

Stop Swearing! Stop Resisting! Stop Hating!

The Letter of the Law vs The Spirit of the Law

Introduction

I. 'DO NOT SWEAR FALSELY': A sinner's way to accommodate a *deceptive* heart

"you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn'" (v33).

Acts 5:1-5

Our God is a God of Truth who cannot lie.

"it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18).

"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Numbers 23:19).

"the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret" (1 Samuel 15:29).

"in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

"Let God be true though every one were a liar" (Romans 3:4).

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy' ...if you call on him as Father..." (1 Peter 1:14-17).

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Ephesians 5:1).

"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:9).

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

"But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor" (Ephesians 4:20-25).

II. 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE': A sinner's way to accommodate a *vengeful* heart

Lex Talionis = a punishment given that is proportional to the crime (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21).

The *vengeful heart* seeks excessive retaliation that exceeds the level of justice.

“The object of that law was not to urge men to take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and to insist upon it every time; it was simply meant to avoid this horrible excess, this terrible spirit of revenge and demand for retribution, and to check it and hold it within bounds” (Lloyd-Jones).

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (v20).

But the laws of God were never meant to be given to and kept by the people as a means of achieving eternal life!

“But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you” (v39-42).

The Sermon on the Mount builds off the foundation of its beginning – *the Beatitudes*.

“but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!” (1 Corinthians 6:6-8).

What is Jesus requiring of the believer?

Simply, *that he die to himself*.

George Muller:

“There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Muller and his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.”

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose” (Galat. 2:20-21).

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In Fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me” (1 Corinthians 4:3-4).

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing your will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21).