

Russell Kelfer

Clear Conscience With Men

539-A

Series: The Beatitudes

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We continue our study on the sixth Beatitude,

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

(Matthew 5:8)

And of course, seeing God they shall become like God. We have established so far in our study that the heart is the real person where God sees each of us. It is the mind, what you really think when you think no one knows what you think. It is your emotions, how you really feel about God, how you really feel about your wife, how you really feel about your neighbors and how you really feel about others. It is your will, what you would do if you could do it without restraint or consequences. Mind, emotion, and will combine to make up your heart, the real you deep down inside.

We then discussed that to be pure in heart involves five basic aspects of the word pure. Translated into spiritual experience, those five aspects of the human heart involve:

- I- The Absence of Hypocrisy
- II- The Presence of Pure Motives
- III- The Presence of a Clear Conscience
- IV- Single-mindedness
- V- Purity of the Thought Life

Right now we are dealing with the evidence of the third aspect, a clear conscience. The conscience is the radar of the heart that exposes good and evil. A clear conscience is a perfect weather report. When you look at the newscasts reporting the weather, the radar shows troubled spots, and the weatherman tells us to be careful and beware of the danger that is coming. The conscience is the radar of the spirit that God uses to expose evil in the heart. What God is looking for is a clear conscience or a perfect weather report.

We have discussed in the last few lessons that God's goal is threefold. In Acts 24:16 we see that the Christian should be void of offense towards God and towards man. There are three hindrances to a clear conscience. The first is unconfessed sin or the failure to assume God's perspective and repent as we saw in I John 1:9. The second aspect is the wounding of the conscience of a weaker brother as we saw in Romans 14, I Corinthians 8,

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and I Corinthians 10. The last point we will discuss in this lesson is found in Matthew 5:23-24. We will consider when we have wronged another, and they have an offense toward us.

First let's review the last lesson where we looked at three parallel passages in Scripture. All of them had to do with our conscience being defiled by causing a weaker brother to stumble. A weaker brother is someone who is chronologically younger than you, your children or the young people in the church. He might be someone who is spiritually younger than you such as someone who is a new Christian or someone who has no doctrinal experience, or no experience through testing or moral training. A weaker brother might be someone who is immature or weak in a given area because of their past life or besetting sins. A weaker brother might be anyone who looks to you for strength, such as someone in your family or someone who is a disciple or a pupil.

THE PRINCIPLES IN REVIEW

The principles we dealt with in the last lesson which were explained in the three parallel passages were as follows:

1- Conflict between Christians. All three passages had conflict between Christians. The people were dealing with secondary issues. The issue was food that had been offered to idols or the observance of certain days.

2- Matter of Conscience. Some habits were clearly scripturally acceptable to some and totally unacceptable to others. This brought into focus the matter of conscience.

3- Stronger Christian's Responsibility. What the stronger Christian should or should not do was not to be determined by what he could or could not do where his own conscience was concerned. The one deciding issue was if a more mature Christian's actions might harm another Christian, don't do it.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

In the last lesson we looked at nine obnoxious questions. I reduced my level of friendships considerably. The questions were:

Question 1- If there is a movie that you feel is acceptable to you, and it won't defile your conscience, but another weaker Christian sees you go to that movie and might be offended, what should you do?

Question 2- Is it proper to have a double standard in your

home regarding television? Are there shows you can watch that are morally impure, but not good for your children?

Question 3- Is drinking ever worth the price you pay in regards to a weaker brother, even if to you it might be scripturally acceptable?

Question 4- In the area of crude or abusive language or foolish jesting about spiritual things, what does it really say to a weaker brother?

We covered these four points thoroughly in the last lesson. We barely touched on the next ones.

Question 5- Should what you wear be affected by what other people think? There are three areas to consider regarding what you wear that affect other people. Is it modest or immodest, is it gaudy or pretentious, or is it sloppy or dirty?

Question 6- Is gluttony a sin? Gluttony is the art of eating more than you need. It is the habit of having food consume you rather than you consuming it. Gluttony teaches three things:

1- It teaches that discipline is partial. The person you are ministering to may need to spend time in the Word everyday and develop some spiritual disciplines as you may have. However, you may have the problem of gluttony. When it comes to eating, should they do what you do, and gorge themselves at every turn?

