

A Song of Worship

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Tonight we're in Exodus 15 and we'll be reminded of how important music is in our worship.

It's not the only form of worship, but it's definitely one of the ways that He deserves to be His name lifted high and be exalted, as we heard in that song. Matthew chapter number 5, if you want to turn to verse number 33, as we continue through the sermon on the mount this morning, we'll be looking at it.

And we're reminded here as we get started, the purpose on the sermon on the mount is to convince people that we're listening. He's there with a crowd of people, His disciples, but there's a group of people, scribes and Pharisees, that are self-righteous.

And there are people that need to know that their outward goodness is not enough, that God came for their heart, that He made a standard internally that nobody can meet, that they can't come to on their own.

They need to come to Jesus and say, I've tried my very best, but I can't do it without you. And He would say, that was how it was intended. It was never to be done without me, but it's to be done through a relationship I would have with you.

[1 : 04] I'll give you a new heart. Now, not only the cutting off your hand, the plucking of your eye, you need something much deeper than that. You need a new heart, which is given to us by recognizing our need for forgiveness and accepting Jesus Christ.

And then we've already seen three, you have heard it said. So He tells them, you've heard it said, you've heard it said, you've heard it said. And we've had that anger as equivalent to murder, that lust after a person that's not your spouse is adultery, that an illegitimate divorce can lead to adultery.

And all of you paid real close attention last week when the student pastor talked about all those things. And I would encourage you to pay real close attention today as we talk about something that affects us very much.

And it's these two areas of making vows, the integrity of who we are, and then vengeance, not giving forgiveness. They're two different things, but I think they all be looked at together because they're opposite sides of the same coin.

That the problem that we have making vows and not keeping them and the problem that we have with vengeance really comes down to the same problem. And that has to do with our lack of understanding that we have been made complete in Christ.

[2 : 13] And we'll look at that together. So verses 33 through 37 talks about vows. Verses 38 through 42 talks about vengeance. And let's read them together before we pray.

Matthew chapter 5, verse number 33 through 37. It says, Again you have heard that it has been said, By them of old time thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath.

But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

But neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

In 38 through 42 we look at this area of vengeance or forgiveness. You have heard that it has been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

[3 : 17] And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow thee, turn not thou away.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, I ask that you in this moment will help us have understanding with your scripture today. Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the preservation and that we get to hold it in our hands today.

And to be challenged, to be transformed into your image through hearing your word and by responding to it. Father, my prayer of the day personally is that I would be removed from the equation, that you would allow me once again to be an opportunity for the text, that this text would find a place in the hearts of those that are listening.

And we will leave here closer to you as a result of responding to your word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. So as I said, we have vows and vengeance here.

And it's a manifestation, I said, of the same problem. In lying and seeking vengeance, we desire to take from someone a desire to make ourselves complete. And so I like playing with blocks.

[4 : 28] And so I wanted to illustrate this here for you. It's so simple that I wasn't going to do it because it would be embarrassing. But I'm going to do it anyway here. How many of you still like playing with blocks?

I like Lincoln Logs. And I like Lincoln Logs better than Legos. How many of you like Lincoln Logs? Anybody in here? I like Lincoln Logs because when you step on Legos, you want to die.

I don't understand why they can't make a different Lego. You put man on the moon, we could make a Lego that doesn't want to kill you when you step on it. But my son likes playing with Legos. And he has some kind of order to how he keeps up with them.

And we like to build things. And so this morning here, here you go. I won't throw it. It might be dangerous. Here we go. Eric, you have a log here. And I have a building block. And so I like to play with my building blocks here.

And if I'm building them just like a kid, I have four. But if you have four blocks, what do you really want to have? You want to have five building blocks. Because I can only do so many things with these building blocks.

[5 : 26] And I really want that orange block that you have, Eric, in your hand. So I want to find a way to, Candy, if you will, go steal one of my blocks while I'm over here with Eric.

I'll pretend not to know. All right? So Eric has an additional block. And I would really like to have that block because I'm building a pile of them up here. Because I've been saving. I've been building up.

