

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

29- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 9  
The King Reveals the Deepest Meaning of the  
Law of God- Part 1

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Church September 18, 2022

**Matthew 5:21-48**

**21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'**

**22 "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**

**23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,**

**24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.**

**25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.**

**26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.**

**27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';**

**28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

**29 "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.**

**30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.**

**31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE**

**HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';**

**32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**

**33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'**

**34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,**

**35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.**

**36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.**

**37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.**

**38 "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'**

**39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.**

**40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.**

**41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.**

**42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

**43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'**

**44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

**46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?**

**47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?**

**48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now we need to remember that Matthew originally wrote this

Gospel Record- to his fellow Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- in the Hope that by heralding Jesus' Life; Ministry; Death; and Resurrection- they would see (as he had) that Jesus was the complete FULFILLMENT of the Law of God that they were all supposedly trying so hard to obey; and was EVERYTHING a believing Jew was hoping for.

And so, Chapters 1-4 of Matthew's Gospel Record contain many historical facts surrounding the Birth of Jesus- that most of the people, who first read this Account- would have *personally* lived through and were "eyewitnesses" of.

And then here in Chapters 5-7 this former tax-collector gives the first of five large Sections of inspired Teaching in his Gospel Record- designed to represent the five Books of Moses (*the Pentateuch*). So, Matthew is showing the Jews that, in addition to Jesus being the long-awaited "*Mashich*" (Messiah); and "*Immanuel*" (God with us)- the Lord Christ is also the "*2<sup>nd</sup> Moses*".

Now over the Centuries- Chapters 5-7 have come to be called, the "*Sermon on the Mount*". And it is truly the greatest Sermon ever preached. And there have been many, who have tried to analyze just *why* Jesus was teaching these things. But if you understand the basic Premise of this entire Book- that it was written by a Jew to capture the attention of other Jews in a "*Story*" format- then what Jesus was teaching here makes much more sense.

Matthew's approach is that Jesus is the *new* King; who sovereignly rules over a *new*, coming Kingdom; that is going to "*take the place of*" and "*completely replace*" the *old* Kingdom that began in Rebellion with King Saul under the Old Covenant.<sup>1</sup> And History bears out the fact that of all kings, who ruled over both Kingdoms (*Israel and Judah*)- the overwhelming *majority* of them were evil and wicked men. And even the "Good" Kings had such grievous Sins in their lives to warrant them being placed under Church Discipline- if they had lived under the New Covenant.

So, instead of this *new* Kingdom being inhabited by ethnic Jews, who have been *physically* circumcised- the people, who will inhabit this *new* Kingdom will be people from every nation; tongue; tribe and culture on earth. And the subjects of this *new* Kingdom that God is establishing through the Life; Death; Ministry; and Resurrection of Jesus- will NOT be only those, who were born as Jews- but will be those who have become *true, spiritual* Jews<sup>2</sup> by believing in Jesus- Who has circumcised their hearts.

So, now in this first large Section of Teaching- Jesus is describing the Attributes and Characteristics of the *new* people, who will inhabit this *new*

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<sup>1</sup> God's Will for Israel was that they have a plurality of Judges, who would govern the people according to God's Word and Will. But even though they already had God as their King- the people wanted to be like the other Nations of the world and have a human King. God gave them what they wanted- but warned them, through the Prophet Samuel, that they would "*rue the day*" they rebelled against His Will to lust for an earthly King. **1Samuel 8.**

<sup>2</sup> **Romans 2:28&29**

Kingdom- where Jesus is King and Lord of all. And so far- we have found out that these people will be “*Blessed*” or “*Favored*” by God. And the Source of their “*Blessedness*” and their unimaginable “*Joy*” is God Himself- working in them and through them- to sovereignly CAUSE them to be like what He described in **Matthew 5:3-10:**

