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INTRODUCTION

Ethics enables one to make application of Biblical theology to everyday life. Three fourths of life involves ethics because conduct is three fourths of life. Everyone who lives acts morally and ethically. The smallest decision requires a choice between right and wrong according to some standard or norm. Everyone acts morally and ethically. When people see things differently than others it is because they are measuring their conduct against a different norm.

Does the Christian have a standard or norm? "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The Scriptures are the standard and norm for the Christian (II Timothy 3: 16-17).

The more we study the Word, then, the closer to the right eternal and ultimate standard our decisions will come. The more we know the Word, the more we will know God's will; the more we will make the right decisions, the less confused we will be; and we will be able to walk in victory every day of the year.

DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

Definition

Christian Ethics is the study of the principles and the practice of right and wrong in light of the Holy Scriptures.

Christian ethics is the application of Christianity to conduct. It is the translation of doctrine into deeds.

Term

Greek: *ethos*, meaning custom or habit.

PRESUPPOSITIONS

Christian Ethics Are Grounded in Its Jewish Heritage, the Old Testament

The ethical presuppositions in the Old Testament found their ultimate fulfillment in the New Testament. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. . .one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . .but I say unto you. . ." (Matthew 5:21-22).

The Need to Distinguish Between Christian and All Other Ethical Systems

There are all sorts of ethical systems. Some are based on duty, love, or pleasure. Some say our knowledge of right and wrong comes from conscience, experience, or the habits and customs of the country in which we live. But Christian ethics are based on the Scriptures. All other ethical systems will be referred to as philosophical ethics during this study.

Philosophy and theology deal with the same subject. The philosopher sets up standards of right and wrong dealing with the same questions as the church (the philosopher is also an ethicist). But he starts with a different premise and ends up at a different destination. Christian ethics does not differ from philosophical ethics in that it is seeking to answer any different questions. It is the answers to the questions that are different.

Christian ethics are based on the belief that Christ is the source of all truth, and He has revealed His will for us in His Word and that we can know right from wrong as a result.

The Differences Between Christian Ethics and Philosophical Ethics

Philosophical ethics are incomplete and inadequate. They ask all the right questions, but cannot supply the right answers. The answers are all to be found in the Christian faith. Christianity alone has adequate answers to all of these questions.

Philosophical ethics are to be criticized because they absolutize the finite. They make man's reason infallible. Man's reason is held to be the final source of authority. Reason alone, apart from revelation, is sufficient guide for all moral conduct. Anyone who wants to do right will know the right. The god of universities and colleges is man's reason and intellect.

This view ignores the fact of fallen man; that man cannot think morally and ethically until God does something for and to his mind (I Corinthians 1). "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).

Philosophical ethics are contradictory. The ethicists themselves cannot agree on the two basic questions of ethics: What is the highest good? What is the source of knowledge of right and wrong?

In Christian ethics there is no question because all truth comes through Christ. The Holy Spirit will guide the Christian into all truth.

The Relation of Ethical Conduct to Religion

There are religions that have no relation to moral or ethical conduct. There are religions whose rites are grossly immoral and unethical. The Canaanite religion of the Old Testament and some of the religions of India today involve the use of sacred prostitutes. But many churches today would consider it the height of legalism to impose ethical and moral conduct on the life of any of their members.

In the Bible, morality is the very essence of religion. Conduct cannot be divorced from acceptable worship. Because Israel's lives were full of sin and their hands full of blood, God could not stand any part of their worship (Isaiah 1:10-15). We have been saved from sin unto holiness.

Christian Ethics Are Not a System of Rules

Christian ethics are based upon principles of truth. Most Christians want a definite set of do's and don't's so that they don't have to apply principles to situations themselves. But there is no way to be under grace and under rules at the same time. But the liberty we have under grace is not a license to sin. The system of Christian ethics will show us how to apply the principles taught by Christ to our lives, instead of rules and regulations.

Romans 13:8-10 is an example of applying the principle of love and thus fulfilling the law:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. . .if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to its neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

By determining to love our neighbour, then our knowledge of the Word will show us how to react in any situation.

Christian Ethics Are Based on Jesus Christ

Christian ethics are not based merely on principles, but on a living person, the Lord Jesus Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Christian ethics are not based on a system of rules, but on principles of truth. Christian ethics are not based merely on principle, but on the Lord Jesus Christ because He is the truth (John 14:6). We are to look at Him and follow His steps. We can memorize principles and still miss it. He is the standard against which we must measure up.

Therefore Christian ethics are rooted and grounded in the perfect nature and character of God Himself. The kind of life that God demands of us is the life He lived. We are to be the image of God to the world. As we look to Him, see what He is so we can be like Him, then will we see that He is holy, righteous, just, and merciful, and that He is love.

We are to be holy.

...who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Ephesians 1 :3-4).

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (I Peter 1 :15-16).

Why must we be holy? Because we are the temples of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). To be holy means to be consecrated, to be set apart to the Holy Father.

He Demands Righteousness of Us

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

This is an imputed righteousness because we cannot be righteous in ourselves. We cannot be made righteous by keeping rules; but we have the righteousness of God which is by faith through Jesus Christ (Romans 2:20-22).

He Expects Us To Be Just and Merciful

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8).

Justice means to be fair, impartial, upright, but mercy goes beyond mere justice. The principles of justice and mercy are mingled. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6: 31). "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

He Commands Us To Love One Another

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Love is in deed, not only in word.

THE BACKGROUND OF ETHICS

Moral and ethical conduct dates from the time of man's creation. Man has been endowed with moral and rational faculties from the beginning (Genesis 2). The commandment not to eat of the tree presupposed that Adam could, and was expected to, make moral decisions.

Ethical conduct and thought appear in all the religions of the world from earliest history.

Egypt in 1600 B.C.

From the 16th century B.C. in Egypt there comes a document called the Egyptian Book of the Dead. It is a collection of religious compositions about the afterlife. The papyrus of Ani shows him and his wife in a great judgment hall after death, and there in the judgment hall is a balance scale. On one side is Ani's heart, and on the other is a feather symbolizing truth and righteousness. To one side is a beast which devours the dead. If a man's heart doesn't balance the scale, then he will be devoured. A man has to confess his righteous acts and repudiate his sins.

The Egyptian Book of the Dead reveals that in this early period a recognition that happiness in the afterlife is dependent on the quality of the person's earthly life; i.e. ethics. This type of ethics appears in all cultures of all times.

Hebrew Ethics in 1500 B.C.

This is the revelation to Moses in the Old Testament. Ethical concepts reached their height in the Old Testament. The distinctions of Israel's religion are to be found in its moral and ethical teaching. It is higher than the ethics of any other nation. It always demanded holiness. It was the highest ethic until the advent of Christianity.

The commandment to love one's neighbour was the heart of the Law, and Jesus filled it with meaning with His teachings. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. . .thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. . ." (Leviticus 19:17-18 cf Matthew 5:43). "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2 cf I Peter 1:16 and Ephesians 1 :4).

Greek Ethics

Socrates: 469-399 B.C.

Socrates is called the first moral philosopher. He dealt with the two moral questions of justice and virtue. He equated these two things with knowledge. This is the weakness of all philosophical systems, that it is the educated man who is the good man.

*Those that knew what righteous conduct was
would choose to do nothing else, while those
who did not know could not live righteously.*

His philosophy was that an educated man is a righteous man, and an ignorant man is a fool. This is precisely the ethic of the churches today.

Plato: 427-327 B.C.

Perfection is attained through the development of the cardinal virtues:
temperance, courage, justice, and wisdom.

Aristotle: 384-322 B.C.

Aristotle is called the founder of Greek ethics as a system. He said that man's chief end, his highest good is happiness. He meant well-being: that when everything is going right, then man is happy. One chooses happiness for itself, never as an end to anything else. He chooses honor, pleasure, wisdom, or goodness not as ends to themselves, but that through these things man can be made happy. Only an educated man could find happiness because only he would know how to find it.

Aristotle called the pathway to happiness the "Golden Mean" - to do nothing to excess. Between cowardice and rashness there is courage; between stinginess and extravagance, liberality; sloth and greed, ambition; and between humility and pride, there is modesty.

Epicurus: 341-270 B.C.

The philosophy of Epicurus was called the ethic of Hedonism: that pleasure is good and pain is evil. Pleasure is the chief end of man. The Hedonists are the most lecherous reprobates of all of history.

Paul encountered the Epicureans and Stoics in Athens (Acts 17:18).

Zeno: 4th - 3rd Century B.C.

Zeno founded the school of the Stoics which lasted from 294 B.C. to 200 A.D. It was the dominating school of thought during this period. The good is to be passionless and apathetic.

The Stoics held that grief, pain, fear, joy or happiness will not affect a wise man. Peace of mind and tranquillity is the highest goal in life. To be completely indifferent to pleasure or pain is the highest goal.

To arrive at such a state one had to practice a rigid asceticism which they defined as resignation to one's fate, inner harmony, and complete self-control.

Christian Ethics In the Early Period

The emphasis was on moral and ethical conduct. In the early period, Christian ethics were not in any sense a philosophy. It was a religion and worship of a Person.

Contrary to Greek philosophy which held that goodness depended on education, Jesus said that He selected not many that were educated, but chose the foolish of this world (I Corinthians 1 :25-28) The New Testament does not teach a philosophy, but places a heavy emphasis on moral and ethical conduct. The whole New Testament is a moral and ethical treatise.

The Decline of Christian Ethics

In the early days, things were kept simple. But about the 4th century when the Holy Spirit left, the more pious fled the world and established monastic orders because the church had become so worldly and carnal. They went to a rigid system of self-denial so the Stoic ethic began to replace the Christian ethic in the church from that point until the Reformation.

The basic ethic was no longer the Sermon on the Mount, but was characterized by asceticism, monasticism, legalism, ritualism, and a double standard of morality arose. The man who would be perfect had to deny himself, forsake the world, and go hide in a cave or monastery.

Augustine: 354-430 A.D.

Augustine was the first to systematize Christian ethics. He was influenced by Greek philosophy. He tried to Christianize the four Platonic virtues. He said that Plato was right but didn't go far enough so he added Paul's faith, hope, and love to Plato's temperance, courage, justice and wisdom.

He recommended asceticism and monasticism as the highest good; that if man wanted to become perfect he should become a monk. This ethic prevailed through the middle ages.

Christian Ethics In the Middle Ages

Scholasticism (the rise of schools)

The scholastics were theologians who speculated. They tried to harmonize faith and reason. They tried to set Christianity on a philosophical basis. Anselm, Abelard, and Thomas Aquinas were of this period. Aquinas is called the father of Catholic theology and was influenced by Aristotle.

Mysticism

Master Eckhart (1260 - 1327) is considered the originator of this school of thinking. Thomas Ecampus, the author of Imitation of Christ, was a mystic.

The mystics repudiated all ritual and sacramental religion. They sought through prayer and meditation to come into complete harmony with God.

The highest good is to know nothing, will nothing, think nothing, but God.

The Reformation Period

This was a return to the New Testament ethic to some extent. It repudiated Roman Catholic asceticism, monasticism, and the double standard of morality. But it didn't go far enough.

Luther didn't teach much on holiness and the separated life. His main theme was justification through faith. So this gave rise to the Pietists and the Puritans who were out preaching the holy life because it was a needed emphasis.