And this represents everything that I am and who I am. And so I really need another building block. So I'm going to tell Eric whatever it takes. You did a real good job on that song today. I like your tie.

You know, we're friends, aren't we, Eric? You said if I ever need anything, I could just come of you and ask, right? All right, I'll take the block. All right? And so I get the block from Eric. Eric, whatever it takes I'm going to get this block from Eric, I will lie.

I'll say whatever needs to be done because I have decided that I need this block that I'm missing. So now that I have this block, I come up here and I say, I got my five blocks. And then I look at it and say, I am missing a block.

[6 : 23] Which one of you has taken my block? David, boy, I saw the way you looked at my blocks. Everybody else was laughing at me when I had blocks. And David said, I could see your face. You're like, I wish I had some blocks this morning while the service was going on to play with.

And there's a reason we don't give you blocks, David, during the service. All right? And your wife sets you on the second row during the service. All right? So do you have my block? You don't have it? Who took my block?

Cannon did. You took my block. It represents who I am. I got to be a five block kind of guy. You know about those four block people. They're trouble. I am a five block kind of guy.

And you took it from me. And because you took my block from me, I hate you. And I need vengeance upon you. And I am going to take everything I can until I can make myself complete by getting my block back.

Cannon, give me my stinking block back. All right? Hey, don't be an overactor. Give me my block. All right? All right. So I finally got my five blocks here. And I said it's painfully simple. Because I am building my life around this precept that I got to be a five block kind of guy.

[7 : 27] That if anybody has something that I think I need, I will do whatever it takes to get another block. And because I got to be a five block kind of guy, if anything is taken away from my five blocks, and you have taken it from me, then I am going to be vengeful.

And I'm going to do whatever it takes to take back from you so that I could have my five blocks. And that's why I say it's a manifestation of the same problem, is that people who don't remember that we are made complete in Christ are people who go around fabricating lies and selling themselves to always gain something that does not belong to them.

And they also go around vengefully unforgiving people because they feel like something was taken from them. They were disrespected. They weren't appreciated. They didn't feel accepted. And you have taken something that has now made me not complete.

But as children of God, we can be people that are truthful in everything we say. Not just when we sign a contract, but in every word we say we can be truthful people because we're already complete.

You don't have something that I need to take from you to be complete. And because we're children of God and we've been forgiven of our sins and we've been made complete, that means when somebody takes something from us, we can say you can go ahead and keep that and play with it because it does not make us complete if I take it back from you from force.

[8 : 51] So same problem, but the same solution found in knowing that we are complete. So let's look at the Old Testament principles. And that's what these people would have concerning vows, first of all.

What would it be that they would know that the scripture says here? First of all, let's look at what they should have heard. You know, it said you have heard, but let's look at what they should have heard before it was distorted.

The pastor gave examples about how he was told growing up all these things that weren't necessarily true. And he'd go to the scripture and say, hey, the Bible doesn't say that. That is just something you have made up a tradition of men.

But what should they have really heard when it came to vows? Well, they should have got to the Ten Commandments. And they should have known that thou shalt not lie. They should have heard that because that's from the Word of God.

Leviticus 19.12 says, and you shall not swear by my name falsely. They should have been taught that they should not swear by his name falsely. And then we get the Proverbs, and they could have learned that six things the Lord hate, even seven.

[9 : 53] The first is a proud look, and the second is a lying tongue. Proverbs 12.22, it's an abomination to the Lord. The scripture also tells them that the wicked engage in lying.

Psalms 58.3, the wicked are estranged from the womb, and they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. That the wicked lie everywhere they go.

But now that we've been made new in Christ, we aren't those people. We don't come from the womb anymore that are speaking lies because it's our nature, because we've been given a new nature in Christ. Proverbs 64.2, it said that the wicked delight in their lives.

Jeremiah 9 says that the world lies. Jeremiah 23 says that the false prophet lies. Isaiah 57 tells us that hypocrites lie. And we're also taught in the Bible that Satan is called the father of lies.

So you would think that these people properly taught from the word of God would be people that say, we want to distance ourself from lying because it goes contrary to the word of God.