2- It teaches that appearance is not vital.

3- Just because you are thin, it does not mean that you should gorge yourself, showing contempt or disregard for the problems of the weaker, heavier brother. It is not how fat or thin you are, but it is how much you eat. Some people can breathe food and gain weight. Others can make pigs of themselves and lose weight.

Question 7- What is the greatest message you can preach to a weaker brother? It is not your knowledge. It is not your instruction. It is your example. It is what you say. It is saying, "I love you so much that I will forego any pleasure, discard any habit, or change any attitude that might offend you.

Question 8- Is it anyone else's business how you spend your money? Taken from the parable of the talents, let me give you a few points.

- Remember, first of all, that it is not your money, it is God's. Therefore, it is everybody's business how you spend every

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nickel of it.

- It was given by God in varying proportions. There were rich rulers. There were those who were given 10 talents, 5 talents and 1 talent.
- The accountability was relative. To whom much is given, much will be required. The more you get, the more accountable you become.

There are four goals for money:

Goal #1- To meet the basic needs of life, food, clothing and shelter.

Goal #2- To give away all you can. The more you don't spend on other things, the more you have to give away.

Goal #3- It is a test for Christians. It is a way that God tests your obedience, your allegiance and your love. Paul tells us that God often tested him as he said that he learned to be content in whatever financial condition he was in. He learned how to really enjoy being wealthy and how to really enjoy having nothing.

Goal #4- It is to show Christ to the world as He meets your needs with His provisions. The less you have, the more need you have. The more you give away, the less you have. The less you have the more need you have. The more need you have, the more God's grace can supply those needs. The more God's grace can supply those needs, the more beautiful your testimony.

Goal #5- Let's go back to your accountability regarding how you spend, how you give, and how you save and learn how it affects others. The widow's mite was one of the most beautiful testimonies in all of Scripture. When we waste our money, we give the weaker brother opportunity for jealousy, to lower his own standards of giving and to develop weak spending habits.

Question 9- How do your doctrines and spiritual experiences affect your weaker brothers?

Affect #1- Your doctrinal positions relative to your weaker brothers ought to always be founded upon what you have in common. What did Paul preach? What did Peter preach? They preached that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, that He died for our sins, and that He rose again on the third day. What do you have in common? What is your spiritual motivation? It is the love of Christ. What does the heart of God care about? He cares

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about harmony in the body. Jesus praying to the Father said, “Oh that they might be one as You and I are one.” Remember that the other person’s ability to understand spiritual truths may not be the same as yours. You can stumble your weaker brother by straining at gnats doctrinally in areas that they are not ready to understand. Regarding spiritual experiences, just remember this. If your experience divides the body, it may either not be valid, or you may not be walking in love as you share it.

Affect #2- To share spiritual experiences wrongly may cause a weaker Christian to covet, to be offended, or to be confused.

Affect #3- Spiritual pride that results from spiritual experience may require tribulation or a thorn to keep it in perspective. In II Corinthians 12 Paul says, (paraphrased), “I have had so many revelations from God. It was a neat, spiritual experience. God knew that I couldn’t handle it, so He brought tribulation into my life to bring me back down to earth, and to keep my eyes on Him.

This brings us to two major questions concerning this aspect of our lesson:

1- What is the difference between legalism and a disciplined, Spirit-filled life?

2- How does a Christian make the most of his spiritual life?

1- Difference Between Legalism and Disciplined, Spirit-filled Life

From the last lesson, I’m sure some of you thought the principles taught may have been legalistic. Legalism is a popular word among evangelical Christians today to justify something you don’t want to do. Some may ask, “If I give up drinking or R-rated movies, or the like for someone else’s sake, am I losing my freedom and coming back under the law?” I want to give you some definitions.

Legalism - bondage to the system. It is trusting in the means rather than seeking the end. It is dependence on effort or accomplishment to earn the favor of God.

Discipline - the mark of a disciple. It is the limits man places on himself, because he is free in Christ to do so.

Freedom - the God-given opportunity to do the will of God by choice.

Let me illustrate with a quick story. Let’s assume that the gates of one of the major prisons has just been opened. Two

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prisoners who had been involved in severe crimes and had been in prison for five years walked out free. They were not on probation or parole, they were free. Let's follow these two lives quickly to see if we can see a parallel of spiritual freedom.

