LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 5 (Part 13) :33-48

Oaths, Eye for Eye, Love For Enemies

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Matthew chapter 5 we are picking it up here in verse 33 which begins for us the last three sections of this chapter. I'll read the first one we'll pray and then we'll see what the Lord has for us. Beginning in verse 33 it says again you've heard that it was said to the people long ago do not break your oath but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord but I tell you do not swear at all either by heaven for it is God's throne or by the earth for it is his footstool or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king. Do not swear by your head for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your yes be yes and your no, no.

Anything beyond this comes from the evil one. Let's pray. Father God open our hearts to the ministry of your word here today and speak to us Lord about what you want us to hear from this and the rest of the chapter here today. So use this time father in Jesus name we pray Amen. This passage is obviously about let me just say this it appears from the outset that this passage is about the swearing of oaths and there is a companion passage to this it's found in the book of James I'll put it on the screen for you says above all my brothers do not swear by heaven or by earth or by anything else very similar to what Jesus said he said let your yes be yes and your no, no or you will be condemned in that statement you will be condemned means you will come under judgment you know when the whole world is judged you'll find yourself being involved in that as well.

Over the years people have read James and the passage from Matthew 5 and you know what they come away with? They read these passages and they come away with a prohibition against oaths in other words people read these passages they go oh God doesn't ever want us to swear an oath and so we come up with all these Christian rules about how you know for like in a court of law well you know if they want us to swear an oath I can't do that because you see I got Matthew chapter 5 and I've got James chapter 5 and I can't do that. That practically misses the point of the entire passage and Jesus and James as they spoke this thing and James echoing obviously Jesus the focal point of the passage is not to simply put a prohibition on the speaking of oaths that's reading the New Testament with an Old Testament mindset. Guys the whole emphasis of this section of scripture is about speaking the truth and we miss that we literally kinda blow

that off and we come up with some some sort of a you know rule you know and we're so good at that us Christians to come up read the Bible then come away with rules there's a rule you know you gotta follow the rule and so we're gonna we're never gonna speak an oath again I'm never gonna do that anybody ever asked me to speak an oath I won't be speaking but we've missed the point about the fact that God let me back up God says that when we speak let it be the truth that's the essence of what he wants us to get a hold of in this passage and what they would do back in Old Testament times is when they made a statement about something in order to punctuate it and really get people to believe it they'd say hey I swear I swear that this is true you know people still do that somewhat today but the Jews would put a lot of emphasis on it and and some people even today will say I swear to God right you know sort of thing you know and you're supposed to always supposedly swear by something that's bigger than you so that it can hold you accountable but the Jews got into all this weirdness as they always did related to rules and regulations in the Pharisees and some teachers of the law began to say well as long as you don't swear by God but you swear by something less than God like say Jerusalem I swear by Jerusalem he'd say well then what you swore really isn't completely binding because it was just by Jerusalem and Jesus says oh yes it is because Jerusalem is his footstool or if you say I swear by heaven the the Pharisees would kinda let you off if you wanted to get off the hook on that particular thing but Jesus said you know don't you realize even when you swear by heaven you're swearing by the throne of God you see the point is is that when what God did say in the Old Testament about oaths is that when you speak an oath when you swear an oath make sure you keep it make sure you're true to your word that was the point it wasn't all about this that and the other thing it was about hey when you say something mean it you know stick to your word and and and and that is is is what this passage is really all about I found a great a quote that I want to share with you from William Barclay here's how it goes it says the truly good man frankly will never need to take an oath he doesn't need to why because the truth of his sayings and the reality of his promises need no such guarantee but the fact that oaths are still sometimes necessary is proof that that men are not good men and that this is not a good world that we're living in why is it when you you know when there's a a court of law is going on or you're in a jury or something like that or you're testifying and they ask you to swear an oath why do they even do that it's because people have lied on the stand it's because juries have been dishonest in their verdict it's because sometimes people don't tell the truth that's why we have incorporated the idea of oaths in our system of of justice and so forth God isn't necessarily forbidding that in this passage if the justice system asks you to take an oath well you don't you don't have this biblical mandate that if you swear an oath you're gonna get struck dead what Jesus is saying is when you're talking just with other people and telling them things tell the truth let your yes be a real yes let your no be a real no now here's the question this is this is where it all comes down to why is this even important to say here's the reason it's because