[10 : 54] That's what they should have been taught. And what, since that time in the New Testament, we have heard all those things. In Sunday school, in adult Bible fellowship, and here, you've been taught those same things.

And even more so in the New Testament, we learn a few things. We learn in Hebrews 6 that when God swears by his, he swears by his own name because there's nothing greater. That when we make a pact here on earth, we swear by the name of God because there's nothing greater.

That when he made a covenant, he did it by his own name because there's nothing greater. Then we see the example in Matthew 26 where Peter is standing there outside. There and they come to him and he's outside in the court.

And they say, do you know this person Jesus in there? You kind of sound like you would know him. This is, I don't know the man. And then they come a little bit more and they say that he swears. And it's not that it's just using filthy language.

But he is saying, by the God of heaven, I do not know that man. And they were named Jesus. And he swears by the name of God of heaven. Then when Jesus comes by, he just breaks and he crumbles.

[11 : 57] And he runs off crying because he knows that he has not only lied, but he has put the name of Jesus connecting it to it. And said, by the name of God, I swear I don't know who that man is.

And we see when a person does that, we see the brokenness of heart and the repentance is there. And I'm also glad that we get to see the forgiveness offered and that Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and he preaches.

And so we learn about lying there. We learn it's a big deal that when we're involved in it, it ought to affect us emotionally there. Apostle Paul in Romans 9 will say that I speak the truth in Christ and I lie not and the Holy Spirit bears me witness.

And if Paul takes an oath in the epistle here and in many other places, Jesus takes an oath in his trial. God takes one in Hebrews 6 and Matthew 5, 17. I came not to destroy the law.

And in verse 19, he says, no one is to break the least of these commandments than believe me. If he says that, then there's still a place for this kind of oath.

[12 : 55] But what he has told us here in verse number 37 is that we should elevate our conversation so that our yes means yes and our no means no. Here, Daniel Webster said there's nothing as powerful as the truth and often nothing as strange.

And we live in a world like that where there's nothing that seems to be more strange when somebody just does something just honestly. A teenager I read this week in the news accidentally had like \$35,000 put into their bank account.

I think he was 18 years old. And so he spent it as quick as he could before the bank realized what he did. He went and bought a car. He spent a lot of that money. And then the bank comes to him and says, you've got to give that money back.

And he wasn't able to. So he's in trouble. There's charges against that. You know, he probably wouldn't have robbed the bank for \$35,000. He probably wouldn't have stole it from his family if he could.

But the fact that it was just given to him and he didn't have to work for it, he thought, now this is a loophole. Nobody can blame me for that. Have you ever had that before with a bank account?

[14 : 00] I remember waking up one morning having \$10,000 extra in the bank or just \$10,000. And \$10,000 in the bank. And I was thinking, praise God.

But it wasn't so. All right? But it's easier. You know, I began to calculate in my head and think, you know what? This is like a no interest loan. How are they going to charge me interest on this money?

And you begin to run those things through your head. Or at least I do. You won't be that honest this morning. But at least I did on that occasion. And so he goes out and he spins it. And we know what the Bible teaches about that.

Is that we ought to be people of integrity and our word. Look what it says about vengeance here. What they should have heard. Those are the two things we're looking at here. What they should have heard about vows. What they should hear about vengeance.

The first one here with vows isn't a direct quote. It comes together from many different things. It's what's true about God.

[14 : 55] We'll see. But here in vengeance it's a direct quote from the Bible. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Three different times in the Bible it's said here. Starting in Exodus chapter 20 you have the law of God.

And in that chapter you have the moral law which is between man and God. And we see that in the Ten Commandments. But in Exodus 21 through 23 you have what's the civil law. And the way that we should act together inside of society.

So they should have been taught that this eye for an eye and a tooth for the tooth is part of a civil law. That is there's judges and there's magistrates and there's authorities that go on because this is a civil situation.

An example given in Exodus chapter number 21 verses 22 through 25. Listen to the scenario. If a man strive and hurt a woman with a child so that the fruit depart from her and yet no mischief follow.

He shall be surely punished according as the woman's husband will lay upon him. And he shall pay as the judge determines. And if any mischief follow then thou shalt give life for life.

