

40-05-13.wpd —God Is In Control

Promises, revenge, impositions, persecution, love, perfection

Mat 5:33-48

We must place everything in life under the rule of the God of love.

INTRODUCTION: (Text read as Scripture reading)

–The *Sermon on the Mount* calls for allegiance to the *Kingdom of God*. Its demands require us to put God in *complete control of our life* (**title**). The three areas mentioned in our **text** bear this out. Jesus continues to "*fulfill*" OT Law by teaching its deeper intention, by calling for deeper commitment to God, submission that goes beyond surface compliance, an *allegiance* based on *heart transformation*. **HOM.idea.**

–Jesus also continues to proclaim His divine authority in each of these areas by saying, "*You have heard that it was said ... But I tell you...*" Let's start with v.33-37, "*Again, you have 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. And 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.*"

I. God Is in Control of Our Plans and Promises

A. Everyone knows that people can fail to keep promises they make.

1. There may be valid reasons for it: unforeseen *circumstances*, sudden *illness*, *accidents*, an unanticipated loss of *resources*).
2. But there may also be bad reasons: poor *memory*, poor *commitment*, poor *character*....

B. Because of this failure, the oath came into being to strengthen a person's promise by appealing to something commonly revered or honored within a society, BUT the oath also failed in two ways:

1. It detracted from the idea that *telling the truth* was based, not on the values society held, but on the moral character God required.
2. It distracted people from their obligation to God Himself by focusing on *creational*, *political* or *religious* objects.

C. Christ's words are meant to refocus our attention:

1. Everything people were swearing by was directly related in some way to God's position of ultimate control: "*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 [the Messiah]. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black."

2. If God is in control, then ultimately He controls the possibility that our plans and promises can be carried out: "*Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*"

TRANS: Our *YESes* and *NOes* have only one appeal, and that's to God, who lovingly watches over us— **James 4:13-15**, Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." Our allegiance in the Kingdom of God means that **we put everything in life under the rule of the God of love**. This goes for the kind of situations described in the next part of the text, too: v.38-42, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, 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, let him have your cloak as well. 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.

II. God Is in Control of Our Rights and Resources

A. Maintaining our rights and attaining possessions are both normal values in our society [Popular movies exalt the *vengeance theme* (*V for Vendetta*), and commercials exalt having all the *right kind of things* to make us *happy*.] But all our resources belong to God. Our *time*, our *energy*, our very *bodies*, are in the service of the King and His Kingdom.

B. Christ's words cut across today's popular values:

1. In a Kingdom based on love, revenge is nullified by grace, and the one who seeks control by coercion forfeits control to the one who offers his other cheek for slapping, or who adds his last bit of clothing to what's lost in a suit, or who goes a second mile when forced only to go one.
2. Jesus backed His words with His behavior by submitting to the *injustice* of the Cross. (It looked like a defeat, but by suffering He resisted and overcame evil, showing us the way to victory.)

TRANS: [Clothing was expensive in Bible times. The poor often went naked or had only one garment. Those who owned two, lost one in a lawsuit, and gave the other one up, walked away naked. The early church preacher Chrysostom wrote: "Do

you grasp the excellence of the Christian disposition? After you give your coat and your cloak, even if your enemy should wish to subject your naked body to hardships and labors, not even then, Jesus says, must you forbid him."] It's easy to say, "**I place everything in my life under the rule of God,**" but can we do it the way Jesus described it: by turning the *other cheek*, by leaving the *courtroom naked*, by going the *second mile*? Yet these bring victory, these defeat evil, these allow us to act like the God of love and grace Who is in control, which we see even better in the final words of this passage: [v.43-48](#), "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 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 sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

III. God Is in Control of Our Opponents and Oppressors

- A. Do we really want to be like the God of love who is King over all things in heaven and earth?
1. He gives to those who do not deserve it. He shows kindness and generosity both to us and to those who spurn His love and reject His Word. Are we willing to show that kind of love and grace to those who hate and mistreat us?
 2. Can we pray for those who injure us, as Jesus did for those who nailed Him to the Cross?— [Luke 23:34a](#), Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
- B. We can get so used to living under grace that we forget what God saved us from— [Col1:21-22](#), Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

CONCLUSION:

—God made us in His image to be like Him. We fell from that, but Jesus calls us back to it. To be like our "*Father in heaven*" we must be like His Son, and we become like Jesus by embracing Him as our Lord and **placing everything under His rule.** This is what Jesus calls for in the Sermon on the Mount. Only then can we "*be perfect...*" as our "*heavenly Father is perfect.*" And that's all the *perfection* God will ever ask for.

Matthew 5:33-48 (NIV)

- 33“Again, you have 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.’
- 34But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;
- 35or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.
- 36And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.
- 37Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.
- 38“‘You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’
- 39But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- 40And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.
- 41If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
- 42Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.
- 43“‘You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
- 44But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
- 45that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
- 46If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?
- 47And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?
- 48Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.