Jesus told the truth and since you and I are called by God to convey his truth to a lost and dying world you and I need to be bearers of truth in our everyday language so that people won't begin to look at us and say you know I'm not really sure I can trust that person because I've listened to them talk before and when they talk their words are often laced with exaggeration and hyperbole and sometimes half-truth or downright lies and now here they are telling me about Jesus and I have this question can I trust them here I mean there been some other areas where I don't know so can I trust them now do you see what's on the line people this is way more than just your reputation and my reputation this is someone's eternal future destiny that may be on the line here related to this because you and I are bearers of truth as Christians I'm talking to those of you in this room who are born-again Christians I don't make any assumptions that all of us are but the point is for those of us who are we have a mandate from God to speak the truth and always the truth and nothing but the truth do you know that that when Jesus is recorded in the gospel accounts in fact right here in the book of Matthew that we're studying through do you know that no less than 56 times Jesus made this statement I tell you the truth you have an old King James it's me it's the old verily verily I say unto you we don't use that anymore what he was literally saying was I tell you the truth truthfully I say to you and so forth 56 times in the book of Matthew alone 51 times in the book of John Jesus says I tell you the truth but you have to understand something not only did Jesus tell the truth he was the truth do you know that we serve the master who actually said I am the truth look at John chapter 14 verse 6 Jesus answered I am the way and the truth and the life and and here's the truth you ready for the truth no one comes to the father except by me that's the truth but you see Jesus is the personification of truth he he didn't just say I tell the truth which well he did say that but he didn't just say that you and I can say that we can say hey listen man I swear I'm telling you the truth and that's why we would swear you know to try to get people to really understand that we don't have what I'm telling you is really really true here but you and I can't say something Jesus did say and that is I am the truth he said it and we believe it and now we serve him and now we got into into a lost and dying world to represent him how do we represent him best by telling the truth by speaking the truth and and and this just really underscores the fact that we need to be obsessed with truth and and literally put off lies and deceptions and half truths at all costs because we are sharing the gospel nothing less than the gospel of Jesus Christ and and and and so forth and so for that reason listen if you want to make a rule If you like living by rules here's a good rule of thumb to live by unless you're a hundred percent sure of something Don't repeat it You know Because we are guilty too often of passing things along That just we're not really sure about and you know here's another good rule of thumb for those of you that and I know that the vast majority of you have email and Or are connected to some maybe social networking service or something like that Listen, I think a good rule of thumb is don't ever pass along forwarded email messages. Just don't do it for one thing We're all getting them anyway,

and you're just passing along what we already got but secondly you and I can't be a can't afford to be associated with the the The Propagation of half-truths, which is what most email forwards are In fact, some of them are just blatant flat-out lies And that's all they are, but you'd be shocked how many?

born-again Christians pass along email information that came into their inbox without Ever checking it out and they just go this is horrible And they send it to everybody in their address book and aren't we all thrilled when we get it It is about the most annoying thing that happens in the world. That's hyperbole right there But you know what? I mean, it's just like don't do it. Don't send them. We don't care, you know I mean if they're selling kidneys on the black market, we'll pray about it, you know, but just like you know We all we all have enough issues, you know Without learning about you know, the the kidney black market or something stupid like that so but you know beyond that beyond just the the the the annoying fact that they get sent along is That we become Recognized as people that pass this kind of information along and you know Sometimes we even qualify and say I don't know if this is true, but and then we shoot it off into cyberspace I don't know if this is true or not but if you want to get your blood boiling here read this one and the Sensationalism and the and all this other junk and and then and then We start telling them about Jesus Christ And They're wondering if this is just more of the same Just more sensational half-truths So Let's not even do it let's not even go there, you know Let's let's just make sure that what comes out of our mouths and what we send along to others in the way of information is 100% true Because we are bearers of truth and it's so vitally important Second section look at verse 38 It says you have heard that it was said I for I and tooth for tooth But I tell you do not resist an evil person If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic Which was a common thing that they sued people for back then let him have your cloak as well You can apply that to today's kind of Understanding if someone forces you to go one mile go with him two miles Give to the one who asks you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you Now most people I would have to say are probably aware of the saying an eye for an eye You know, we've heard we hear it all the time.