[15 : 59] Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. Hand for hand. Foot for foot. Burning for burning. And wound for wound. Strike for strike. Right. So in other words if you harm a woman with a child. And there could be harm where she doesn't lose the child.

But there also could be harm where she does lose that child. The point is that the husband has the right to seek damages. But the judge and the civil system will determine what is the right for action.

So this is what they should have been hearing about it. That God had put a place in there. And it protects the victim. But it also protects the criminal from somebody taking more. That somebody taking not an eye for an eye but taking a life for an eye.

And he puts that there in protection. And we have something similar today about that. That different body parts have a different price about it. And that's where those lawyers that would chase an ambulance down.

They understand that. They're very good at understanding. If this is what happened to you. This is what you have coming to you. There's a system upon it. We've been told that even some factors. It's already written out.

[17 : 02] If you lost a thumb in the assembly line. Then a thumb is worth X amount of money. And so that's what's being taught to them. That's what they should have heard there.

They should have heard that the vengeance here. Is that what is going to be repaid. Is decided by the judge and the magistrates. And this is a simple law. So these scribes were the ones who cared around the book.

And they were supposed to be able to decide what to do based upon the book. And the Pharisees were supposed to be experts in teaching. And living out the book. But let's look at how messed up they were. So we said what they should have heard.

But this is what they were hearing. It's a perversion by the scribes and Pharisees there. By the self-righteous. So concerning vows. This is what had been said. Thou shalt not forswear thyself.

But shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath. They're not changing a specific verse here. But they are changing the emphasis that is made here. What is being applied.

[17 : 56] When we read Leviticus 19.12 and it says. And you shall not swear by my name falsely. The emphasis here is that you shouldn't swear falsely. That's what God is teaching.

That you ought to be a person of integrity and not swear falsely. But with their self-righteous hearts. This is the emphasis. They said you should not swear falsely by his name. You see the difference?

It was the emphasis there. They took the same statement. But they emphasized the wrong part. God says don't swear falsely. Don't be a person that doesn't say yes. Be yes.

And no be no. And they said God says. That when you swear by my name. You have to be a truthful person. But if it isn't by my name. Then you don't have to be. And you just wonder how does that happen.

How does a mind do that? They were pretending to swear. But they didn't do it by God. So they get out of it. They were swearing by the earth. By Jerusalem. And by their head. And the thing had become so complex.

[18 : 51] That Jesus had to deal with it later. And he gave them another chance at understanding. In Matthew 23. In verse number 16. He goes to them and says. You swear by the gold of the temple.

But don't you understand that the gold sanctifies it? You swear by the altar. You say if you swear by the altar. It's nothing. But if you swear by the gifts that are upon it. You're guilty of it.

And he says. Don't you understand that if you swear by the temple. Not of the gold of the temple. You're blind. Because which is greater. The temple or gold. If you swear by the altar. But not the gift upon it. You're a fool.

Because what is greater. The gift. Or the gift. Or what sanctifies it. If you swear by the temple or heaven. You're swearing by the one who dwells in them. God is not impressed with their ability. The fabricate lies.

That appear to be truth. He was less than happy about the fact. They were using his name to do it. They are the originators of the opposite day. How many of you remember the opposite day.

[19 : 47] In elementary school. No. But a few of you in here know what I'm talking about. I never got that calendar. I never knew when opposite day was coming. But I would know that my friend would say. Hey Trent.

Do you want my fruit roll up? And I'd say. Yeah I do. He'd say. Just joking. It's opposite day. Like oh man. I wish somebody would have told me. It's what little kids do. When they want to change things around.

Any teachers. We still play an opposite day. It's a way to change things around. I'm sure they're way cooler about it. Last night with the bridge builders. And the high school class came together for an activity.

And the idea was they were supposed to say something. And the other class was supposed to find out if it was true or false. And 80% of us tried to say something that was false. Because it was more fun.

And were playing a game. And a lot of them tried to get you in technicalities. Jacob Elsey cheated. Alright. Jacob Elsey said. I could fly an airplane.

[20 : 42] And so the teenagers were talking. And Miss Miller doesn't think Jacob can fly an airplane. Alright. And so they thought. He asked the question. And they were all talking. And they said.