The 18th and 19th Centuries

This period saw the rise of many new systems of ethics:

- Ethics of ***Evolutionism***
- Ethics of ***Pessimism***
- Ethics of ***Duty***
- Ethics of ***Power (Nietzsche)***
- Ethics of ***Value***
- Ethics of ***Utilitarianism***

The 20th Century

The most significant system of the twentieth century is the Social Gospel movement which was an attempt to apply the Sermon on the Mount to the world and thus usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.

THE THREE BASIC QUESTIONS OF ETHICS

What Is the Highest Good For Man?

Religion, philosophy, and ethics are concerned with man's goal in life. Man is aware that he isn't what he should be. He is aware that there is a higher purpose than the one he has attained already. The chief concern of all ethics is to answer this question. It is called in ethics *summum bonum*, the highest good. What is man's chief end? What is his purpose in life?

What is the standard, the norm, the final authority for what is right and wrong? Is it God or reason? Is it Scripture or popular opinion? custom? education? philosophy? Can one simply go by one's inner convictions? Can man be educated to do right?

Man's conscience tells him to do right, but it doesn't tell him what the right is. That is the task of Biblical ethics. Man's conscience must be educated. Conscience will excuse a man if it is not educated. Conscience says do right without saying what that right is.

Man is by nature moral. In order to make right moral judgments, he has to have a certain standard, or norm, or authority to measure his conduct by.

Is man completely free to choose and act morally and ethically?

This problem concerns the freedom of the will. Is he really free or is he controlled by fate? Is he predestined to act as he does, and does he lack real freedom of choice?

Views

The American Ethic

The American ethic is the ethic of pleasure. The ancient designation for this ethic of pleasure was Hedonism, or Epicureanism. Epicurus founded the philosophical school that held that happiness, or pleasure, is man's chief end. Pursuit of happiness is an end in itself.

Individualistic Hedonism

The pursuit of happiness and pleasures is the American goal in life. All training in schools, all advertising is geared toward making one happy. Anything that would make him unhappy is to be avoided at all costs. The American is taught and trained to think in terms of avoiding all discomforts and pain, and to pursue happiness as an end in itself. Being happy is his reason for existence on this earth. The highest good in life is the individual enjoyment of the greatest amount of pleasure.

The medical and drug professions labour to mask sickness, pain, and suffering. The undertaker, by cosmetics and perfume, seeks to cover and mask the reality of death. The American secular educational institutions teach the American ethic as the only way in life. All training is directed toward one goal: happiness and pleasure in life.

The U.S. government ships the American ideal abroad through movies, TV, literature, government programs, and billions of dollars of aid and gifts.

The philosophy in the institutional church and schools presents Christianity as a life of joy and happiness. They avoid teaching the deeper life and the persecutions that Jesus taught his disciples. They teach the ethic of self-realization: that one is to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, self-respect, pride, and everything that will help develop a well-rounded personality.

Most of radio, television, and magazine advertising is directed toward realizing the American ideal, the American goal. All the new convenient foods and modern appliances are geared toward freeing the family of the "drudgery" of daily life and to give them free time for pleasure and happiness. A man works for one reason: to get pleasure.

Universal Hedonism

This is the same as individualistic Hedonism except that it is universally applied. It is sometimes called *utilitarianism*.

Universalistic Hedonism is applying the same principles to not just individual enjoyment, but to everyone. This philosophy commends those actions that bring the greatest amount of pleasure to the most people. The founder of this philosophy was John Stuart Mill.

We criticize this by saying that actions are not necessarily right just because they help a lot of people, or just because they are useful. Utility is not the supreme goal in life. Such a philosophy of life could logically justify divorce, mercy killing, taking the goods of the have's and giving them to the have-not's; prostitution; cannibalism, etc. The end is said to justify the means.

This is the ethic that is taught in the church today in the form of denominational expediency. The program that brings the most people to the church or the most money in the offerings is the best program. That action is best which benefits the most people in the church.

God's answer is found in I John 2:15-17:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The Ethic of Self-denial

This is just the opposite of Hedonism. This ethic comes from the Stoicism mentioned in Acts 17:18. Stoicism said that the highest good was living the life of self-denial: to rule over one's emotion. The wise man is the one who isn't moved either by joy or pain. This led to a rigid asceticism, a self-righteousness that crept into the church.

Monasticism

This was first seen in Christendom about 150 A.D. in Egypt. A man named Anthony took the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler literally to mean to sell all and go live in a cave.

The practice spread to the west as the practice appealed to the self-righteousness of men. Monasteries began to be established and celibacy and asceticism began to be practiced.

Monasticism is based on a number of fallacies. First, it assumes that there is a double standard of morality, one for those who would be perfect and take up the monastic life, and one for the laymen of the church of whom there is little more required than the paying of tithes and attendance. This is still found in the Catholic church, and has followed into the Protestant churches with the "clergy" and "laity."

Secondly, it assumes that the practice of external asceticism, living the life of self-denial, promotes holiness and righteousness. It is supposed to gain them merit.

The monasteries eventually became centers of vice and corruption. After Luther instituted his reformation, the Catholic church started a counter-movement to clean up the monasteries.

The fundamental error of the ethic of self-denial as expressed in monasticism is that it was an attempt to flee the sinful world rather than obeying the command of Jesus to go into the world with the Gospel and be the light of the world (Matthew 5). Christian ethics teach us how to live our lives in a sinful world so that God is glorified (John 17:15-16).

The same ascetic tendencies are in Protestantism, but they are not as easily recognized. Holiness, Pentecostals, and Old Order groups emphasize a life of self-denial of certain worldly practices.

The New Testament ethic, on the contrary, is the denial of self. When self is denied, the worldly practices will go. The New Testament teaches the Christian how to live in this world and glorify God. Man isn't made to hide away and become righteous by self-discipline, punishment, or asceticism.

Though we must take a stand against things of the world, one cannot legislate morality. That is why the law cannot save. Man is justified by faith, and given a new nature that is against sin when he is saved.

The criticism of the Protestant ethics of self-denial is four-fold. (1) The "do's" and "don't's" become ends in themselves. (2) It results in a "works" salvation. (3) It becomes the central message of their preaching. (4) There is no sound basic doctrinal teaching to undergird their call to a separated life, which results in legalism and dead works.

The Ethics of Duty

The highest good is to do one's duty. This is duty for duty's sake. Immanuel Kant is the founder of this ethic.

Kant said that there is a universal moral law within all men which he called a *sense of ought* which commands him to do his duty. He also called it the *categorical imperative*. Loyalty to this moral law within man is the essence of goodness. It is the highest goal.

This is the ethics of works religion. It is the ethics of those denominations that equate a religious program of men's works with duty to God; that a true Christian is one who is true to his denomination. It is the ethic of the Liberals and the Social Gospel movement.

The answer to this is that Christianity is more than duty. It has also to do with truth, with faith, with the communication of the Gospel.

The Ethic of Self-realization

The harmonious development of all your normal capacities is the highest goal. This process is three-fold: live the Golden Rule: have faith in yourself; and develop a well-rounded personality. This is the highest good and the key to success.

The colleges all teach one to perfect every facet of his being, to have self-respect, self-expression. This was the ethic of Plato and Aristotle. It is the ethic of Norman Vincent Peale.

Humble self-abasement which exalts Christ has now been replaced with the expression of self in order to realize the highest potential of self. Norman Vincent Peale calls this ethic "Positive Thinking" and deceives many into thinking they are following the Scriptures.

Paul taught that we are to rejoice in Jesus Christ and have no confidence in the flesh; Peale teaches that man should believe in himself and strive for the highest realization of himself. He teaches that anybody can do all things through Christ, including the unsaved.

Paul tells us to admonish one another when we are wrong. Peale teaches that one should never say anything wrong or negative to anyone.

The Ethic of Love

This is the ethic of Neo-orthodoxy, the World Council of Churches, and the unifiers in all the denominations that say that the highest good is to love your neighbour and to strive for unity in the Body of Christ. They exalt unity above truth so they reduce the ethical principles of the New Testament to one: love. They reduce the ethical teachings of Jesus to two: love God and love your neighbour.

These same groups also deny the inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth, the deity of Jesus, and some deny the resurrection of Jesus.

But this ethic gives no content to the will of God. It doesn't tell how to put into practice that love. It doesn't give any spiritual principles to base one's conduct on. They don't believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God so they have no standard to appeal to. They believe that salvation is just an encounter with the Christ of heaven, not believing on the divine Son of God.

A person has to know what the will of God is, or he may think he is loving his neighbour while he is actually doing him a disservice.

Other Systems of Ethics

The ethic of *power* (Nietzsche)

The ethic of *intuitionism* (Quakers)

The ethic of *pessimism, or the ethic of crisis*

The ethic of *Marxism* (the basis of modern communism)

The ethic of *evolutionism* - everything is progressively going toward a higher good and goal

The ethics of *value*

The Biblical Answer

The Biblical answer is two-fold: seeking first (only) the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33); and doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21-23).

Seeking First the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness

The highest good of man, his goal, his duty, is all summed up in seeking the Kingdom of God. The Importance of this is seen in the fact that Jesus' mission in the world was to establish that Kingdom.

The highest good is to achieve citizenship in the Kingdom of God. But we are not citizens by saying we are. We are in the Kingdom if we are doing the will of God. Merely confessing it won't do it; neither will merely believing. It is only by doing the will of the Father.

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-14).

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

Jesus mentioned the Kingdom over 100 times, but the church only twice in the four Gospels. He put the stress on the Kingdom because the church is in His Kingdom, not the Kingdom in His church. The end is not the church, but the Kingdom of God which is bigger than the church. It includes Israel. It includes God's plan to establish the rule of righteous God on this earth and throughout the universe.

Doing the Will of God

How do we achieve citizenship in this Kingdom? It is by doing the will of God. This starts by confessing and believing on Jesus; but continues as we walk in the will of God.

To do His will we have to know His will. If we know the principles of Christian ethics, the application of biblical doctrine to practical working in our lives, then the Holy Spirit will lead us into acting with love and righteousness in any situation. Christian ethics do not teach rules, but the principles that will guide us, knowing the will of God in any situation.

Jesus was not a moral teacher. He did not leave a system of ethics, but He taught great spiritual principles that will govern our conduct in every situation.

The difference between a rule and a principle is seen in Matthew 5:21: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment. . . ." The rule is "thou shalt not kill." The principle is that whosoever is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment, and that makes everyone guilty. If the situation was right, anger in the heart would lead to killing. The act hurts the other person, but the thought makes us guilty.

Principles of Christian Conduct

An abiding, unfailing trust in God in all circumstances

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 6:11). Paul said that love is the greatest because without love faith doesn't profit a person anything. But love is meaningless without the faith to put that love into practice.

Through faith in God, when we pray, believing, we receive when we pray (Mark 11:22-24). We know (faith) that all things are working together for us because we love God (Romans 8:28). We must continue in the faith because we must by much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Hebrews 10:23). Paul was able to say at the end of his life that he had fought a good fight and kept the faith (II Timothy 4:7).

