

# THE REAL MEANING OF SWEARING, SUFFERING AND LOVING

Date 6/12/11 WBCFWB

Text Matt. 5:33-48

Introduction: The setting (Jesus with His disciples – teaching them concerning the law).

- He is sharing the Real meaning of “Swearing / Suffering and Loving” for His followers.
- Jesus is not only teaching by instruction but by example of life as they follow Him.
- We sometime know what the Bible says, but putting it into practice comes from following Jesus by yielding to the Holy Spirit in obedience.
- Let’s look at the Real Meaning of (Swearing, Suffering and Loving).

## I. The Real Meaning of Oaths and Swearing, (5:33-37)

- Christ said, "Swear not at all" (5:34).
- He was enlarging the law governing oaths to include all swearing and profanity (5:17; James 5:12).
- All conversation should be straight-factual, *not injected with oaths or profanity* (v.34, 37).
- Man is to be righteous- His word - character are to be his guarantee, only oath needed.

### A. This law was based on the third commandment. (v.33)

(Ex. 20:7) Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

- The law had been interpreted to say, "Do not make false vows"; "Do not swear falsely"; "Do not swear to a lie." - **But the law was much too narrow.**
- **Man had interpreted it to his own liking which allowed him to swear and curse as much as he wished.**
- **Making a false vow to God. How many vows - been made to God and never kept!**
- **Making a false vow to another person, promising something and not doing it.**
- **Using God's name in vain. So many use God's name as a slang or curse word.**
- This person will stand especially guilty before God (Exodus 20:7).

### Scripture says that it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay (Eccles. 5:4-5).

- **The person is in debt to fulfill his vow or promise.**
  1. A vow to God puts the man in debt to God. To break a vow is an act of lying to God (Acts 5:4).
  2. A vow puts the man in debt to man. To break his vow is an act of injustice to man. **(Numbers 30:2)** "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth".  
**(Eccles. 5:4)** "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed".

### B. The real meaning of the law is this: swear not *at all*; curse not *at all*. (v.34-36)

#### Do not swear or curse by anything.

1. Swear not, because all things are sacred. - Heaven is God's throne: the place where His glory is manifested (Isaiah 66:1).

2. Swear not, because all power belongs to God. - No man has any power to do anything!

- Cursing has no mask; it cannot be hidden. *It is spoken and heard.*
- The problem is that it is often acceptable conversation, and *cursing is a problem*, for it **reveals several things**: (a problem with self-image - a thoughtless mind - an inadequate vocabulary – hardness or enmity toward God - a foolish regard for judgment and eternity).

C. There is ***only one*** ideal oath and guarantee for man: **his word. (v.37)**

- His word should arise from his character- should be the only oath- guarantee he needs.
- He should not say more than, **"Yes, I will...." or "No, I will not."**
- His **life should be so honest and straight** that *no one would ever question his word.*  
**(Matthew 5:13)** "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men".

## **II. The Real Meaning of the Law Governing Injury or Suffering, (38-42)**

Christ says that the Christian is not to render evil for evil; he is not to bear a grudge or seek revenge. **He must go beyond and forgive.**

Christians have the right to avoid and resist evil for security's sake (Rom. 12:18 **"peaceably"**).

A. This law is often thought to be justification for retaliation according to; (v.38)

(Ex. 21:24) Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot", misused & abused.

- **God's purpose for the law was to show mercy and to limit vengeance.**
- **In ancient times men killed for the most minor of offenses.**

**For example**, if a person was injured accidentally, a whole family or village was subject to be killed in retaliation.

- Thus, this law was the beginning of mercy in a merciless society.
- It limited retaliation to an equivalent injury.

B. Christ says this: ***the law really means that a person is not to retaliate.*** (v.39)

**We must understand what Christ is saying. (two Things)**

1. **Christ is not saying "resist not evil"—ever.** *Christ Himself resisted evil.*

- 1) He drove out the money exchangers from the temple (Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15),
- 2) He resisted the punishment of the High Priest (John 18:22-23).
- 3) Paul, the apostle, also resisted evil (Acts 16:35; Acts 22:25; Acts 23:3; Acts 25:9-10).