Does he mean a real airplane? Or does he mean a toy airplane? Or a model airplane? And so they answered and said. No. You can't fly an airplane.

And he said. No. When I was younger I had model airplanes. And I could fly an airplane. And he got them. On a technicality. And I believe if they would have answered the other way. He would have got them on the other technicality.

Alright. So we like to do that. And that game was all fun and good. But in real life that is not a way to go about living. And we continue in the same foolishness today. Do you say one thing and do another?

Do you say one thing but believe another? Are you one way here and a different way another way? Here at other places. Here are some ways that we lie to control the situation. We exaggerate. We tell our spouse.

[21 : 36] You've never. Or you've always. We exaggerate. Because we're trying to get an action out of them. We do word inflation. I'm guilty of this so many times. Hying something to the point that nobody believes what you're saying.

This will be the greatest ever. Handler lies. This is where the little people wouldn't understand what you're saying. So we just don't tell them. Other people have called it the Watergate lie.

It's where you withhold information because you don't think the person deserves to have it. Then you just have routine business lies. Making up numbers at the end of the quarter through sales that you know will never go through.

Or we even joke about it in the foyer of the church. And we say, you know, we can't lie here. We're in church. The proximity to this building determines how honest we are going to be. So we do that because we want to control the situation.

But there's another set of lies that we do where we want to be accepted and we want to be loved. And these are political lies that we do to be nice. I have my wife's permission on this illustration. And I needed it.

[22 : 35] We're at Chick-fil-A the other day. And a friend of ours from college who's from the north. She was talking to Stephanie and I wasn't around. And she said, you know, people here in the south, they'll just agree with you.

And they'll say whatever you want. But they're just lying to you. They're being nice. And they don't really tell you what you believe. Well, Stephanie and I are going down the road in the minivan. And she's all upset about this. And she said, can you believe that she said that?

She said us southerners are fake. And that we just say whatever you want us to say. Agree with them. And I say, I can't believe she said that. What did you say? She said, well, I agreed with her because I didn't want to make her mad. And I was like, I think that might be what she was talking about.

And it's true. She wants to make people feel comfortable there. And she's being polite in that. And she was there. And so we do that all the time, just being political in that.

We don't tell people about it. And I will say our friends to the north are much more honest than their daily conversations. And our friends from Seattle are agreeing with me here that they just say what they mean.

[23 : 33] And they mean what they say. Benevolent lies when you need to tell somebody the truth, but you won't do it. You just won't. You need to help them with the truth that you want.

And then lastly, lies with personal branding. In a day that we live where we all run our own marketing firm with social media where we're all out there and we have an image and we get to control it, it's very easy for us to only put out things that make us look a certain way.

And we get so consumed with this branding and marketing that we do because we want to have an image. And how does it affect us as a church and as a community? First of all, it destroys community.

Imagine a society where no one can trust one another, where every teacher is questioned, no partner could trust another one. Stephanie and I took our kids to an ear, nose, and throat doctor many years ago.

And as soon as we walked in, there were signs everywhere that said, please do not be on your cell phone when you're talking to us. Do not sit here. Do not lean against the wall. Basically, anytime somebody did something dumb in the office, they made a sign and stuck it up there because they could not trust you to be human in that office.

[24 : 38] And I said, I don't feel comfortable at all here at all because they had signs everywhere. And it really takes away that feeling of community. Glad we don't have that here, a sign every time something happens around the church.

Not only does it destroy community when we can't trust one another, it destroys your identity. You're trying hard to figure out who you are and it's always changing. One of my favorite lines in *The Graves of Wrath*, the guy used to be a preacher.

And he says, they go to him, he's on the side of the road, and they say, why aren't you a preacher anymore? He says, because preachers have to have answers and I don't have any answers anymore. So I don't know who that I am.

And when people begin lying, they get to a point when they're like, I don't even know who I am anymore. Because I'm one person with another one and I'm another person with another one. So they just lose their identity.

And then it destroys human dignity. You begin to use people. You keep people at a disadvantage. You're treating them as children at best and as objects at worst. Joy Davidman says, there are lies of gossip, public and private, which make haters out of us.