Sincerity and truthfulness before God and man

This is sincerity and truthfulness as contrasted with hypocrisy and deceit. There are many decisions we have to make where sincerity and truthfulness could be compromised to avoid being laughed at, or to get a bargain, or any number of other reasons.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another (Ephesians 4:14).

We are to speak to please God as Paul did (I Thessalonians 2:4). We are not to be as the hypocrites in worship and religion (Matthew 6:1-6). Our conduct toward God is to be in sincerity and truthfulness.

Though man may question our beliefs and practices, no man should be able to question our honesty and sincerity.

To be truthful does not mean that we have to say things that will hurt people even if they are true, because this will violate the principle of love.

If we are truthful we will pay a cost because it will offend the weak and carnal, but it will convince all of our honesty and sincerity. Though people may disagree, they should never be able to charge us with dishonesty or insincerity.

Genuine humility before God and man

This is humility in contrast to pride and self-righteousness.

"Blessed are the meek' (Matthew 5:5). Meekness cannot be confused with weakness. God is no more pleased with weakness than He is with pride. Weakness is never taking a stand for anything. Nor should anointed truth be confused with pride or lack of lov

A meek person is a humble person who does not defend himself, his rights, or his position. Meekness is where Moses would not defend himself against Aaron and Miriam. God defended Moses when he wouldn't defend himself.

Meekness is following in the steps of Jesus, who, when reviled, reviled not again; when persecuted and threatened, He committed Himself to God (I Peter 2:19 ff). Meekness is turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). Meekness and humility is not thinking more highly of oneself than he ought to think (Romans 12:3).

Let nothing be done in strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. . . . Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who... took upon him the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:3-8).

The Lord Jesus Himself is to be our example of humility. He told His disciples when they were bickering about who would be the greatest that even the Son of Man came to minister and not to be ministered to.

A forgiving and merciful spirit toward all

Jesus gave Peter an illustration of a forgiving spirit. We are to forgive everyone that trespasses against us, from the heart, as often as he trespasses, or our heavenly Father will not forgive us (Matthew 18:21-35). "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11 :25).

But there is another motive for forgiving others: because of our love for God. "And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

This forgiving and merciful attitude of heart is to extend even to our enemies.

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; that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven. . . (Matthew 5:44-45).

e) The practice of a separated life.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1 :16 cf Leviticus 11 :44-45).

We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto God. Anything less is not acceptable to Him. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

The body we live in is the temple of the Holy Spirit. To defile it is to defile His temple. That is why fornication is such a serious sin. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

There are no rules in the Bible that say we can or cannot do this or that. But the principles that are set forth will govern our lives so that we will walk in holiness. That conduct is right for us if we know that Jesus could, or would, do the same.

When in doubt about any course of action, we can ask ourselves: Will it glorify God? Will it edify me? Does it avoid even the appearance of evil? Would it cause my brother or sister to stumble? Is it a positive seeking after the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

An unqualified love of God and one's neighbour

In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus shows that one cannot really love God apart from loving service to his neighbour (Luke 10:25-27). The greatest in the Kingdom of God will be those who are the servants of others (Matthew 20:26-28).

The greatest principle is set forth in Matthew 7:12: "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."

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. . .we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. . .let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Loving service to our brethren does not mean that the church is to get involved in social and welfare improvements in the community to meet the material needs of society and the world as a whole. The church's calling is to preach the Gospel, save souls, and to teach them that the world is passing away.

But, as individual Christians, in our daily lives and associations, we are to translate into deeds our love for the people. We cannot separate loving response to the need of a neighbour from true religion. If we see a need and don't meet it, then we are deceiving ourselves. Institutional religion has robbed the Christian of the independent exercise of his responsibility to translate doctrines into deeds, because by doing it for him the individual is limited to paying his tithes and coming to church.

Complete self-denial and dedication to discipleship

Self-denial and discipleship extend even to the loss of family, friends, possessions and life if necessary (Luke 9:57-62; 14:25 ff). If we are Christians, then we are disciples. If we are disciples, then we will have left all, taken up the cross, and followed Him. Else, we are not Christians.

The requirements for discipleship include rejecting family and all if need be; taking up the cross; counting the cost; forsaking all; and following Him.

A personal evangelistic desire to fulfil the great commission

The Christian has a personal evangelistic desire to fulfil the great commission as an expression of his joy of sharing the good news of the Kingdom to others.

The commission is given to those who believe:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. . .and these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 6:15-18).

The commission is given in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and 10, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This commission is demonstrated in Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

The New Testament saint never questioned his responsibility and privilege to spread the Gospel. Those who were scattered abroad preached the Word while the apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

Faithfulness and obedience to God's Word and will

It is not saying Lord, Lord, that qualifies us for the Kingdom of God, but it is doing the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21).

He that is faithful in a little, whether it is in riches or in that which is another's, will be entrusted with much (Luke 16:10-12). Those who are faithful unto death will be given a crown of life (Revelation 2:10). "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith (faithfulness in the Hebrew)" (Habakkuk 2:4).

A sincere concern to uphold at all costs the purity of the faith

The average church member feels it is sufficient to live one's faith. He feels that to take a stand for truth would be divisive and show a lack of love. Though we can't argue people into faith, yet we cannot stand idly by and let people distort the Word.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

"In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, substituting the doctrines of demons for truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-3). "The time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but will get teachers who will say what they want to hear" (II Timothy 4:1-3). Paul did not shun "to declare unto you all the counsel of God" because he knew that "men would arise from the body, speaking perverse things to draw to themselves disciples" (Acts 20:26-31).

We are to strive together with one mind for the faith of the Gospel (Philippians 1 :27). God has entrusted us with the Gospel and we must speak to please God, not men. God will hold us responsible if we compromise the Word. In his second epistle John stresses that the purity of the doctrine of Christ is more important than the friendship of man.

What Is the Norm, Standard, or Final Authority?

What is the norm, the standard, the final authority for what is morally and ethically right or wrong? By what standard do we measure our conduct? Is it God? reason? conscience? philosophy? intuition?

God Is the Source of Right

The ultimate source and standard of right and wrong is God and His Word.

The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

God is the standard for what is right. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1 :16). "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments (Psalm 119:137).

The Christian ethic has its source in God and His righteousness. Christian life and conduct are not based on the ethical and moral systems of man, but on God and His Word. In the Old Testament the terms for human and divine righteousness are interchangeable. That means that human righteousness is to be cut to the measure of God's righteousness. Nothing short of that will suffice.

What Is God's Righteousness

God's righteousness is His own moral holiness and perfection of character which is the standard of all men. What He requires of us is the essence of His being.

What is the essence of His being? He is holy, just, merciful, good, love, sinless, perfect. In a word, He is righteous.

The truth of God's holiness is set forth in Leviticus 19:2: "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" and is carried over into the New Testament in Matthew 5:48 and I Peter 1:15-16.

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He (Deuteronomy 32:4).

What God Requires of Us

What God requires of us is the same as that He required of Israel except that hers was an objective demonstration of holiness through ritual and sacrifice, while ours is to be a true and inward holiness. Israel was also expected to have an inward, true holiness, but she did not have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to enable her.

The remarkable thing in the New Testament is that it is not simply an abstract or philosophical truth, for the ethical ideal of Christianity is expressed in and through a Person: the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1 :14, 18).

Jesus is the perfect illustration of what He taught. He is our norm, our standard to live up to. "...because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21). "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master" (Luke 6:40). Jesus never pointed to anything except Himself. He is the vine through which we receive the life to bear fruit (John 15:1-5). He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

If we see Jesus, then we see the Father. If we know Jesus, then we know the Father also. We will keep His commandments if we love Him (John 14:15, 21-24). Hearing the Word without doing it will bring nothing but ruin (Luke 6:46-49).

The answer to any question of how we should act, what we should do, what we should say, or how we should react, is determined by what Jesus would do in the same situation. It is at this point that one can distinguish between a professing Christian and a true disciple because the majority will follow the principle of expediency.

Is Man Completely Free to Choose and Act Morally and Ethically?

The Scriptures show that man is endowed with a measure of self-determination. Therefore, he is responsible for his attitudes, motives, actions, and conduct. The idea of a standard or norm of conduct by which man should regulate his conduct would have no meaning apart from the fact that man has the power of choice.

Whatever is not self-consciously willed has no moral or ethical value. Therefore, man must be free to some extent because when we praise, or blame, a man for something he did, we do so on the assumption that he voluntarily made that choice.

Biblical ethics would say that apart from the new birth man is incapable of realizing the highest moral and ethical good because in his freedom to choose he always chooses self and sin.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF ETHICS

OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS AND MORALITY

Characteristics of Old Testament Ethics

They Are Based on Revelation

Old Testament ethics may not always be up to New Testament standards, but still they are based on revelation. This is no reflection on God, but on Israel's inability to comply with what He requires of us. Conduct and morality in the Old Testament were grounded in the revealed will of God. They were not based on reason as were Greek ethics. Nor were they based on social needs as they were in Egypt and Babylon.

They Have a Religious Basis

This is to be seen in the fact that Israel's life and conduct were inseparably related to her worship, her religion, her temple, her law, her covenants and sacrifice, and her holiness.

Old Testament Ethics Are Incomplete

The full revelation came in the New Testament dispensation. God revealed Himself to Israel as she was able to receive it and apply it, and it was an incomplete revelation. He required less of Israel than He does of a Christian.

Jesus expanded the letter of the law to the all inclusive principles behind the letter in the Sermon on the Mount. The prophets themselves searched diligently to understand what they were prophesying (I Peter 1:9-12). Even the angels didn't understand what it was all about (verse 12).

The Old Testament Ethic is an Ethic of Law

This ethic of law is in contrast to the ethics of the New Testament which is an ethic of grace.

The Old Testament ethics are based on the law of Moses and the ten commandments are central to it (John 1:17). In the New Testament, ethics are based on Jesus Christ, and the Sermon on the Mount is central. It is the inner meaning of the law.

The Difference Between Old and New Testament Ethics

The difference between the Old and New Testament ethics is not absolute, but to some extent it is a matter of degree. The Old Testament forms and legal codes are done away within the New Testament dispensation, but the eternal moral and ethical principles revealed by God to Israel are valid in any age. All the principles of the ten commandments are carried over into the New Testament. But they are no longer a legal code, they are spiritual principles.

The relevance for the Christian's study of Old Testament ethics, as well as the Old Testament itself, is that the Old Testament is a part of the revealed will of God (II Timothy 3:16-17). When Paul wrote this, he was talking about the Old Testament and it "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness."

We must understand the purpose of the Old Testament and use it for that purpose. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). It was written for our admonition: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition. . ." (I Corinthians 10: 11).

It is true that there are many forms, rituals and legal codes in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is characterized by its abundance of precepts, laws, and practices. But this was necessary because they were spiritual children. It was as necessary for them as it is for a parent to spell out the do's and don't's for his children. "Wherefore the law was our school master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

Yet the Old Testament is not just a set of legal codes, but there are many principles that are as clearly advanced in ethics, morality and spiritual depth as are found in the New Testament. Peter quoted Leviticus 19:2: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1 :16). David recognized his need and prayed for a clean heart (Psalm 51 :10).

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:16-17).

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully (Psalm 24:3-4).

The principle of righteousness runs all through the prophets. "For I desired mercy, and no sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Samuel 15:22). The whole chapter of Isaiah I is an elevated teaching of ethics.