- They will be “*Poor in spirit*”- knowing that they are NOT Good or Righteous people- but wicked sinners- in Need of a Savior
- They will be people who genuinely “Mourn” or Grieve over their own Sins- which are many
- They will “Gentle” people- who do NOT inherit the entire World by waging natural War- but by believing
- The new people who will inherit this new Kingdom will genuinely hunger and thirst for a Righteousness that they know is not their own, personal righteousness- but is the spotless Righteousness of Jesus.
- God will make these new people “Pure” in their hearts- meaning they will be genuine and will NOT be religious hypocrites like the Jews
- They will be Merciful people remembering that the ONLY Reason they inherit this new Kingdom is because God has shown them Mercy.
- They will be “Peacemakers” in two ways: 1) They themselves will be at Peace with God- through Salvation and 2) they will be helping others find this Peace with God- through the Heralding of the Gospel.
- God will cause them to be both Humble and Bold through the constant and intense Persecution they will be confronted with- all the days of their Lives

And because of what God has sovereignly done in them and for them and through them- the new people of this new Kingdom will be both the “**Salt of the earth**” (**Matthew 5:13**); and the “**Light of the World**” (**Matthew 5:14**).

And these *new* people will *inherit* this *new* Kingdom- NOT by natural birthright- but because they will *all* experience the Miracle of the New Birth- that will gift to them the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ (that He earned by living a sinless Life)- through the Agency of “*Faith Alone*” and NOT by or through religious Deeds or Works.

And once these people have been born all over again (*by what God alone has done for them*)- these *new* people (*empowered and motivated by the Gift of Love for God*)- will then struggle against the Lusts of their Flesh (*by and through the Power of the indwelling Holy Spirit*) to be humbly and joyfully submissive to the Authority of Scripture (*in their daily Lives*)- all to the Glory of God! And this is what is called, “Sanctification”- which very little is taught about in the modern church.

So, they will be born again- NOT “by” or “through” Works of Righteousness or religious Deeds they perform- but by Faith alone! And the *unmistakable* Proof; the *inarguable* Fruit that they have indeed been born again- is the godly Works and holy Deeds they will perform in full view of sinners and believers alike- so ALL the world will...

**... see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16).**

So, all of this- the *entirety* of the “*Sermon on the Mount*” is all about already saved people living the Life of “godly Holiness.” And that means that this Sermon is NOT about how lost sinners become born again in the first place. Jesus talks about that in other places. This Sermon is about what people look like; and what their normal, every-day lives look like- who have ALREADY experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and who have ALREADY been given that Gift of Love for God; and how their lives should reflect that Love for God- through humble and joyful Obedience.

Now there are two biblical Concepts- both of which are connected to our Sin- that we need to understand and believe:

1. The Concept that Jesus “*Paid for*” our Sins
2. The Concept that saved people are commanded to “*Kill Sin*”

... so, let’s quickly go through both of these together.

## **1. The Concept that Jesus “Paid” for our Sins**

Jesus Christ “paid” for our Sins by what He alone did. Now when we say this- we mean to say that by His sinless Life; His vicarious (substitutionary) Death on the Cross; His bodily Resurrection; and His Ascension into Heaven to sit at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High- Jesus SATISFIED the righteous Requirement of God- that whoever sins MUST die- *eternally*.

You see, when we sin- however great or small those Sins may appear to us- we have *insulted* and dishonored the Glory of God. We have *belittled* and created a celestial Slight against what God cares about the MOST- His Own Glory. So, the pristine Righteous and Holy Glory of our God has been *attacked* and *maligned*- NOT because God Himself is somehow less Glorious (we could NEVER do that)- but because- by our Sin- we have *testified*; or *cried out*; or *displayed*; or *shown*; or *revealed* that God’s Glory is NOT worthy of our Praise; or our Adoration; or our Worship. Our Sin has shown what we really think about God and His Holiness.

And even though God personally remains the same- our Blasphemy has not gone unnoticed.

