



Go for God!

“Truth, Justice & the Christian Way!”

The Gospel According To MATTHEW

Chapter 5:33-48

> **PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION** – *“We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”*

> **(v33-37) TRUTH!**

(v33) “Do not swear falsely” – Remember the 9th Commandment in Exodus 20:16 - *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

- **What is an oath?** - A solemn statement or claim used to validate a promise.

In Bible times, oaths were sometimes accompanied by protective curses to make sure the oaths were kept (1 Sam 14:24; Gen 24:41). Such curses were also used to protect property rights from thieves (Judg 17:2) or from those who found a stolen object or knew of a theft (Lev 5:1).

An oath was used to seal treaties, insuring that neither party broke their promise (Gen 26:28). Oaths were also used in Israel's treaty with God at Sinai (Deut 27:11-28:68; 29:11-20).

In the Bible oaths were sometimes taken lightly, as if all parties expected them to be broken (Hos 10:4). In legal cases oaths were sometimes used to make a person admit guilt (1 Kings 8:31-32). However, oaths were not to be used in wrongful accusations of people (Ex 20:7; Job 31:30; Ps 10:7; Hos 4:2).

Sometimes people pronounced a curse upon themselves in connection with an oath, which they had taken. David vowed not to eat until evening with these words: ***“God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down”*** (2 Sam 3:35). This was a strong pledge on his part that he expected to keep his promise.

Oaths could be taken with symbolic gestures such as raising the hand (Gen 14:22; Dan 12:7; Rev 10:5-6) or touching the sex organs (Gen 24:2; 47:29), possibly symbolizing a person's life and power. Oaths were taken very seriously (Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12). Lying about an oath could result in death (Ezek 17:16-18).

- **Jesus himself was bound by an oath in Matthew 26:63-64** - *And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

Even God bound Himself by oath to keep His promises to Abraham - Hebrews 6:16-18 - *For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*ⁱ

(v34-36) Making an oath in someone's name or on something was common practice. Making a promise on someone greater than oneself gives the promise greater credibility and invokes judgment from that sworn upon if the promise is not executed.

The precept, "*Swear not at all,*" refers probably to ordinary conversation between man and man (Matt. 5:34,37). But if the words are taken as referring to oaths, then their intention may have been to show "that the proper state of Christians is to require no oaths; that when evil is expelled from among them every yea and nay will be as decisive as an **oath**, every promise as binding as a VOW." Source: [Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary](#).

(v37) Here Jesus affirms honesty and truthfulness, "let your 'yes' be 'yes,' and you 'no' be 'no'." However, Jesus warns us about dishonesty and lying, "For whatever is more than these is from the evil one." Jesus explains about the "evil one" in John 8:44-45 - *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.*

James sums up the topic well with, "*But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*" (James 5:12)

- **What happens to LIARS? Revelation 21:7-8** – "*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*"

> **(v38-42) JUSTICE!**

(v38) "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" - This Old Testament quotation is in reference to Ex. 21:24-25; cp. Lev. 24:20. This principle of justice is that the punishment must match the crime.

- **There are two purposes to this type of civil law:**

(1) Curtailing of further crime as one is punished for their wrongdoing (individual & societal). The Law read in Deuteronomy 19:20 - "*the rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.*"

(2) And it was to prevent excessive punishment based on personal vengeance and angry retaliation.

(v39) Resist personal retaliation – Turn to Romans 12:17-21.

- Let God retaliate. If a law has been broken, then report the crime to the civil authorities. In this illustration we see a slap on the cheek as a symbol of insult. It could become a slap on both cheeks, a double insult. This is not about someone trying kill you or your family, in that incident defend yourself. Nor does it deal with going to war; we must defend the nation (may God by His grace grant us victory).

(v40) ***“If anyone wants to sue you”*** – Let the courts decide, if you’ve broken the law then repay according to the judgment. In those days’ payments were made in the exchange of money or goods (i.e. tunic & cloak).

(v41) **Going the extra mile** – In Jesus day the Jewish people were under Roman rule and many times a Roman soldier would ask a civilian to carry his pack a Roman mile. Don’t hate the Roman soldiers for this servitude instead reach them with the love and service of God by willingly going an extra mile.

(v42) **Helping others** – If someone comes to you with a legitimate need (not want) and you have the ability and the means to help them, then bless them. If someone is irresponsible with their life (i.e. – drug addiction, alcoholic, wasteful living, etc.) then do not cast your pearls before swine.

> (v43-48) ***THE CHRISTIAN WAY!***

(v43) ***“You have heard . . . to hate your enemy”*** - Jesus is referring to the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Leviticus 19:18 - *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*

The religious leaders of Jesus day were teaching a prejudice against gentiles (foreigners), half Jews (Samaritans), and any individual one may dislike or has a disagreement with.

- Listen to Exodus 23:4-5 - *“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.”*

The “enemy” spoken of in Exodus 23 is not the enemy soldier met on the battle field, but an individual—whether fellow countryman or foreigner—who in some way or another is antagonistic. This passage is speaking of someone that hates you and how you’re to respond despite this hatred.

- Let’s look to Luke 10:25-37 for further insight.

(v44) **Let’s apply four principles to overcome your enemy:**

#1 – ***Love your enemy like Christ!*** - Romans 5:6-11 - *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

#2 – ***Bless those who curse you!*** – Romans 14:19 - *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*

#3 – ***Do good to those who hate you!*** – Romans 12:20-21 - *Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

#4 – Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you! – Luke 23:33-34 - And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

(v45-48) Follow the Father's example!

The word "*perfect*" in verse 48 does not speak of sinless perfection for that can only be obtained when we're glorified in heaven. The Greek word is *teleios*, which speaks of completeness or maturity (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.)

- Orin Crain discovered the process of Christian maturity in these well-orchestrated words, *Slow me down, Lord.*

Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind.

Steady my hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time.

Give me, amid the confusion of the day, the calmness of the everlasting hills.

Break the tension of my nerves and muscles with the soothing music of the singing streams that live in my memory.

Teach me the art of taking minute vacations—of slowing down to look at a flower, to chat with a friend, to pat a dog, to smile at a child, to read a few lines from a good book.

Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values, that I may grow toward my greater destiny.

Remind me each day that the race is not always to the swift; that there is more to life than increasing its speed.

Let me look upward to the towering oak and know that it grew great and strong because it grew slowly and well.

Take the time to meditate on the teachings of Christ and practice them daily. It will bless your life, your marriage, your family, and the world in which we live, but more importantly it will please the heart of our heavenly Father. May God richly bless you!

ⁱ Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary