

## ***Foundations of Radical Christianity***

- I. The Sermon on the Mount Defines Radical Christianity
  - A. Jesus defines what it means to be ruined for God and the way to be great in the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount and it defines radical Christianity and Christianity 101 and they are actually the same thing
  - B. The Sermon on the Mount is the constitution of God's Kingdom, both in this life and in the life to come
    1. It is the only legitimate means by which to gauge our spiritual development
    2. It is also the only legitimate way to measure our ministry
  - C. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:24-25 that a wise man builds his house (his life and ministry) on the rock, which refers to relating to Jesus according to the Sermon on the Mount
  
- II. Pursuing Perfection in the Grace of God
  - A. Jesus summarizes the Sermon on the Mount and tells us what it means to truly live radically in verse 48 of Matthew 5: "You shall be **perfect**, just as your Father is perfect." - the word perfect here means complete in obedience and carries the idea of walking in the fullness of the light and revelation we have received
  - B. We must only pursue perfection in the grace of God as a response of love for God
    1. In a sense, the first commandment (to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength) is a restatement of Matthew 5:48 in a relational context
    2. Connecting our hearts to this verse gives us a vibrancy we won't otherwise have in our day to day pursuit of God - as we walk in the fullness of the light that we have, we are able to feel God's love more and we are able to feel more like our love for Him is legitimate
    3. To truly be ruined for God means that we have laid hold of this vision of loving God through perfect obedience and can't be content without pursuing it; you have encountered love and you can't live without more
  - C. We pursue complete obedience as an expression of love, but if we are not pursuing complete obedience, then loving God with all our heart is reduced to nothing more than sentiment
    1. We must love God on God's terms
    2. John 14:15-23
    3. Denying our lustful desires and pursuing holiness in the grace of God is the theater God has chosen for us to express our love to Him
    4. We move His heart when we repent of our compromises
    5. The Sermon on the Mount can be viewed as the what we are to do, and the first commandment as the why we are to do it and we pursue obedience to the Sermon on the Mount in order to tangibly show our love for Jesus
  - D. A sustained **reach** for 100% obedience is different than **attaining** sinless perfection in this life
    1. Walking in perfect obedience is **relative** in this age and **absolute** in the age to come
    2. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to obey Him, with full confidence that He enjoys us even in our immaturity
    3. The Scriptures present two aspects of our being complete or perfected in God
      - a. First, we are **instantly** made complete in Christ in our legal position when we put our faith in Him as our Savior; this is called **justification**

- b. There is also a process by which we *progressively* become "complete in obedience" in our living condition before God; this process is called *sanctification*
  - c. So those who have said "yes" to Jesus are at one in the same time *perfect* and *being made perfect*
4. As we walk through the process of sanctification and earnestly seek to walk in the light we have been given, the Lord is faithful to give us even more light, or revelation

### III. The Beatitudes ó Flowers in the Garden of Our Hearts (Matt. 5:3-12)

- A. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the eight beatitudes, which define true spiritual reality ó the beatitudes deal with issues of the heart; before Jesus begins to tell us about how we should *act*, He tells us about how we should *be*
- B. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"
1. To be "poor in spirit" means to acknowledge that we are in desperate need of a Savior and that we are completely dependent upon His mercy and grace
    - a. This is the key to everything that follows ó we must be emptied of ourselves before we can be filled
    - b. Jesus begins by destroying any ideas that we might be able to accomplish the Sermon on the Mount by ourselves
  2. So to be "poor in spirit" is to realize our incredible dilemma in our separation from God, but it is also to recognize our dilemma in seeking "perfect" obedience after we enter in
  3. We become poor in spirit by
    - a. reflecting on God, who can be seen clearly in the face of Jesus ó you can't look at God in the truth of who He is without feeling your own poverty and emptiness apart from Him
    - b. setting Matthew 5:48 as our conscious goal; if perfect obedience is not our goal, we can become complacent and easily settle for less
- C. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted"
1. Jesus speaks of a spiritual mourning that naturally follows becoming poor in spirit
    - a. As we see God, His holiness, and how we were intended to live, we are forced to realize our own helplessness and hopelessness, and we must mourn this
    - b. The reason many of us don't really experience the type of mourning Jesus is talking about is that we don't have a deep conviction related to sin
  2. It is a grace of God to allow us to see and mourn over our sin because it produces a stronger and deeper appreciation and love in our hearts
  3. Jesus says when we mourn over our sin, we will be comforted - we are comforted as we repent of our shortcomings and enter in to a fuller encounter with Jesus; we experience the joy of being reconciled and gain an even deeper understanding of His love for us
- D. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"
1. True meekness has much more to do with our inward spirit than our outward manner
  2. Meekness is ultimately about having an accurate view of ourselves, which is expressed in our attitude and conduct toward others
- E. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled"
1. A man or woman who hungers and thirsts after righteousness earnestly desires to live out the beatitudes and the fruit of the Spirit
  2. If we are really "hungering" and "thirsting" then we have a painful awareness of our need