You see, God is the most Glorious Being in the Universe. God is the most lovable; the most important; the wisest; the most beautiful; the most powerful Being in the Universe. And there is ONLY one single response that ALL of God's Creation should give to God- "*Awe inspired Worship.*"

And when we don't respond to God that way- we have sinned horribly against Him. So, Sin is NOT only being a pedophile or a mass murderer or a drug dealer. It is also our Actions (or Thoughts) of *de-valuing* Him. So, for example, when God stands before us and we look full bore into His Magnificence- and we say to Him, "*No thank You, I'd rather have something else beside You.*" When we say, "*You don't satisfy me- I need something (or somebody) else.*" Or when we say, "*You don't please me- and I don't find the fullness of my own Joy in You- I find it is something else.*"- we couldn't insult God any more than that. The sexually perverted people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who wanted to rape angels, did NOT sin against God any *worse* than that.

And when that happens- God is furious. His Wrath against that sinner (and his Sin) is frightening and relentless. God will NEVER rest- until that Insult to His glorious Character- is resolved. And it is resolved in ONE place- the Lake of Fire.

You see, the Punishment MUST fit the Crime. And there is no greater Crime than to *devalue* the Glory of God. And so, Hell was designed to be terrifying on purpose: To illustrate how serious God is about despising the sinfulness of Sin. So, God plans to eternally damn both the unrepentant sinner and his Sin FOREVER- in the Place of everlasting Torment that was originally designed for the devil and his angels.

And this is where the word, "**Propitiation**" comes is. And the Apostle John as well as the Apostle Paul and the unknown writer of Hebrews used this word:

### **1John 2:1&2**

**1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;**

**2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.**

### **Hebrews 2:17**

**Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**

### **Romans 3:21-25**

**21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,**

**22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;**

**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

**24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;**

**25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.**

**This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;**

### **1John 4:9&10**

**9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.**

**10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

Now in each case- the word that was translated into English as “**Propitiation**” comes from a Greek word (*hilasmos*; Strong’s #2434), which means: *to appease or satisfy the Anger of God.*

And now we know that God is angry because our Sins have *belittled* the one thing that God loves the *most*- even above the very Heavens themselves- His Own Glory (**Psalm 113:4**)! But how does Jesus’ Death *appease* that Anger? God had told Adam before he sinned this from **Genesis 2:16b&17**:

**16 ...From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;**

**17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.**

... and God spoke through His Prophet to say this in **Ezekiel 18:20a**

### **The person who sins will die...**

So, the Punishment for sinning against God- has ALWAYS been Death. And “Death” is understood in two ways:

1. *Physical* Death (the body will die and return to the Dust)
2. *Spiritual* Death (the eternal Damnation of Hell)

But we have already come to know that Jesus was personally Sinless. So, in order for His Death on the Cross to count for us- God had to “impute” or “credit” ALL of the Sins of ALL of God’s chosen elect on Jesus.

## **2Corinthians 5:21**

**He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

So, Jesus died with ALL of our Sins on Him. And in doing that- ALL of our Sins were “paid for”- in the sense that the Insult; the belittling of the magnificent Glory of God- by our Sin- was *adjudicated* by Jesus’ Death and the Holy Anger against us was appeased. In other words, the Righteous Justice of God that was seeking Judgment against us because of our Sin- was satisfied by the Death of Jesus on the Cross. And that Satisfaction is Permanent and Full- so by Jesus dying- the Ultimate Price was paid- AND there will NEVER be any MORE Judgment rendered against us!

So, our Sins- ALL OF THEM- have been FOREVER “Paid For”! And that is WHY the Apostle Paul wrote this in **Romans 8:1**:

**Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

So, our Sins were NOT merely “*swept under the rug*”. God did NOT say, “*Oh well, boys will be boys- I’ll just forget about it.*” No, our Sins were “Paid for”. The ultimate Price was paid. There is NO LONGER any outstanding Debt against us- concerning our Sins. None. Our Sins were “*paid in full*”.

And this is very important- because when we begin to doubt our Salvation; or we begin to question if we have done enough to *earn* God’s Favor- we must IMMEDIATELY repent and rehearse the Gospel to ourselves: Jesus died with ALL of my Sins on Him. And God the Father *accepted* Jesus’ Payment as a complete Satisfaction against the Insult against His Glory that my Sins created. There is NOTHING I could give that would come close to what Jesus has already given- His Own sinless Life. So, we MUST understand that we CANNOT “do” ANYTHING to add to what Jesus has already done. And to even try- is a wicked denial of what Jesus has already done.

