



Matthew 5:33-48

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN WORDS & ACTIONS

The disciple's lifestyle is to be different from other people's in that it draws its inspiration not from the norms of society but from the character of God. Even the God-given law had been accommodated to a practical ethical code with which Jewish society had come to feel comfortable, but Jesus is demanding a different approach, not via laws read as simply rules of conduct but rather by looking behind those laws to the mind and character of God himself. Whereas any definable set of rules could, in principle, be fully kept, the demand of the kingdom of heaven has no such limit—or rather its limit is perfection, the perfection of God himself. —R. T. France

The Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount:

- To characterize the true nature of a kingdom citizen.
- To confront people with the perfect righteousness of God.
- To call people to a life submitted to Jesus, the King.

Matthew 5:33-48 contains some of the best known phrases of the Sermon on the Mount—*turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, loving your enemies*. Yet it is also one of the most misunderstood and misapplied sections of Jesus' sermon. As we study this passage, it is important to remember three things:

1. Jesus is correcting the scribes' misunderstanding of the Law.
2. Jesus is confronting individuals not governments.
3. Jesus is communicating in highly illustrative language.

THE SCRIBES' INTERPRETATION—OATHS (5:33)

The scribes taught that oaths made in the Lord's name had to be performed (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23) but that other oaths were not binding (cf. Matt. 23:16-22). Thus, oaths became a _____.

THE KING'S DECLARATION (5:34-36)

Do not speak in oaths at all!

THE DISCIPLES' APPLICATION (5:37)

Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no." (cf. James 5:12).

Speak _____ (cf. Ps. 15:2; Jn. 8:44; Eph. 4:25).

Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which He is not involved... God hears not only the words spoken in His name; He hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into the transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God. —William Barclay

The life of an honest man is his oath. —Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

When I utter the formula "I swear by God"...I am saying that people are expecting me to lie from the start. And just because they are counting on my lying I have to bring up these big guns of oaths and words of honor.

—Helmut Thielicke (1908-86)

When a man says to me, "I'd swear on a stack of Bibles a mile high," that is the fellow I do not believe because I think the lie he's telling me is a mile high.

—J. Vernon McGee

This passage does not address oaths in court or oaths in general but rather using oaths to deceive (cf. Matt. 26:63-64; Heb. 6:17).

THE SCRIBES' INTERPRETATION—RETRALIATION (5:38)

The scribes took the principle of *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation) used in legal settings (cf. Ex. 21:23-25; Lev. 24:19-20; Deut. 19:21) and applied it to _____.

THE KING'S DECLARATION (5:39a)

But I say to you, do not resist an evil person (cf. Proverbs 20:22).

THE DISCIPLES' APPLICATION (5:39b-42)

- **Insults.** Accept them _____ (1 Peter 2:23; 3:9).
- **Disputes.** Let things go _____ (1 Cor. 6:1-8).
- **Demands.** Serve others _____ (John 13:1-20).
- **Requests.** Give to others _____ (Prov. 11:25).

THE SCRIBES' INTERPRETATION—LOVE (5:43)

The scribes had taken the great command to *love your neighbor as yourself* (Lev. 19:18) and had reduced it down to loving the people that you liked and hating the ones that you did not like.

THE KING'S DECLARATION (5:44)

But I say to you
love your enemies
[bless those who curse you]
[do good to those who hate you]
pray for those who [spitefully use you and] persecute you.
(Luke 6:27-28; cf. Prov. 25:21-22; Rom. 12:19-21)

THE DISCIPLES' APPLICATION (5:45-48)

- *Agape* love reflects the heart of _____ (1 John 4:7-8).
- *Agape* love responds with a heart for _____.
- *Agape* love raises the bar to righteous _____.

Resist. Greek, *anthistemi*, "to set one's self against; to arrange in battle against" (Wayne Barber).

We are to set aside our petty ways of getting even—the kind of living that punishes others by returning their own sins to them.

—Kent Hughes

The heart's fierce effort to protect itself from every slight, to shield its touchy honor from the bad opinion of others, will never let the mind have rest. Continue this fight through the years and the burden will become intolerable. Yet the sons of earth are carrying this burden continually, challenging every word spoken against them, cringing under every criticism, smarting under every fancied slight, tossing sleepless if another is preferred before them.

—A. W. Tozer

When struck on the cheek, the instant impulse is to strike back on the cheek of the smiter. There should be a second blow. But the Master says if there be a second blow, let it fall on your other cheek. Instead of inflicting it, suffer it.

—F. B. Meyer

Roman law gave a Roman soldier the right to conscript civilians to carry their burdens for one mile... To add insult to injury, those carrying the soldier's equipment or weapons were the very ones the Romans were oppressing!

—Marvin Vincent

Love is the outgoing of the entire nature in self-sacrificing service.

—W.H. Griffith Thomas

You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies.

—Corrie ten Boom