

Sermon on the Mount: Integrity, Retaliation, Love

Mathew 5:33-48; First presented 6/28/16

v.33-37 – Taking a vow is part of the Jewish culture: Lev. 19:12; Deut. 23:21. In these passages, one was not forbidden to swear or make an oath, one was forbidden to swear falsely or make an oath in the Lord's name and not do it. To FORSWEAR is to swear falsely, perjure yourself. Exodus 20:16 says thou shalt not bear false witness (perjure yourself) against thy neighbor. To swear by the Lord and not do it or keep it was greatly frowned upon, but swearing by the Lord was not uncommon: II Samuel 12:5; 14:11 – David using "as the Lord liveth" or swearing by someone's life, II Kings 2:2 – Elisha using both "as the Lord liveth" and "as your soul liveth". The point Jesus was making was that the truthful person shouldn't have to swear. Just let your yes be yes and your no be no. Integrity. Stand behind your word. (Swearing to tell the truth in court is not a sin, but in your regular Christian life you shouldn't have to swear on anything)

v.38-42 – The idea of justice for wrongs was introduced in Exodus 21:12-36; Lev. 20:20, 21; Deut. 19:21. Before then retribution was not equal to the offence: If you killed my cow, I killed you; If you stole from me, I killed you. There had to be a standard for retribution, justice. The law of the tooth (lex talionis) was a guideline for the civil authorities, and not to be used wrongly for personal revenge. It was possible that many applied this wrongly for personal revenge (Moody Bible Commentary) Jesus forbade his disciples. Not only should they not retaliate, they should be willing to surrender what was theirs to avoid taking revenge: turn the other cheek, let him have your coat, go with him two miles, give and lend to those who ask. Take a look at I Corinthians 6:1-7; Romans 12:17-21;

v. 43-48 – Directly tied to foregoing revenge is the idea of loving your enemies. We are to love everyone, even our enemies. Those that not only wish us harm, but also do us harm. We are to love them, pray for them, do good things for them. Romans says we should even meet their needs. We do this to love more the way God loves His creation, more the way God loves us. He blesses with sunshine, and rain, the good and the bad, the just and the unjust. The world loves those who love them, who does nice things for them. If we love in that way, how are we different from the world? We are different from the world because the Spirit of the Lord lives in us. We should seek God to love by His Spirit the way God loves. Thus we can be perfect (in love) as our Father is perfect (in love). We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us (Phil.4:13) We can love those that we think we cannot love. By the power of the Holy Ghost.

Lord, help me to do those things that you require of me, those things that in my flesh are too difficult for me. I believe that you hear my prayer and are changing my heart so that I am able to be merciful and show love in the way that you want me to. Thank you, Lord, for changing me. Thank you for filling my heart with the love of the Lord and enabling me to love others as you loved me, because I once was your enemy, yet you gave your life for me. Thank you, Lord. Amen.