And we are correct to rejoice in the fact that Jesus “paid for” ALL of our Sins. But there is one more Concept concerning Sin that I am afraid is being minimized by our correct rejoicing over the fact that ALL our Sins have been “paid for” by Jesus.

## **2. The Concept that saved people are commanded to “Kill Sin”**

After we have been sovereignly born again (by what God alone has done for us); and AFTER we have repented and trusted in Jesus- we are then “adopted” into the Family of God. And now we enter into the Lifelong PROCESS of “Sanctification”-which is a “*cooperative Effort*” between us and God the Holy Spirit.

And the Process of Sanctification is where already saved people become *progressively* “Holy”. And this is the *part* of Salvation where we develop our own, personal, intrinsic Righteousness. It was the spotless Righteousness of Jesus (that was imputed to us by Faith alone) that allowed us to be “counted as Righteous” by God- so we could go to Heaven. And there is NOTHING we can do to improve on that- because Jesus’ Righteousness is perfect.

But there are literally hundreds of Commands all through the Bible pertaining to people- WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE RIGHTEOUS- that we MUST obey. And while obeying these Commands does NOT save us- we prove that our Salvation is *genuine*- by our Obedience to these Commands. In other words, saved people WILL strive to obey these Commands. And so, if there is NO striving to obey- there is NO reason to believe that that individual is saved.

And through our Obedience to that many, many Commands- we develop our own personal Righteousness. And while our personal Righteousness will NEVER be without flaw- it WILL grow and be more and more improved.

So, it is in the Lifelong Process of “Sanctification” where already saved people work to KILL the remaining Sin that is in our Lives.

**Romans 8:12&13** says,

**12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh —**

**13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

Here we see that the Apostle Paul was ‘moved’ by God the Holy Spirit to teach us that saved people will “live forever”. In other words, saved people now possess “Eternal Life”- where we will NEVER die! And we should rejoice over that!

But notice that this is NOT an absolute Statement. There are “*inspired Qualifiers*” in this verse that make this verse to either be true or not true in our personal lives. And the *prominent* Qualifier that God the Holy Spirit “moved” on Paul to write in this verse is- the word, “**IF**”. And that word is used as a Qualifier- in both a Negative and a Positive statement. Negatively- Paul said,

... **if you are living according to the flesh, you must die...**

So, what does that mean? But before you answer- please remember that this entire Chapter of **Romans 8** is written to ONLY those who are saved. Nothing in **Romans 8** is for the Lost. So, with people, who *say* they have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; with people, who *say* they have repented of Sin; and who *say* they have had the spotless Righteousness of Jesus imputed to them by Faith alone; with those who *say* they have been adopted; with those who *say* they have already been saved; and who *say* they are now in the process of being sanctified and made Holy- what does this part of **Romans 8:13** mean when it says:

... **if you are living according to the flesh, you must die...**

... or we could use Matthew's terminology and ask, "*What does this part of **Romans 8:13** mean for people, who say they are the new people of God; and who say they are going to inherit this new Kingdom and who say they are going to live underneath this new King- Jesus Christ?*"

And the reason we need to ask this Question is because this part of **Romans 8:13** promises DEATH to those who live according to something that Paul called, "**the Flesh**".

Now what this part of **Romans 8:13** does NOT mean- is that people will still go to Hell- even *after* they have been saved- IF they *continue* to live their lives "according to"; or "in accord with"- the Flesh. This verse does NOT say that. And yet this is a Command for saved people to NOT live their Lives like that. And it DOES promise Death to those who do.

Now I would suggest to you that the term, "**the Flesh**" has to do with those sinful, carnal, worldly, wicked, and earthly "*Impulses*" that *originate* from our unconverted Flesh. Because even though our souls have been saved- our physical bodies have NOT. Our fleshly bodies are the same as it was BEFORE our souls were saved.

