wrote about the “...*lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...*” (1 John 2:16). These three examples are all used of the eye which is not single-mindedly focussed upon the things of God.

The last sentence of this verse appears to be an impossibility. How can the “...*light which is in thee be darkness*”? This light is the Greek ‘phos’ which means to make something manifest. If a heart is governed by an ‘evil eye’ there is nothing to be seen. When God looks upon the heart of his disciples he expects to see something of the character of his sinless son reflected in their hearts. If human hearts are not illuminated in some way by the light of the gospel they are as the darkness that was upon the face of the waters before the Spirit of God moved upon them and divided light from darkness. How great was that darkness?

Ensure the light of the Spirit Word illuminates our steps.

Points to Consider

- How is the lesson of these verses 22-23 similar to verses 19-21?
- What are some other quotes that tell us the importance of serving God with singleness of mind?
- Is your vision single or are you currently trying to focus on other ambitions at the same time? What are some of the outside influences that could be obstructing our vision?
- What should be our ultimate focus?
- What is meant by the term evil eye? Look up the following passages to find the answer: Deut. 15:7-9; 28:54-57; Prov. 23:4-7; 28:22; Matt. 20:11-15; Mark 7:22.
- How does the whole body become full of darkness?
- How can light be darkness?
- How are you going to ensure darkness does not penetrate through your light?

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

- serve** ‘douleuo’ (1398) – to be a slave, to be in bondage.
 ☞ Rom. 6:6; 7:25; 16:18; Titus 3:3
- masters** ‘kurios’ (2962) – supreme in authority, controller. Vines: one who exercises power. Who or what exercises power over us?
 Usually rendered ‘Lord’ in N.T. some 670 times.
- hate** ‘miseo’ (3404) – to detest.
 ☞ John 3:20; 12:25; Heb. 1:9
- love** ‘agapao’ (25) – See Matt. 5:43
- will hold** ‘antechomai’ (472) – to hold oneself opposite to, ie. (by implication) to adhere to, to care for. Vines: to hold firmly to, to cleave to. Thayer: to keep one’s self directly opposite to any one.
 ☞ Luke 16:13; 1 Thes. 5:14; Tit. 1:9; Occurs 4 times in N.T.
- despise** ‘kataphroneo’ (2706) – to think against, ie. disesteem. Vines: to think slightly of. Thayer: to think little or nothing of.
 ☞ Matt. 18:10; Rom. 2:4; 1 Cor. 11:22
- mammon** ‘mammonas’ (3126) – Vines: akin to a Hebrew word signifying to be firm, steadfast (whence Amen), hence, that which is to be trusted. Gesenius regards it as derived from a Hebrew word signifying ‘treasure’ (Gen 43:23). Thayer: what is trusted in. The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word in Isa. 33:6; and Psa. 37:3
 ☞ Luke 16:9,11,13; Occurs 4 times in N.T.
 ☛ Matt. 12:25-30; 19:20-26; Mark 9:38-40; Rom. 6:16

This is the introduction to the alternative god Mammon. The worship of this god is the result of having an ‘evil eye’ (v23). The term comes from the Chaldee ‘mammonas’ and can mean wealth, avarice, self-confidence or a combination of all three, and a more demanding God is yet to be found. Worship of this god leaves no room for the worship of the God of Israel, and it is merely another manifestation of that evil trinity, “...*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*”. In this guise, Mammon is the best known and most faithfully served of all gods.

In using this illustration Jesus is again referring to a social custom of the times. It was impossible for a bond-slave in a rich man’s house to serve two masters – he was completely owned by one master, and could display loyalty to no other man. However the things represented by Mammon can so dominate the human heart as to take control of the entire imagination and ambition and so becomes just as much an idol as any other form of worship. Consider some Old Testament examples of idolatry:

- **Baal:** Elijah said that this worship caused Israel to “...*halt between two opinions*” (1 Kgs. 18:21). Does not James say that a “...*double minded man is unstable in all his ways*” (Jas. 1:8)? This is the same as trying to serve two masters.
- **Molech:** Worship of this idol generated such power over the human imagination that its followers were willing to offer human sacrifice.

Consequently the words of Romans 6:6 are extremely important. “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not serve sin.*”

Remember the words of Paul, that covetousness is idolatry.

Points to Consider

- There are only two masters we can serve – God or mammon. Do we sometimes try and combine the two of them in our lives? How? Why isn't this possible?
- Can you think of things we do that are really 'serving mammon' although we may not be doing anything usually considered wrong?
- Consider the phrase 'ye cannot' and follow the contexts in which it is used: Josh. 24:19; 1 Cor. 10:21; Gal. 5:17.
- "No man can serve two masters". Does this mean we shouldn't have two jobs?

Selah

- A master tells his servant what he can and cannot do. Is money and wealth the slave or the master? Surely money is the master because it tells us what we can and cannot do!

Is it wrong to go into a business partnership with someone outside the truth? Why? Would it be wrong to share the purchase of a property with someone outside the truth? Why? Do you make yourself available for work functions and seminars to improve your conduct at work which may conflict with Bible studies, classes, camps etc. Who are you serving in these situations? Do you enjoy mixing with people of the world?

Who are you serving and giving glory to when you engage or take an interest in the following: TV, videos, theatres, sporting events, gambling, drinking, drugs, computer games, novels, magazines, comics, smoking, immodest dress, modern music, etc. How can you make better use of your time and devote your utmost loyalty to serving your Heavenly Father?

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”

thought ‘merimnao’ (3309) – Vines: to have a distracting care. Bullinger: to be full of anxiety which divides up and distracts the mind, to be full of cares (Mark 4:19).
This word occurs 6 times from this verse onwards until the end of the chapter!
☞ Luke 10:41; 1 Cor. 7:34; Phil. 4:6

put on ‘enduo’ (1746) – used in the sense of sinking into a garment. Thayer: to be adorned. Bullinger: to go into, as into a garment.
☞ Mark 1:6; Rom. 13:14; Eph. 6:11

📖 NIV: “Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”

The solution to these following verses was hinted at in the previous verse. Who do we put our trust in? If it is ourselves then we will always worry and have undue care because there are just so many things we have no control over. We should learn to put our trust in God because He has power over all things and will always do that which is right. The key is **faith** in God (verse 30).

☞ Deut. 8:3-4; Psa. 37:25; Luke 21:34; John 4:34; 1 Pet. 4:19; 5:7

The fowls of the air are fed by God and the lilies of the field are clothed by Him, hence the reason for the following verses.

Human nature can easily become preoccupied with things which have no real value, and lose sight of its ultimate destination which is the kingdom of God. Therefore this verse is designed to teach us to focus upon the important issues of life. At the same time it is important to realise that Jesus is not saying that we should neglect other necessary things which the Father might provide for our life and well-being. The word ‘thought’ comes from the Greek ‘merimnao’ meaning anxious care. In other words we should not become preoccupied with certain things in life and neglect the things of God.

Let us faithfully realise that God can provide for all our needs. Jesus had already taught his disciples to pray “*Give us this day our daily bread*”, thereby signifying that we should be content with those things the Father finds fit to provide for us. We should never be over concerned with what we might eat or drink, or what clothes we may wear, for they can become a form of idolatry to us.

May we always be satisfied with the things God graciously provides for us.

Points to Consider

- How did Jesus show this principle in his life?
- How do you think the culture in which we live affects our attitude towards these things?
- What makes us worry about these things?
- Do you think that worrying about ourselves is basically selfishness?
- Think of examples of people in Scripture who worried about themselves or tried to improve their situation rather than serving God.
- Do you worry from day to day how you are going to budget for the next week’s necessities?
- Do you work extra hours to satisfy your own desires and wants? (For example to keep up with fashions, buy a car, go on a holiday, pay off a mortgage or loan, to buy more luxuries for home, etc.)

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”

- 📖 Roth: “Observe intently the birds of the heaven”.
There is our answer to all problems: “*Look up and look heavenwards*” (Psa. 5:3).
- feedeth** ‘trepho’ (5142) – prop. to stiffen, ie. fatten (by implication to cherish with food, pamper). Vines: to make grow, rear up, nourish.
☞ Matt. 25:37; Luke 12:24
- better** ‘diaphero’ (1308) – literally it means ‘to carry through’! Bullinger: to carry different ways; hence, to differ, to be different from (in our terms special, not just anyone).
☞ Matt. 10:31; 12:12; 1 Cor. 15:41

Whilst birds are industrious and busy each day gathering food, they work only for the needs of each day, and so long as the daily need is met, they do not concern themselves beyond immediate necessities (Matt. 6:11). Such a disposition requires faith in our Heavenly **Father** to provide as **He** sees fit.

- 📖 Wey: “Are not you of much greater value than they?”
- ? Our **God** is forever giving us visible examples to develop our faith so that we will believe in those things we cannot see! How does this principle apply to Joshua who was encouraged to take over after the death of Moses? (See Josh. 1:1, 2, 5)
- ☛ Psa. 147:9

The thoughts of this verse immediately follow the previous one. “*Behold, the fowls of the air...*”, ie. look, and learn a lesson from the birds of the air. These beautiful creatures which continually give glory to God remain completely free from the anxious care so often displayed by their human neighbours. Yet they are all bountifully supplied the necessary things of life by their Creator. “...*Your heavenly Father feedeth them*”. They do not worship Mammon.

These creatures are not troubled by the cares of men, and yet are still supplied their daily needs. The exhortation to disciples is that they should learn to trust in God and not in themselves for all their needs. In Job 12:7 we read “*But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee: and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee*”.

Trust in God. He will provide.

Points to Consider

- There are many things that we can learn from God’s creation. Think of other places where Jesus uses things from nature to teach practical lessons.
- What does Jesus mean in today’s terms by sowing, reaping and gathering into barns?
- Are we being told if our Heavenly Father supplies the daily provisions for birds, is there a need for us to be concerned with sowing, reaping and gathering into barns? What is Jesus saying?

“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

stature

‘helikia’ (2244) – maturity in years or size.



Luke 2:52; John 9:21,23; Heb. 11:11



RSV: “Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?”

JB: “Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life?”



Are we starting to see how very simple the Truth and the Bible is? Let us live very simple and basic lives and we will be all the happier for it.



Psa. 39:4, 5, 7; 90:12; Luke 12:26

This verse shows that anxious care over unimportant things is of absolutely no value. Jesus is not saying that by careful thought we can make ourselves about half a metre taller – the issue is far more serious than that. The ‘cubit’ is the usual Bible measurement of the length of the forearm, from the Greek ‘pechus’. It is a linear measurement, but symbolically can apply to length of time as well. However the ‘stature’ of which Jesus speaks is ‘helikia’ meaning maturity, and in John 9:21-23 and Hebrews 11:11 speaks of length of life.

Therefore Jesus is placing his finger on one of the most futile of all human anxieties – that of seeking to lengthen the span of their evil days. Jesus is not condemning the reasonable care that all must take of their health, but is emphasising that there is a limit beyond which we should not go, unless that also becomes a form of idolatry. We should at all times remember that in the ultimate, man is quite powerless over his life because it is God who gives life and it is God who takes it away. *“If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust”* (Job 34:14-15). Also read carefully Ecclesiastes 8:8.

Unnecessary care may not always improve our life, it may even shorten it.

