WAGING WAR FOR THE KINGDOM 2

1. Review

a. Jesus calls us to live out the ***8 Beatitudes*** (5:3-12) as we ***resist 6 temptations*** (5:21-48), and ***pursue 5 kingdom activities*** (6:1-18) that position our hearts to freely receive more grace. The 8 Beatitudes are like 8 flowers in the "garden of our heart" that God wants to fully blossom. These flowers are cultivated as we "weed our garden" by resisting 6 temptations (5:21-48) and as we "water our garden" by pursuing 5 kingdom activities (6:1-18).

b. Last time we looked at the first three temptations :

i The temptation to provoke or respond with anger

ii The temptation to immorality

iii The temptation to disregard the sanctity of marriage – covenant breaking

c. Today we are going to look at the other three.

iv The temptation to not keep our word and agreements—commitment breaking (5:33-37)

v The temptation to retaliate and be defensive towards those who insult us or take advantage of us.

vi The temptation to be passive towards our enemies who hate us instead of actively loving them.

2. Refusing to make false Commitments (Mt. 5:33-37)

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

a. Jesus taught His disciples on the importance of resisting the temptation to not keep our word and agreements—commitment breaking (5:33-37). He did not quote a specific law, but referred to the Pharisees' summary of several laws (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 10:20; 23:21-24). Jesus was not correcting or changing a Mosaic law, but was restoring its original meaning.

b. The Pharisees distorted their application of the third commandment (Ex. 20:7). They taught that the main issue was to keep oaths *in God's name* instead of keeping all of our commitments. They argued that the law forbade using *God's name* in vain, but not in making commitments in vain.

c. They saw this command as forbidding profanity, not dishonesty. Therefore, they developed a new system for making vows. They taught that only vows made with God's name were binding. They shifted the attention from the need to keep the vow to the formula used in making it. The original intent in God's heart was to honour God's name and be truthful in what we say.

d. They established new ways to make vows, by swearing not by the name of God, but by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or the temple. The obligation to keep the vow depended on the nature of the object sworn by (Mt. 23:16). They viewed swearing evasively as a way to lie, yet keep the law.

e. The purpose of swearing in God's name was ordained to restrict man's tendency to lie. In Scripture, oaths are permitted and necessary. They are to be used in formal and legal settings. What Jesus commands is that we not use oaths in personal conversation. Thus, the legitimate use of oaths is to serve godly purposes and not ungodly purposes

f. Jesus testified under oath in a legal setting before the Sanhedrin. He had refused to answer His accusers until the high priest put Him under an oath; then Jesus answered (Mt. 26:63-64). Paul used oaths calling God to witness (Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10; Phil. 1:8).

Mt 26:63-64 *[63]Jesus kept silent. The high priest…said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ…!" [64]Jesus said to him, "It is as you said."*

g. ***Do not swear at all:*** Jesus was not referring to legal settings in this command, but to our ordinary conversations with people. He did not intend this command to be taken without any limitations, but qualified it by telling us to not swear by created things (v. 34-36). If we swear by heaven, it is His throne; if by earth, it is His footstool. To make an oath by our head is to swear by that which is under His control. The proof is that we are incapable of changing our hair colour! Jesus is saying that every oath is an ultimate reference to God. Thus, we do not escape the seriousness of an oath by omitting to use God's name since all oaths are to be honoured.

h. ***Let your "Yes" be "Yes":*** Jesus calls for truthfulness and integrity in our commitments. People of integrity do not need oaths and should refuse them unless required by an authority. Some people ***promote themselves in a false way*** by exaggerating their commitments. They present themselves as one who will keep their commitments to show up to do work, attend a meeting, give money, solve a problem, run an errand, or spend time with someone, etc.

i. Our word is our bond. Thus, ***to exaggerate our commitments is to lie*** by giving a false impression as to how much others can rely on us to do what we said.

j. We can operate in a ***spirit of manipulation*** if we promote ourselves in a false way. We do this by portraying ourselves as more committed than what we will follow through on. Someone may say, "I'm committed to this and that," so that others will accept or applaud them for that commitment.

k. We are disciples of the One who is "the Truth" (Jn. 14:6). When we do not follow through on what we say, ***integrity demands that we acknowledge it*** to those we committed to. This applies to our marriage, children, workplace, friends, financial obligations, ministry situations, etc. This is to walk out a Sermon on the Mount lifestyle.

l. The Spirit is restoring integrity in the Church and raising up people who will keep their word.

Ps. 15:1-2 *O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? [2] He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart;*

Ps. 24:3-4 *3Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? [4]He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not…sworn deceitfully.*

m. Righteous people should not need to confirm their statements with an appeal to a higher authority. Their word should be enough

James 5:12 *But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

n. In our day the use of 'spin' to make things seem more than they are is common place. Taking the positive and enlarging and embellishing it to get people to believe things are better, bigger than they are. It is so entrenched in our society we can easily begin to operate in this way. However, if we are meek then we will not need to promote ourselves.

3. Refusing a spirit of retaliation and defensiveness (Mt. 5:38-42)

a. We do not retaliate with defensiveness towards those who insult or take advantage of us (5:38-42).