The first man had an ungrateful spirit regarding his freedom. He didn't think he should have ever been in prison in the first place. He began to run again with the wrong crowds and the wrong friends. He felt that nobody now could tell him what to do because he was free. He began to drink and be involved with other things that would defile his body. Nobody could stop him now, he thought, because he was free. Finally, he needed things he didn't have money for. He began to steal and nobody could stop him because he was free. There was no discipline in his life. The result? He was arrested. His freedom brought him back into bondage. He had to be regulated by the law, because he could not regulate his freedom with discipline, so he never really was free.

The second man who was released from prison honored his freedom with a grateful spirit. He said, "I don't really deserve to be free, but I'm going to be grateful for my freedom." He got a job to support his family. It meant discipline, but now he was free to do that. He sought forgiveness of those he offended and wounded. It meant humility, but now he was free to do that. He began to serve others. It meant sacrifice, but now he was free to do that. He became free by discipline. The result was that his freedom restricted itself through discipline and ended up with greater freedom than ever. He was really free. The Scripture says,

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.
(John 8:36 NKJV)

Jesus was the freest person who ever lived. He was free always to do those things that pleased the Father. He was free to wash His disciple's feet. He was free to spend time in the Father's presence. He was free to avoid anything that defiled Him. He was free to do anything that would not offend His disciples.

Do you want to increase your freedom? If eating meat, drinking, going to certain movies, gluttony, wasting money or any of these kinds of things causes your brother to stumble you should not do them. You are not in bondage to those things, you are free in the spirit to give them up. Because you are free, you have a choice. You can choose to forego your own pleasure for God's treasures.

2- How a Christian Makes the Most of His Spiritual Life

The answer is very simple. Mark 8:34-36 tells you to give it away. That is the whole principle behind this lesson, you give your life away. You give away your rights, your money, your ambitions and your pride and you gain Jesus. The whole thrust is to stop clutching and thinking you want to do this and that because it is your right. Give yourself to God and through Him you give your rights to others. "As much as you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me."

III- Stronger Christian's Responsibility

This part is the most familiar to the most of you. The title of this portion of the lesson is Building a Bridge of Reconciliation. We are going to deal with three aspects:

- 1- The Concept
- 2- The Calling
- 3- The Challenge

We begin in Matthew 5,

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(Matthew 5:23,24 NKJV)

1- The Concept

This is very, very simple. God looks down at the person who you have offended and He says, "I died for him. He is offended by you. Therefore, that constitutes a sin against Me." Then you come to worship and God says, "You have come to worship Me, but stop. First, go and remove the offense and be reconciled to him and then come back and worship me." These are the two basic, simple underlying principles of this passage.

If we take the whole passage at large, in verse 20 we hear Jesus say (paraphrased), "Unless your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you are in big trouble." The problem was that the scribes and Pharisees were willing to keep the externals of the law, but their hearts were black and wicked. So the obvious commandment was found in verse 20, the absence of hatred was found in verses 21-22. Jesus said, (paraphrased), "Now the real problem is not that you go out and actually murder

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somebody, the question is, do you want to? Do you have hatred in your heart?"

In verses 23-24 Jesus goes one step beyond the attitude of the heart when He says that an activity of love that is positive has to issue forth from the attitude of the heart. It is not that you just don't hate your brother, you go to him in an expression of love and make sure that everything is right between you and him. The passage in detail will be dealt with in seven parts:

- 1- The Place - The Altar
- 2- The Person - You
- 3- The Problem - Any Offense
- 4- The Urgency - Leave Your Gift
- 5- The Activity - Go
- 6- The Objective - Be Reconciled
- 7- The Blessing - Come and Offer Your Gift

1- The Place- The Altar

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar,

(Matthew 5:23 NKJV)

What altar is being discussed here? Jesus was speaking in an Old Testament context. That altar represents a place of sacrifice. There were two basic kinds of sacrifices. The first was a sacrifice of propitiation. This involves finding forgiveness, being restored and being brought back into the fellowship of God. The second was the eucharistic or the sacrifice of thanksgiving. So the two sacrifices were for different reasons. One was to restore a right relationship with Him, and the second was to praise Him for His blessings. It was an offering.