Points to Consider

- Whilst we are incapable of living a longer life than is allocated to us, how can you ensure you use the time you have to it’s fullest?
*“Redeem the time,
T’will soon be past,
Only what’s done for
Christ will last.”*

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:”

- grow** ‘auxano’ (837) – to grow (‘wax’), enlarge, (grow up, increase). What are we to increase in? Follow the word through Scripture.
 ☞ Luke 1:80; 2:40; 1 Cor. 3:6; 2 Cor. 9:10; 10:15; Col. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3:18
- toil** ‘kopiao’ (2872) – to feel fatigue; by implication to work hard, (be wearied). Thayer: to grow weary or exhausted, (with toil or burdens or grief). Mankind without God is working very hard and going nowhere, it is a bit like running on the spot!
 ☞ Matt. 11:28; Luke 5:5; 2 Tim. 2:6
- spin** ‘netho’ (3514) – to spin. Thayer: to spin as used in Ex. 35:25
 Spinning was what the women did and toil was what the men did.
 ☞ Luke 12:27; Only used 2 times in N.T.

The previous verse spoke of the importance which mankind attaches to the length of his life. This may understandably be considered a very important issue. Now Jesus moves on to speak about something that should be considered as being **quite unimportant** and yet how many become extremely anxious about it – and that is the way we dress. The modern fashions which concern dress (or undress!) pander very much to human pride. They invite continual comparison with others, draw social comment, and establish a standard of social acceptability. Such a thing is not for the disciple of Jesus.

His advice is to consider the lilies, ie. learn a lesson from the lilies. ‘Consider’ comes from the Greek ‘katamanthano’ meaning to learn thoroughly. Basically this is also the meaning of disciple (see Matt. 5:1). How can we learn a lesson from a lily? We have to stoop down and examine it very closely – we have to humble ourselves. When we stoop down we learn two things: “...*they toil not, neither do they spin*”. In Jesus’ day to toil was the man’s labour, and to spin was the woman’s labour. However if disciples, or learners, truly humble themselves before God and consider what life is all about they will be caused to realise that so much is sheer vanity, and much time is wasted upon the pursuit of unnecessary things.

Our main anxiety of life must be directed towards attaining the kingdom of God.

Points to Consider

- Do you obsessively worry about what clothes to wear? Do you follow the latest fashions and designer label clothing?
- Again, who are you promoting and manifesting if you follow such fashions?
- How does 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:3-4 suggest we should be adorned?
- What is God’s opinion of one woman in particular in 2 Kings 9 who’s adorning was not the “*hidden man of the heart*”. (See Revelation 2:20 and the association she has with the abomination recorded in Revelation 17.)
- What simple lessons can be gained from the natural beauty of the lily?
- What does the lily represent in Scripture?

Selah

- The lilies glorify their Creator because they allow His creative work to mould and shape them. In the end they are a work of **God** and not self. Let us spend our time in allowing God’s word to work in us and to weave into our minds His character (Mal. 3:16-17; Phil. 2:13). God created man in his own image, let us not add or subtract from that.

“And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

arrayed ‘periballo’ (4016) – to throw all around, (to clothe).
 Mark 14:51; Luke 23:11; Rev. 7:13; 19:8

JB: “Not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these.”

? What may be the key phrase in this verse? Hint: the lilies glory belonged to God.

Here we have a famous example of the futility of striving after unnecessary splendour during the time of mortal probation. We are asked to consider Solomon who reached the absolute height of human attainment and all the world wondered at his greatness. So great were his treasures that “...*silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon*” (1 Kgs. 10:21).

Even though Solomon achieved such great things in his life, he found that in the end it all meant absolutely nothing, hence his words, “*Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity*” (Eccl. 1:2) sum up the whole of his life. What of the magnificent array of clothing for each occasion, the enormous banquets, the philosophies about the secrets of life, the gold and ivory, and peacock’s feathers? Ultimately they were of no value – there was just one thing, “*Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*” (Eccl. 12:13). That is just the lesson that Jesus is striving to convey to us.

All man’s strivings and anxieties are valueless, unless all is done unto God.

Points to Consider

- Solomon had everything the world had to offer, and from the point of view of those in the world, had a very comfortable life. Think of quotes from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes which tell us the conclusions that Solomon came to about the so called ‘pleasures’ of the world at the end of his life. Do you think that Solomon received any benefit from what he had done?
- What are you hoping to achieve out of your current or prospective education and/or employment?
- Should we, as God’s children, pursue after ambitious careers and success in this life?
- What are your current ambitions? How are they assisting you in your present walk towards God’s kingdom?



“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”

of little faith

‘oligopistos’ (3640) – See notes below. Strong’s also says that the word means: ‘lacking confidence’. Thayer: trusting too little. This word is only used by the Lord Jesus Christ who also was able to say “*with God all things are possible*”.

? Why was Abraham called the father of the faithful? (The apostle Paul may help you in Romans 4.)

In today’s busy world it would do us all good if we made the effort to visit the countryside or the bush and marvel at God’s natural creation. The Lord Jesus Christ learnt many valuable lessons from the creation around him. It proved beyond doubt the existence of a God. In fact it proved beyond doubt the existence of a **caring** God. See if you can make your own list of all those spiritual principles revealed in creation (Rom. 1:20).

The lesson of personal vanity is brought to a climax in this verse. If God cares for the lilies of the field which today are arrayed in all their beauty, and tomorrow are dried out and placed in the oven for a quick burning fuel, finally to disappear without trace, how much more will God care for all His saints? The lilies of the field are for a moment of time – but the saints are forever. Therefore what is the point of the vain glorious care with which we are want to adorn this mortal frame?

Jesus’ summary is that these vain attitudes are nothing more than a lack of faith which is illustrated by the phrase “...ye of little faith”. In the original texts this is one word, ‘oligopistos’ which means to be incredulous. If you are incredulous it means that you are unwilling to believe something.

Therefore our anxious cares about the futile things of life and the imitating of this present world with its outlandish lifestyles, and excesses of adornment of the human form, its eating, drinking and making merry, its headlong rush after materialism can be nothing more than a demonstration of a lack of faith in the coming kingdom. **Could it be possible by our demonstration of such things that we actually doubt the coming of God’s kingdom?**

An important background to Jesus’ words can be found in Isaiah 40:7-8. “*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of God shall stand forever*”. There can be nothing more sure than the everlasting Word of God, it will never fail us, even though everything else might fade into insignificance.

Our only source of faith must be the Word of God.

The term “...ye of little faith” is used only four times in the Scriptures, all in Matthew’s gospel. Look up the verses and see if you can find the flow of thought and its personal exhortation to you.

Points to Consider

- From these verses what does faith mean to you?
- What is the basis of faith in your life – careers, education, money, etc. or is there something else?
- Are your anxious worries and trivial cares for mundane things affecting your faith?
- How do you endeavour to strengthen your faith?

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”

- seek** ‘epizeteo’ (1934) – to search for, to demand or to crave. Vines: literally to seek towards. Thayer: to wish for. Bullinger: to seek earnestly or continually.
 ☞ Matt. 12:39; Acts 13:7; Heb. 11:14; 13:14
- knoweth** ‘eido’ (1492) – See verse 8 which fits this context also.
- have need** ‘chreizo’ (5535) – to have necessity of or be in want of. Vines: it is necessary or fitting.
 ☞ Luke 11:8; 12:30; Rom. 16:2; 2 Cor. 3:1; Only occurs 4 times in the N.T.
 ☞ Eph. 4:17-22; Psa. 127:2

Here Jesus poses and answers three questions, but one answer satisfies all three. “...Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”. This is a reminder that we must have faith in our Father’s wise provision for all our needs, for he has a greater knowledge of them than we have ourselves. Indeed God provides for all His creation as we have found in Matthew 5:45, “...He maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust”. Jesus stresses that it is only the Gentiles that should be taking care over the provision of these daily requirements, using the term Gentile to emphasise that they are “...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:12). This means that they are ignorant of the gospel and the guiding hand of God in all life.

The underlying message in Jesus’ words may be that even those who claim to be his disciples might at times return to Gentile ways, not because of ignorance, but sometimes because they wilfully continue to exhibit desires for things of the present world. When God first formed the nation of Israel, He left them with a very important message which Jesus later used as He wrestled with the temptations of the flesh, “...that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deut. 8:3).

May we always have faith that the Heavenly Father knows our needs and will provide accordingly, and as prospective citizens of His coming kingdom we are called upon to do no more than humbly accept our lot in life.

May we realise that there are far deeper issues in life than continually worrying about our personal comforts.

Points to Consider

- Here we have the only logical conclusion: Have faith in God who will provide all that His children need, not want. Compare verse 31 with the words of the prophet Haggai who asks us to “Consider our ways” or “Set your heart on your ways” (Hag. 1:3-6). What is the lesson as far as priorities go, God or mammon?
- Would our Lord put us alongside the Gentiles for striving after such materialism?
- Do you take matters into your own hands instead of allowing your Heavenly Father to provide for you? Think of some personal examples.
- Do you become despondent when God does not supply you with your wants? Why?
- How do you feel when you ask God for something that you thought God should provide you with and you don’t receive it?
- What differences should there be between the needs of the Gentiles and the needs of the children of God?
- Can we expect God to provide what we need if we don’t make any effort to provide for ourselves?
- What things do we really need in life?
- In this country we very rarely need to worry about where our next meal will come from or what we can wear. Do we sometimes forget that God provides everything? How would we cope if we did not know where our next meal was coming from?
- If we are always worrying about ourselves are we showing faith in God?

Here we have a very encouraging verse. The people in the nations of the world who do not know God are forever wishing for that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow (why are lotteries, poker machines, quick picks etc. so popular?). Yet those who really know and believe in God realise that He will provide all that is necessary for this time of opportunity. Finally, those who have been faithful will receive that “pot of gold” as it were and live forever when eating, drinking and clothing are no longer essential to preserve this body of corruption.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

seek ‘zeteo’ (2212) – to seek; spec. (by Heb.) to worship (God); (to desire). Vines: to seek by thinking, to seek how to do something, or what to obtain. Thayer: to aim at or strive after.
 ☞ Matt. 28:5; John 5:30; Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 10:33; Col. 3:1

righteousness ‘epizeteo’ (1343) – See Matt. 5:6

added ‘prostithemi’ (4369) – to place additionally, ie. lay beside. Vines: to place beside.
 ☞ Mark 4:24; Luke 17:5; Acts 11:24

📖 JB: “Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness.”

☛ Matt. 19:27-29; Rom. 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:8

What an enormous contrast we now have to the many petty anxieties to which our natures are subject? What do our personal treasures, our personal preferences in apparel, or our individual tastes in diet matter beside the unimaginable prospect of a place in the everlasting kingdom of God?

Here is an undoubted climax of the Discourse on the Mount, and everything that Jesus is saying in these three chapters is designed to prepare us for that event. The kingdom is the final destination of those who in this present life fully appreciate the heavenly principles which are portrayed in this discourse. The kingdom is the destination which will be achieved by those who are truly ‘poor in spirit’, those who truly ‘mourn’ the fallen state of man, those who are truly ‘meek’ and ‘merciful’ and so on.

It must never be underestimated what Jesus meant when he said we must seek the kingdom of God **‘first’**. This has a very emphatic meaning of being **‘first’** in time, place, order, or importance (Greek ‘proton’). These words are given to us in the form of commandment.

Finally, in the day of the kingdom everything that we may have faithfully desired during our time of mortality will be ‘added unto’ us. This ‘adding’ will be in a divine setting giving honour and glory to God eternally. This will truly be the bestowal of the ‘need’ (v32) of the human race that the Heavenly Father has foreseen. In that day things which may have seemed so attractive to us during this mortal dispensation will finally be seen in their true light as being of absolutely no value at all.

The desire for the kingdom of God and His righteousness is the most important thing in our lives.

Brain Teaser

- Consider the discourse between Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:10-16 and see how the lesson taught by our Lord might be found there. What did Elijah teach the widow about priorities?