I hear it in movies TV programs Magazine articles and stuff like that I even heard one I had some one guy on his signature on his email said, you know If we lived by the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for his tooth We'd all be you know, partially blind and and toothless which sounds like a really cool thing to say but it is a complete and total misunderstanding of the passage and By the way, that's very common sort of a thing It has taken on a connotation of vengeance this whole eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth in other words It has become kind of a justification for me getting back at you. It's like hey you did it to me Guess what I for an eye buddy Back at you sort of a thing, right? That's the way people kind of think about

this whole eye for an eye sort of thing It's permission for payback, you know That was never God's intention when he gave them gave Israel the guideline of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth it Always was meant to introduce into the system of justice in Israel the idea of Balance because balance is one of the most common themes to justice in fact, you know, you know what I did I Got into Google and I just put in image of justice Let me show you what I got There it is And it comes in various forms and shapes and but they all basically kind of relate to this if you look for an image That kind of you know is the essence of justice. That's what you get. Why because that is a scale and The balance is supposed to always be in our justice system All right It is it's that universal picture if you will so when God spoke to the Israelites about creating a system of justice and Fairness he basically told them that if somebody knocked out your tooth You can't go and burn down their house Right, or you can't go and slaughter his cattle Because he knocked out your tooth that would not be a fair expression of justice If he knocked out your tooth The worst you can do is knock out his tooth and that wasn't literally meaning that you had to go do that What he was saying was there are limitations on What you can do as payback in a system of justice by the way This was never meant to be a personal vengeance system.

This is how justice was to be meted out There must be fairness in other words the punishment must fit the crime Okay, that's why the INI and tooth for tooth thing even got created so that there would be fairness so that there would be Punishments in their justice system that would fit the crime and not be this this weirdness that we have today We've gotten away from the whole idea of fairness. We still use that picture of scales, you know in our justice system But now we've gotten into punitive damages that go way beyond anything that you can measure Like, you know emotional. How do you measure emotional? Distress well, you can't and so that's why in our system of justice now people get these horrific sort of you know rewards in in court cases of millions and millions of dollars when the and and the reason that he's telling us this is because as believers We are not given justification for revenge We can't say, you know, I'm just doing to him what he did to me it's fair you know that the whole eye for an eye tooth for the tooth thing was never meant to be a Guideline for personal vengeance or personal acts of justice, which really there is no such thing as a personal act of justice. That's called revenge If it doesn't happen through the justice system, it's really not justice.

It's revenge and This was never meant to govern that But since we tend to take it that way since we tend to apply it to ourselves Jesus said you want me to tell you how I want you guys to treat each other You don't mean it you want me to tell you that I'll tell you how Somebody strikes you on this side of your face What's the natural Inclination of your flesh to do the deck him back, right? That's that's that's just that's what happens that's just it's it's it's hardwired into our flesh you hit me I'll hit you back You know or

in the case of Will Smith if you kiss him once he'll hit you back I don't know if you saw that on the news or not reporter came up and want to give him a hug and actually planted one right on his lips and He came back and went It's just natural it happens, you know, it's like that's what you do, you know, but Jesus said for you guys I want it to be something different. I Want your response to people not to be natural I want it to be supernatural In other words going beyond the natural because the natural inclination is just a deck somebody back I want you to turn the other cheek. I want you to literally let him hit you on the other side And he goes on to kind of explain, you know If he asked you to go one mile go to if he sues you for your cloak give him other things You know don't resist an evil person, you know, so see this is as Christians there. There's there's a whole nother thing.