Let's suppose you are in your prayer chamber. You are seeking to exercise I John 1:9. You come before the Lord and say, "Lord, I'm so sorry. My attitude was so rotten yesterday when that lady bumped me in the parking lot. Instead of being concerned about her, I was angry because she was in the wrong. I confess my sin before You." You may feel so good and righteous. About that time, the Lord focuses an image in your mind. You remember a car you backed into in the church parking lot one time. You knew it wasn't a big dent. You knew whose car it was, but you were in a big hurry. You just put your car in gear and went on your way. That was two years ago, and you had forgotten about it. You think everybody else forgot about it, too. Then, one day as

you ask God's forgiveness about an attitude offense, this picture comes into your mind, and you keep punching the erase button. You think, "Go away, go away." It is a strange picture, because it has come up 20 or 30 times as you have prayed in the last year. This passage says that when you come to the altar and God brings an offense against another person to your mind, don't put it away. Don't put it aside.

Next, this passage says that you may be rejoicing in worship. You may be praising God. Maybe He has just met your financial need and you are just praising Him and thanking Him for it. While you are praising Him, a little image comes to your mind. There is somebody you have cheated out of \$10.00 a long, long time ago. Why would that come to your mind at a time like this? You don't even know where that friend is now. It was only \$10.00. His dad was independently wealthy, and he didn't need that money anyway. You needed it worse than he did. You can rationalize on and on. You think it really shouldn't be bothering you.

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
(stop what you are doing.) (Matthew 5:23 NKJV)

Another aspect is when you go to partake of the Lord's supper and remember that your brother has an offense against you. God may call your attention to these things in one of two ways. He may call attention through the Word. You may be reading the Word in your time alone with God, "Him that stole, steal no more!" You underline that and agree with an "Amen!" You think, "Thieves should be put in jail." Then God gradually brings to your mind an offense mentioned before. Or, God may call an offense to you through your conscience alone. God's radar may be scanning, and little storm clouds are forming. What do you do? You don't get busy and do more for God. You don't sacrifice more. You don't worship more. To obey is better than sacrifice. Jesus said, "Stop and leave your gift." You need to stop what you are doing.

2- The Person - You

When you bring your gift to the altar and remember that your brother has "something against you," you are the offender. It makes no mention whether the offense is justified or not. What if it is not? What if you are the one who by rights ought to be offended in that relationship?

God is the initiator of reconciliation. You may be someone who

has never been reconciled to God. You are still living apart from God, because you have never personally invited Him to be your Savior. God, through Christ, has come to you. You are the sinner. You are the one who has offended Him. God came first to each of us. God is the reconciler. He is the initiator of reconciliation. God in us can do nothing less. He came to us though we had offended Him. The world says, "You have hurt me, so I will hurt you. I hurt you, but you deserve it." The Christian says, "You hurt me, I deserve it. I hurt you, please forgive me." That is the difference.

You may ask, "What if I have 'something' against them? What if that person has an offense against me, but I have grounds against them?" The Scripture is very clear. First of all, what if a person has wronged you? We need to look at Matthew 18:35. The parable Jesus gave illustrated this. He told the crowd that God will be angry if from their hearts they did not forgive every one of their brothers his trespasses. You may say, "But you don't understand. What if he has really wronged me?" You can then turn to Luke 23:34. As Jesus hung on the cross He said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." You may then ask, "What if they wrong me more than once?" You can then turn to Matthew 18:21. Peter said, "How often, Lord, do I have to forgive my brother? Even seven times?" Jesus answered, "No, let's try to multiply that. Seventy times seven. Infinity. Eternity." So The Principle is then, notice the person. You are to assume the role of the offender.

3- The Problem - Any Offense

...and there remember that your brother has something
(ought) against you, (Matthew 5:23 NKJV)

I looked up the word "ought" in several books, and I came up with the same answer. It means "anything at all, anything itty bitty, or anything great big." It may be an attitude, an act or appearance. It may be a major offense of moral impurity where you may have defiled yourself with another and never made it right. It may have been a minor offense of rudeness or insensitivity. Often a Christian's offense is the result of the tongue. James says it is like a lethal weapon, firing arrows everywhere it goes. But it doesn't matter how big or how small the offense is, if your brother is offended, that is enough. It means anything of any magnitude. How many people are spiritually weak, emotionally unstable, and physically sick because of unreconciled conflict in their lives with other people?