Points to Consider

- Read the parable of the merchant and the pearl in Matthew 13:45-46. How does the lesson of this parable relate to what the Lord is saying about seeking first the kingdom of God? What is the exhortation for you?
- Do you seek the things in this life with more effort than you seek the kingdom of God?
- How are we to seek first the kingdom of God?
- What projects do you currently feel should be first in time, place, order and importance?
- If the kingdom of God is to come first, what does this tell you about the way you should be prioritising other current interests now?
- What is God’s righteousness that we are instructed to seek? How are we to seek this along with the kingdom? What things are to be ‘added unto us’?

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

- morrow** ‘aurion’ (839) – a breeze, ie. the morning air; prop. fresh. Thayer: from ‘aura’ the morning air, tomorrow.
 ☞ 1 Cor. 15:32; Jas. 4:13, 14
 📖 JB: “So do not worry about tomorrow.”
- 📖 Wey: “tomorrow will bring its own cares.”
 Diag: “the morrow will claim anxiety for itself.”
- Sufficient** ‘arketos’ (713) – satisfactory, enough.
 ☞ Matt. 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:3; Only occurs 3 times in N.T.
- evil** ‘kasia’ (2549) – badness, trouble, naughtiness, wickedness. Vines: the evil of trouble and affliction.
 Thayer: trouble. Bullinger: the evil habit of mind.
 ☞ Acts 8:22; Eph. 4:31; Jas. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:16
- 📖 JB, NIV: “Each day has enough trouble of its own.”
- ☛ Psa. 95:3-7; Prov. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:12-15; Job 14:1

Jesus finally exhorts us to take “...*no thought for the morrow*”. In the context of the present world this is very true, for the morrow is not ours to command, it is only God’s to give. But maybe in a far wider sense Jesus is saying that there is another morrow which is far more important – the morrow of the kingdom of God. Our lack of involvement in this world’s present, or its morrows is a very important development in our preparation for the great morrow of the kingdom of God. David foresaw that morrow as a morning “...*when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds...*” (2 Sam. 23:4).

May we all look forward faithfully to that coming day, not giving ourselves over to the lust of the flesh, allowing the things around us take care of themselves. There can be no lasting value in the things we see around us. By contrast, may our first resolve be one of obedience to all the principles and commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ so that finally great will be our reward in heaven (Matt. 5:12).

All our desires must be centred on these things of eternity.

Points to Consider

- There is one thing in the future which we should be thinking about. What is it?
- Let us remember that all of our plans will only be carried out if it is the **will** of God. Look up James 4:15 and look up in your concordance the meaning of the word ‘will’.
- How can you ensure you will not allow worry to take control of your life?
- Who is in control of all tomorrows and how should this affect all our future plans?
- What does the last phrase mean?

Selah

- Most worry revolves around one’s self and how we may or may not be affected by such and such an event. If we learn to dedicate ourselves to God by helping our brothers and sisters in any way we can, the result will be surprising. Our worries and difficulties and concerns, whilst still present, take on a much smaller place in our hearts. Let us live each day as if our last.



Discussion Group Five

Matthew Chapter 7:1-12

*Every one that asketh
receiveth*

SECTION 5

Matthew 7:1-12 Everyone that asketh receiveth.

The previous two chapters have enabled us to look closely at patterns of human behaviour in the light of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those teachings have demonstrated how lofty the divine pattern is, when compared with the ways of mankind. During the course of Jesus' speech he found it necessary to expose the attitudes of the Jews of his day, and particularly the attitudes of the Pharisees which by now were far removed from the pattern of the Law of Moses, which had been designed to lead Israel to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

However it is very easy for us all to be able to observe the faults in somebody else whilst being oblivious to our own faults. Therefore in Matthew 7 Jesus turns the spotlight of the Word of Truth more fully upon ourselves causing the discerning disciple to ask some searching questions of himself.

- Are we now prepared to carefully examine our own understanding and motives before condemning others?
- Do we remember that we are constantly under the scrutiny of God whose gaze is even more intent than that with which we scrutinise others?
- Do we take sufficient thought and care with important decisions in life?
- Have we absolute respect for the authority of the teachings of Jesus?
- Do we fully appreciate the importance of divine requirements, as opposed to our own desires?

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Judge

‘krino’ (2919) – to decide, to try, to condemn, to punish. Bullinger: to pronounce final judgment.
 Luke 19:22; John 3:17; 7:24; 8:15-16; 12:47-48 (See also AV marginal references)

The following verses will give us the context and therefore the true meaning of our Lord’s words. Herein lies a very important principle for Bible understanding. Christadelphians should be **‘contextual’** scholars!
 Discuss what this means.

It is very important to be able to distinguish what Jesus is saying here, for the Scriptures point out that occasionally we may be required to make a judgment against a brother or sister. See 1 Corinthians 5:11; Philippians 3:17-18. The question is not **what we do**, but **how we go about it**, if placed in the unfortunate position of having to make a judgment which involves somebody else. Very often the Pharisee was tempted to make a judgment regarding others upon the basis of his own self-righteousness – something which the disciple of Christ dare not do. A very good example of what Jesus meant is found in the parable of the prayers of the Pharisee and publican (Luke 18:11-13). The Pharisee prayed ‘with himself’ that he was not like the publican, then in the space of two verses he speaks about himself five times. This man’s standard of reference was himself, not God. Therefore by the condemnation of the publican he was only exalting himself.

The lesson is extremely important: on those rare occasions when judgment upon another is required, extreme care must be taken that it is done on the correct basis. God’s righteousness must be upheld, and not anyone’s personal desire or standard. The very meaning of judgment reveals how serious a matter it might be – Greek ‘krino’ meaning to distinguish, or decide, and carries with it the implication of condemnation and punishment. We must never place ourselves in the situation of making a wrong condemnation of another. Let the Word of Truth alone make that decision.

We are all under the close scrutiny of judgment of God.

Points to Consider

- Read Philippians 2:3. What does this verse tell us about our attitude to our brethren?
- Are there people in our ecclesia we do not speak to very often because we don’t agree with what they are doing? Is this a good attitude?
- Are we sometimes guilty of thinking that people who do things differently to us in the Truth are not as strong as us? Remember they can probably see faults in us in different areas!
- Think of a judgment you have made about somebody else before. What were your reasons for such a conclusion? Are you only trying to justify your own actions by pronouncing judgment on someone else? Is it your human pride that causes you to make this judgment and reveal their faults to cover up yours? If this is not the case, what has caused you to make this judgment?
- Have you made your views known because that is how you feel about the situation; which is stating that fleshly thinking is right instead of the divine command, or are you saying God is right and therefore such an action should take place?
- Would you be happy for the same judgment you have made concerning someone else to be made about you?
- What does Scripture tell you should be your response with such a situation?
- How can you ensure you have upheld God’s righteousness in pronouncing any judgment?

If Christ tells us not to judge others, why is it important to set ecclesial standards and ensure that they are upheld?

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

- judgment** ‘krima’ (2917) – a decision. From a lexicon or concordance one will find that this word is but the noun of the verb rendered judge in verse one and so it conveys the same idea.
☞ Luke 23:40; Rom. 2:2, 3; 1 Cor. 6:7
- judge** ‘krino’ (2919) – See verse 1.
- measure** ‘metron’ (3358) – a measure and by implication a limited portion or degree. Vines: it also refers to that which is used to measure such as a graduated rod or rule.
☞ Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38; Rom. 12:3
- mete** ‘metreo’ (3354) – to measure, for example by a **fixed standard**. It also means to estimate or to allot by rule. Thayer: to judge according to any rule or standard, to estimate.
☞ Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 10:12
- 📖 RSV: “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get”
📖 JB: “because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get”
☞ Jas. 2:12-13

James 5:9 very clearly warns that we should not develop an incorrect attitude towards our brethren and sisters, because such personal attitudes may limit the extent of divine mercy which may be extended towards ourselves in time of need. Therefore Jesus is re-emphasising the great care which needs to be exercised in these matters, lest we slip into the Pharisee attitude of elevating self above our fellows, rather than elevating the ways of God in our lives.

This verse is very clear about the type of judgment we may exercise. It can be either executed with mercy and understanding, or it can be unwarranted and harsh judgment. Therefore the warning is that we must take great care in the way that any necessary judgment might be administered, for we all recognise that upon that great day following the resurrection we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of “...every idle word that men shall speak...” (Matt. 12:36).

Again, remember that we dare not judge others upon the standard of our own personal superiority.

Brain Teaser

- We can sometimes see these particular verses like a mathematical equation and think that how we judged another brother is exactly how God will judge us at the judgment seat. Right or wrong?
 - If we have judged another brother contrary to the true principles of Scripture will a righteous God judge us by our wrong standard of judgment?
 - Why in this situation would we be rejected if we maintained that wrong standard of judgment?
 - If we went around showing mercy as we understood it, to every brother and sister who rejected the doctrines of living the Truth, would God therefore show us mercy for knowingly breaking those same doctrines?
- When we answer these questions we should then be able to see how **our standard of judgment will determine our position at the judgment seat.**

Points to Consider

- Where else in these chapters does this principle come out?
- Is the reason for the differences you have with someone else based on unseen motives? If this is the case, upon whose conditions should such a conclusion be based, and what steps are you going to take to rectify the problem?

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

beholdest ‘blepo’ (991) – See Matthew 5:28

mote ‘karpfos’ (2595) – a splinter. Vines: a small dry stalk, a tiny piece of straw or a bit of wool that might fly into the eye. (N.B. Such would cause our brother discomfort.)
 ☞ Luke 6:41, 42; Occurs 6 times in the N.T.

considerest ‘katanoeo’ (2657) – to observe fully, discover, perceive. Vines: to understand fully, to consider closely.
 ☞ Luke 20:23; Jas. 1:23, 24

beam ‘dokos’ (1385) – a **stick** of timber.
 ☞ Luke 6:41, 42; Occurs 6 times in the N.T.

📖 JB: “Why do you observe the splinter in your brother’s eye and never notice the plank in your own?”

N.B. An important key to this illustration is that we need to personally examine our own selves before we can effectively help those who are in discomfort and distress because of a minor problem (‘splinter’). We need to understand what our faults and weaknesses are so that we can fully appreciate our desperate need for God’s mercy and this in turn should produce in us a warmth and compassion for everyone else who is in exactly the same position as us.

☛ Matt. 18:15-35; Luke 18:9-14; Rom. 14:1-4; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Pet. 1:7-9
 In these references given we may hopefully see the answer to the brain teaser given in verse two. The unmerciful servant showed no mercy, however he was not rejected because God applied this same standard and showed him no mercy. God rejected him because of the wrong attitude he had and it was that attitude of being unmerciful that brought his downfall. The Pharisee was judged not by his standard of judgment of the publican, but because of his wrong standard of judgment which elevated himself. The man in Romans 14 would be rejected because he despised his brother and his attitude was wrong. Paul puts his finger on the issue in 1 Corinthians 4:5 when he says that God will make manifest the **counsels of the heart** and that is the basis upon which all of us will be judged for that is the only true measure. Verse 3 will now highlight how our thinking may be totally distorted and unless we fix it, we are the ones in danger of condemnation.

In the next three verses Jesus proceeds to demonstrate the principle of verses 1 and 2 in the parable of the mote and the beam. The lesson is that we should not refrain from taking the mote out of our brother’s eye, **but that there are more important things to do first!** They may involve a consideration of our own personal faults and problems which will need to be corrected before we go about solving the problems of others. It would not be possible for the Lord Jesus Christ to be our mediator unless he had first “...learned obedience by the things he suffered” (Heb. 5:8).