[25 : 38] The lies of advertising and salesmanship, which make money out of us. The lies of politicians, which make power out of us. And so when we lie one to another inside of this church and this community of believers, we make the other one as a child at best or we make them like objects to us.

That all you are is somebody to my advantage and I want to keep you at a disadvantage. And it really hurts that. It destroys the joyful fellowship that 1 John 1, 3, 4 says that we have because we walk in light together.

And another thing that it does not only destroys this community and our identity of who we are and dignity of one another, but it also repels the lost world because they can sense it. They understand when we're not being honest and sincere.

And that is the complaint that they've had upon the church is that we are people that don't handle each other honestly. That we're fake. That when we share prayer requests, we don't really share prayer requests. And that we're not transparent.

That we're all about giving this image. And they don't want it. Because there's enough of it out in this world. People trying to sell something to them for their own advantage. And when they come in here, they feel like the same thing could be happening.

[26 : 44] God forbid in this church or this group of believers that it makes us insincere. And that does not help a lost world that is looking for real truth. Something that's different than the world. So that's in vows.

That's where we have been told ourselves. What the Bible says and we've been told something. And then when it comes to vengeance here, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is a direct quote. But an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth being mentioned.

Here is where the context is misapplied. So in the first one, it was an emphasis that is misapplied that says, Yeah, you only have to be honest if you're saying that God said this.

And in your normal conversations, you don't have to be honest. But in your contracts and your oaths and when you say that I swear upon God, you have to be honest. But in daily life, that's an emphasis problem. Here is a context problem where they took a verse that applies to one context and they apply it to another.

People say that the God of the Old Testament is not the God of the New Testament because he is really mean in the Old Testament. And you and I should be busy about clearing that up. He is not mean, but he is just and he is merciful.

[27 : 47] People interpret it that way because that's the way the human heart is. We believe that an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is mean and vengeful because we are people who want to take from people. But God was a loving and merciful God and he was protecting us together as we live together in peace as much as possible.

So they applied a civil law to their daily vendettas. Laws are restrained and when justice is enacted speedily and quickly, it has a great effect upon society. There needed to be and needs to be a principle in place where man will run off in a motion and judges have discernment.

And then they even have guidelines that a judge has discernment in the situation. It's this person's fifth term to be coming here for the same crime and he has discernment, but he has guidelines.

The judge can't send us a guy to death for a crime that doesn't call for that. We have built-in guidelines that say a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye. And we have to trust and hand it over to those people that would do that.

Deuteronomy 19 says, Kent, you could have just one witness and the witness can be punished for the false accusation. So we're learning what God would have there. So if somebody came and there was just one witness, it wouldn't stand.

[28 : 56] You have to have more than one witness. But if a person makes an accusation against somebody and it comes out to be false, that the person making the accusation could have the punishment that would have been given to the person that was being falsely accused.

It's a wonderful law given to us as we live together in society civilly, but they had taken it and applied it to the wrong place. You know, we live in a culture that's very much like that, where they take the word of God and just put it wherever they want to go, and they misapply the context there because our self-righteous hearts want to make us to be God.

I want to be in charge of repaying people. I want to be in charge of vengeance there. So we need to listen through the noise and hear what God has to say about these issues. We don't need to just hear what we've been told of old time, but we need to know what is really right and what is really said when it comes to vows and vengeance.

So what the world was telling them back then about vows, it wasn't true. It was a wrong emphasis. They said you only have to be honest during this time. You don't have to be honest in this area, but you have to be honest in the other one.

And we're told the same thing today, that there's a certain level of honesty that has to take place in different areas and it changes. But that's not true about the children of God, that our yes means yes and our no means no, and that we don't have to go around making an oath to get people to believe us because our word means something to them.

[30 : 20] And then also the same upon vengeance, that we can't go around seeking vengeance upon people, but we give it over to the right authorities there. And so what's the prescription here for us? I said listen through the noise what God has to say.

The self-righteous are told to repent. They're adulterous in their heart. They have killed men in their minds. They have used God's name to make false promises. They have manipulated God's word for the use of evil and for vengeance.