What Christ came to do was to fulfil the law. He made explicit what was implicit in the law. He revealed what was implied. But Israel was not ethically matured to the place where just the application of principles to their lives would result in righteousness. So God gave the law as a schoolmaster, a teacher to bring them to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

Righteousness did not come by law, but by faith the same as in the New Testament. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6 cf Romans 4:3). The law was a teacher, not a saviour.

The ten commandments, which are often called the moral law of Israel, were the supreme expression of the revelation in the Old Testament dispensation. It was God's revealed standard of righteousness and the basis of Old Testament ethics and morality. Its inner principles are eternal. Although the ten commandments were not carried over into the dispensation of grace as a legal code under which Christians are placed, yet every principle expressed in them is clearly taught in spirit in the New Testament.

We have been delivered from the law to serve in the newness of the spirit of the law, and not in the letter (Romans 7:6). "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

No one will find salvation or enter into the Kingdom of God who does not fulfil the righteousness of the law, but only by faith in the spirit of the law, because no man can keep the letter of the law. This is not the legalism that teaches that man is saved by keeping the law. God gave Israel the revelation and the law to hold sin in check until Christ came with the message of grace. It was always a message of faith, but not always a message of grace. The law came by Moses. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Problems Concerning Old Testament Conduct and Ethics

What of God's permission of divorce? polygamy? the slaughter of Israel's enemies? of God being depicted as jealous while we are told to avoid jealousy?

God's requirements in the Old Testament were the same as in the New Testament: holiness, righteousness, perfection. *He simply tolerated more.* For example, Moses allowed divorce to prevent a wholesale leaving of wives, but required them to make it a legal transaction (Matthew 19:3-9). But from the beginning it was not so.

Though God tolerated more in the Old Testament, He had to deal with it eventually. Jesus made propitiation for Israel's sins: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:24-25).

Israel got the revelation gradually, and God gave them more as they could handle it. They had sufficient revelation to exercise faith in God, but their ethics and morality did not measure up to what is required of us always.

God's intention in giving the law was that it should be obeyed with no exceptions. That is why He instituted sacrifice to make provisions for them if they did break it.

To a superficial observer it would appear that the moral and ethical requirements of God in the Old Testament were lower, but in looking closer at some of these "problems" it can be seen that this is not the case at all.

God's Command to Exterminate the Canaanites

Critics of the Old Testament say that God did not command this, but the Old Testament writers simply pictured it this way because this is what Israel did, and they were trying to make it appear that God had commanded them to do it. They contend that since the sixth commandment forbids killing, then God would be contradicting Himself. Therefore they conclude that the ethical standards of the Old Testament are lower.

Reply:

Capital punishment was not prohibited.

The commandment "thou shalt not kill" doesn't prohibit capital punishment. God set up the principle of capital punishment immediately after the flood (Genesis 9:6). In the chapter following the ten commandments, God commanded that anyone killing a man was to be put to death (Exodus 21:12). Kidnapping, and hitting or cursing one's father or mother was also punishable by death (Exodus 21:15-17).

This was capital punishment.

Since the Canaanites were guilty of the worst crimes against God and humanity, this is precisely what God was doing through Israel. He was judging them for their sins.

They burned their children alive in the fire to their gods (Leviticus 18:21). They practiced sodomy, religious prostitution, adultery, and all sorts of loathsome vices (Leviticus 18:22-24).

They defiled the land.

They were so wicked that the land was defiled: "(For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled) . . . it spued out the nations that were before you . . . commit not any of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 18:27-30).

They had to be removed to keep from defiling Israel.

God said that they had to be removed to keep them from defiling the Israelites. He was going to give the true revelation to them, and if they were contaminated by the sins and false gods of Palestine, then the true revelation could not have been preserved.

Israel did not destroy them all, and she did become defiled. God had to eventually destroy both Israel and Judah because of this. Baalism, nature worship, was the greatest threat to Israel's religion all through her history.

The Canaanites were being punished and judged by God for their sins (Deuteronomy 9:4-5; Leviticus 18:24-25). When God made His promise to Abraham, He said that it would take 400 years for Canaan's cup of iniquity to become full. Then He would use Abraham's seed to take Canaan's land as judgment for her sins.

The argument is raised that because Israel was not sinless, then she could not have been used as God's executioner. But God's executioner did not have to be sinless. She could not be guilty of a crime worthy of death. God used Assyria as the rod of His anger (Isaiah 10:4) and Babylon (Habakkuk 1).

Conclusion

This was punishment for crime and not a violation of the commandment not to kill. The ethical standard of the Old Testament is as high as it is in the New Testament.

Did God Permit Lying in the Old Testament?

Was a lie ever permitted if the end justified the means as in Rahab's lie (Joshua 2:4-6 cf James 2:25)?

Reply

Rahab was not justified for her lie.

The Bible does not say that Rahab was justified for her lie, but for her faith (Hebrews 11 :31). It was her faith that caused her to be spared. She was justified by what she did. She believed the report of the spies and acted accordingly. She had faith in the God she had never seen or heard.

Her method was not up to New Testament standards.

The method she used would not have measured up to New Testament standards, but she was a harlot in a heathen land which had no revelation from God. She lived in a city that was so sinful that it had to be destroyed. There was a complete absence of any moral or ethical principles in Jericho. In that context, Rahab believed the reports and used her own methods to hide the spies.

Conclusion

The law itself forbade lying so the Old Testament standard was as high as the New Testament's. The law itself said "thou shalt not bear false witness" (Exodus 20:16).

The Jealousy of God

God is depicted as jealous in the Old Testament. The critics say that the writers are expressing their low ethical understanding and translating that to God.

. . . for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation of them that hate me (Exodus 20:5).

The argument is that since God is perfect, then He could not be jealous.

Reply

God is solicitous of His honour.

The term jealous, when used of God, can have a connotation or meaning that would not always be applicable to man. It means that God, as sovereign Lord, is solicitous for His own character, name and honour. He will not share His glory with false gods.

Israel is God's wife.

God depicts Himself as Israel's husband. Her idolatry is spoken of as spiritual adultery and therefore He speaks of Himself as the offended husband.

We too are allowed the same solicitous concern for our partners and children: that they remain faithful and any infidelity on their part will cause us to be solicitous for it. There is something wrong with someone who isn't jealous in the right sense. It makes him too understanding with no concern.

The Ethic of the Decalogue

The principles of the ethical standards of the Old Testament are set forth in the Decalogue. Every principle of the Decalogue can be found in the New Testament.

Responsibilities to God

Monotheism

Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).

The principle is monotheism: one God and absolute loyalty to the one God.

All other religions outside of Israel were polytheistic and God was weaning Israel out of the polytheistic religion of Egypt. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy God is one God" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

The New Testament Principle:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. . .this do, and thou shalt live (Luke 10:27-28).

Absolute loyalty to one God is expressed by Jesus in terms of discipleship to Him. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:37-39 cf Luke 14:25-27).

Spiritual Worship

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them (Exodus 20:4-5).

The principle is spiritual worship. It forbids the worship of God in a finite or unworthy manner.

The sinfulness of making images, statutes, and pictures of deity is two-fold: (1) It is an attempt to finitize the infinite, omnipresent God; and (2) man invariably transfers his affection from an invisible God to the localized object.

The New Testament Principle:

God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

No man has seen God at any time. Jesus has revealed Him, His nature, and His character (John 1: 14, 18).

Reverence and Respect for God

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

The principle is to have reverence and respect for God.

The Hebrew word translated *take* means to bear or to carry. We are not to wear His name vainly, or to profess something that we are not.

This principle has a three-fold implication: (1) It means not to profane God's name by the way a person would live, or by his character and conduct. (2) It forbids perjury and false swearing (Leviticus 19:12). (3) It forbids profanity, cursing, or swearing. Any irreverent or useless use of His name is forbidden.

The New Testament principle:

The Christian is forbidden to swear at all. "But I say unto you, swear not at all. . . but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:34-37). "But above all things, my brethren, swear not . . . but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation (James 5:12).

Respect for the Lord's Day - God's Provision for Man's Need of Rest

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God (Exodus 20:8-10).

The principle is to have a reverence for the Lord's day and recognition of God's provision for man's need of rest.

By this commandment God presents His two-fold blessing of provision for a day of rest, and worship in which man can refresh himself, both in body and in spirit. The Sabbath is not carried over into the New Testament, but the principle of needing rest is. In the New Testament it is no longer a commandment.

The day was changed from the seventh to the first day in honour of Christ's resurrection. The early Christians immediately started to meet on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7). It is called the Lord's day in Revelation 1 :10.

We could meet on any day of the week because every day is alike to the Lord. But because the first day has a special significance, and the whole world uses it is a day off of work, it is a good day to meet together.

Responsibilities to One's Neighbours

Respect for Authority

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exodus 20:12).

The principle is respect for all authority, including our elders. Part of the secret of the survival of the Jews as a nation is the respect they had for their parents and their elders.

The New Testament principle:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Ephesians 6:1-3).

This commandment was carried directly into the New Testament. Parents are to be respected even if they are wrong.

Respect for the Value of Human Life

Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13).

The principle is a respect for the value of human life. Any time a life is taken it must be dealt with by capital punishment (Genesis 9; Romans 13:1-5). Capital punishment is the only authorized killing, and only because it is punishment.

This commandment includes unauthorized killing of any kind. For the Christian, it includes all killing. It forbids execution, killing in self-defense or self-protection, to protect property and loved ones, or to defend an unregenerate state.

The New Testament principle:

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: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in . danger of the judgment. . . (Matthew 5:21-22).

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 (Matthew 5:38-39).

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life . . . and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (I John 3:14-16).

A Christian will forgive no matter if he feels like it or not.

The Sanctity of the Marriage and Family Relationship

Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).

The principle is the sanctity of the marriage and family relationships. Marriage and the family is the God-ordained method of the expression of the love between man and woman. Any other attempt at expressing this love is called adultery and fornication.

It is not the independent individual exercising his so-called rights and freedom from responsibilities that God permits, but it is only marriage and the family.

The New Testament principle:

The prohibition of adultery and fornication, sex outside the marriage relationship, is prohibited through out the New Testament. However, the principle is carried into the thought realm. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).

This principle includes divorce and remarriage: "Moses because of the hardness of your heart suffered you to put away your wives: But from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 10:8-9).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness. . . .they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:

but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:4).

. . . Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. . . shall inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9-10).

See also Revelation 21 :8 and Colossians 3:5.

Honesty in the Acquisition of Our Possessions - Recognition of the Rights of Others to Own Property

Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15).

The principle is two-fold: honesty in the acquisition of our possessions; and the recognition of the rights of others to own property.

There are many forms of theft that are not in violation of the civil laws. Gambling is just a form of stealing. This is the acquisition of the property of others without paying for it by labor or money.

There is moral theft such as controlling the stock market; concealing defects in something you sell; employees loafing on the job; employers not paying what the job is worth; failure to pay debts; cheating on exams; cheating on income taxes; betting; and sweepstakes.

The New Testament principle:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Ephesians 4:28)

Thieves are among those listed who will not inherit the Kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:10). We are to provide things honest in the sight of all men (Romans 12:17)

Truthfulness

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (Exodus 20:16)..