So, if we live our Lives in such a way that the sinful "Cravings" or the wicked "Lusts" of our unredeemed Flesh are "dominate" or is "calling the shots" or is "over-powering" our saved souls- this verse says we have been deceived about our Salvation experience- and we are NOT saved- but are still Lost. And if that is true- we WILL Die- *eternally*. In other words, we will go to Hell.

Now if you are tempted to say, "*But Brother Blair, I know what happened to me. I prayed the Prayer; I walked the aisle; I raised my hand; I asked Jesus to come into my heart and I was even baptized! Are you telling me I am still Lost- simply because I'm not doing what you say I have to do?*" I would respond

to that by saying, “*First of all- I’m NOT telling you anything. The inspired; inerrant; and infallible Word of the living God says that if you are living according to the Flesh- you WILL die. And that means you aren’t saved- because saved people will NOT die (John 11:26)! Now you can get mad at me; or you can prove that your Salvation experience was real by no longer living in accord with your fleshly and sinful Impulses and go ahead and kill the remaining Sin in your Life. But IF you don’t do that- YOU WILL DIE!*”

But then, *Positively*, Paul said,

**... if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

Now this part of **Romans 8:13** describes people, who have already been born again- who are *actively* and *purposefully* doing something that the other group, *who say they are saved-* are NOT doing. And what is that?

**... putting to death the deeds of the body ...**

... and whatever that means- it should be both measurable and obvious- since the Context of Romans 8 is concerning Sin and being set free from Sin. And that tells us that we should understand this to say,

**... putting to death the [sinful/unrighteous] deeds of the body ...**

... or “*killing Sin*”

So, the Point I am making is that already saved people are commanded to KILL the remaining Sin that is in our Lives- precisely because we HAVE experienced the Miracle of the New Birth where Jesus HAS “paid for” ALL of our Sins! In other words, the ONLY people, who will live their Lives- in such a way- that they are actively and continuously “Killing Sin”- are those who have ALREADY experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- where Jesus has “Paid For” ALL of their Sins. Another way of understanding this is to say that the ONLY people who are NOT ongoingly killing Sin- are those who are Lost and unsaved- the people who Jesus has NOT “Paid for” all their Sins.

Now what does all this have to do with the **Gospel of Matthew** in general and the Sermon on the Mount in specific? What Jesus said here in this *perfect* Sermon- is what the people look like- AFTER Jesus has “paid for” ALL of their Sins; and as they are actively and continuously killing the remaining Sin in their lives.

In other words, the ONLY people who have Attributes and Characteristics like the ones described in this Sermon- are those who have ALREADY experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; those who Jesus has “Paid for” ALL of their Sins; and those who, by the Power of the Holy Spirit are being progressively Sanctified and who are busy- killing Sin every day.

So, beginning today- we will explore the next part of the Sermon on the Mount that has to do with:

### **Jesus illustrating His full Deity- by revealing the deepest meaning of the Law of God**

... and Jesus will do that by using a similar phrase- six different times over the next 28 verses. So, over and over in this Passage- Jesus says,

**You have heard that it was said... but I say to you ...**

... or He said something like,

**You have heard that the ancients were told... but I say to you ...**

... or,

**It was said... but I say to you ...**

... and the part that begins with a phrase like, “**You have heard that it was said**” is either an infallible Old Testament Truth; or an important Subject that was taught by the Pharisees.

And the part that begins with the phrase, “**but I say to you**” is NOT a contradiction of that Old Testament Truth- but rather a full explanation as to what was actually in the Mind and Heart of God when He first gave that Commandment to Moses or one of the other Old Testament writers.