4- The Urgency - Leave Your Gift

The literal translation says that “if you come to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, drop your gift like a hot potato.” We need to go straight to him. It means to send forth and leave alone. One translation says, “Drop your gift in front of the altar. Don’t waste any time. Do not expect to please the heart of God until you have been reconciled with man, any man who has anything against you.” You don’t wait for a convenient time. You don’t say, “Lord, I’m going to put this on my list of things to do next month.” You don’t wait for a supernatural sign from heaven that says, “Lord, let me know if I’m supposed to ask forgiveness from that person who I did that to.”

The Spirit, through the Word, is the most supernatural sign God can give you. Do you know what you are supposed to say? “Excuse me, Lord, I have an errand to run. I’ll be right back.” Then go do it.

5- The Activity - Go

What does it say? Go. You find the offended brother. You seek him out. You find him in person. You may find him by phone. You may find him by letter. Whatever is most appropriate, you go and find him. You may only have to walk across the room. You may only have to turn your head this morning and grab the hand of your spouse or the friend sitting next to you. You may have to search the whole city. You may have to go across the nation. You may have to look around the world.

What Jesus is saying is that we need to be willing to search as hard for someone we have offended as we would a relative who is about to die and is leaving us a big inheritance. You need to be as willing to search for someone you have offended as someone who owes you a million dollars and is in hiding. You go until you find that person.

6- The Objective - Be Reconciled

This is the point I want to be sure to make clear. The Objective is not to clear your conscience. You may say, “I don’t understand that. I’ve always thought that you find someone you have offended and asked forgiveness in order to clear your conscience.” Not according to this passage. The goal is not to clear your conscience. The goal is to be reconciled with your brother. God will clear your conscience. This is the biggest problem.

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The word that is used in this passage for “reconcile” is only used in this one place in the entire Bible. It means to change one’s feelings toward another so that He changes his towards you. It is to put away by means of reconciliation. The biggest problem with this issue is that we will come home from a seminar where we have learned about having a clear conscience, or we leave a Sunday School class where a clear conscience has been discussed, and we decide to clear ours. We pick up the phone and ask forgiveness from someone we have offended. We may say, “Joe, I’ve never really liked you. I’ve told at least 35 people you are a phony. Will you forgive me?” You hang up the phone, and you are proud of yourself and think your conscience is clear. What you have really done is dumped something you shouldn’t have on another person. The goal is not to clear your conscience, the goal is to be reconciled with your brother.

Let’s stop here and try to analyze very simply what some of the offenses might be. I’m going to ask you to close your eyes and ask the Spirit of God to use this time to bring to your remembrance any offense that has not been made right with someone else.

Is there a wall of bitterness or a seed of bitterness between you and any of your children? It may be a child who has moved away from home. Is there a seed of bitterness that has not yet been reconciled? You may need to be the initiator to make it right.

Maybe there is a husband who has never really made things right with his wife over an offense he committed. Maybe he has never really loved her as Christ loved the church. Maybe he has never really humbled himself and gone to her to apologize and ask forgiveness.

Maybe there is a wife whose prayers have been hindered, because she has never really submitted herself to the authority of her husband. Maybe she has never really been able to go to her husband and humble herself to say, “I’ve not been the kind of wife I should. My attitudes have been wrong in these areas. Will you please forgive me?”

Maybe there is a situation within your family circles. You may need to go to your in-laws or your brother or your sister. You may need to go to an ex-husband or ex-wife. You may need to go to a set of grandparents. There may be someone within that family circle that when you begin to pray his name comes up, and there is a tense feeling of enmity between you and him.

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There may be past relationships that you need to make right. There may be someone you had a relationship with in school. There may be someone who would never become a Christian if they knew you were one. There may be someone to whom you have never gone back to ask forgiveness for a wrong attitude, or for taking advantage of them.

You may have left a church in rebellion and never made things right with the leadership of that church. There may be people in that church who you harmed and hurt by backbiting or needless gossip.