The principle of truthfulness involves the respect for another's name and character. This prohibits false witness that would result in perjury, slander, gossip, or criticism which would in turn result in lives or reputations being ruined.

A lying tongue is one the seven things listed that God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19). "Thou shalt not raise a false report (gossip)" (Exodus 23:1) ". . . so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20).

The New Testament principle:

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell (James 3:6).

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Ephesians 4:29).

We must respect truthfulness and honesty in all our relationships. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9). Liars have their part in the lake of fire (Revelation 21 :8,27).

Not Covetous

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's (Exodus 20:17).

The principle forbids an Inordinate desire for the things of others.

The violation of this commandment involves the breaking of the other commandments. Stealing is the result of coveting another man's property. Adultery results from coveting another's marriage partner. Lying will often be a result of coveting.

The New Testament principle:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). It is loving the things of this world that causes a person to covet them. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

A covetous person will not inherit the Kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:9-10). A person could covet and repent of it, but a covetous person covets because it is part of his nature.

NEW TESTAMENT ETHICS AND MORALITY

Distinctive Characteristics

Jesus Is a Redeemer and Saviour

Unlike the philosophers, Jesus was not a moral philosopher or a moral and social reformer. He is Redeemer and Saviour.

New Testament Ethics Are Spiritual Principles

The ethics of Jesus do not constitute a system of moral and ethical rules, but set forth eternal spiritual principles which are intended to be guide lines for the motivation of conduct.

New Testament Ethics Are Christian Ethics

The ethics of the New Testament are the ethics of the Christian. That is, they are applicable to believers only who are under grace.

The New Testament Ethic Is Conduct

The Christian ethic is conduct. Christianity is not just a system of worship, it is a way of life, something that we take home with us. Religion and morality are inseparable in the Bible. Christianity does not separate worship from life; nor does it separate Christianity from conduct.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22).

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled his tongue. . .this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:26-27).

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (James 2:15-16).

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. .. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:37-39).

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8).

The parable of the good Samaritan demonstrates religion in practice (Luke 10:29-37).

Christian Ethics Are Based Upon Motives

Christianity goes beyond the conduct to the motive. It not only asks what did you do, but why did you do it? Here is where God looks.

The rich young ruler had been keeping the letter of the law, but he had not kept the inner meaning because he couldn't obey Jesus at the point of discipleship.

Right conduct with the wrong motive is as wrong in God's sight as wrong conduct. Unfeigned love for God and his neighbour is the basis motive for the Christian's conduct.

The importance of this distinctive characteristic of Christian ethics is to be seen in the fact that a non-Christian can live the Christian ethic outwardly. Ghandi (1869 - 1948) was the Hindu political social reformer. He was moral and upright, and he read the Sermon on the Mount every morning.

But his motive was not for God's glory. It was for social improvement, political reform, and for self-satisfaction, which the Bible calls self-righteousness. None of his work was done in the name of Jesus which would disqualify all of it for being acceptable to God. Because without faith in Jesus Christ it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23).

Therefore we have to make a distinction between moral acts or good works that are acceptable in the eyes of the world and those same works that are acceptable to God. Apart from the Christian faith it is impossible to please God. It is impossible to perform a single righteous act that He will accept. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:18).

The Bible does not say that the sinner without faith cannot perform socially praise-worthy deeds of mercy and kindness, or that a sinner could not perform an act that would result in good to someone else. What it does say is that man without Christian faith cannot perform: (1) any action that isn't tainted or distorted by sin; (2) any unselfish action; and (3) any moral act as the basis for which God will be appeased or will justify or accept him (Genesis 2:16; Isaiah 64:6).

Why Do Sinners' Works Lack Acceptable Motives?

Because apart from faith everything he does is motivated by either selfishness or sin. However noble an act may be, in God's sight it was not done for His glory, He whom he does not even acknowledge. He performed it without faith. He did it to satisfy some selfish desire, or to satisfy his conscience. If it is not done for God's glory then it is sin. ". . .and the plowing of the wicked, is sin" (Proverbs 21 :4).

Does the Importance of Having Right Motives Ever Justify Wrong Conduct?

Does the end always (ever) justify the means? For example, stealing food to feed one's starving family; mercy killing of one suffering pain from a terminal disease; keeping a person alive by machine long after he is really dead; shooting a thief to protect one's property.

The answer is "no" because these actions are escapes from moral responsibility. Jesus never robbed the rich to feed the hungry. He just used His faith. It never occurred to Job to commit suicide. The prayer of faith will heal the sick making mercy killing unnecessary (James 5). Nothing ever justifies sinning. A wrong does not make a right.

The moral and ethical process has three parts: (1) the motive; (2) the act; and (3) the consequence.

Conduct is ethically right when it is the outcome of good motives carried out by right means which results in Biblically acceptable consequences.

The Christian Ethic Is an Absolute Ethic

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother 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 (Matthew 5:22).

We are commanded to swear not at all (Matthew 5: 33-37; James 5:12). We cannot resist evil, but are commanded to turn the other cheek; give our cloak when they take our coat; and go the second mile when compelled to go the first (Matthew 5:38-42). "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Why? So we can be sons of God (verse 45).

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

Why Such an Absolute Ethic?

Because Jesus had no intention of giving His disciples an ethic so humanistic that a sinner or moralist without Christ could fulfil it and thus feel self-righteous. He gave us an uncompromising ethic. Anger is the same as murder. The lustful glance is adultery. No one can keep these ethics apart from the Christian under grace, and he will not be able to without the Holy Spirit.

The ethics of the Sermon are based upon motives: love, faith, holiness, God's glory. It is an absolute ethic, yet demanded by God.

Is It Possible to Live this Ethic?

God would not require something that was not possible. It must be perfection that can be realized, or He wouldn't demand it.

God demanded the same holiness in the Old Testament. "The Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil (Job 1:8)?

How Do We Live this Ethic?

We do it by reckoning ourselves dead to sin daily (Romans 6:11). We do it by walking in the Spirit and thus not fulfilling the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-22).

Each day we must consciously, willfully, by an act of the will, and by the grace of God, say that we are crucified with Christ. Each day we must walk it out by faith. To reckon ourselves dead is to count ourselves dead, believe we are dead, and walking it out. God dealt with our sin at Calvary. We must deal with it now by reckoning ourselves dead to it. If we are to live in the Spirit, we will walk in the Spirit.

If we sin we live in the realm of God's redeeming grace. If we confess and repent of our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9). The Israelites had to offer sacrifice to obtain forgiveness. We can bow the knee to claim our once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12, 14). But because it is easier for us, does not mean that it is any less sin.

God demands perfection, but man isn't always perfect. This is not an excuse, but it keeps one from being discouraged.

The Ethics of Jesus Are Positive In their Emphasis

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. . ." (Matthew 7:12). Other religions and philosophies are negative in emphasis, but the Christian ethic is a "do" ethic.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (Matthew 18:15).

We are told to forgive our brother as often as necessary no matter how often he offends (Matthew 18:22).

The Ethics of Jesus Are Positive In Righteousness

We are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Righteousness means to do right. It is not putting something on like a garment, but it is doing that which is right.

The Ethical Principles of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is to New Testament morality what the Decalogue is to the Old Testament.

Three Basic Questions

Because of the revolutionary nature of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon, several views have arisen as to its purpose and meanings. Three basic questions concerning the Sermon must be considered In looking at these views.

What was Jesus' aim, His purpose in giving the Sermon?

Was He giving high ideals in morals in an attempt to inspire men to live better? Or was He giving principles that He expects to be obeyed?

To whom is the Sermon addressed?

Was it to the Jews and Israel of Jesus' day? to Christians? or is it addressed to the whole world, that men should practice it and society be reformed as the result?

Is the Sermon to be applied to the past, present, or future?

Those who say past say that He offered the Kingdom to Israel, and the Sermon was to have been the laws for the Kingdom. When Israel rejected the Kingdom, it made the Sermon invalid for any age.

Those who say the future say that the Sermon will be the law for the Kingdom when Israel is restored; that it was never intended that a Christian should obey it.

The Humanistic View

A humanist is one who would make man good with a "spark of divine" in all of man. His whole philosophy is to improve society and to educate the masses. Man is progressing toward God by evolution. The humanist holds that Jesus was a great moral and ethical genius who taught the principles of brotherhood. He would never consider Jesus divine.

The humanists hold that certain of Jesus' ethical teachings are still valid for today, but for the most part they belong to a past age because they cannot cope with the complexities of life in this modern world.

Reply:

Truth and moral standards are not relative to time or place. The principles of the Decalogue are still valid today. The teachings of Christ are the only answer to the complexities of the modern world.

The Liberal View

To the Liberal, the Sermon is a means of obtaining salvation by works. God would accept one who would keep and do the Sermon. Man is not inherently bad, he needs to be educated morally and spiritually. The highest ideal of a Christian is to put the Sermon into practice and then be accepted by God.

To the Liberal, Jesus is not divine, not the Son of God, so the Sermon becomes a means of being saved. If the teachings of the Sermon were applied to society, it would result in clearing the slums; abolishing political corruption. The rich and the poor would become more liberalized in the sharing of the wealth.

Through teaching the principles of the Sermon, society would be reformed and the Kingdom of God would be literally ushered in on earth.

Reply:

This view overlooks the need of regeneration first before man can keep the Sermon.

The "Interim Ethic" View

This view originated with Dr. Albert Schweitzer. He held that the New Testament, including the Sermon on the Mount, was largely an interim ethic. Christ and the apostles taught purely an eschatological concept. All they had on their minds was that the end of the world was near.

Dr. Schweitzer held that they did not teach permanent principles of morality and conduct for the world, but temporary principles to be used only in the short interim between the ascension of Jesus and His almost immediate return. He, like the others who hold this view, said that Jesus and His apostles were wrong.

The Sermon's super-human righteousness, the call to love one's enemy, the command not to resist evil, the call to renounce the world's goods, the commands against divorce, taking the oath, or going to court: all this was impossible for permanent practice, so it could only be for the interim.

Reply:

Jesus and the apostles did teach the imminent return of the Lord, but that is the basis for demanding such a high ethic.

If it is impossible to practice the Sermon on a permanent basis, it is just as impossible on a temporary basis.

The Dispensational View

The Sermon was applicable only to the first advent.

This view holds that Christ offered the Kingdom to the Jews, and had they accepted it, the Sermon would have been the law of the Kingdom.

Dwight Pentecost is a proponent of this view: Because of the teaching of the Sermon concerning the presence of evil, the presence of one's enemies, persecution, the Sermon is not for the millennial Kingdom because we will not have enemies and persecution in the millennium. But it applied to Israel only at the time of Christ when He offered them the Kingdom at the first advent. They rejected Him so that made the Sermon of no effect.

The Sermon is applicable to the second advent.

The Sermon is applicable to the second advent. Jesus wanted to get a complete revelation in print, and this will be the law of the millennial Kingdom.

Lewis Chafer is a proponent of this view:

The Sermon has no relevance for the present age, but it is a code of ethics that will prevail in the millennial Kingdom. Fulfillment of the Sermon in the present age is impossible. Christ's teachings in the Gospels apply only in some cases to the present age and in some cases, only to the Kingdom age. All Christ was doing was setting forth the nature of the Kingdom and the laws by which He would govern it in the millennium. As a rule of life it was addressed to the Jew before the cross, and to the Jew in the coming Kingdom. It is therefore not now in effect. (Systematic Theology, Volume 5, pp. 97 ff).