The need to recognise our own faults is emphasised in the exaggerated comparison made between the mote and beam. The mote ‘karpfos’ means a twig or a straw. The beam ‘dokos’ is a piece of building timber. What an enormous difference between the two, and yet how blind we may be at times to our own faults which must be abundantly obvious to others? Romans 2:21-22 restates this situation another way. “*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*” This saying is a very important lesson for us to engage in serious self examination before we hasten to pass judgment upon others.


May we always endeavour to be humble enough to recognise our own faults.

Points to Consider

- If you had a splinter in your own eye would you realise it was there? If so how is it that we are too concerned about removing our brother’s minor irritation that we are oblivious to the beam in our own eye?
- What is the only solution to regain one’s sight again?
- How will you ensure the beam won’t cause such a problem again? (Find scriptural suggestions.)
- When have you found yourself guilty of pointing out a minor fault in someone else, without even considering that you yourself have a much larger problem, so large that their’s pales into insignificance? Why have you done this? How can you avoid this next time?

“Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?”

how ‘pos’ (4459) – Bullinger: how, used in this verse as an absolute question.
 RSV: “How can you say to your brother”
 JB: “How dare you say to your brother”

pull out ‘ekballo’ (1544) – to eject, to throw out or cast forth. Even the use of this Greek word can convey the idea of anything but gentleness!
 Matt. 17:19; Mark 1:34; 9:47; Luke 20:12

behold ‘idou’ (2400) – lo! Vines: calling attention to what may be seen or mentally apprehended.

It is so easy to become troubled by the failures of others and so easy to forget the sinfulness of our own selves.

The seriousness of ill-founded judgment upon another person is graphically illustrated in the language of the parable as the one who is blinded by a beam in his eye attempts to remove the mote from his brother’s eye. He says “...*let me pull out the mote...*”. Obviously somebody who demonstrates this type of thinking is leaving God out of the question and is seeking to solve a situation in his own strength.

The fact is that when any decision of this nature has to be made, the Word of God must be the foundation for the action. It is only the Word of God that reveals human nature for what it is. Therefore a true appreciation of its message should be able to help us recognise the gravity of our own sins. This must be a modifying force against hasty actions which may adversely affect others. If we can remove the beam in our own eye, we may then be in a position to help remove the mote in our brother’s eye.

We must always recognise our own faults, before looking for faults in others.

Points to Consider

- When have you been guilty of leaving God out of the question in an attempt to remove the mote from your brother’s eye?
- How often have you admonished your brother without allowing him to admonish you?
- Can you really help someone if you don’t form a friendship with them first? Do we always try to do this? If not why are we really offering to help?
- Is there such a thing as a friendship where only one person gives help?
- We can never remove our faults or problems completely. Does this mean that we should never try and help others?

“Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

hypocrite ‘hupokrites’ (5273) – See Matthew 6:2 and compare contexts.

cast out ‘ekballo’ (1544) – See verse 4. We need to be harsh on ourselves not our brother or sister.
☛ Matt. 5:29

see clearly ‘diablepo’ (1227) – to look through, ie. recover full vision. Thayer: to penetrate by vision.
☛ Luke 6:42; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.

☛ Gal. 6:1

? What is necessary for us before we can hope to help a brother or sister effectively and what should our motive be?

? We must at all times be aware of our natural tendency towards self-elevation, self-righteousness and pride. Such evil characteristics have no place in ecclesial life or in preaching the Truth. How could we reveal these attitudes when preaching the gospel?

An individual who fails to remove the beam out of his own eye first is named a hypocrite, or play actor. We were personally introduced to the hypocrite in Matthew 6:2 and found him to be a very proud person, blinded by his self righteousness and who loved others to see his display of piety. Now Jesus goes on to explain that whilst others can clearly observe a hypocrite, he is unable to see himself so clearly. Indeed his position produces a partial blindness which prevents clear vision in a variety of circumstances. The only cure is the removal of the beam so that he can ‘see clearly’, the Greek word ‘diablepo’, meaning to recover vision, or to be able to see through something.

Therefore the lesson of Jesus is that with the recognition and rectification of our own faults we may see a matter in an entirely different light and this will give us a much more balanced point of view. We may even find that where our restricted vision led us to believe that an obstacle existed, there really is no obstacle at all!

Let us have our vision rectified by the Word of God.

Points to Consider

- Have you ever considered that the beam in your own eye is preventing you from seeing clearly to remove your brother’s splinter so that he can see?
- It is only when we have self-examined our own actions and discarded our own human natural feelings on the matter that we can then see to help discard our brother’s trivial problem.
- What is self-examination? How would you go about it? How often do you engage in it?
- If you have treated a brother incorrectly, according to our Lord’s words, how do you intend to resolve the error on your part?
- What is the best way to see what our own problems are?

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

- holy** ‘hagios’ (40) – sacred. Vines: fundamentally signifies separated and dedicated to God.
 ☞ Rom. 1:2; 7:12; 2 Pet. 2:21
- dogs** ‘kuon’ (2965) – Vines: the Jews used the term of Gentiles, under the idea of ceremonial impurity. In Jesus’ day they were scavengers of the streets with very unsavoury habits.
 ☞ Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:22; Rev. 22:15
 ☛ Matt. 15:27; Psa. 22:16, 20; Isa. 56:10-11
- cast** ‘ballo’ (906) – related to the words pull out and cast out in previous two verses. First used in the discourse in Matthew 5:13.
- pearls** ‘margarites’ (3135) – a pearl from an oyster. Thayer: this verse means to thrust the most sacred and precious teachings of the gospel upon the most wicked and abandoned men (incompetent as they are, through their hostility to the gospel, to receive them), and to profane them. Just think how long a pearl takes to cultivate and what attitude is necessary to preach the gospel to strangers.
 ☞ Matt. 13:45-46; 1 Tim. 2:9; Rev. 21:21
- swine** ‘choiros’ (5519) – a hog. Bullinger: a young swine or pig.
 ☞ Matt. 8:30; Luke 15:15, 16
 ☛ Isa. 66:3, 17
- trample** ‘katapateo’ (2662) – to trample down or to reject with disdain or scorn. Thayer: to treat with rudeness and insult.
 ☞ Matt. 5:13; Luke 8:5; Heb. 10:29
- rend** ‘rhegnumi’ (4486) – to break, wreck or crack. Vines: to tear.
 ☞ Matt. 9:17; Mark 9:18
 ☛ Prov. 9:6-8; 23:9; Acts 17:5-6; Gen. 3:15
- ? How can we reconcile this verse with Matthew 5:14-16?

The parable of the mote and beam contained the exhortation that we must handle the Word of God with extreme care and reverence. Firstly, in its application to ourselves, and secondly towards our brethren and sisters. Now Jesus goes on to explain that we must also observe the same care and reverence for God’s Word in our relationships with other people. Care must be taken that we do not let God’s Word fall into disrepute or be blasphemed –even our own actions or words can cause His Word to fall into disrepute. Whilst we have a clear command to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), this must be done in the same God-honouring way as we conduct our own lives and support our brethren and sisters in conducting their own lives.

In Israel both dogs and swine were unclean beasts, and as such symbolised those who had no respect for the things of God. For example, as a prophet of God, Elisha was insulted and the Word of God blasphemed. The result was that the people were cursed by the prophet and torn by the two she bears that came out of the wood (2 Kgs. 2:24). Likewise 2 Chronicles 36:16 records that those who “...mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets...” incurred the wrath of the Lord. Even the sons of Eli were guilty of trampling the Word of God underfoot (1 Sam. 2:29). (‘Kick’ is the Hebrew word ‘ba’at’ meaning to trample underfoot.) Because of this attitude a faithful priesthood was to be raised up in their stead.

Hence we have been given an example of the reaction of different classes of men to the gospel. There are some like the man with the beam in his eye who want the gospel upon their own terms – but there is hope that eventually he will see the error of his ways. On the other hand there are those styled the unclean, who do not want the gospel upon any terms at all, so ingrained are the Serpent ways of flesh. Whilst we are not to wrongly judge men and women, once we have evidence of blasphemous rejection of the gospel, it is more profitable to turn our attention to areas where it will receive a more hospitable reception.

Great care must be taken not to become defiled by blasphemers of God’s Word

Points to Consider

- What other ways can we preach to people who don't want to talk about the Truth?
- Is it possible to use this verse as an excuse for not preaching the Truth to people. Why would we do this?
- Does this verse contradict the previous verses we have just considered about refraining from being judgmental of others? What are your reasons for this?
- Who are the dogs and swine referring to in our day?
- Why should such 'dogs' and 'swine' be avoided?
- In what way could they 'trample under foot' the precious Word of Truth and 'turn again and rend you'?
- What is the difference between proclaiming God's Word to these people and to those mentioned in James 2:1-9?

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:”

Ask	‘aiteo’ (154) – See Matt. 5:42
☞	Matt. 21:22; John 14:13-14; 15:7; 1 John 3:22
☛	Luke 18:1-8
seek	‘zeteo’ (2212) – See Matt. 6:33
☞	Matt. 13:45; Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 14:12; Col. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:11
shall find	‘heureo’ (2147) – to find, or obtain. Thayer: to find by inquiry, thought, examination, scrutiny, observation, hearing; to find out by practice and experience, ie. to see, learn, discover, understand.
☞	Matt. 11:29
☛	Matt. 13:45-46
knock	‘krouo’ (2925) – to rap at a door for entrance.
☞	Luke 13:25; Acts 12:13, 16; Rev. 3:20
shall be opened	‘anoigo’ (455) – to open up in various applications.
☞	Acts 14:27; 26:18; Rev. 3:7, 8
☛	Luke 11:5-8
📖	Roth: “Be asking and it shall be given you, be seeking and ye shall find, be knocking, and it shall be opened unto you.”
☛	Deut. 30:10-11; Psa. 119:2, 10, 145; Jer. 29:13; Matt. 15:21-28; Rom. 2:7; Col. 1:9-11; Jas. 1:5-6
?	All three commands when properly understood convey the fact that the person is in need of something and therefore humility is needed on their part. There is no place for pride for those in need. We have been commanded to ask someone else and they have the means to answer. There is the necessity to seek and therefore someone else has the power to give so that we may find. There is a door we cannot open and we need to knock constantly until someone else opens it. Such a humble attitude of mind when developed will help solve all the problems of verses 1-6. How?

This can be the reaction of a third class of men to God’s Word – the genuine seekers after Truth. **This must be ourselves.** Unclean human nature is not rejected because of its uncleanness, but because of its failure to rise above it. Hence we have presented to us three verbs, words of action, which all can exercise – **ask, seek and knock.** This is something that anybody can do, especially those who “...*hunger and thirst after righteousness...*” (Matt. 5:6). This illustration implies an unexpected result, because in eastern countries in the time of Christ a door was never opened unless the one who knocked first identified himself. Here the one who knocks is not asked to identify himself because Jesus can read the hearts of all men.

The grammar of these three verbs is in the continuous sense, ie. we must continue to ask, knock and seek. A good example of this is found in Zephaniah 2:3. “*Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger*”. Is it not true that by constant and diligent application we do finally come to a complete grasp of God’s Word? This constant asking, seeking and knocking is what God requires of us, and we find in Isaiah 62:7 that he requires that we “...*give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*”. Note particularly that the requirement to ‘ask’ of God is used five times in the next five verses.

It is our great responsibility, and privilege, to seek out by all means possible the message of the gospel.

Points to Consider

- Find examples in Scripture of those who were rewarded for asking, seeking and knocking.
- Which parable of the Lord had someone trying to enter but the door was never opened? Why?
- Not everything we ask, seek or knock for will receive the desired response. What are the conditions?