There may be a situation in your neighborhood that you need to pay attention to. There may be someone in your neighborhood who you have wronged.

There may be a former employer that you need to go back to because of the way you left that employment. You may have said destructive things about that person since you have left.

In other words, is there someone in the kingdom or someone who is not in the kingdom or not in the church, or not growing because of you or because of me? That is the question we have to ask ourselves as we bring our gifts to the altar. If God brings names or faces to your remembrance at a time like this, don't chalk it up to some kind of emotional trauma. Just understand that when you bring your gift to the altar and there you remember something that God brings to your mind, do something about it. Be reconciled.

How do we do this? I am going to give principles to follow:

Principle 1- Don't transfer the offense, remove it. The goal is not to make the other person feel guilty. How many times do people seeking to clear their conscience call somebody and so word their asking for forgiveness that they dump the whole load of guilt on the other guy? It makes him think, "Good grief, it was all my fault." That is not your purpose. Your purpose is not to transfer guilt, it is to reconcile yourself to your brother.

Principle 2- Don't say, "If I offended you," and leave yourself a loophole. Don't ask forgiveness for just the act, ask forgiveness for the attitude that was behind the act. Don't go to get something, go to give something. How many times have people remembered an offense and gone to ask forgiveness of a brother because they needed their support or wanted to lessen the pressure in their

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own lives? How many wives have asked forgiveness from their husband because they want to release the pressure of the tension that is going on in the house, rather than because they really wanted reconciliation before God?

Principle 3- Don't go to someone in order to clear your conscience. That is a by-product of asking forgiveness. Go to be reconciled.

Principle 4- Don't go to resurrect the problem, go to resolve the problem. So many people go to ask forgiveness, then end up in an argument about what the matter was all about in the first place.

Principle 5- Don't ever go to ask forgiveness with a haughty spirit. This is the key to it all. Don't go as a spiritual giant returning victorious from a war. Don't say, "I've just been to a conference," or "I've just been to a Sunday School class where I have learned about reconciliation and asking forgiveness. I'm going to ride my white horse and grab you by your arm and ask for forgiveness, then gallop off into the sunset with a silver glow around my head." This is not the spirit we should have. We should go with a humble spirit as an offender seeking mercy.

What do you do after you have asked forgiveness, whether they accept it or not? We need to look further in Matthew 5.

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Matthew 5:44 NKJV)

There are four things you need to do for those who are at enmity with you. Enemies may be those you have offended or those who have offended you. The passage says they may curse you, hate you, use you or persecute you.

1- You love them unreservedly. What you have is theirs. You may think, "All I thought I had to do was ask forgiveness. Do I still have to love them?"

2- Bless them unequivocally. You want God's best for them. You plead with God to give them His best.

3- You do good unselfishly with no thought of reward.

4- Pray unceasingly that God will meet their needs, and if necessary at your expense.

What do we do for ourselves? We need to search out the basic

heart attitude that was behind it all.

7- The Blessing - Come and Offer Your Gift

Jesus said, "Once you have sought forgiveness and been reconciled, then come to offer your gift." What freedom you will have before God, maybe the first time in years, to come into the presence of a holy God, void of any offense toward man. We then have the privilege to leave the presence of that holy God clean and whole. What power void of offense toward God we will have.

Assignment for the Week

1- Memorize Matthew 5:23,24.

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

2- Meditate on that verse everyday for a week. Analyze it like we did in this lesson. Visualize it and picture what it really means in your life. Personalize it to make it real to you.

3- Ask yourself this question, Can you look every person in the eye and know that not one of them can point a finger at you and say, "You offended me and never made it right."?

4- Whatever it takes, go. Don't go to clear your conscience, but to be reconciled to your brother. God will clear your conscience.

This is the gospel. It is a gospel of reconciliation. Man is reconciled to God because God, the innocent party, took the initiative and came to man with love and gave. All He asks of us is that we, the not-so-innocent party, build bridges of love back into the hearts of those we have offended. We do this so that when we bring our gifts to the altar and there remember that anyone has anything against us, we stop and leave our gift. We go and reconcile ourselves to our brother. Then, we come back and with joy offer our gift. That is the gift God wants. It is a clear conscience issuing forth from a pure heart.

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