- F. ðBlessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercyö
  - 1. Jesus desires for us to have a tender spirit in how we deal with others in light of receiving God's mercy in our many failures
  - 2. Matthew 18:21-35 ó what Jesus seems to be saying here is that if we don't offer forgiveness to others, then we will not be forgiven ourselves
- G. ðBlessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see Godö
  - 1. Jesus emphasizes the heart over outward conduct; a pure heart will produce right conduct
  - 2. To be ðpure in heartö means to be undivided, and without hypocrisy ó Psalm 86:11
  - 3. It also speaks of experiencing breakthrough in purity of thought and motives
  - 4. The promise is that we will see God ó this has both a present and future implication
    - a. We will be able to see God at work around us today and to feel His presence in a stronger way, and
    - b. We will see God face to face and be with Him forever in the age to come!
- H. ðBlessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of Godö
  - 1. ðPeaceö in the biblical sense does not just mean ðthe absence of conflictö, but refers to being complete and having all things in agreement with the will of God
  - 2. It should be our prayer to become an anointed peacemaker ó one who brings shalom (peace/reconciliation) to all that is out of God's will
- I. ðBlessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heavenö
  - 1. If you operate in the power of the Holy Spirit and are making an impact on the kingdom of darkness, you *will* have persecution
  - 2. This is the first beatitude that deals more with our circumstances than our heart
  - 3. Jesus only promises blessing for persecution that comes as a result of righteousness

#### IV. Salt & Light ó Our Calling to Make an Impact and to be Great (Matt. 5:13-20)

- A. Our ðsaltinessö and the ðbrightness of our lightö are dependent upon our walking out the beatitudes in a consistent and corporate way
- B. Jesus came so that the fullness of what God originally intended in each of His commandments would eventually be fully expressed in the lives of His people
- C. Jesus tells us how to be great in His Kingdom
  - 1. God places the desire for greatness in each of our hearts
  - 2. We achieve greatness by pursuing complete obedience

#### V. Weeding the Garden ó Resisting the Toxin of Sin (Matt. 5:21-48)

- A. Jesus points out six practical areas in which we are to wage war against the lust of our flesh
  - 1. Unholy anger - the spirit of murder
  - 2. Adultery - the spirit of immorality
  - 3. Disregarding the sanctity of marriage - the spirit of treachery (betrayal or treason)
  - 4. False commitments - the spirit of manipulation
  - 5. Demanding justice for ourselves - the spirit of pride or bitterness
  - 6. Retaliation - the spirit of revenge or animosity

- VI. Positioning Our Hearts to Receive Grace: The Fasted Lifestyle (Matt. 6:1-23)
  - A. Our heart receives more grace as we consistently and secretly:
    1. Serve others through charitable deeds
    2. Give of our time, money, and other resources
    3. Pray
    4. Forgive and bless our adversaries
    5. Fast
  - B. In each of these areas we are to embrace voluntary weakness by investing our natural strengths (our time, our money, our energy, our reputation) into Kingdom purposes
  - C. We don't *earn* anything from God by pursuing the fasted lifestyle; these devotional practices are simply a means of positioning our hearts
  
- VII. Pursuing Wholeheartedness Without Fear or Anxiety (Matt. 6:24-34)
  - A. After teaching us about the dangerous toxins and helpful nutrients in developing the garden of our heart, He then encourages us to pursue wholeheartedness without fear or anxiety, out of a place of trust in His provision
  - B. Jesus admonition to His disciples is that we use the money we have now to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven
  
- VIII. Walking Out the Beatitudes in the Midst of Relational Tension
  - A. One thing you can count on is that many of your relationships will change as you begin to walk out Kingdom values
  - B. warns us against the tendency to want to judge others for not walking out the Kingdom lifestyle with the same intensity
  - C. He also tells us that some people will reject our pearls, or our Sermon on the Mount based Kingdom values
  - D. The best weapon we have in addressing relational conflicts and bringing about passion in others is prayer
  
- IX. Standing Firm in the Pressures
  - A. Jesus wraps up the Sermon on the Mount by warning us of the pressures to come and encouraging us to stand strong in the foundations He has laid
  - B. He first warns us that there will be false prophets and messages that will seek to hinder us from entering through the narrow gate or the difficult way
  - C. Storms will test the reality of our foundation; these storms will take many different forms
    1. Personal pressures ó financial, relational, temptation to go the easy way
    2. Eschatological storm ó unfolding of end time events
  - D. The only way to stand in the pressures is to build upon the foundation of Jesus and His teachings, specifically those in the Sermon on the Mount