38 *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* ***39*** *But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.* ***40*** *And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.* ***41*** *And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles* ***42*** *Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.*

b. Jesus gave four illustrations of the kingdom principle of refusing retaliation and defensiveness. Each of the four examples describes one who insults or takes advantage of us in small ways. The Pharisees taught two errors—that the Law commanded revenge and that people could administrate it personally outside of the court system. Moses taught the people to not take the law into their own hands, but to resist an evil man by using the court system. The Pharisees empowered people to act in wrong ways and in a wrong spirit in their conflicts.

c. The law of Moses did not command revenge, but to love one another without bearing a grudge. The people were to live free from the spirit of revenge (vengeance) and defensiveness (grudge).

Lev. 19:18 *[18]You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge…but love your neighbour…*

d. The Greek verb (anthistimi) here translated *resist* means to *oppose* or *withstand* someone or to *fight back*. In other words, we are not to retaliate or seek to pay back people who do evil against us by insulting us or troubling us in small ways. Jesus was speaking about our attitude toward people who infringe on our personal rights or who cause us inconveniences. Jesus was not teaching against the principle of just retribution in the legal court system.

e. When evil people do bad things to us, Jesus' disciples should accept the injustice without taking revenge. Implicit in this view are Old Testament promises that God will take care of the righteous. Therefore to accept injustice without retaliating expresses trust that God will faithfully care for His own. The Old Testament taught that the Jews were to leave vengeance to God (Lev. 19:17-18; Deut. 32:35; Ps. 94:1; Prov. 20:22; 24:29).

f. Jesus highlighted how we need to respond to governmental demands when he used the illustration of "going the extra mile". Roman soldiers had the legal authority to require a man to carry the soldier's gear for a mile. People despised this legal requirement because it was inconvenient, annoying, and even humiliating. Thus, most obeyed this legal requirement, but with a wrong spirit.

g. This has to do with infringement of our time and personal rights by the government. The passage addresses our natural resentment at the small demands of the government or those in authority. We try to get out of things without getting caught. That is the attitude Jesus condemns. We are to serve cheerfully.

h. When those in authority require more than is necessary in small matters, it is easy to feel resentment, but we are to patiently bear the injustice. The point is not to resist them by seeking

loopholes. We are to cooperate with their request and not ignore it. Jesus is not calling us to become indentured servants to the government, but to bear with small inconveniences.

i. Walking out the kingdom principle of refusing retaliation and defensiveness is an important aspect of walking out the Sermon on the Mount and in being salt and light to society

4. Replacing Passive Love with Active Love (Mt. 5:43-48)

a. To refuse to retaliate is the beginning of our victory, but it is not complete until we actively love them. Jesus told us what ***not to do*** (to not resist evil men; 5:38-42) and ***what to do*** (to love our enemies 5:43-48). Much potential good is lost in our relationship with God, our family, and with others when we refuse to actively love our enemies.

43 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' **44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. **46** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?*

b. This brings us to the highest and most challenging part of the Sermon. It is praised by many, mocked by some, and ignored by most. Embracing this ushers us into a supernatural lifestyle.

c. It is a victory to say nothing and not retaliate against our enemies. But to act in the opposite spirit of our enemies by actively loving them instead of passively avoiding them, causes us to face our bitterness and fear. This is the place we experience the supernatural realm and make great advances in the kingdom.

d. Jesus is referring to our attitude toward people who mistreat us in everyday life. He is not addressing the issue of self-defence against a criminal who physically attacks your family.

e. Jesus corrected the Pharisees' distortion of the command to love. They limited it by taking out *"as yourself"* and adding the command to *"hate your enemy."* They saw their fellow Jews as neighbours, but not foreigners (Gentiles). They limited the command to loving people who were nice to them (not those who troubled them) and to those like them. They lived with revenge toward their fellow Jews and racism towards outsiders, instead of with God's all-embracing love.

f. The call to actively love our enemies includes our words (bless), actions (do good), and prayers. This is the highest summit of love and is much more than sentiment it has practical actions. It is an act of our will that transcends negative feelings. As we obey this, our feelings will change.

g. God blesses evil people because it is His nature to love. He loves by providing sun and rain to wicked men. We must not mistake His blessings over them as His approval. Calvin referred to this as God's *common grace* in contrast to God's *saving grace*. Common grace is God's gift of provision given to all people in this age and is not like the gift of salvation.

h. Jesus died for us while we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Our standard of love is to love like He loves, as we love our enemies (without the condition of our self-interest). God loves people while they are unthankful and evil instead of waiting until they are grateful.

i. In loving this way, we prove that we have received the Father's love. We are filled with gratitude for love that we did not deserve so it makes sense to us to share that love with our enemies. This is the most convincing way to prove that the Father's love exists. It is God's grace to unbelievers to witness God's love through you in the times they mistreat you.

Jn. 13:35 *[35]By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

j. Unbelievers know about married love, parental love or friendship love. Even tax collectors (greedy manipulative men) love people who love them. The essence of what Jesus wants us to understand is the value of love that is more than what is natural affection for family and friends.

5. Conclusion

Matt.5:48 *[48] You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

a. Jesus called us to live *perfect* by seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives us. We cannot love Jesus with the same amount of love in which He loves us. However, we can love Him with our *"all"*—where we hold nothing back. This is all that He desires from us.

b. When we obey the Spirit's light, then He gives us more light and more experience in God. We have more responsibility to obey, but we experience and express to others more of God's power.

c. Power in our life is found in pursuing 100-fold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in total obedience. Maintaining a sustained reach for full obedience for decades is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months.