

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

## MATTHEW 5:33-45

### LESSON: CHRIST'S NEW COMMANDS —January 20, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION:

Jesus took six important Old Testament laws and interpreted them for His people in the light of the new life He came to give. He made a fundamental change without altering God's standards: He dealt with the attitudes and intents of the heart and not simply with the external action. The Pharisees said that righteousness consisted of performing certain actions, but Jesus said it centered in the attitudes of the heart. Anger is murder in the heart; lust is adultery in the heart. The person who says that he "lives by the Sermon on the Mount" may not realize that the Sermon on the Mount is more difficult to keep than the original Ten Commandments!

- **First illustration: Murder (5:21-26)**
- **Second illustration: Adultery contrasted to lust (5:27-30)**

#### **Third illustration: Divorce as contrasted to marriage**

**5:31-32** Jesus taught that divorce is not the solution to marriage problems. A couple should stay together if at all possible. He voided the conception, that some had, that if the wife displeased the husband, he could divorce her. Jesus allowed divorce for immorality. But, proper divorce allowed remarriage. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, added that desertion by an unbelieving spouse allowed remarriage.

#### **LESSON: I. A WARNING AGAINST OATHS MATTHEW 5:33-37**

#### **Fourth illustration: A warning to Oath-taking as opposed to speaking the truth**

**5:33** Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:—In Matthew's writing this warning is something that they had heard because it had been said in olden times; in the law of Moses. Jesus says thou shalt not disown or disavow; break your vows to God, but shall fulfill them all; perform their oaths unto the Lord. He did not disallow oaths in law courts. The law was based upon the third commandment which was *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."* In Jesus day, the Pharisees made many vows, but found ways around keeping them. Jesus taught his disciples against careless oaths. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 says *<sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."*

**5:34** But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:— People say, "I swear to God this is the truth..." "As God is my witness..." "...So help me God..." It wasn't swearing by God's name that was the problem...it was swearing falsely. **There were two kinds of swearing to the Jews:**

1. **Bound swearing.** There were oaths using God's name. When God's name was used, He was considered a partner; therefore, the oath could never be broken.

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE



2. **Unbound swearing.** There were oaths which omitted God's name, but used such sacred phrases as by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by my head, or some other statement to emphasize one's intention or truthfulness. Such oaths were not necessarily binding because God was not considered to be a partner in the oath.

They were not to swear neither by heaven, that something is true when one knows that it's false, for Heaven is God's throne; where His glory is manifested. To swear by heaven or to curse heaven is to swear by God and curse God. When one promises something under oath one should fulfill the oath.

**5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.**

This continues from verse 34 that man is not to swear by.

- While Heaven is God's throne, Earth is His footstool, the place He governs and looks over. To swear by earth or to curse earth is to swear by God and curse God which was binding and sacred.
- And Jerusalem is the city of the great King. There is a sense in which God cares deeply for every city and place on earth. He cares about how a place is treated and how it is spoken about, for it was binding and sacred.

They were not to swear by any of them because all power belongs to God. Therefore, a man should stand in awe of God, not curse Him!

**5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.** They were not to swear by their head, because one cannot turn or make one hair white or black. Again, all power belongs to God.

**5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.** Man's word or communication should arise from his character. His yes should mean yes. And his no should mean no. His life should be honest and straight, so that no one should ever question his word. When he speaks, everyone should know that it will be done. If it takes tricks to get your point over, then it springs from evil.

## II. AN ALTERNATIVE TO REVENGE MATTHEW 5:38-42

**Fifth illustration: Retaliation as opposed to forgiveness**

**5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:—** This is saying, you've heard that the judicial penalty stated in Leviticus 24:20 as a means of ending feuds, the Mosaic Law says *"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."* It had been misused and abused.

- The law was not a command that had to be executed.
- The law was given to the courts to guide the judges in the execution of justice.
- The law could be satisfied with money or some other ransom or payment deemed just.

**GJW** Although this type of retaliation **an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth** when wronged to get back at them is not for the Christian.



# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE



**5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.** Jesus gave four illustrations of kinds of incidents they would face: slap (v.39), take your shirt (v.40), go two miles (v.41), or borrow some kind of personal wealth (v.42). He taught them that for the sake of the gospel they should not retaliate; they should not be distracted by demands of their possessions, time, or money, but should be flexible, helpful, and generous. Jesus is not saying to resist not evil ever, for in Jesus' day, He says to His disciples to struggle not against evil. Jesus resisted evil when it came to spiritual matters, but He did not resist evil when it came to physical matters. Jesus accepted physical injury. The disciples would run into much opposition and harassment when they proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, so, Jesus said turn the other cheek if one is being slapped, that is, accept physical injury. Well, I can see that retaliating can escalate the matters worse. The example that comes to mind is a robbery. We're always told to give over what they ask, so you won't get killed.

**5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.** Jesus' radical statement is saying that it is more important to give justice and mercy than to demand it, that's why He's saying *"if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."* In that day the disciples wore a **coat** which is their close fitting under garment and a **cloak** which was their outer costly garment. So, Jesus tells them if they lose their coat, let them have the cloak also. Don't sue; don't make it a big thing. Don't escalate the matters for these are temporal things. He wants us to focus on and be more concerned about spiritual things. He is our provider. Don't be ruled by temporal things, but by spiritual things. So, if a person sued one of them, they were to just continue delivering the gospel. Their time was not to be spent over petty things in lawful litigation that would take away their time of spreading the gospel.

**5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.** In ancient times government agents, mostly a Roman soldier would compel a Jewish native to carry his armor or materials for one mile, in order to relieve the soldier. So, Jesus says go an extra mile; double your duty. This can also speak of going out of your way. Because if you are compelled, that means you are forced to go out of your way, you are forced to do extra. This sounds like doing overtime on a job. This sounds like doing the work by yourself even when others are around doing nothing. Even in these situations, we can't look at it as a burden; we can't look at it as being taken advantage of. We are not to be bitter till we begin to complain or gripe. We can look at it as they're not going where I'm going, for God has more for me and I can lean on Him. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Our attitude should still be of peace; our countenance should still be of joy, and our strength should be in Him, for we can do nothing of ourselves, but it is of Him, it is in Him, and it is to Him!

**5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.**

Finally, the beggar or the one that just asks of you, Jesus says give. James 4:2d says *"ye have not,*



# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE



*because ye ask not.* Matthew 7:7a says *"ask and it shall be given you..."* Well, this first part is saying that Jesus wants us to ask for what we need and the one being asked is to give. That's a part of the Christian helping those in need. I guess you're saying it's a difference when they consistently ask and when I just desire to give or even whose asking, but, that where God's discernment is always there to help us. But, there should not be a difference if you have it to give. And it's not to be about getting attention when we give. Acts 3:6 says *"But Peter said, I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"* (NIV). Of course if someone desires to borrow (it does not say what) of importance or unimportance, it would have to be something you have. And this would also be another perception of discernment. To **the giver** it should be with a cheerful heart. And to **the borrower**, it can teach them to trust God more and hopefully they learn how to be more industrious to get to the point to pay back the loan.

## III. JESUS' LAW OF LOVE MATTHEW 5:43-45

### Sixth illustration: Love thy neighbor applied to love your enemies

**5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy—**

Well, the law is what you have heard—The Mosaic Law. The first half (Thou shalt love thy neighbour) is found in Lev.19:18. The second part (and hate thine enemy) was found in how the Scribes and Pharisees explained or interpreted and applied that OT command. Jesus' application was exactly the opposite of hate, resulting in a much higher standard. Love for one's neighbors should extend even to those neighbors who are enemies. Nowhere did the law teach hatred for one's enemies.

The law said, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"* (Lev.19:18). Israel made two fatal 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. They did not include the uncircumcised as neighbors but as enemies.
2. They inferred that they were to hate their enemies. God said, *"Love thy neighbor"*; therefore, they reasoned and added, *"Hate thine enemy."* It is the natural reason of man at work. It is not God's best for the world.

**5:44a But I say unto you, Love your enemies—** The word **"But"** is saying *"quite the contrary to what has just been said."* All people are our neighbors including our enemies. Jesus is acknowledging that we will have enemies, yet we are to respond to them in love, trusting God that we come out the better. The real meaning of the law to love involves four very practical acts:

1. **Love your enemies:** respect and honor all men (1Pt.2:17). Every human being has something that is commendable, even if it is nothing but the fact that he is a fellow human being with a soul to be reached for God.
  - a. Loving our enemies is against human nature. The behavior of human nature is to react, strike back, hate, and wish hurt. That's human nature! The root of human reaction against enemies is self and bitterness (Self-preservation is not evil of itself).



# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE



b. There is one thing a believer can have for his enemy: mercy or compassion. If he does not have compassion for those who hate him, he has gained nothing of the Spirit of Christ (Lk.6:36). When Christ said "*Love your enemies*", He could have used any one of the four forms of love, but, for the Christian, it will take:

- "**Agape**" love—this love wishes well. It is a love that demonstrates kindness, benevolence, and esteem. It is the love of choice; the act of our will. It is a sacrificial love, that is, a love that cares, gives, and works for another person's good—no matter how the person may respond or treat one. Loving your enemies is agape—the love that must be willed. Note:
  - a. The Christian's love for his enemy is different from the love he holds for his family. It would be impossible to love an enemy with affection. Christ knew this.
  - b. The Christian sacrifices himself, bears all in order to work for his enemy's good.
  - c. The Christian's love (agape love) is not complacent acceptance of open wickedness and license to sin. It is not sitting back and allowing a person to do as he pleases. It is restraint, control, discipline, and even punishment when it protects the offender from himself, and protects those whom he hurts (i.e. a parent controlling a child for his own good and for the good of those who love him).
  - d. A Christian can have agape love only as he allows God to love through him.

**5:44b ...bless them that curse you**— the second act of the real meaning of love:

2. **Bless those who curse you.** To "**ble**ss" means that a person has to speak. Christ is saying to speak softly to the curser (Prov.15:1). Use kind, friendly words; when face to face, be courteous; when behind his back, commend his strengths. Do not render railing for railing, that is, do not condemn or attack him in bitter or abusive language (1Pt.3:9). The curser has two major problems:
  1. The curser has a weak self-image. He feels the need to assert himself to come across as strong and forceful to fit in. One sign of a weak self image is the acceptance of cursing as a normal part of conversation.
  2. The curser either does not know the Lord or else is very immature and weak in the Lord.

**5:44c ...do good to them that hate you**— We can overcome evil with good— The third act of the real meaning of love:

3. **Do good to them that hate you.** Doing good goes beyond words. It does things for the person who hates. It reaches out to him through his family or friends, employment or business. It searches ways to do good to him, realizing that he needs to be reached for God. If no immediate way is found, then the Christian patiently waits for the day when he will face



# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE



one of the crises that comes about in life (i.e. sickness, accident, death). And then the believer can go and do good, ministering to him as Christ Himself would minister.

**5:44d ... and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;** — The fourth act of the real meaning of love:

4. **Pray for those who persecute you.** Three things need to be prayed about:

1. For God to forgive the persecutor.
2. For peace between one's self and the persecutor.
3. And 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. When we continuously pray for our enemies, especially those who does spite against us and persecute us, we will find it easier to love them. It is God who does the changing in us. We might not see a change in them right away but the change is coming through us. It is taking the "*poison*" out of our attitudes. Hallelujah! This challenge is only done through the grace of God which is a sacrificial love.

**5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.** Jesus reminded us that love was a necessary proof of salvation, that you may be children of your Father which is in heaven. A child of God will be called to love. This love is a mark of maturity, proving that we are sons of the Father, and not just little children. We act Godlike because the Father shares His good things, even by sending sun and rain, upon those who oppose Him. Our love creates a climate of blessings that makes it easy to win our enemies and make them our friends. Love is like the sunshine that rises and the rain that falls, that the Father sends so graciously, whether they do right or whether they do wrong; on the just and on the unjust. What a gracious God! And so, Jesus has explained our challenge that is ahead of us.

## SUMMARY:

<sup>1</sup>Oaths taken in the name of the Lord were binding and it was a very serious matter to break them. Jesus is saying that all promises are sacred and when truth is profaned, God's name is profaned (5:33-36). Just mean what you say and say what you mean (5:37). Jesus gives the following five examples of how a believer should react to unfair or unreasonable treatment (5:38-42): Do not retaliate in personal relationships (5:39). In a legal judgment against you be willing to give more than you owe (5:40). Do more than what is required of you (5:41). When a person has a genuine need, give him what is needed (5:42). <sup>2</sup>Jesus stated that Israel should demonstrate God's love even to her enemies (5:44), because this is necessary that you may be children of your Father which is in heaven (5:45).

GJW



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/oath-making/>  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/love-your-enemies/>