This Passage (verses 21-48) contain six different Sections of infallible Teaching from Jesus Himself, Whom Matthew presents to his Jewish readers as being the 2<sup>nd</sup> Moses:

1. **Verses 21-26** Jesus gives the *deepest* Meaning of God’s Divine Prohibition to NOT commit Murder
2. **Verses 27-30** Jesus gives the *deepest* Meaning of God’s Divine Prohibition to NOT commit Adultery

3. **Verses 31&32** Jesus gives the *deepest* Meaning of God’s Divine Prohibition to NOT Divorce your Wife
4. **Verses 33-37** Jesus gives the *deepest* Meaning about making Oaths
5. **Verses 38-42** Jesus gives the *deepest* Meaning about loving our Neighbor
6. **Verses 43-47** Jesus gives the *deepest* Meaning of how we are to interact with Evil and Evil-doers

... and then **Matthew 5:48** sums up everything Jesus has been teaching so far in what we now call, the “*Sermon on the Mount*” by saying,

**... you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect**

... which as far- fetched as that may seem- has ALWAYS been the case. God has ALWAYS required spotless Righteousness for anyone to be with Him forever in Heaven. The 66 Books of the Holy Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that from Cover to Cover.

So, contrary to popular opinion; and, sadly, contrary to what many in the modern Church believe and teach- to be with God in Heaven forever *requires* that we become JUST AS RIGHTEOUS AS GOD IS!

The Bible has NEVER taught anything else.

The English word, “**Perfect**” in **Matthew 5:48** comes from a Greek word (*teleios*; Strong’s #5046), that literally means: *to be complete; finished; or that which has reached its End*. And to be “*finished*”; “*complete*” or for a person to “*reach the End*” of all of the Moral Teachings of Jesus and the other biblical writers- would make that person to be completely “*in accord*” with those Teachings. And to be fully and completely “*in accord*” with the Moral Teachings of the Bible- would make that person to be “*perfectly Righteous*”. Another term to help us to understand what Jesus meant by using the word, “**Perfect**” in **Matthew 5:48** would be, “*Sinless*”!

Our Problem with this Statement is that we are NOT “Perfect”. As human beings, we are “*Sinners*”. And to be a “*Sinner*” means that we have transgressed God’s Law; and we are, by Nature, “*Lawless*” (**1John 3:4**)- meaning we live, “*without*”; or “*outside of*”; or “*in opposition to*”- God’s Law. Another word, to help explain what this means is, we are “*Rebels*”.

Adam and Eve rebelled *originally* in the Garden (**Genesis 3**); but because we have that *same* rebellious Nature in us (Original Sin)- we too have *personally* and *repeatedly* rebelled against God and His Law- thus making us to be “*wicked Rebels*”.

But Jesus’ “*perfect Obedience*” produced “*perfect Righteousness*.” Another way of saying this would be to say that Jesus loved God with ALL His Heart, Soul,

Mind, And Strength; and He loved His Neighbor to the very SAME degree that He loved Himself. And Jesus is the ONLY Person, Who EVER did that.

And in His Mercy and Love; and by His Grace- God the Father takes that perfect Righteousness that Jesus earned by being perfectly Obedient to His Father- and God “imputes” or “credits” that SAME spotless Righteousness to ALL those, who trust in Him- by Faith alone. And that Act of being “Justified” (forgiven and made Righteous)- *empowers* us to love God; and to Love His Word and Will; and to then strive to *obey* that Word and Will. And what *enables* us to keep on doing that- is the Command to “kill” the remaining Sin that is in our lives. And we do that in two ways:

1. We starve our Sin to death by refusing to feed it by NOT yielding to its Lusts and Impulses
2. We eat a steady and healthy diet of the Word of God on a regular basis

So, we eat; and we don't eat. We starve and we feed. We engage and we dis-engage. We yield and we don't yield. We participate and we refrain from participation. We go and we stay. We embrace and we shun. We do and we don't. And we love and we hate. And as we embrace the daily killing of Sin and as we shun the sinful Impulses of our Flesh- we enter into a humble and joyful Obedience that brings forth an improvement of our own, personal intrinsic Righteousness.