The extreme dispensationalists say that the Sermon is legalistic, and the Beatitudes are a system of works for the Jew in the millennium.

The Beatitudes require the doing of certain things to be righteous. We have already obtained righteousness by grace. The Jew is under a covenant of works which will be restored in the millennium. The Beatitudes and the Sermon seem to be a pattern of works necessary to attain to the Kingdom.

Reply:

The Jews never were, and never shall be, saved by works. There is no higher spiritual truth and principle set forth anywhere in the Bible than the Sermon. Those that call it a system of works are the same ones who say it is impossible to keep.

The New Testament contains all of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, if the Sermon is legalistic, then the whole New Testament is a covenant of works. We prove that we are justified by faith by doing righteous works. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. . ." (Ephesians 2:8-10).

If the Sermon isn't applicable today, then the question can be raised: Is there a single teaching in the Sermon that a Christian can ignore and still call himself a Christian?

It is not a legalistic teaching, but the spiritual nature of the Sermon is its own witness that it is the highest revelation in all the Bible of how a Christian is to live under grace.

Jesus gives the inner meaning of the law, the spiritual intention of God, contrasting it with the letter of the law.

The Biblical "Present Day" View

The ethical requirements of the Sermon on the Mount are the highest expression of morality and conduct in the Bible. The Sermon has application from the time it was given to the second advent.

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 (Matthew 5:21).

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 (Matthew 7:24).

Jesus makes no allowance for anything but doing His teachings, doing the will of the Father. The Sermon is how a Christian is to live under grace in a sinful world.

Righteousness and peace will prevail in the millennium. For that very reason the Sermon cannot be for then. Jesus assumes the presence of evil, and His teachings show us how to live amongst that evil.

Unrighteousness: blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the pure in heart. War and strife: blessed are the peacemakers. Persecution: blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Corruption and moral darkness are widespread: the Christian is the preserving influence (salt) and light. There are divorce and adultery. There is abuse to Christians. Religious hypocrisy is present in the giving of alms, in fasting, and in praying. Satan and temptations are amongst us. Jesus is still absent or we would need fast no more. Materialism still competes with God for the Christian's allegiance.

The Christian is urged to seek the Kingdom, and pray for the Kingdom to come. He is told to do these things that Jesus taught.

The Sermon has the same intentions for the Christian as the law did for the Jew: that is, it is to be obeyed. Jesus contrasted His teachings with the law repeatedly, setting forth His teachings as the inner principles behind the law.

The difficulty of obeying any particular principle or teaching may be granted, but Jesus makes no concessions to weakness, stubbornness, or hardness of heart as Moses allowed under the law. The Sermon is more absolute in its requirements than the law could ever be.

But under grace the Christian has the Spirit to guide him and help him; and he has the blood of Jesus to cover him if he fails.

Questions Answered by the Sermon

The immense scope of the Sermon and its validity for this age is to be seen in the many important questions that it answers, answers that are applicable to our age.

What is the difference between a rule and a principle?

In contrast to the law, the Sermon on the Mount sets forth certain spiritual principles which are to guide the Christian's life and conduct.

A rule applies to outward conformity. A principle concerns the attitude of the heart. For example, the law says "Thou shalt not kill." The principle says that anger, which could lead to killing, is murder (Matthew 5:21-22).

What does Christ mean when He demands that we deny all and follow Him?

How involved and concerned should the Christian get with this life? with the world? with material possessions?

No man can serve God and mammon (job, career, home, family, etc.). The Christian is to take no thought for any of his needs because God will provide him with much more than he needs (Matthew 5:19-34).

To what motive does Christ appeal when He demands righteous living?

What does Jesus warn is the consequence of disobedience of His teachings? Is it ethical to seek salvation because of the fear of hell and wanting to escape its punishment?

Jesus appeals to the fear of the consequences of disobedience: hell fire. A man who is saved because of a holy fear of God will only need to be saved once.

Does it matter how we live?

Can a Christian do as he pleases within certain limits? Can he drink intoxicating beverages? Can he dance to rock and roll? go to x-rated movies? gamble? Can he do any of these things and still claim to be living the separated life taught in the Sermon? What verses teach that we are to be separated and an example to an unregenerate world?

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the Light of the world. . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16).

Jesus set forth principles that teach that we are not to misuse our bodies' and God will destroy those that do.

What was Christ's attitude toward antinomianism?

Antinomianism means that since one is under grace he can ignore the righteousness of the law.

Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but He came to fulfil it. Anyone breaking the law and teaching that it is not sin to do so will be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:17-20).

Jesus' attitude was that the law had its place. It was adequate for the dispensation it was intended to serve. The law was to be fulfilled. It was given with the intention that it was to be obeyed.

The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us by faith (Romans 4). The law is holy, righteous, and good. God demands absolute conformity to His holy law. God sent His Son who did it for us. The law was fulfilled in us by faith in Him who kept it for us.

Every inner principle of the law is carried over into the New Testament.

Can an unregenerate heart perform any act that is completely free from sin which God will see as a basis of acceptance?

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:18).

Even the plowing of the wicked is sin (Proverbs 2:14). Anything that is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Anything that does not bring glory to God is sin.

What is the danger of professing Christ and not being faithful?
or

What is the sole basis upon which one will enter the Kingdom of God?

It is doing the will of the Father. Therefore the only thing that is important is finding out what God's will is and doing it. It is only those who do the Father's will that are going to enter the Kingdom.

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 (Matthew 7:21).

Can a true Christian justify violence and killing in light of the Sermon?

What is the Christian's attitude and response to be toward an enemy? He is not to resist evil, but to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). He is to give his cloak when his coat is taken from him (verse 40); go twice as far as he is compelled to go (verse 41); give to him that asks of him (verse 42).

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: That ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven. . . (Matthew 5:44-45).

i) *Does Jesus say that our answer to the above question proves whose children we really are?*

Yes. The Christian will do all these things so that he can be the son of the Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:48).

Who alone are the blessed in God's sight?

Blessed are the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3); they that mourn (verse 4); the meek (verse 5); those that hunger and thirst after righteousness (verse 6); the merciful (verse 7); the pure in heart (verse 8); the peacemakers (verse 9); they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake (verse 10); and those who are reviled and persecuted for Jesus' sake (verse 11).

What is to be the Christian's attitude toward divorce and the swearing of oaths?

Anyone who divorces his wife except for fornication causes her to commit adultery. "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 (Matthew 5:31).

The Christian is forbidden to swear an oath by anything at all in contrast to Israel who was commanded to swear her oaths unto the Lord. His communication is to be yes and no. Anything more comes of evil (Matthew 5:33-37).

What are the two ways of life? Can they be mixed?

The two ways are God's, and the way of mammon. They cannot be mixed because "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" (Matthew 6:24). The Christian knows that he is a Christian by the fact that he despises all the ways of the world. and loves the ways of the Lord.

How many does Jesus say will find the true way?

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: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

Is a Christian to see how much of this life he can indulge in before it becomes sinful?

What one verse states that Christian life is a positive seeking after righteousness?

The Christian actively seeks the Kingdom which moves him as far as possible from sin, not as close as he can come to it.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33).

What one basic principle does Jesus give which is to govern our attitude and conduct toward all men?

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 (Matthew 7:12).

What is the man called who heeds His teachings? the one who does not?

The man who heeds Jesus' teachings is wise and what he builds will stand because it is built on a rock. The man who does not heed is foolish and what he builds is built on sand. It will fall with a great fall (Matthew 7:24 ff).

Does Jesus deal with specific sins showing us how to apply these principles?

Jesus deals with divorce (Matthew 5:31-32); taking the oath (verses 33-37); the giving of alms (6:1-4); praying (6:5 ff). The principles of love and murder are applied in Matthew 5:12-24.

Are the teachings of Jesus too radical and dogmatic for modern society?

What was the reaction in Jesus' own day? "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" (Matthew 7:28-29).

When we stand up and teach the things that Jesus said people will see the authority in the Word. They will be utterly astonished today just as they were when Jesus spoke it.

The Teachings of the Sermon on the Mount

Theme: How the disciple should live the Christian life in a sinful world.

The Character of the Disciple - Matthew 5.1-12

The Inward Life

Poor in spirit (verse 3)

For the sinner, it is to recognize his spiritual poverty and the need of salvation.

For the Christian, it is to recognize the need of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then it is to recognize that he is what he is by the grace of God. it is to be spiritually humble.

The reward: the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mournful (verse 4)

The Christian mourns when the Holy Spirit reveals his spiritual condition. Before he was saved, he mourned because he was lost. After he was saved he mourns until he receives the Holy Spirit.

Even in the joy of the Holy Spirit, the Christian mourns because he lives in the midst of this sinful world even as Lot's soul was vexed in the midst of Sodom.

The reward: comfort, as truly we are comforted through the ministering of the Holy Spirit.

Meek (verse 5)

The spirit of humility and lowliness of mind characterizes the disciple of Christ. We are told to be like our Master. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matthew 11 :29). Meekness is very important and probably one of the hardest things to accomplish. That is why it is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

Meekness cannot be confused with weakness. Moses was called the meekest man on earth. But when he made the children of Israel drink the golden calf, he was strong over all the nation. Jesus was meek and lowly in heart, but not weak when it came to casting out the buyers and sellers from the temple with their cattle.

The reward: the earth. The earth is now in the hands of the aggressive, the proud, the strong, but in the millennium it is the meek that are going to rule.

Hungry and thirsty for righteousness (verse 6)

The basic office of the Holy Spirit after the Baptism is to develop in the Christian a hunger and thirst to press on into the deeper life.

The reward: to be filled with righteousness.

The Disciple's Relationship to Others - God and Man

Merciful (verse 7)

Mercy isn't just doing our duty. It isn't just meeting others halfway. It isn't just doing what is right, or just being fair. Being merciful is going the second mile. It is not just not charging the legal interest on a debt;

it is charging no interest, or even cancelling the debt if necessary. Mercy is the application of grace.

If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain (Matthew 5:40-41).

The reward: mercy. The merciful will be dealt with by God with mercy. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). The selfish, the self-centered, those who are not merciful, will be judged on that basis.

Pure in heart (verse 9)

Impurity will obscure one's vision of God, even now, as well as seeing Him in the Kingdom. Literally, in the Greek, the word means *to be clean*.

Blessed are the clean of heart; clean in his thoughts, affections, desires, motives, attitudes, and conduct.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. . . (Psalm 24:3).

Sin will keep us from entering the Holy of Holies where God sits. Sin will veil God from us. Sin is what keeps us from knowing His will: it is veiled. Sin will prevent answers to prayer.

The promise: to see God. The pure in heart communicate with God.

Peacemaker (verse 9)

This refers to the conduct of the disciple in his daily walk. He is to be a man of peace. The passive side is non-resistance. "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" (verses 38-39).

The active side is to actively seek peace, peace in his own life. It is to follow after peace with other men, seeking to promote peace between men and God. God has not called us to defend anything aggressively, but to be peacemakers.

The promise: to be called sons of God. Why? Because the peacemaker is like His Son who is the Prince of Peace.