**The point is this:** Jesus and Paul followed the new law, "resist not evil."

- They observed the spirit of the new law, but ***they were not enslaved by it.***
- There are times when evil should be resisted. (Romans 12:18)

2. **Christ is saying "resist not evil," that is, do not seek evil for evil; do not bear a grudge or resent those who have mistreated you.**

- *Do not seek revenge or look for a chance to retaliate.*
- But forgive, go out of your way to help those who do evil against you.

**Revenge consumes. It can eat up a person's inner being.**

- 1) It can consume a person's mind—be the *focus of all his thoughts*.
- 2) It can consume a person's emotions—cause all kinds of emotional problems.  
(Romans 12:17) "Recompense to no man evil for evil."

**C. The ideal behavior. (39-41)**

Christ shared **three very practical illustrations**, teaching the Christian **how to treat those who do him wrong**.

**1. Accept physical injury. Turning the other cheek is difficult.**

- It means a person does not challenge, resent, avenge, retaliate, or enter a legal action against an attacker; but **he prepares for another slap and bears it patiently**.
- **He lets it pass and accepts it. He forgives and trusts the matter to God.**
- Many a person has his cheek slapped. A "**slap in the face**" can come by insult, slight, criticism, rumor, abuse, threat, or physical attack (2 Cor. 11:20).  
(Luke 6:29) "And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also".

**2. Accept property injury.** The coat referred to was the **tunic, the inner garment**.

**William Barclay** says that Jewish law allowed a man's tunic to be given as a pledge, but the cloak could never be taken. The reason was simply that a man would have a number of tunics (under clothing), but he might have only one cloak (*The Gospel of Matthew*).

- A Christian is not to be consumed with fighting over property and disputing rights.
- Believer forgets self and property and rights, he lives for God- for the salvation of others.

**When does a person fight for his rights?**

- **the damage being done to himself;**
- **the damage being done to his family;**

**3. Accept any forced burden.** In ancient times the citizens of a conquered country could be enlisted into **forced service** by the conquerors in any way deemed necessary.

- A citizen could be compelled to carry water, supplies, anything.
- Christ is saying that if a believer is forced to go a mile, he should go twice as far.
- Again, **rights—even the rights of liberty**—are not the primary concern of the believer.
- The believer's primary concern is people and their burdens—reaching and relieving their burdens in obedience to God.

**Going a second mile is difficult.**

- Means not become bitter and resentful, grumbling, complaining and criticizing.
- It means a person forgives and serves and reaching out to the offender.
- Such action will more likely reach the offender for the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Definite commands governing morality and injustice in the Bible. (v.39; — Rom.12:18.)

**D. The great Christian ethic is to give.**

- Christians are to help those who have need, and to readily help.
- **Christ allows no excuse:** when someone asks, Christians give and does not turn away.
- However, the **Bible does not say to give without discretion**. "A good man showeth favor, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion" (Psalm 112:5).

**(Acts 20:35)** "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive".

**(Proverbs 25:21)** "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink".

### III. The Real Meaning of Human Relationships or Loving – (5:43-48)

- No subject is more important than the subject of human relationships.
- God is creating a family of believers who are to live together eternally.
- Therefore, He wants that family to live together as a family, loving each other and loving their neighbors as they should.
- **God's family must never allow hate to enter their hearts.**

#### A. The law said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:18) **Israel made two mistakes in interpreting this law.**

1. They said "**neighbor**" meant only the people of their **own community, religion, and nation.**
  - They did **not include anyone else.**
2. They **inferred** they were to **hate their enemies.**
  - God said, "**Love thy neighbor**"; **therefore, they reasoned** - "**Hate thine enemy.**"
  - Human reason leads a person to think that he should oppose and hate his enemy.
  - **But such is from depraved human reason. It is the natural reason of man at work.**

#### **Many fall into the same mistake as Israel.**

- They interpret "neighbors" to be only their friends and those who live close by.
- They never think of enemies nor of the world as a whole as their neighbors.

#### B. The real meaning of the law "to love" involves **four very practical acts** (v.44)

1. **Love (agapate) your enemies. Believers are to love all men, even enemies.**
2. **Bless those who curse you. "To bless"** means that a person has to speak.
  - Christ is saying to speak softly to the curser - **Use kind, friendly words.** (**Proverbs 15:1**) "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger".
  - When face to face, be courteous; when behind his back, commend his strengths.
  - **A fact that is often forgotten is this: if we react with sharp, harsh words, it will only stir up more anger and hate in the curser.** (**1 Peter 3:9**) "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing".
3. **Do good to those who hate you. "Doing good" goes beyond words.**
  - It does things for the person who hates - **reaches out** to him through his family or friends, employment or business.
  - It searches for ways to do good to him, realizing that he needs to be reached for God.
4. **Pray for those who persecute you.**
  - **Three things in particular need to be prayed about:**
    - (a) for God to forgive the persecutor (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60),
    - (b) for peace between one's self and the persecutor, and
    - (c) for the persecutor's salvation or correction.

- **Prayer for the persecutor will greatly benefit the believer.**
- It will keep the believer from becoming bitter, hostile, or reactionary.

**(Luke 23:34)** "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots".

**(Acts 7:60)** "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep".

### C. The incentive to love everyone as a true neighbor **is threefold.** (45-47)

#### 1. **Love makes a person a child of God.**

- Love is unmistakable proof that a **person truly loves and truly knows God.**

#### 2. **Love makes a person like God. God loves His enemies.**

- The Christian is to be just like God: he is to love his enemies.
- **In loving his enemies, the Christian becomes more and more like God.**

#### 3. **Love makes a person distinctive from other men.**

- A believer must do more than others. He must go beyond what others do.
- Everyone loves his friends, so **doing more and going beyond means that the believer will love his enemies.**

### D. The charge is "**Be ye therefore perfect.**" (v.48)

**Perfect** (*teleios*): The idea is perfection of purpose.

- It does not mean perfection of character, that is, being without sin.
- Fitness, maturity for task and purpose. Full development, maturity of godliness.

### The Bible reveals three stages of perfection.

#### 1. **Saving perfection.**

- Christ's death - guaranteed forever - perfection or redemption of those set apart for God.  
**(Heb. 10:14)** "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified".

#### 2. **Progressive or maturing perfection.**

- God reveals anything that is contrary to His purpose, and **the believer is expected to clean it up** (Phil. 3:13-15).
- As a member of the church, the believer is experiencing "**the perfecting of the saints.**"
- **(Ephes. 4:11-12)** "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ".

#### 3. **Redemptive or resurrected perfection.**

- The believer's purpose and aim is to "**attain unto the resurrection of the dead...[to be] perfect**"  
**(Phil. 3:10-12)** "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus".

**The Lord's point is this: the mature believer *will do good and show kindness to all men, both good and bad men.***

**He is mature in heart when he shows love to his enemies as well as to his friends.**

**Conclusion;**

- If a person will work to mature in this challenge, he will be marching ever forward to be like his "Father who is in heaven" (Phil. 3:12-16).
- **No man will ever gain perfection, particularly in the area of human relationships.**
- **He is to walk as he has learned to walk—more and more like Christ.**

**(Hebrews 6:1)** "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God".

**(Hebrews 13:21)** "[God] make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever".

**(1 Peter 5:10)** "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you".

**Invitation:**

- 1. What Your words – vows – language – let it please God in every word.**
- 2. If you suffer, make sure it is for doing the right thing – according to God's Word.**
- 3. Love beyond just those that love you – love your enemies – the way that God love.**
- 4. Have You received God forgiveness and love through His Son Jesus Christ?**