For example, when we were on our “journey” through the Burden of the Prophet Malachi, we discovered that around 400 years before Jesus was born- there was a sinful epidemic concerning the Priests divorcing their Wives and marrying other Women. And this was such a terrible affront to God that He caused the Prophet to say this in **Malachi 2:13-17**:

**13 ...you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.**

**14 "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.**

**15 "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.**

**16 "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."**

**17 You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"**

And this *minimizing* and *degrading* of the Marriage Covenant back in Malachi's Day- carried over into the Days when Jesus walked the earth. So, it was common for there to be two- even three living Women, who *used* to be the Wife of a Pharisee- but who were no longer the current Wife of the Men, who were the spiritual Leaders of the people of God. And so, Jesus said this in **Matthew 5:31&32:**

**31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';**

**32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**

So, in spite of what God said in **Malachi 2:16** ("For I hate Divorce, says the Lord..."), Divorce and Re-Marriage among the spiritual Leaders of Israel was rampant back then- with little or no regard for the Will or the Word of God. And that is why Jesus spoke this in **Matthew 5.**

Now I wish I could tell you that 2,000 years later- the Church of Jesus no longer needs this Rebuke- but, sadly, we do- because Divorce and Re-Marriage is again rampant among those who lay claim to be God's people. So, in spite of what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:31&32**- it is not *uncommon* for people, who say they are in right standing with God; and who say they have the third Person of the Trinity- God the Holy Spirit living inside of them- to be on their third, fourth, even fifth Marriage! And very few, if any modern-day Leaders will say anything about it! So, the OVER-emphasis about the Truth that Jesus "paid for" our Sins by His Death on the Cross; has led to a horrible UNDER-emphasis about the Truth that saved people are commanded to "kill Sin"- daily. Beloved, we need to fix that.

For many years *before* the Supreme Court of the United States ruled (unconstitutionally) that no Law could be passed that prohibited "Marriage" between two men or two Women- those of us, who lead in the Church had been struggling with those perverted people about whether or not God had categorically condemned the Sin of Homosexuality in the Bible. And of course, the Answer is, "Yes!" God has clearly and repeatedly *condemned* Homosexuality as a Sin that **MUST** be repented of and turned from- and NOT agreed to; condoned; normalized; or accepted.

So, based on that- this Church teaches, as an official and formal part of the Doctrinal Statement- that we *cannot*; and we *do not* recognize the Union between two perverted people as a “*Marriage*”. It isn’t- precisely because God has already defined “*Marriage*” as being between one, naturally born man; and one naturally born Woman- within the Marriage Covenant.

But one of the important areas of discussion back then centered around the “*Sin of Homosexuality*” as opposed to the “*Sin of Divorce and Re-Marriage*”. And the advocates of that perverted behavior said things like, “*You guys (the Church) are opposed to us simply because you don’t like what we want to do. But your objection to Homosexuality is NOT based in Scripture because you ignore God’s clear and repeated Condemnation of Divorce and Re-Marriage.*” And, for the most part- that Argument was true; and those people had a Point- and I said so at the time. Because many within the modern Church have been *woefully* hypocritical about this Subject. But thanks be to God, Who has blessed a few to remain rock-solid and Faithful about what Jesus taught about Marriage. May God help us to stay faithful- no matter what the Government of this Nation does.

But really and truly, my friends, the way far too many in the modern Church have gone through “*spiritual Gymnastics*”- twisting the Scriptures until they are not even recognizable- to allow Divorce and Re-Marriage among Believers- usually for any Reason- in spite of Jesus’ clear and repeated Condemnation- would be funny- if it wasn’t so serious. So, in many cases- the Leaders of the modern Church are doing *exactly* what the Pharisees did- back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

So, we are now going to go through 28 verses of inspired and infallible Divine, Absolute Truth from the very Mouth of the Lord Christ Himself. And this part of the Sermon on the Mount is designed to tell us what the Attributes and Characteristics are- of the *new* people; who will inherit this *new* Kingdom; that will be ruled by this *new* King- Who alone has brought us the New Covenant. This Passage will identify those, who “kill Sin” daily in their lives- precisely because Jesus has already “paid for” ALL their Sins. And I can’t wait to get into this with you.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.