Persecuted for righteousness' sake (verse 10) Reviled and persecuted for His sake (verses 11 and 12)

It is a joy to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. Contrary to all logic and intellect, we are blessed when we are being persecuted.

The reward: 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. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:11-13).

No one will come into the deeper walk without trials and experiences. Gold is refined in the fire. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. . ." (1 Peter 4:12-13). Persecution is the never-failing consequence of living the other seven Beatitudes.

The persecutions in verse 10 are not the same as those in verse 11. One is persecution for righteousness' sake, for the Christian's conduct. The other is persecution for Jesus' sake. The rewards are different. For one we are promised the Kingdom of Heaven; for the other, great rewards in heaven.

No one who has not experienced the persecutions of verses 10-12 can say that they have lived the other Beatitudes. The righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount will draw the world's persecution.

Why are we blessed when people persecute us for righteousness' sake? Because that is our evidence that we are living pleasing to God. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . ." (John 15:20). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. . ." (II Tim 2:12). ".. .exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). To seek to avoid all tribulation and trials is to get off the path into the Kingdom. That is why it is a blessing to be persecuted.

We must be sure not to confuse persecution with chastisement for sin, disobedience, stubbornness or unteachableness.

Righteousness is learning God's will and doing it (Matthew 7:21 ff). This will bring persecution for righteousness' sake. This righteousness is an obvious condemnation of the world and the institutional church.

The other type of persecution is for Jesus' sake. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake:" (Philippians 1:29). To be reviled for His name's sake is to experience personal attacks of reproach and hate and verbal abuse.

Jesus mentioned three things here: reviling, persecution, and verbal abuse, falsely. He is speaking of false reports, slanderous reports, criticism, and gossip.

The promise: great rewards in heaven. We are to rejoice and be exceedingly glad because we know that the prophets were also persecuted in the same way before us.

The Disciple's Two-fold Influence - 5:13-16

Salt

Salt purifies

Salt is antiseptic in the sense that it will cleanse a wound. The Christian is antiseptic in the sense that his purity of conduct, thought, and motives act as a purifying influence in a society which is sinful and corrupt.

A Christian married to an unbeliever purifies the marriage by his holiness. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (I Corinthians 7:14).

Salt preserves

There was a time when meat and fish were preserved by salting. The Christian's influence, his prayers, his practice of his Christianity, help preserve a measure of order in a society that is headed for destruction and ruin.

Jesus warns that there are two types of salt. There is salt; and there is salt that has the appearance, but, like people who have the form of godliness, and don't have the power thereof. If salt has lost its flavour, how can that salt itself be salted? There is nothing more useless than saltless salt. It is good for nothing. It can only be cast out. That is the judgment on churches and church members which lose their influence and witness.

Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (Luke 14:34-35).

If our witness loses its effectiveness through sin, indifference, lukewarmness, or whatever the reason, God is not going to use us. He will cast us out.

Salt seasons

A Spirit-filled Christian seasons life by being able to minister the love, healing, health, joy, and peace that he has. One would never know this In those Christians that are non-charismatic.

Light

Jesus called Himself the light of the world in John 8: 12. John the Baptist called Him light in John 1. But Jesus said that we are lights of the world just as He called Himself the light of the world.

*Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
That ye may be blameless and harmless, the
sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a
crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye
shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:14-15).*

We shine as lights in the world by our conduct, not by the lack of good conduct. The purpose of the light is to shine. The church is supposed to be a lighthouse on a hill. But today it has the same interests, the same goals, the same methods, the same motives, the same conversation, as the world.

When Christians get together, the subject should be of things of the Lord. It isn't that that is all we should talk about, but there is very little in their conversation that is spiritual.

There are three characteristics of disciples as light:

Its position

Jesus said that men put light on a hill to be seen. The purpose of putting it on a hill is so that the world knows where we are, who we are, what we are. People who hide their testimonies are putting their lights in the valley where they can't be seen. The church today is part of the community, and doesn't want to be thought of as apart from that community.

A church is set in a community by God to reveal sin. It is supposed to expose sin by its presence, but the church today is a part of the community, and is accepted by the community, whether it is saved or not. They like the religious influence.

A light is on a hill. Not only does it reveal sin, but it reveals its presence as the means of saving like a lighthouse reveals the rocks and the shoals and the dangerous water.

Its nature

Its nature is light, and light banishes darkness. The very presence and influence of the Christian banishes darkness. Just living our Christianity makes us lights in a world that is filled with darkness.

Is our influence seen as a light where we work? If it is, there are some things that won't happen when we are around. Smutty jokes, foul language, or office intrigues just don't happen when we are around. Our very presence should affect people that way.

Its purpose

The purpose of our being lights is so that God will be glorified. When men see our good works they will glorify our Father which is in heaven. This does not speak of good works to be seen, but living the Christian life, the life of the disciple of Jesus. The world cares little for what we say, but they do watch what we do. The world is quick to notice the inconsistency of a Christian. Nobody notices mud on a hog, but an inkspot on a white shirt causes everybody to talk and stare.

The Principles of the Conduct of His Disciples - 5:17-7:29

The Relation of the Law and the Prophets to the Principles of the Sermon - 5:17-20

What is the law?

The law is God's eternal standard for righteousness. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4). No one enters the Kingdom except his righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and the Scribes, or he keeps the law. We can't keep the law by our actions and deeds, but by faith in Christ it is counted to us as if we had kept it.

The significance is that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. That is God's eternal standard, not some inferior revelation or moral standard that was supposed to serve in the old dispensation until something better came along. Its standards are so high that no man could keep it. God didn't do away with the law or the law's demands or standard. We are obeying the law through faith. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12).

The law is too good for sinners to keep. Jesus is stressing that He did not come to do away with the law, but to fulfil it. By His fulfilling it in His humanity, He could offer a perfect substitute to God as from One who had kept the law. He stands at the head of the human race as the first Adam stood at the head of the human race.

The principles of the Ten Commandments can be found throughout the New Testament

We are not under law, but under grace, as the means of justification. But grace does not set us free to violate the righteousness of the law. It is to be fulfilled in us by faith. Exodus 20:12 is carried directly the New Testament: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:1-2). "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

Jesus' attitude toward the violators of the law is significant. Anyone who breaks the commandments or teaches others to, he is the least in the Kingdom. He did not rule out the possibility of being saved. He is speaking of people who do not have a right attitude toward the law.

Until the law was fulfilled, its Intention was that it be obeyed, taught, and respected. The Scribes and the Pharisees were the chief violators of the law. They not only made void the law by their traditions; but to justify their own disobedience, they taught others how to disobey. We are not under law for justification, we are under grace. But grace does not set us free to disobey.

The Inner Spiritual Principles that Were Implicit in the Law (5:21-48)

Jesus taught the inner meaning of the commandments, and showed us the spiritual principle involved in the commandment.

Jesus made explicit what was implicit in the law and the prophets.

A Christian isn't being called to live the Sermon on the Mount as Christian law. Christianity is not a stricter obedience to the moral law. That is, the Sermon is not a higher law for the Christian dispensation. These are eternal principles. A Christian is to be motivated by principles of conduct, not laws. That saves us from legalism.

The principle concerning anger (verses 21-26)

The commandment: "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. . ."

The principle: "But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. . ."

Few violate the letter of this commandment, but Christ absolutized it. He said that all are guilty because all have been angry. Murder becomes anger in the heart because it is the anger which motivates a person to kill. It is the anger He wants us to deal with. The principles of righteousness in the Sermon do not require less, but more of the Christian because he has more light; he has the Holy Spirit; he is more mature than the Israelite.

How does the tongue express a desire to kill? A person who is angry starts throwing names at another, doing with words the killing that the anger in his heart makes him want to do. "Fool" is an Old Testament synonym for a wicked, apostate, or unregenerate person. To call a person a fool is to show utter contempt for one created in the image of God (James 3:9-11).

The practical application of these inner principles:

(1) Seek reconciliation before trying to worship or serve God. God will not accept our praise and worship as long as there is someone we are not right with. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26), even if it means admitting you are wrong.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (John 4:20-21).

(2) Seek reconciliation while we have the opportunity. We should never leave any stone unturned to show our willingness to have reconciliation. Delay can make us the loser even if we are right.

Jesus is teaching two things in this passage: (1) Avoid anger, quarrel, or disagreement with anyone; and, (2) when problems arise between people, we are to take the initiative to straighten it out, even though we may be right and they are wrong. As the Christian, it is our responsibility.

The principle concerning lust (verses 27-30)

The commandment: "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time. Thou shalt not commit adultery. . ."

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

It is no longer the law, *thou shalt not* but the principle deals with the heart. A person can be guilty of the sin without ever committing the act because sin is in the heart. Then who is more guilty, the woman who dresses to invite the lustful glance, or the person who has the lust in the heart? They are both equally guilty. The Christian must dress in such a way as to not draw attention to himself. Proper dress does not draw the wrong kind of attention. This does not mean that we can't look nice and clean. "Consider the lilies of the field. . .Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field. . .shall he not much more clothe you. . .(Matthew 6:28-30).

Are we to take literally verses 29 and 30? Are we to literally pluck out the eye or cut off the hand if the offence is an habitual thing?

What Jesus is saying is that if the only alternative to habitual sin and hell is the loss of some member of the body, it is more profitable to lose that member than to end up in hell. If we are going on with the Lord, we have to submit to the severe discipline of the Sermon on the Mount.

Though Jesus is to be taken literally, there is a higher principle for a Spirit-filled Christian. The lust isn't in the eye, it is in the heart, and the heart can't be cut out. The higher principle is that we should deal with the heart. No Spirit-filled Christian should be so bound by sin that he would have to cut off a member to keep from lying. He would need deliverance. But deliverance is no short-cut to sanctification or holiness.

But the principle remains: if the only alternative to habitual sin and ultimate hell is the loss of some member of the body, it is better to lose it. Jesus was showing the rigid discipline needed to enter into the Kingdom.

Peter speaks of men whose eyes are full of adultery (II Peter 2:14). What can we do about it? "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). If a thought tries to impress itself on us we can reject it.

The members of the body only express the desires of the heart. Sin, when it is committed, is already committed in the heart before it is carried out with the body. Sin acted out is the expression of what has already been done in the heart.

The Christian is without excuse if he can close the eye, if he can walk away, or he can reject the thought.

The principle concerning divorce and remarriage. or the principle concerning the permanency of marriage (verses 31-32)

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

The principle: "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."

Observations

(1) The only grounds for divorce that Jesus gives is fornication. Fornication is sexual uncleanness. It includes adultery, but is more inclusive than that.

(2) The Mosaic concession is no longer allowed for the Christian except for fornication.

(3) This applies to wives putting away their husbands as well as husbands putting away their wives (Mark 10:11-12).

(4) The adultery is committed by the remarriage, not by the separation or divorce.

(5) Divorce and remarriage is one of the signs that we are in the last days (Matthew 24:36-39).

What does Jesus mean?

(1) If a person is married he had better stay that way.

(2) A person who is divorced except for fornication is still married in God's sight. Even if he has remarried he is married to the first partner.