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

receiveth ‘lambano’ (2983) – to get hold of, obtain.
 ↙ Matt. 19:29; Acts 16:3; 1 Cor. 9:24,25

☛ Psa. 33:16-22; 145:15-20; Matt. 8:5-13

This verse presents the evidence that our continual beseeching of the Father for our true spiritual needs will be fulfilled. It is a matter of faith to continually ask, seek and knock, and wonderful things can be opened up unto us. In Matthew 8:5-13 we have the account of the Centurion who continually besought Jesus that his sick servant might be healed – and so it came to pass. Jesus commenting said that he had “...not found so great faith, no not in Israel”. Likewise in James 1:6 we have the guidance to continually ask of God in our lack of wisdom, for God “...giveth to all men liberally”. Likewise James exhorts us not to ‘waver’ in asking of God.

Seeking out the ways and mercies of God can be approached by us in two ways – through prayer and the diligent study of the Scriptures. Study should always be preceded by prayer, and with this combination some of the greatest blessings of mortal life can be realised. Surely it is the “...honour of kings to search out a matter” (Prov. 25:2).

Our faith can be demonstrated by a continual and prayerful approach to God for the fulfilment of our spiritual needs.

Points to Consider

- Why is there an apparent repetition of verse 7?
- What does the emphasis from other versions suggest about the way we should ask, seek and knock?
- Read Proverbs 2:1-5. What does this tell us about the way to seek God and His wisdom? Note verse 4. Do we put in as much effort as we would to search for a hidden treasure or a large amount of money?
- What blessings can we expect to find or receive if we don't make a personal effort ourselves? What role does prayer have in this?
- Why do you think it is important to pray to God before opening His Word?

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?”

• Psa. 103:13; Rom. 8:28

In these two verses Jesus makes a comparison between our Heavenly Father, and an earthly father. He points out that every father will respond to the needs of his son. What father knowing that his son is hungry would refuse to respond to his requirements? Jesus demonstrates the Father's response in two most significant ways. What father would give a stone instead of bread, or a serpent instead of fish?

The first example in verse 9 is a reversal of Christ's temptation in the wilderness where the tempter suggests that Jesus turns stones into bread (Matt. 4:3). No doubt this memory was very fresh in Jesus' mind at this time. This little lesson is showing us that no reasonable father desiring the spiritual well-being of a son, would place him in a position where he may be tempted to enter the way of sin, when the son had come to him seeking the bread of life. The second instance in verse 10 has a similar relationship to the life of Jesus, for we find in John 21 and the miracle of the 153 fishes, that those who are taken out of the sea of nations by the gospel net would find a place in the kingdom of God. Again, what responsible father finding that his son desires a place in the kingdom would introduce him to the ways of the serpent?

Therefore these verses demonstrate a Father, who finding that his son requires salvation, immediately sets about providing the necessary spiritual help that the son requires. We might also note that the symbolic examples in these two verses span the entire period of Jesus' ministry on the earth, beginning with the temptation in the wilderness and concluding with his final appearance to the disciples before he was taken to the right hand of the Father in heaven. It is the entire ministry of Jesus that the Father has revealed to us that we also might be suitably prepared for a place in the kingdom.

We have a merciful Heavenly Father who is prepared to provide for our greatest needs.

Points to Consider

- If we were to ask something of our natural father, would we expect him to be deceptive and give us something altogether different? Therefore, how does this apply to the expectations we have of our Heavenly Father?
- If we were to ask something of our Heavenly Father and we were provided with something else that we did not expect to receive, would this be deception? Why then has God blessed us with this instead? (See Rom. 8:28.) Although God knows what is good for us, sometimes things don't happen the way we expect them to. How do we react when this happens in our life? Do we still remember that He will only give us what is best for us?
- The questions of verses 9 and 10 answer themselves. However, our Lord wants us to think about these examples before we come to his exhortation in verse 11. We must learn to interact with the Bible, allow it paint the picture for us and then allow it to expound itself. Bible study requires asking, seeking and knocking. If we build these habits into our lives then our loving Heavenly Father will respond beyond what we could imagine.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

evil	‘poneros’ (4190) – See Matt. 5:11
☞	Mark 7:23; Col. 1:21; 1 John 5:19
📖	Wey: “If you then, imperfect as you are”
good	‘agathos’ (18) – See Matt. 5:45
gifts	‘doma’ (1390) – a present. (N.B. Strong’s gives the wrong number! ‘Doma’ is the correct Greek word.)
☞	Luke 11:13; Eph. 4:8; Phil. 4:17; Only occurs 4 times in N.T.
how much more	(4214 & 3123) – Vine: very, very, much. Bullinger: Very, very much, exceedingly; more strongly; also denoting constant increase, more and more.
?	Sit down and make a list of all the ‘good things’ you believe God has done, is actively doing right now and promises to do in the future. After you have made this list and thought about it, how should you feel towards God and what should be the result? (Clue: Answer comes out in the following verse.)
☞	Matt. 5:3-11; 6:33-34

Now Jesus draws an obvious conclusion from the previous two verses. If in our own evil and sin stricken state we know how to provide the best for our children, how much more our Father in heaven who is “...of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity...” (Hab. 1:13)? The Heavenly Father has made a provision for all his children which no earthly father could ever make. Earthly fathers may bestow ‘gifts’ upon their children. But compare the gift of our Heavenly Father, “...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). How can we make a comparison between heavenly and earthly gifts? Nevertheless let us realise that what we do now can be an indicator of our desire to attain the kingdom of God. The sacrifices we make now, for the spiritual benefit of our families and others, are all part of the Christ-like life which must be demonstrated by disciples.

Note that this is the final time Jesus exhorts us to ‘ask’. Continual asking will result in the Heavenly Father providing both bread and fish in a way which no other father can provide. This will be the final ‘toiling’ of those who “...do hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6).

May we look forward to the time when the Heavenly Father will provide all the things which this world cannot provide.

Points to Consider

- In what way are we evil? What scriptural proof can you give?
- What ‘good gifts’ have you given to others that will assist you and them in your united walk to the kingdom?
- Even if you are not a parent, who could you ‘adopt’ as your own children? (Think of those in your ecclesia that may be on “the outer” and how you may assist them.)
- Try to begin to comprehend the extent to which your Father gives good things.
- What is the ultimate gift of the Father, on the condition we ask for it? Does that mean we will automatically receive it?
- What are some of the characteristics we must begin to manifest in order to reap the rewards of such a gift?
- In what way can you see the hand of God working in your life?
- Christ is showing that if natural men act like this, how much more will God, who is righteous? Can you think of another parable that teaches a similar lesson?

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

Therefore The Lord is now going to summarise all the lessons arising from verses 1-11. Go back over the flow of those verses and see how the Lord’s words fit into his summary. How would you like the ecclesia to act towards you when your sins are known before all (v1-5)? How would you like the principles of the Truth bombarded against you when you were not in a frame of mind to receive it (v6)? How would you like to be deceived by your brethren in a time of need (v7-11)? *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”* (Matt. 5:48)

📖 JB: **The golden rule:** “So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the law and the prophets.”

📖 RSV: “So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.”

📖 NIV: “...for this sums up the law and the prophets.”

☛ Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:4-5; Mark 12:29-31

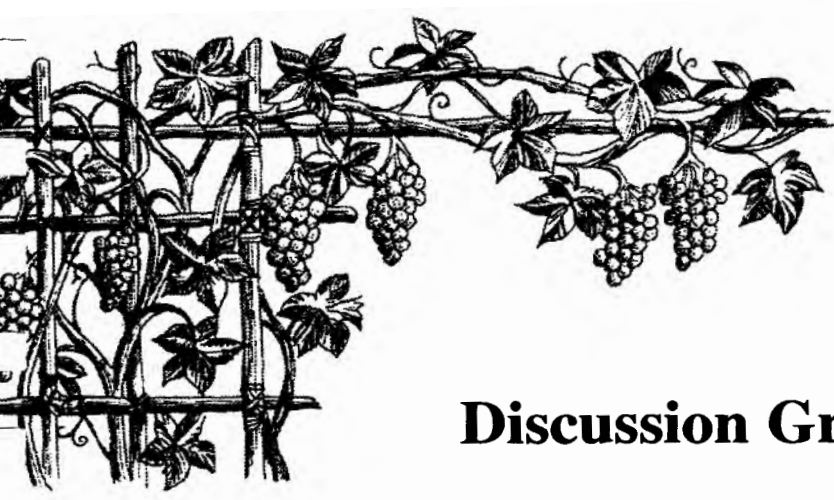
This verse brings us to a climax in the first part of chapter 7. It is rightly known as the ‘golden rule’. The opening word ‘therefore’ is important because it links this verse to all that has gone before. That is the love and mercy of the Heavenly Father extended towards his children must be displayed in all our relationships with our fellow man. This introduces a new dimension into our lives because it translates the **asking into giving**. We have asked much of our Heavenly Father in faith and as a result been given much. The Father in heaven has given His Son and the Son has given his life. A great sacrifice has been given by both Father and Son, which has made possible the atonement of our sins.

‘Therefore’ because such a love has been demonstrated to us, we should be prepared to show a like attitude towards our fellows. Here is the ultimate key to all human relationships. As the Heavenly Father has acted toward us, so we should be prepared to act toward others in a demonstration of love, understanding, compassion and sacrifice. In Matthew 22:36-40 Jesus explains it this way: *“And the second (commandment) is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”*. Thus we find a foundation principle of Scripture, and a secret of godly discipleship, and a demonstration of the principles of Christ and his Father toward our fellow men. Surely we would wish that they do no less towards us.

We are sure that when the kingdom is established all men will practise these principles towards one another, for “...all the earth shall be filled with the glory of God”.

Points to Consider

- What two commandments in the law was Christ referring to here and where are they found?
- How do you intend to enact this ‘golden rule’ in your life from here on?
- Before we say or do something to others, do we stop and think how we would like them to treat us?
- Do we ever try and ‘get our own back’ on people? Why? How does this fit in with the sections in this discourse which remind us about the importance of forgiveness?
- What did Christ say was the greatest commandment in the law? How does that fit in with these verses?



Discussion Group Six

Matthew Chapter 7:13-29

*By their fruits ye shall
know them*



SECTION 6

Matthew 7:13-29 By their fruits ye shall know them.

At this point in Matthew 7 Jesus concludes his argument about the necessity of developing a Christ-like life by concentrating upon the very important issue of making the correct decisions in life. Sometimes it is difficult to make a decision and even more difficult to make the correct decision. Very often we reap the results of our decisions years later, and if that decision has been the wrong one the results are quite often irreversible. For this reason Solomon says, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*" (Prov. 4:23).

The greatest decision we can make in life is the decision to accept the way of salvation in Christ Jesus. This alone is the decision that will lead to the kingdom of God; it is the only decision that can lead to eternity.