We're not getting even we are not lashing out even though we may want to when when people hurt us And the fact of the matter is only God can give us the strength to restrain ourselves in those sorts of situations because when we're hurt personally, you know This just again It's very very difficult hard to restrain ourselves But you and I are called by God to ultimately trust his Justice Do you really believe God is going to, do you really believe God is a God of justice and he's going to call men to account one day? Do you really believe it? We don't act like we do. Most of the time we don't act like we do. We think we got to go take care of that.

We have to get vengeance. We have to try to, you know, avenge that sort of a situation. But Jesus taught us a different example of how to live. He expresses it here. He lived it in his life.

Here's how Peter tells it. 1st Peter chapter 2, when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. Talking about Jesus. Peter knows because he was there. When he suffered, he made no threats.

Instead, what did he do? He entrusted himself to him who judges justly. And that is the example that you and I have been called to convey to the world. It's not one of vengeance and anger and fleshly response when people wrong us and do things that they shouldn't do. And there's no doubt about the fact that they shouldn't do those things.

But still you and I are not called to personal vengeance. We're called to an attitude of personal love that absolutely blows the mind of the world because they don't understand it. They don't understand. They don't understand it because they don't understand where the power to do that comes from. It doesn't come from you and me.

I'll tell you that much. I got to tell you right here standing up in front of you, I don't have the goods. I do not possess the goods to love somebody who hurt me. But my God does. Jesus modeled it on the cross.

First thing out of his mouth, Father forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. It still blows me away every time I read that. But I have to remember that's the Jesus who now lives in my heart and your heart through the presence of his Holy Spirit. And he will now enable you and I to live that same sort of passion toward people with an understanding that God is the one who is going to ultimately take care of these things.

And I will not take them into my own hands and so forth. And then the final section here. Look at look at me in verse 43. It says, you've heard that it was said love your neighbor and hate your enemy. This is obviously a continuation of what we've been dealing with.

But I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his son, notice whose it is, belongs to him, his son to rise on the evil and the good and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get for that? No big deal. Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

And they say tax collectors because they were considered to be the scum of the earth. And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Don't even pagans do that. Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect. Now some of you might be wondering right now, wait a minute, where in the Old Testament does it say love your neighbor and hate your enemy?

Well it doesn't. Anywhere. But yet the rabbis of Jesus's day, if they would have heard that statement, love your neighbor and hate your enemy, they would have considered that an accurate interpretation of what is in the Old Testament. And I'll show you kind of how they got there in terms of their thought. There are several passages in the Old Testament where God told his people to love their enemies, but the part, or excuse me, to love their neighbor, but the part where they gave themselves permission was to hate their enemies.

And here's why. First of all, Leviticus chapter 19 is where they got the first part. It says, do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people. One of your people. Notice that?

But love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. So it kind of, you know, remember the old question they kind of posed to Jesus? Who is my neighbor? So there's the first passage.

So obviously I am called to love my neighbor, right? I'm to love, you know, people, not to seek revenge, not to bear a grudge against one of my own people. And to the Jews, of course, that meant to fellow Jews, and that's exactly what it did mean. So where do they come up with the permission to hate their enemy? Well, it was actually taken, believe it or not, from all places, from the Psalms.

And I'll show you one of them. Psalm 139, beginning of verse 21, says this, do not, excuse me, do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And abhor those who rise up against you. I have nothing but hatred for them. I count them my enemies.

Now, some people might read a passage like this, and they consider it justification for their own hatred. And since they can easily convince themselves that those who hate them must be enemies of God, I mean, for heaven's sake, then certainly it's okay for me to hate my enemy. So love my neighbor, hate my enemy. Yeah, sure, no problem. Look at David.