If a person is divorced except for fornication, he had better stay single, or claim reconciliation and go back to the first one. If he gets divorced for any other reason and then remarries, it is adultery, which means that he is still married to the first one. God has made them one flesh (Matthew 19: 5-6). The only thing that can break that one flesh bond is death (Romans 7:3), or fornication (Matthew 5:32).

The principle concerning the oath (verses 33-37)

The law: "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. . ."

The principle: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all..."

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation (James 5:12).

God swore an oath by Himself (Hebrews 6:17-18), but what God does, being perfect in wisdom and righteousness, and what He permits us to do are two entirely different things. An angel swore by Him who is in heaven (Revelation 10:6). But what an angel does, or what God Himself does, is not necessarily right for us. Jesus couldn't make it any plainer because He pointed to the law that permitted it and said it is not permitted for His disciples.

An oath is the unnecessary affirmation to the word of a Christian. A Christian ought to tell the truth.

The principle concerning retaliation (verses 38-42).

The law: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. . ."

The principle: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil. . ."

Some contend that this only concerns our conduct and response in retaliation towards family, friends, church members or our brothers in Christ; that it doesn't mean that we should not kill to defend our country when we are called on to; that if none resisted with force then we would be taken over. The argument is that as citizens of the state, we have a responsibility to kill.

But the context shows that Jesus was talking about our enemies (verses 43 ff):

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. . .that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven. . .

As Christians we can't live a double standard of morality. We can't be a person to a brother in Christ or to our family, and then just an abstraction called a citizen of the state when called upon to kill an enemy, saying that the killing of an enemy is the state's responsibility. But God is going to charge that to the individual. The state will be answerable if it does not fulfil its obligations, but to try to justify killing saying that it was done as a citizen of the state and a soldier is not dealing with the issue.

Romans 13 does speak of the state's responsibility of keeping order. There are to be armies and arms because we are living in a sinful world. But the principles of the Sermon on the Mount are not addressed to sinful society. They are addressed to Christians under grace.

Jesus gave examples of how to apply these principles:

(1) Turn the other cheek (verse 39). Jesus prayed for His enemies. Stephen prayed for those who stoned him (Acts 7:60).

(2) Injustice at the law (verse 40). The usual reaction is to get a lawyer and fight the case. But He said that if we are sued and they take away our goods, we are to offer them the rest too if necessary. Christian is not to go into court (1 Corinthians 6).

(3) Inconvenience (verse 41). When we are compelled to go one mile, we are to go two. It was a common practice in those days to be pressed into service by the Roman soldiers to carry baggage, clean up after wars, provide food, and to work. Simon was compelled to carry Jesus' cross. We apply this to ourselves when we are called on to do that which is not our job.

(4) Fulfilling the needs of others (verse 42). Jesus did not say to give them what they ask for. Neither did He say to give them everything they ask for. God deals with us in this way. He doesn't give us everything we ask. "...ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2-3).

The principle is to give to all who ask without discrimination. Secondly, it is to give freely, unconditionally, with no strings attached. "Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again" (Luke 6:30).

The Principles of the Disciple's Conduct in Worship and In Practice (6:1-18)

The principle is to avoid practicing our piety before men just to be seen and heard. In other words, shun hypocritical worship and religion.

Giving of alms (verses 1-4)

The principle: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. . ."

The principle is not to give to gain recognition or praise for our generosity. If we do, that is our reward. But if we give our alms properly, we will be rewarded by our Father in heaven. If we broadcast our giving, then the recognition will be our reward.

'But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (verse 3). What He is saying is that when we give, forget it. That is not to enjoy the blessing of having been a blessing to somebody. That is the reward even though we have told nobody. This means not only do we not advertise our good deeds to the world, we don't advertise them to ourselves.

b) *Prayer (verses 5-15)*

The principle: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which is in secret. . ."

The principle is to avoid prayer designed just to be heard and admired. This doesn't forbid public prayer because public prayer is seen in the Bible. But most prayer would not be in public. Jesus is speaking of our personal prayer. Prayers of worship, praise and thanksgiving to God basically should be done in the closet.

Jesus prayed in public before His disciples (John 17). The church prayed together publicly (Acts 4). But we should avoid planned prayers. Those are just prayers of words, whereas prayer doesn't consist of words. Jesus groaned in the spirit (John 11 :33). "likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

Prayer is not to be used as an opportunity to preach and teach in public. Neither should prayers be designed to be sermons to get back at people or to correct their errors.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (verse 7). The rule of faith is that if we believe when we pray that we have received, then there is no reason to ask for that thing again (Mark 11 :24). We do not have to cease praying concerning that matter. We can hold the petition before the Lord, and praise Him for it.

Why should we not use repetition in prayer? ". . . for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (verse 8). We don't supply with Him any information when we pray, so there is no need to ask Him but once for something. This is referring to His promises, not to intercessions, supplications, or thanksgivings.

Vain repetition is the heathen's prayer. Jesus said don't be like them. Indulging in repetitious prayer makes one a heathen at that point.

Fasting (verses 16-18)

The principle: "But thou, when thou fastest. . . appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret. . ."

Fasting isn't just a Jewish custom. Jesus said when you fast. He assumes that we will fast. But we are to avoid fasting just to gain attention or sympathy.

We should avoid fasting as a religious duty because fasting is a matter of the heart. Fasting is something we want to do or God won't accept it.

The Bible doesn't tell us how to fast. It just says when we fast. Man has written many books on how to start and end fasts, but these are man's ideas, and should not be followed because we fast by faith.

What is fasting? It is not mere abstinence from food because anyone can fast. A biblical fast is turning our backs on everything and making our first concern God while we seek whatever it is we want an answer to. It may be that we want to know His will about some decision; to receive a healing; to seek a greater anointing; or to receive deliverance for ourselves or others.

Fasting is as valid for the Christian as it was for Israel, but it must always be motivated by faith and not desire to let people know that you are on a fast. Of course when one is on a long fast, his family will know it. But it isn't to be broadcast.

Another thing to avoid is the so-called fruit juice fast. These are not fasts, they are diets.

A faithful fast will be rewarded by our Father who is in heaven.

The Principles Governing the Disciple's attitude and Conduct Concerning Possessions, Anxiety, Worry, and Criticism (6:19 - 7:5)

The principle that Jesus sets forth is to avoid covetousness, anxiety, and criticism of others.

Covetousness (verses 19-23)

The principle: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Jesus forbids covetousness and calls it sin.

Jesus did not mean that ownership of goods is condemned. It does not mean that we cannot have possessions, but the possessions must not possess us.

Goods were held throughout the Bible with no criticism of it. Mary and Martha had a home in which Jesus paid many visits. Churches were in the homes for centuries. We are admonished to give alms which would be impossible if we had nothing. We are admonished to lay aside each week as the Lord has prospered us financially (1 Corinthians 16:2). Children are admonished to lay up for their parents. Very obviously a workman would need tools and a businessman needs funds.

The principle is to avoid covetousness which is the selfish accumulation of wealth for wealth's sake, possessions for possessions' sake. That is condemned as idolatry. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . . and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Why is covetousness idolatry? Because that which we set our affections on is our god; that is what we will serve. This means more than mammon. It can be family, career, job, intellect, etc. Covetousness is idolatry because what one covets is what he worships.

The principle applies to the poor as well as to the rich. A beggar can be stingy and grasping every penny that falls in his cup.

The supreme aim of most people is to acquire as much material security as they can so they are actually serving mammon rather than God.

How can we avoid covetousness? (1) Look to all of our material possessions as a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. (2) Let them hold no affections in our hearts. (3) By a total committal of all our possessions to the Lord. When we give them to Him, then He is the owner, we the stewards. We can have no affection for them because they are no longer ours. As long as we give them to Him, He will give them back and let us use them.

Just giving up goods isn't forsaking them. One can still covet or lust after someone else's. It is giving up the affections for them. One of the best ways to do this is to trust God to not only provide them, but to keep them as well, instead of the insurance companies.

Sinful anxiety (verses 25-34)

The principle: "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. . . .But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Jesus forbids sinful anxiety.

Anxiety is unnecessary, unavailing, unfaithful, and unbecoming.

Unnecessary (verses 25-26). He feeds the birds so how much more will he feed us?

Unavailing (verse 27). We are to consider our inability to change anything anyway. Luke's account implies that it would be easier to add eighteen inches to our height than it would be to feed ourselves (Luke 12:25-26). Therefore if we just trust the Father He will do it.

Unfaithful (verses 28-31). Consider the lilies of the field: faith will trust God to provide.

Unbecoming (verses 32-34). Consider the world because that is the way they act: "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." Anxiety and concern about our material needs is sin. It is unbecoming to a disciple.

The seriousness of this sin is to be seen in a four-fold way. Anxiety is evidence of a lack of faith about basic things. If we can't trust God for that which is least, then it is foolish to speak of end-time ministry or being used of God. The first requirement for an end-time ministry is to be able to trust God for our basic needs.

Secondly, anxiety calls into question God's sovereignty. Our lack of faith is not in His supply or His ability to supply. Our lack of faith is in Him. It is not believing that He is big enough, faithful enough, powerful enough, honest enough, righteous enough, to do what He says He will do when He said He will supply our needs.

Thirdly, anxiety indicates that we are covetous if we have it. Anxiety and undue concern is lust for material possessions. That is why coveting is not just a sin of the rich. The person who is overly concerned is really concerned about losing that or not having it.

Fourthly, anxiety destroys our witness. Anxiety over material things makes the Christian appear like the world, according to Jesus' own words: "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek."

If we take no thought, He will take thought for us.

A critical spirit toward others (7:1-5)

The principle: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. . .first cast out the beam out of thine own eye. . ."

What it does not mean:

(1) That one shouldn't correct spiritual and religious errors that threaten the purity of the faith or the truth. "...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2).

"Judge not" cannot be used as an excuse not to deal with errors or sin.

(2) That we should not use spiritual discernment. The same Jesus said that we are to judge: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

What it does mean:

We are not to have a self-righteous, critical attitude. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14), the Pharisee judged the publican according to his opinion of his own righteousness. Even when we deal with the mistakes and sins of others we should do it in love.

The principle that Jesus set forth here is that in our personal relationships, we must first occupy ourselves with perfecting our own lives, and then we will be able to help others. But He didn't forbid discrimination. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine. . ." (verse 6).

The Principle Concerning Dispensing the Truth (7:6, 16)

The principle: "Give not that which is holy unto dogs. . .Ye shall know them but heir fruits . . ."

The meaning is (after He said don't judge hastily, harshly, or carelessly) to be careful how, when, and to whom we dispense our precious pearls of spiritual truth. We are to preach the Gospel freely, give our testimony freely, but not to carelessly expose spiritual truths, especially deeper truths, to those who show by their attitude, their arguments, their resistance, their carnality, that they oppose what we are saying or testifying to.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7)

Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words (Proverbs 23:9).

God expects us to have enough spiritual discernment to know when we are talking to a fool.

The Principle Concerning Prayer (7:7-11)

The principle: "Ask, and it shall be given you. . . For every one that asketh receiveth."

The heavenly Father will give His children the things that they ask for. He will not give them something else instead.

The Golden Principle (7:12)

The principle: "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."

This is not a rule as it is often called, but those who abide by this principle are Christians under grace. It takes not only salvation, but the Holy Spirit to live by it. The whole Sermon revolves around this one principle.