Therefore in the remainder of the chapter Jesus illustrates the results of three different types of decisions:

1. The choice of the two ways – The wrong decision means we will become lost.
2. The choice of the two trees – The wrong tree will produce unacceptable fruit.
3. The choice of the two houses – The wrong house cannot provide a lasting inheritance.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:”

- Enter** ‘eiserchomai’ (1525) – See Matt. 5:20
- strait** ‘stenos’ (4728) – narrow (from obstacles standing close about). Vines: from a root ‘sten’, seen in ‘stenazo’, to groan, ‘stenagmos’, groaning. Narrow because it runs counter to natural inclinations.
 ☞ Matt. 7:14; Luke 13:24; Only used these 3 times in the N.T.
 ☞ JB: “Enter by the narrow gate”
 ☞ Matt. 19:24
- wide** ‘platus’ (4116) – spread out flat, ie. broad. Only used here.
- broad** ‘euruchoros’ (2149) – spacious. Vines: lit. a broad place. Only used here.
- that leadeth** ‘apago’ (520) – to lead or take away. The interesting point to note is how often this word is used where our Lord is led to be crucified, a narrow gate indeed, but one that leadeth unto life and not destruction!
 ☞ Matt. 26:57; 27:2, 31; John 19:16
- destruction** ‘apoleia’ (684) – ruin, loss or death.
 ☞ Phil. 3:19; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Pet. 3:16
 ☞ Deut. 30:15-20; Prov. 4:10-19; Jer. 21:8

Verses 13-14 comprise the well known parable of the broad and narrow ways. It is a parable based upon the commandment of Exodus 23:2, *“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil...”*. It is this multitude who ‘do evil’ that rush through the wide gate of life because that presents the fewest obstacles to the pleasing of the flesh. By comparison the ‘strait gate’ (from ‘stenos’ meaning narrow or obstacles) will place barriers in the way of pleasing fleshly desires. This way of life is never popular with human thinking.

The most significant fact about this verse is the use of the phrase *“...broad is the way...”*. This was the name of the street in Sodom, at the gate of which Lot was found seated. In Genesis 19:2 the Hebrew for street is ‘rechob’ meaning avenue, but is based on another word ‘rachob’ which literally means the broad way. What terrible things took place in that broad way! The things that took place there were the ultimate result of neglecting *“...the narrow way which leadeth unto life...”*. This background surely indicates the serious issues which can lie behind a conscious decision to follow a particular course through life.

There is also an exhortation warning of the danger of following numbers. In Ahab’s day Israel were attracted to the 450 prophets of Baal who sat at Jezebel’s table – but it was the prophet Elijah who stood alone at the top of Mount Carmel who represented the God of Israel (1 Kgs. 18). Often the ‘narrow way’ may represent a lonely way, but never let us forget that it is the way of Truth. In fact the commencement of this verse represents a commandment of Jesus, as he says quite plainly *“Enter ye in at the strait gate...”*.

Beware, lest we find ourselves trying to make the narrow way a little wider.

Points to Consider

- What is the ‘gate’ referring to?
- Why are we to avoid the wide gate?
- Christ’s command is to, *“enter in at the strait gate”*. Why is it that so many choose the wide gate?
- Think carefully about the word ‘strait’. What does it tell us about the way that leads to life?
- There are only two ways, one which ultimately leads to life, and the other, death (Deut. 30:15-20). Think of other places in Scripture that tell us about the two ways.
- Do we sometimes try and mix the two ways? How? Do you think this is possible in God’s opinion?
- Consider the three occurrences of the two choices in this section of Matthew 7 and colour them in.
- Few find the strait way. Do we find it hard to be different at times? If we do, what sort of things can give us encouragement?

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

narrow ‘thlibo’ (2346) – to crowd, afflict, trouble, suffer tribulation. Vines: hemmed in, like a mountain gorge. Thayer: a compressed way.

☞ 2 Cor. 4:8; 1 Thess. 3:4; Heb. 11:37

find ‘heureo’ (2147) – See verse 7.

We have here another aspect of “seeking” (v7). The narrow way has to be sought after for this way is not readily apparent to the carnal mind (v14). The broad way does not have to be found for flesh uncontrolled by the Word of God is already on that path! Let us make the effort to keep asking, seeking and knocking for we are assured that if we have that love and determination God will give us the kingdom.

Jesus now explains why we should enter at the ‘strait gate’ – *“Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life...”* (Diaglott “...**the life**”, ie. eternal life, or the kingdom of God). Therefore we have a contrast between verses 13 and 14. Verse 13 emphasises the way to death, and verse 14 emphasises the way to life. Surely the way of life must be the one which is desired by us all, and this must be the real reason why we should be prepared to pluck out our right eye, or cut off our right hand if we find that they are a hindrance to us finding a place in the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:29-30).

It is also interesting to contemplate Jesus’ use of the term ‘way’ in this parable. Whilst it is the same Greek word in both verses (‘hodos’ meaning progress) it may be viewed in an entirely different context in verse 14, eg. Jesus used the same word in John 14:6 to describe himself “...*I am the way, the truth and the life’ no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*”.. Another interesting use of the term is found in Acts 9:2 where it is used as a name for the first century ecclesia. They adopted this name to identify themselves as a separate body of people. We may therefore picture both Jesus and the ecclesia as the “...*narrow way... which leadeth unto life...*”. Surely it is both Jesus and the ecclesia in this present age which can provide the strongest refuge against the evils of the ‘broad way’ that leads to eternal destruction.

Let us value the right decision we have made in life to enter the narrow way.

Points to Consider

- What does the word ‘leadeth’ suggest in connection with the responsibilities we must carry out?
- How do we “find” life? (What is your scriptural proof?)

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

Beware

‘prosecho’ (4337) – See Matt. 6:1
Matt. 16:6, 11, 12; Luke 12:1; Acts 20:28

false prophets

‘pseudoprophetes’ (5578) – a spurious prophet or one that is not genuine, a pretender.
Matt. 24:11, 24; Acts 13:6; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1

inwardly

‘esothēn’ (2081) – within or inside.
Matt. 23:25, 27, 28; Luke 11:39

ravening

‘harpax’ (727) – rapacious or greedy or those who seize by force. Thayer: a robber or one who is ravenous.
Luke 18:11; 1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:10

wolves

‘lukos’ (3074) – a wolf from its whitish hair.
John 10:12; Acts 20:29

A false teacher is self-centred and not **God**-centred (Phil. 3:17-19). Remember, if you are taken in by them it is because their words also appeal to your nature and they proclaim that the broad way will lead to life (2 Pet. 2:18-20). Only **God’s** Word can expose the error and guide you down the narrow way.



Rom. 16:17-20

However, if we believe that we have made the correct decision in life let us not be deluded into thinking that we may have an automatic entrance into the kingdom of God. Jesus now adds a caution that there still may be influences which might lead back to the ‘broad way’. Paul twice defined what Jesus was speaking about in this verse: *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock”* (Acts 20:29). Also 2 Thessalonians 2:3, *“Let no man deceive you by any means, except there come a falling away first”*.

Therefore it is possible for there to be many dangers to our spiritual well-being even though we may class ourselves as being “in the Truth”. It is a sobering thought to realise that some of these false teachers may come from within the Brotherhood itself. The important exhortation for us is to ensure that we are firmly grounded in our own beliefs and doctrine as well as being *“...no respecter of persons”* (Acts 10:34). No matter what the circumstances might be, we must be able to continue *“...steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

We must continually strive to maintain correct doctrine and practise.

Points to Consider

- What was Jesus instructing the disciples and us to be so cautious of when encountering false prophets?
- What false prophets do we read of in Scripture and what havoc did they cause?
- Where is the very first occurrence of a ‘false prophet’ and the subsequent downfall that followed?
- In what areas of our society is the ‘false prophet’ at work today? How are you influenced by it?
- How does this verse fit in with verse 1 which tells us not to judge people?
- When judgment is necessary, how should we go about it?

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”

shall know ‘epiginosko’ (1921) – to recognise, to become fully acquainted with, to perceive. Vines: to discern.
 ☞ Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22; 1 Tim. 4:3

fruits ‘karpos’ (2590) – fruit as plucked. Vines: metaphorically of works or deeds, fruit being the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly, the character of the fruit being evidence of the character of the power producing it.
 ☞ Matt. 3:8; John 15:2; Phil. 1:11; Jas. 3:17

📖 JB: “Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?”
 Imagine putting your hand forward to grasp hold of and experience the fruit. You would soon recognise the tree for its worth or otherwise!

☛ Prov. 23:7; Matt. 12:34

Eventually all error will reveal itself, no matter in what guise it may have been presented to us. Isaiah 8:20 presents an infallible test upon which all teaching must eventually stand or fall. *“To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* That is a test which can be applied within the brotherhood, if necessary, when a decision needs to be made regarding certain teachings which may arise. It is also a test which may equally be applied when contending for the Truth with those of the world around us.

The lesson of this verse has its foundation in the creation account of Genesis 1:12. Each tree was to bring forth fruit *“...after his kind”*. The same principle applies in the thinking of the mind. If a man’s thinking is wrong it will eventually be revealed in his teachings or actions. The comparison between grapes and thorns, or figs and thistles is an illustration of the difference between the things God has provided for the good of man, and the result of the curse which God pronounced because of the wrong thinking of man.

There is a continual need to be on our guard against error.

Points to Consider

- Is there an obvious difference in the way we act towards those we associate with outside the truth in every-day dealings?
- Can those in the world see that your ‘fruits’ are different to their’s? In what way are you different to them?
- Is it possible to reveal good fruit when the source is corrupt and not what it seems to be on the outside? (What does verse 17 indicate?)

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

bringeth forth	‘poieo’ (4160) – to make. A good tree will make good fruit according to its kind (Gen. 1:11-12).
good tree ☞	‘agathos’ (18) – See Matt. 5:45 Matt. 7:11; Acts 9:36; Jas. 3:17
good fruit ☞	‘kalos’ (2570) – See Matt. 5:16 Tit. 2:7; Jas. 3:13
corrupt ☞	‘sapro’ (4550) – rotten. Vines: akin to ‘sepo’, to rot, putrid. Thayer: corrupted and no longer fit for use. Matt. 12:33; 13:48; Eph. 4:29
evil	‘poneros’ (4190) – See Matt. 5:11
☞	Roth: “the worthless tree” JB: “rotten tree” Wey: “a poisonous tree good fruit”
☞	Psa. 51:6, 7, 10; John 3:6; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

This is the second example of a decision that we may have to make from time to time. Two varieties of fruit may be placed before us, and we need to decide which one may be permissible to eat. The tasting of either fruit may bring about the everlasting result which is described by Jeremiah, “...*behold, I have set before you the way of life, and the way of death*” (Jer. 21:8). Therefore before a fruit is tasted each requires a careful examination. Is it the fruit of a good tree, or a corrupt tree?

The ‘good tree’ is described by the Greek ‘agathos’ which means good in every way. It may be likened to the character of a true disciple. Consequently the fruit it produces is also good. But this good is a different Greek word, it is ‘kalos’ which means beautiful. A faithful disciple will produce that which is beautiful in the sight of God.

By contrast the corrupt tree – from ‘sapro’ meaning rotten or worthless, will bring forth evil fruit – from the Greek ‘poneros’ meaning hurtful or evil. Paul describes the difference between these two fruits in Romans 7: one will be “*fruit unto God*” (Rom. 7:4 – also described as “*fruit unto holiness*” in Rom. 6:22), the other is described as “*fruit unto death*” (Rom. 7:5). Surely this emphasises the care we should exercise in choosing between teachings presented to us during the course of our pilgrimage.

All decisions must be firmly based upon the pure doctrine of Truth.

Points to Consider

- List other places in Scripture where people are likened to trees bringing either forth good or bad fruits?
- What does Paul tell us are good fruits?
- Where is the first place in Scripture where a choice had to be made as to whether or not to partake of a certain tree?
- Why was the fruit on this tree so tempting?
- What was the outcome of this decision?
- How do we avoid succumbing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life?
- Look up 1 Chronicles 4:8 which deals with the posterity of Judah and look at the meanings of the names for Coz and Anub. Only **God** has the power to bring about this sort of begetting!

In our association with others, what is wrong with the following way of thinking? It is okay to have a friendship with someone outside the truth, or even with someone who comes along but has not made the commitment, because “they will change”. From these two verses, what does God say on the matter?

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

hewn down ‘ekkopto’ (1581) – See Matt. 5:30
 ☞ Matt. 3:10; Luke 13:7, 9

cast ‘ballo’ (906) – See Matt. 5:13; 13:42, 48, 50

fire ‘pur’ (4442) – See Matt. 5:22
 ☞ John 15:6; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 12:29

As Psalm 115:8 teaches, we will become like the God we worship because it will consume our whole life and it will come out in the end.

📖 NIV: “by their fruit you will recognise them”

📖 JB: “I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits”

☛ Prov. 23:7

These two verses continue by describing the fate of those who are responsible for producing ‘corrupt fruit’, which is not only detrimental to themselves, but can also be detrimental to others. They are to be cast into the fire which is a symbol of the result of judgment that will be pronounced upon them. We have a similar figure in Jesus’ metaphor of the true vine. In that illustration the fruitless branches of the vine are pruned from the parent plant “...and they are burned” (John 15:6). It must be realised that trees or branches which do not bring forth “...fruit unto God” are of no value to Him, and will have no everlasting place in His purpose.

However, to the wise and teachable in God’s ways these false teachers with their corrupt fruit should soon be discernible. This is indicated by the final phrase of verse 20 “...ye shall know them”. ‘Know’ is the Greek ‘epiginosko’ meaning to become fully acquainted with. The Diaglott translates the phrase this way “...ye shall discover them”. False teaching is always discoverable by the adoption of that important rule Isaiah has left with us, “To the law and the testimony...” (Isa. 8:20)

There is need to be constantly on guard against false doctrine introduced “unawares”. (Gal. 2:4)

Points to Consider

- Is Christ going to be able to know you personally by your fruits at his return? What does this mean?
- Do our words and actions portray to others whose children we are? (cp Luke 6:45)

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

Lord ‘kurios’ (2962) – supreme in authority.
 ⚭ Matt. 5:33; 6:24

enter Here is where the strait gate leads: the kingdom of heaven.

doeth ‘poieo’ (4160) – to make or do.

will ‘thelema’ (2307) – See Matt. 6:10
 ⚭ Matt. 12:50; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 6:6

⚭ John 14:21; 2 Cor. 5:14; Jas. 1:22; 1 John 2:17

? How does this verse show us that the Lord Jesus Christ himself will be our judge?

Having introduced a warning about the dangers of wrong teaching and its effects Jesus now introduces us to two things which flow on from the knowledge of right and wrong:

1. The responsibility which the knowledge of right and wrong brings to the individual.
2. The certainty of judgment as a result of responsibility.

The terms of the grammar in this verse show that Jesus is speaking in a negative sense. He is speaking about those who have a knowledge and understanding of the gospel, but have not necessarily brought forth good fruit. The judgment will then bring a time when the fruits of the tree will become fully known.

It is important to recognise here that Jesus is referring to the responsible individual who must face judgment. **It is a verse which may apply to us all personally.** The fact that it is speaking about an individual can be found by the use of the singular terms ‘one’ and ‘he’. Let us therefore picture ourselves at the judgment seat imploring the great judge to hear us, even though we know that during the time of opportunity we did not use that opportunity as we should have done. It will be too late then to beseech him with the words “*Lord, Lord...*”. Now is the opportunity to call upon his name and to profitably apply his gospel teaching, and face the judgment seat in confidence. We must strive to be amongst the class of whom Jesus might say, he “*...doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*”.

May we never overlook the certainty of judgment before we enter the kingdom.

Points to Consider

- Compare this verse to the attitude of many other religions today. Do you think that they follow the principle of this verse?
- Do you think this verse sums up the lesson behind the whole discourse in Matthew 5-7? If so, how?
- List other quotes that speak to us about the importance of **doing** God’s will.
- Not all ‘disciples’ of Christ will enter into the kingdom. What is the Lord’s command and expectations of us in order to give us the kingdom?
- Make a summary of the various qualities we have considered throughout the discourse that will help us to become ‘doers’ of the Word.
- Having considered such qualities, can you say that you are a doer of the Word?
- What is God’s will? How are you doing God’s will?
- Follow the word ‘will’ through the Scriptures using Englishman’s, and discover what **God’s will** is in relation to our attitude towards each other?
- Are you ready to appear before your judge now?

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

<u>Many</u>	(4183) – See verse 13
<u>prophesied</u>	‘propheteuo’ (4395) – to foretell events or to speak under inspiration. Vines: the primary meaning is of telling forth the divine counsels. Acts 2:18; 1 Cor. 14:3-5; 1 Pet .1:10
<u>in thy name</u>	This is a phrase well worth looking up in the Scriptures: Dan. 9:6; Mark 9:38
<u>have cast out</u>	‘ekballo’ (1544) – See verse 4
<u>devils</u>	‘daimonion’ (1140) – Concordances are no value here, but the way God uses the word in the N.T. will help us define devils: Matt. 9:33; 17:18; Mark 1:34; Jas. 2:19
<u>wonderful works</u>	‘dunamis’ (1411) – the word conveys the idea of force, power or strength. They believed they performed great and mighty deeds. Acts 6:8; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 3:20 Roth: “and in thy name many works of power perform?” Wey: “and in Thy name performed many mighty works?”
?	What a heart-wrenching scene. Will we declare what we have done for God and not acknowledge all that God has done for us? Why did we “do” those things mentioned in this verse? What is our motive in the Truth?
☛	Matt. 25:34-45; Luke 13:24-27; Jas. 1:26-27

One of the easiest ways to understand this verse is to picture the scribes and Pharisees at the judgment seat. They all believed they were doing the will of God and working in His name! (John 16:1-3). Look at their example and consider what the true motive of their service was.

Whilst verse 21 speaks of an individual who may be subject to judgment, this verse now goes on to speak of a group, or class, of people who also may be subject to judgment and rejection. This thought remains as intensely personal as the responsibility to judgment presented in verse 21. How would you feel if this was a group of your own family, or ecclesia, who are ultimately to be denied by the Lord? This also means that responsibility to the gospel may go beyond the fact of just personal salvation and extend to many others with whom we may come into contact during our period of mortal probation. Others also will cry “*Lord, Lord...*” and claim to have done many things in Jesus’ name. But is their claim sufficient for salvation? In Luke 13:26-27 Jesus points out that many will make claims that he will not recognise. “*...I know not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.*”

There are many in society today who do some very commendable deeds on behalf of others. Even the scribes and Pharisees performed some very commendable deeds. Amongst the churches and charitable societies today there are those who proclaim the name of Jesus – who make prophecies, heal the sick and do much to improve the lot of the underprivileged, and there can be no doubt that in Christ’s name they claim to do many wonderful works, but they are all according to the world’s standards. It is possible that in the day of Christ’s return some of them may be called to judgment if they have sufficient knowledge of the gospel to be responsible, and will be found unworthy of salvation.

The fact that with all their professed belief and energy they will not be found in the kingdom can be a sobering lesson to ourselves, to find that genuine and sincere people still may not be pleasing to God. Have they been affected by false prophets, corrupt fruit, or have they simply chosen the wrong gate?

In this list of commendable works one thing is missing – Can you see what it is?

Points to Consider

- What were such people prophesying about?
- What were the devils that were being cast out?
- What 'wonderful works', if given the opportunity, can you openly declare? What is your motive for performing such works?
- In what way could you profess to serve your Lord, yet your actions are not complimentary?
- Why is it that so many charity organisations and fundraising societies are not pleasing to the Father?
- Should we contribute to such charities and organisations when they are not true followers of Christ?
- Why does Christ say that he won't accept some people's works?
- What should our attitude be towards the works we perform in the ecclesia so that they will be accepted?
- Is it just our works that gives us salvation and how does James 2:18-26 relate to these verses?

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

will I profess

‘homologeō’ (3670) – to acknowledge or confess. Vines: literally to speak the same thing (‘homos’, same, ‘lego’, to speak), to assent, accord, admit, declare. Thayer: to declare openly.



Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9, 10; Tit. 1:16



JB: “Then shall I tell them to their faces”



NIV: “Then I will tell them plainly”

never

‘oudepote’ (3763) – not even at any time, ie. never at all.

The point being made is that at the judgment seat there will be no grey areas. Our Lord will either **know** us personally and intimately or he will not (Ezek. 18:20-24).

knew

‘ginosko’ (1097) – to be aware of, understand. Vines: to come to know or understand completely. Thayer: to learn to know, get a knowledge of. Bullinger: It denotes a personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known, ie. to be influenced by one’s knowledge of the object, to suffer one’s self to be determined thereby: hence the force of Matthew 7:23, “*I have never had a true and personal connection with you*”.



John 8:55; 14:7; 16:3; 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 2:3-5; 4:8

that work

‘ergazomai’ (2038) – to toil as a task or occupation, to be engaged in.



John 6:28; Rom. 2:10; Jas. 2:9

iniquity

‘anomia’ (458) – illegality, ie. violation of law, unrighteousness. Vines: lawlessness. Thayer: the condition of one without law – either because ignorant of it, or because violating it.



Matt. 13:41; 23:28; 1 John 3:4



Psa. 6:8. Why does our Lord quote from this Psalm? Look at the attitude of the Psalmist.

They have professed unto Christ, now he will profess unto them the Truth because sadly they have been “*hearers only, deceiving your own selves*” (Jas. 1:22).

Jesus is speaking of his own duty to refuse entry into the kingdom to a certain class of people. Whatever ‘wonderful works’ they may have done, they are still classified as ‘workers of iniquity’ – **amongst them all there has been one missing factor**. The latter half of James 2 shows us that **works must always be accompanied by faith**. In this case any reference to faith is completely missing, and therefore the efforts of these people who cry “*Lord, Lord...*” at the judgment seat is vain. Paul points out in Hebrews 11:6 that “*...without faith it is impossible to please God*”.

Therefore there can be much activity in the name of religion which does not please God. This brings us back to the actions of the Pharisee class which did not please God. Their motivation was not faith, but self aggrandisement and personal ego. Faith is God honouring and must be the foundation of all that we do in His name.

Let us carefully examine our motives in all that we do in God’s name.

Points to Consider

- Why would the Lord Jesus Christ say he ‘never knew us’ when we claim to be his followers?
- How can we get to know our Master so that he will recognise us when we appear before him?
- We are called upon to be doers of the Word. Who are those that ‘work iniquity’?

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”

heareth

‘akouo’ (191) – See Matt. 5:21



Matt. 13:9, 18-20, 22-23, 43; 18:15; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 3:7



TCNT: “Everyone, then, that listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it may be compared to a prudent man.”

liken

‘homoioo’ (3666) – See Matt. 6:8

wise

‘phronimos’ (5429) – thoughtful, ie. discreet (implying a cautious character). Vines: prudent, sensible, practically wise. Bullinger: thoughtful.



Matt. 10:16; 24:45; 25:2



Prov. 8:33-35; 10:8, 14; 12:15; 14:1; 15:31; 18:15

built

‘oikodomeo’ (3618) – to be a house-builder, construct, edify.



Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 8:1; 1 Pet. 2:5

house

‘oikia’ (3614) – See Matt. 5:15



Mark 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:1

rock

‘petra’ (4073) – a (mass of) rock. Vines: denotes a mass of rock and a sure foundation. Bullinger: a projecting rock, a cliff, as distinguished from a loose stone that might be thrown by the hand.



Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 Pet. 2:8



Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 37; Psa. 18:2, 46; 62:7

RSV, Roth, Diag: “**the** rock”

Prov. 10:25; 12:7; 1 Cor. 3:10-15

We now commence the final section of Jesus’ Discourse on the Mount with what is commonly known as the parable of the two builders. **It is, in fact, an exhortation to wisdom.** It is an exhortation to adopt the action of the wise man who built his house upon a rock. It is most important that this exhortation has been placed where it is and that it commences with the word ‘therefore’. This means that having considered all the things that have been said “*Let us make the choice of wisdom*”. In speaking this way Jesus is touching upon some very important issues.

Firstly let us note that this exhortation is addressed only to those who are prepared to ‘hear’ and ‘do’. This advice is based upon the exhortation of Jeremiah to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as their city was about to fall. “...**Hear ye the words of this covenant and do them**” (Jer. 11:6). This advice is later taken up in the well known words of James 1:22, “**Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves**”. Jesus’ choice of words in this verse is important. ‘Heareth’ is from the Greek ‘akouo’ meaning not only to hear in the physical sense, but also to understand or mentally perceive. Therefore this verse begins with an appeal to the senses in both a physical and spiritual capacity. The hearing of the gospel must lead us to an understanding of all its requirements and thence an obedience to those requirements. This is indicated by the use of ‘doeth’ from the Greek ‘poieo’ meaning action in a wide variety of circumstances.

In Matthew 5:28 Jesus also used the illustration of the senses when he spoke of the eye and the heart, but that was in a negative sense illustrating that mere physical perception without spiritual application could lead to wrong doing. It is now interesting to see how Jesus speaks of the ear which cannot see, meaning that when he speaks to those who hear “...*these saying of mine*” he is speaking to those who must exercise faith. The ear must always have mastery over the heart, and faith have mastery over sight.

Therefore it is in faith that the wise man will be observed building his house upon **the** Rock (Diaglott). The rock can have two applications: It is a symbol of Christ (1 Cor. 10:4) and also a symbol of the ecclesia (Matt. 16:18). What greater exhortation to wisdom could we possibly find than to build our house upon the foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ and his ecclesia?

By exercising the ear of faith we can be led to building our lives upon the correct foundation.

Points to Consider

- Why is the rock used as a symbol in the Word of God? Make a list of some of the places in the Old Testament where this symbol is used and what it means.
- Which one of God's titles means 'rock'? Where is it found?
- Why do you think this parable is placed right at the end of the discourse?
- What does James say about people who **do** the sayings of Christ?
- These concluding words of the Lord are written to those who are prepared to hear and do. How prepared are you to hear and do what Christ has taught you?
- When do you intend to put the principles we have considered into practise?
- The wise man had obviously thought and planned ahead and made the necessary preparations. How are you showing your wisdom before judgment comes?

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.”

rain	‘broche’ (1028) Matt. 7:27; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.
descended	‘katabaino’ (2597) – to come down 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:1, 9
floods	‘potamos’ (4215) – conveys the idea of running water, flood, river, stream. Vines: a torrent. 2 Cor. 11:26; Rev. 12:15, 16
beat upon	‘prospipto’ (4363) – to fall towards or to rush upon in a storm.
fell	‘pipto’ (4098) – to fall down Luke 11:17; 1 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 4:11
was founded	‘themelioo’ (2311) – to lay a basis for, consolidate. Vines: to lay a foundation. Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:23; 1 Pet. 5:10

The wise man’s house was accounted worthy **to stand** (Luke 21:34-36). Such could be a picture of Noah in the Ark as it floated upon the waters! That was likened to a day of judgment and only those **in the Ark** were saved.

The house built upon the rock is now subject to all the natural pressures of the world, surely testing the foundation upon which it has been built. Two main elements tested the foundation of the house – flood and wind. Even today it is these elements of nature which cause so much havoc in various parts of the world, but they have a very interesting spiritual meaning. It was flood which destroyed the godless society of Noah’s day, whilst wind can represent doctrine (Jude 12). It is a combination of wickedness and wrong doctrine which has caused the fall of many a house in the Truth.

Once again it is **the rock** which is spoken of as the foundation of the house, and truly there can be no other foundation than Christ and the ecclesia which can help prevent spiritual and moral collapse amongst the disciples, as they are called upon to withstand the pressures of flood and wind in the society of this present world.

Never let us underestimate the value of Christ and the ecclesia in our lives.

Points to Consider

- In this parable, what are the wise man’s foundations based upon? How did they prove to be absolutely vital in order to sustain him when faced with such a challenging trial?
- What do the rain, floods and wind represent?
- Read Romans 8:35-39. What does this tell us about the importance of a strong foundation? What is the one thing not mentioned here that can separate us from Christ.
- Why is study and meditation on the Word “*in the days of our youth*” so important?
- Why do we experience difficulties and trials in our life? Do you think one of the reasons is to test the strength of our ‘foundation’?
- What is the only way to keep our faith strong during a trial? How do we remember this when we are going through a trial and things are much more difficult?

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:”

foolish ‘moros’ (3474) – heedless
 Matt. 5:22; 23:17; 25:2; 1 Cor. 1:25

sand ‘ammos’ (285) – sand (as heaped on the beach). Vines: an insecure foundation.
 Luke 6:49 uses the word ‘earth’ instead of sand.

The reason for the different results was the type of foundation used. Both were building, but the basis for building was different. One was building on a spiritual plane and one was building on a carnal plane. One was looking short-term and one was building for the long-term.

Here is another man who heard the teachings of Jesus, but who responded in a different way. Both men had an equal opportunity, and both exercised the free-will which is common to all men. The first heard Jesus’ sayings and obeyed, the second heard Jesus’ sayings and disobeyed. The disobedience of the second man is demonstrated in the place where he chose to build. Bro. L.G. Sargent in *Teaching of the Master* (page 288), suggests that the foolish builder actually built his house upon river gravel which is notoriously unstable, particularly as it is always the first to be effected by flooding. This would also be a very easy place to build, whereas the rock may have been more difficult of access and harder to prepare. In other words not only did he take the easy way out in making preparations for his building, but he was particularly lacking in foresight as regards location and materials upon which his house was to be founded.

Two important lessons come from this: This second builder was a ‘foolish man’ concerning which we read in Psalm 14:1 *“The fool hath said in his heart there is no God...”*. But also his choice of building site was a rejection of the rock chosen by the ‘wise man’ (v.24). Later in his ministry Jesus explained exactly what this rejection meant. *“The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner”* (Mark 12:10). These two points summarise the second section of the parable very clearly: To make a choice in life which does not conform to the gospel leads one to a situation where both God and His Son Christ Jesus are rejected. It is upon such that the judgments of God will fall inescapably.

Never underestimate the folly of rejecting the gospel.

Points to Consider

- Think of some examples from Scripture of people who held fast to their God through trials, and those who failed and gave up. Consider their strengths and weaknesses.
- What is the difference between the wise and the foolish man?
- Why didn’t the foolish man make the effort to build his house on the rock?
- In what way could you be similar to the foolish in your service in the truth?

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

great ‘megas’ (3173) – See Matt. 5:19

fall ‘ptosis’ (4431) – a crash, ie. downfall. Vines: an overthrow or fall that is irretrievable. Luke 2:34; Only occurs 2 times in N.T.

☞ JB: “and what a fall it had!”

☞ NIV: “and it fell with a great crash.”

☞ Wey: “and it falls; and disastrous is the fall.”

☞ Ezek. 13:10-16

Many believed that the city of Jericho could never fall, or that the Titanic could never sink! What a great shock there was when both went down! How sad and how astonishing it shall be on that day of judgment when those who did many powerful works on the foundation of flesh shall be rejected. Let us all take heed and come to know our loving Heavenly Father and be perfect, even as He is.

Here is the result of the second builder’s folly: His house was subject to exactly the same pressures as the house of the wise builder, and even though it may have been a very solid building it ‘fell’ because it was weak at its foundations. ‘Fell’ is the Greek word ‘ptosis’ meaning the house crashed – a much more emphatic term. This reminds us of another building of mankind which is also to crash in spectacular fashion because its foundations are notoriously weak. This is Nebuchadnezzar’s Image which will be “...broken in pieces and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors...” (Dan. 2:35). All the buildings of man will ultimately crash to the ground in similar fashion for “*except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it*” (Psa. 127:1).

In the ecclesia we must take care to build only upon the foundation of Christ. It is to this end that all the words of Jesus in the Discourse on the Mount have been designed. If our lives are not built upon Christ there lies before us no hope and we are “...yet in our sins” (1 Cor. 15:17). Perhaps Paul sums it all up in his words found in Ephesians 2:20-21 when he says we are built “...upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord”.

What a great responsibility we have to ensure that our foundations are correct.

Points to Consider

- No-one will escape judgment, therefore the foolish man suffered the same judgment as the wise man. What does this verse tell us about the extent of the outcome because of such carelessness?
- What warning does this give us in these last days as we prepare for impending judgment?



“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

were astonished ‘ekplesso’ (1605) – to strike with astonishment, amaze. Vines: from ‘ek’, out of, ‘plesso’, to strike, literally to strike out, signifies to be exceedingly struck in mind. Bullinger: to be driven out of one’s senses by a sudden shock.
 Roth: “with astonishment were the multitudes being struck at his teaching”



Those disciples who listened and understood were struck in their hearts. It was now up to them to **do** the things spoken. They were to build on the foundations of the sayings of the ‘word made flesh’.

doctrine ‘didache’ (1322) – instruction. Vines: that which is taught.
 Matt. 22:33; John 7:16, 17; Acts 2:42; Tit. 1:9; 2 John 9
 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:4-10; John 7:46



taught ‘didasko’ (1321) – See Matt. 5:2

authority ‘exousia’ (1849) – force, competency, mastery, strength. Thayer: the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possess or exercises. Bullinger: permission or licence.
 Matt. 21:23; Luke 4:32



scribes ‘grammateus’ (1122) – See Matt. 5:20
 NIV: “and not as their teachers of the law.”



Wey: “were filled with amazement at his teaching, for he had been teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes taught.”

The scribes passed on the Rabbinic teachings and traditions but such never penetrated their own hearts. All those who would be teachers need God’s Word written on their own hearts and then whether naturally eloquent or not they will teach with conviction. Such are needed today.

Jesus’ teachings had a great effect upon those who heard his words. They were ‘astonished’, from the Greek word ‘ekplesso’ meaning to strike. They were truly struck by the things they heard. Here was something which even exceeded the prophets of old. He taught them as no other man had ever taught them during the course of their history. ‘Taught’ comes from the Greek ‘en didasko’ meaning the one teacher. Literally there had been none other like him, but it was not just the things he spoke about, it was the way he was able to say them. He spoke ‘having authority’ – ‘exousia’, meaning privilege, force or capacity and John later was able to capture this particular authority of Jesus’ teaching in the introduction to his gospel. He describes Jesus’ teaching as being “...full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

May we all take the time to fully ponder these wonderful teachings of Jesus, and allow ourselves to fully appreciate the authority and power which they possess, for truly there are no greater teachings than the teachings of our Lord. They offer us a far better way of life now, and a wonderful prospect for the future which can be gained from no other source.

May our choice be the one which will last forever in the eternal kingdom of God.

Points to Consider

- Why was Jesus’ teaching so different to the scribes? How can we apply this method of teaching when speaking the Truth to others, both in the ecclesia and outside?
- What effect has the words of the Lord Jesus Christ had upon you?

How are you going to allow the words you have ‘heard’ to be ‘enacted’ in your life now, so that your house is founded, as the wise man, upon the life-giving words of truth?

The best time to develop our foundation in the Truth is now while we are young. This is the advice of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:1. Now is the time when we have the most time and energy to devote to God. Now is the time to work in the service of our Lord and to study and meditate on His Word. Let us use this week to strengthen ourselves and each other around the things of God and develop our foundation in the things of the Truth so that we are able to “hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14; 10:23-25).

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”