He did it. Loved God, hated his enemies. Do you see where they came up with this kind of an idea? This is where they got it. So the Jews then began to see anybody who is outside of Judaism as someone that they really should hate, because if they're not one of us, then they're obviously enemies of God.

And so they came up with all these rules, like never enter the home of a Gentile, never touch a Gentile, don't sit and talk to a Gentile. They called them dogs. They were dogs. And a dog was considered to be one of the most unclean animals. You know, they're always sniffing through garbage, and yeah!

You know, it was a whole different sort of a scenario than what we might think of dogs today. It was a very, very negative connotation, and so forth. Now, the example that we see in the Psalms, the one I just showed you from Psalm 139, it has nothing to do with how you and I feel toward people that we might call our enemies, our enemies. Frankly, what David was expressing in Psalm 139, he was expressing how God feels towards sin and those who are in absolute, total rebellion against God. And God can express that kind of hatred without any sinful or evil intent.

You and I, we can't do that. So in these Psalms, the hatred that is expressed is expressed from the psalmist who so identifies with the heart of God that he is literally expressing God's view of sin and rebellion. And I would call it, for lack of a better term, righteous hatred. Have you heard of the term righteous anger? Righteous anger, and let me just, people use that term all the time, and I think probably misuse that term all the time.

But righteous anger is basically when I am angry, when I am angry about something that really does not affect me personally at all. There's really nothing about that to make me personally angry. It's something that God is angry about, and so therefore I am expressing his anger toward that thing, and therefore I am righteously angry. I'm not sinning in the midst of my anger, I'm just angry because God is angry at that thing, so we call it righteous anger. What you and I use that term just as kind of justification for just being angry, and so we misuse it.

But do you see where righteous anger is kind of, I'm, I'm, it's, I'm disconnected from anything personal here. This is not personal. You didn't make me angry, you made God angry, and therefore I am expressing righteous anger. By the same thing, righteous hatred is the same exact sort of a scenario. There's, there, you know, hatred is not, it's not a personal hatred of mine.

It's not because you're my enemy and I hate you, and so now I'm hating you because God says I can hate you. It's not what we're doing here. We hate the things that the Lord hates, and what David was expressing in Psalm 139 was hatred for what the Lord hates. He was identifying with the heart of God. These weren't David's personal enemies, they were God's enemies.

Can we put that up one more time, that same passage? I want to show you this one more time because it's, it's important. He says, do I not hate those who hate you? Did you catch that? Oh Lord, and I abhor those who rise up against you.

See, he didn't say, God, I hate those who hate me. I hate them, and I hate those who rise up against me, too. He's not saying that, is he? You see what David is doing? He is literally expressing his heart for God, his love for God, and his identification with God's heart toward those who just don't care, and, and, and, and so forth.

So, call it, if you will, righteous hatred, I suppose. But just remember this, only God's hatred of sin can be pure and free of evil. Yours and mine can't. I've hated things in my life, but they were always tainted by selfishness, self-centeredness, and bias, or personal offense. That's why I've hated things in my life.

Have I ever experienced righteous hatred? I doubt it. I doubt I've ever experienced righteous anger. I'd like to think I have, but I probably haven't. I guess I'll have to ask the Lord someday when I stand in his presence.

Hey, did I ever experience righteous anger? He'll go, yeah, not so much. You were always pretty much an idiot, but I love you anyway. Washed in the blood of my son. Yeah, you know, sort of a thing.

Do you know what's interesting about those who would take a passage like that passage in Psalm 139 and consider it a permission to hate, to hate the things that they hate, is they don't read the very next couple of verses. Somehow, they don't do that. Do you know what David said right after expressing hatred for the things that God hates? Let me show you. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Test me and know my anxious thoughts and see if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Isn't that amazing? And the Jews conveniently ignored that. And you and I can too. I

literally, I was ministering to someone a number of years ago who was seething with hatred towards someone who had genuinely hurt them in their life.

