

## Three More Twisted Jewish Sayings Refuted

### ~Other Speakers S-Z: Timothy Tow:

**Text: Matt 5:33 -48**

The remaining verses of Matthew chapter 5, from 33 to 48, consist of three more twisted Jewish sayings refuted by our Lord.

The Jews say, "Pay what you swear," but Jesus says "Swear not at all, but speak the truth, yes or no." ( 5:33 -37). The Jews have various degrees of oath-taking. Some swear by heaven, some swear by earth, some by Jerusalem , and some swear by the head. All these use the name of the Lord in vain for they are lightly uttered, and what is sworn is rarely performed. For example, Matt 15:4 gives the V Commandment, "Honour your father and your mother," but they say, "Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift, given to God," but actually they selfishly keep it to themselves, then they are not obligated. Jesus says this is a twisting of God's commandment. It is like you are supporting your parents \$500 a month. Suddenly you cut down their support to \$300 and you say, "I have to give to the Church which has a Building Fund Drive ." Though you have given the sum to the Church you have robbed your parents to pay God. Will God be happy with your gift? Don't use God's Name for your own neglect of your parents.

Whatever we say or do, we must say it and do it truthfully from the heart. We must say yes or no in what we say and not add anything to deviate from our true intention. By corollary, when speaking before a judge or Government officer it is most important that you answer their question in a firm voice, "Yes" or "No." If it is not given with truthful backing, and an explanation or deviation is made, you will lose your credibility. Words uttered with a slur will mark you as an unreliable or dishonest person. This is what Jesus means when He says, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" ( 5:37 ).

Coming back to the topic of swearing, we have James's epistle confirming what our Saviour says. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" ( 5:12 ). Do Jesus and James prohibit absolutely any oath-taking at all? "In this world of dishonesty and deception the oath is at times necessary to add solemnity and the guarantee of reliability to an important affirmation or promise. Nothing either here in Matt 5:33 -37 or anywhere else in Scripture forbids this. Heb 6:16 confirms this practice" (Henrickson). For example, when speaking in a law court you must take an oath to God that you're telling the truth. You must take an oath of allegiance when becoming the citizen of a new country. When joining the army you must swear allegiance to your own country.

The Jews say, take full revenge, but Jesus says, rather give way ( 5:38 -43). To take full measure of the revenge, the Jews quote Moses' law, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," again with a twist. This provision is rather the balance of public justice, that crime be adequately punished but not be overly executed, 50-50 in perfect balance. It does not encourage private persons to take revenge at all, for "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom 12:19 ).

Jesus says, privately speaking, Christians not only should not take revenge but rather give way. So turn the right cheek when your left cheek was hit, and go with those who take advantage of you the second mile and give away also your cloke when they take your coat.

A Christian not only forgives, but also gives. Giving is the practical expression of forgiveness. And instead of lending it is much better to give. There are many poor and needy people around us. Since God has given us abundantly, and the power to get wealth, to help those who ask us of a favour, let us answer their needs immediately. "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Prov 3:27 ). "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (Jas 2:15,16).

We have a ministry of hospitality through our Beulah House. By receiving outsiders, even non-Christians, like the sparrows and swallows, unclean birds of Psalm 84, they make their nests in God's sanctuary. We have won over ten to Christ, and baptised them. But there was a bad case. This boarder overstayed one-and-a-half years and we could not evict him. We could have called the Police, but for the sake of a peaceful settlement the Church gave him a parting gift of \$500. This is letting him who takes our coat take the cloke also. One benefit of such Christ-like work is our Church is well respected in the whole neighbourhood. Needy persons are always brought here for succour.

The Jews say to love your friend but hate your enemy but Jesus says love both friend and enemy. Jesus set us

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the example by praying for His enemies who crucified Him. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34 ). And why not, when we realise what debtors we are to our God by being forgiven seventy times seven all the time in our daily life.

Loving our enemies is not an option, but a command. This is the special hallmark of Christianity. Dispensationalists who say the O.T. teaches hating our enemy and the N.T. loving them are also wrong. For we have the example of the Prophet loving the enemy in the O.T.

The Syrians who invaded Israel were smitten with blindness at the word of the prophet Elisha. When they were led to Samaria into the stronghold of Israel , they were surrounded. The king of Israel asked the prophet whether Israel should smite them. Elisha replied that instead of killing they should feed them. The enemy was so overwhelmed by this act of kindness that they came no more to fight Israel again.

We have a modern version of an act of loving the enemy. This happened as recent as a year or two ago. To thaw the ice of hatred between North and South Korea , Mr Chung, the tycoon of Hyundai Motors, etc. presented the North Korean President a thousand fattened brown cows. This has led to further improvement of relations so that North and South became as one at the present Olympics. A lowering of tension between North and South Korea by positive acts of mutual respect has contributed not a little to world peace.

Christians have always given way to their enemy. In 1900 when the Chinese Boxer Rebellion broke out to eject the foreign powers and 185 foreign missionaries were killed, the foreign powers who won the war required the Manchus to pay heavily, but the missionaries demanded nothing. So are Christians today being persecuted in Indonesia and their Churches burnt. But they retaliate not, according to the teaching of our Saviour. In the long run we shall win. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church."

Jesus' teaching on honest speaking and not swearing, not taking revenge but giving way, and loving our enemies are efforts on the heavenly plane unto perfection after our God. Let us live on this higher plane that people seeing us know we are God's people and give glory to the Father in heaven. Amen.