And I brought up the passage where Jesus tells us to love our enemies. And this individual came back and actually cited the Psalms and said, David hated people, I can do it too, and used it as justification. But again, the very next two verses is where David doesn't even trust his heart in that way. And he comes to God right after expressing such harsh words of hatred toward the God's enemies and say, but God, you know, search me and know me. If there's any evil, if there's any wicked, anxious, crazy, stupid, earthly, fleshly stuff in me, please reveal it to me because I don't want any part of it.

And I want to be led in the way that is right and good and everlasting. I don't want to be consumed with fleshly feelings of bitterness and hatred and so forth. So you've got to take the whole Bible. It's one of the reasons we love studying through the whole Bible. You know, we could come up with all kinds of just little verses if we wanted to create this militia, you know, that goes around and hates people and hates things and hates everybody in the world.

Let's just get out there, people, and let's do some good hating this week. Praise the Lord. We've got to take it all together, don't we? We've got to understand what the Word of God has to say related to these things. And understand the whole picture and the fact that Jesus in the New Testament speaks to his church, and that is what the Sermon on the Mount is geared to.

It's to believers. He says, to you, there's a higher road that I've called you to walk. And you don't have the right to just indiscriminately hate people. You know, that's not what I've called you to. I've called you to something else.

I've called you to love and genuine acts of benevolence toward people, even people who have hurt you. He says, you know, if you're benevolent and gracious and stuff to people who are benevolent and gracious to you, what credit is that to you? Who doesn't do that? Who doesn't politely greet people who politely greet you? The question is, how do you greet somebody who sneers at you when you walk by?

How do you greet someone who you know thinks you are just an idiot? How do you greet that person? That's what Jesus is talking to us about. That's where the rubber meets the road. And that is where you and I represent him, represent him.

Remember what he said here? He says, as we walk in this, we become truly children of God, literally representatives of God. Why? Because did you ever notice that even those who are in absolute total rebellion against God, they still get the same rain and sunshine you do? You ever notice that?

God shows that same expression of common grace, we call it actually, or benevolence toward people who even are in total rebellion to him. And he says, listen, I want you to do the same. I want you to extend that common grace, that love, the same that I do and so forth. You know, we talk a lot as Christians. We talk a lot about God.

The question isn't how much we talk about God. The question is, how are we doing representing him to a world that needs him desperately? That's the question. How are you and I representing Christ in this world? I mean, that really is where it all comes down, doesn't it?

Did you ever...I want to just...I'll end with this. Ephesians, I want to put up a passage here from chapter 4, verse 1. Paul writes, as a prisoner for the Lord, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. What is the calling you have received? It's to represent Jesus Christ in the world, is it not?

It's to be an ambassador for Christ, to share the good news. That's your calling, to speak the truth, to show love, to show benevolence, to show kindness, and forgiveness, and grace. That is what you and I are called to. So Paul says, I urge you therefore, I, who am a prisoner because of representing Christ, I'm urging you now to represent him in a way that's worthy of him. Do you know that that's what Jesus meant when he said, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect?

You might read that and go, well, I'm out. Be perfect? Are you kidding me? Do you know what Jesus is basically saying with that simple statement? He's simply saying, just be a true representation of what God has done in your life.

Be a true representative of God to the world. He's talked to you and I about several things here in this latter part of chapter 5. He's talked to us about murder, and lust, and adultery, and deception, and speaking the truth, and these things. And basically, what he's saying to us is, you're my people. You are my representatives to the world.

Now, do an accurate job. Don't give people a twisted, tainted, polluted picture of who I am to this world. When people say about Christians that they're a bunch of hypocrites, they're right. And you and I have to raise our hand and say, guilty as charged. But you know what?

That doesn't mean we're going to give up. It means we're going to get back to the word. We're going to get back on our knees. We're going to get back to the calling that we have, which is to represent Christ in this world accurately. Unfortunately, what that means is dying to the flesh and allowing the spirit to truly have his way in our lives.

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