They are told to recognize they haven't eternally or even externally fulfilled what God would have of them. God says righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees.

They come there and they think they're so great, and he looks at everybody in 520 and says, your righteousness has to go beyond the best one sitting here in this circle. And they need to see what they can't, and that their righteousness will never be enough.

It will never be accomplished apart from the death of Christ upon the cross. So if you're in here today, and you're like the Pharisees and the scribes, and you came in here today, and you say, well, I know the Bible says that this is sin, but you modified it, you have placed an emphasis on the word of God, or you're taking it out of context, and you say, I'm a pretty good person, but I'm not really in need of this.

[31 : 35] I am doing a good job on my own. Can I tell you that Jesus looks through that, and he sees your heart, and he's telling you today that there's no way to achieve the righteousness that is necessary for heaven outside of recognizing, I am a sinner, I have sinned against the Almighty God, and I need forgiveness.

If you're an unbeliever in here today, that is the message that you need to respond to. Believers today, you need to remember some things about you because you're in Christ. Because of what he's done in Christ, we are people of integrity.

The word integrity comes from the word integer. It means that we're not in a fraction, that we are complete. We are a whole number, and we're not divided. You know, like I always thought I would never do banking at fifth, third bank because it's an improper fraction, and if they're going to handle my money, they should be better than that.

It should be one and two thirds bank. But it's an improper fraction. That's not who we are. We're not 90% people. We're not all those things. We are complete in Christ and the work of mine because of what he has done upon the cross.

We sing that here in the church, and I hope with your life you say that, that we can be people of integrity. David completed a promise in Psalm 78, 72, when he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guarded them by the skillfulness of his hand.

[32 : 53] He had a complete heart because he was truthful and honest with his dealings with people. So we recognize God is everywhere. You're always present before the Lord. You can't swear on anything or anywhere, and it not matter.

Because heaven is God's throne. Earth is God's footstool. Jerusalem is the city of the great God. And your head, you have no power over it. You can't tell a hair to be white.

You can't tell a hair to be black. You have no power over it. And this is crushing to the Pharisees. People who like to build a facade and look like they're doing something, this is crushing to them.

Because they're saying, not just in the temple, but everywhere I go, God sees me. And he covers from the top of our head all the way to heaven, the east and to the west, and everywhere they go. And if you're trying to live this external life, that's crushing.

Because you never get a break. You never get to go somewhere and be hidden and just live out your heart. He sees you. They obey the law and they fear disobeying because they fear hell.

[33 : 53] I read a story about a man who was having an affair and he could never take his mistress to his house because inside of his house, there was pictures of his wife everywhere. And so if she ever came over, he would have to take the pictures of his wife and turn them around or take them down because she couldn't stand to see the man's wife looking at her.

Can I tell you that the world that we live in, you cannot turn the pictures of God. When you go to work, He's there. And when you go home in your family, He's there. And when you have recreation, He's there.

In everything you do, the picture of God is still there and you cannot turn it around and you can't ignore His presence. And when we're self-righteous people, that is heavy, heavy, heavy, and it's crushing.

For those of us who have already thrown our hands up and asked Him to forgive us of our sins, it is very, very comforting. It's exciting to those that love Him. It doesn't just bring accountability, but it brings what we want.

And what is it that we want? It's His presence in our lives. Psalm 16, 8. I've set the Lord ever before me because He is at my right hand and I will never be shaken.

[34 : 59] A vow recognizes the presence of God. It doesn't create it. We are honest people because we don't need to take from other people because we're complete. But we're honest people because we know He is everywhere.

In the small things and in the big things, He is watching and we want to bring glory to His name. So what's the principle, the secret, if you will, of integrity? It's just simply knowing that we are always before Him and that we live with an audience of one.

Then we're people that are able to forgive as we're commended. Vengeance doesn't belong to us. We yield it over to God. They may mean yielding over to a civil system. Justice is decided by the court.

Forgiveness is a matter of the heart and the sentence of the court can't give it. We are supposed to forgive. Forgive there is what we're told. Forgive when you feel disrespected. For whomsoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

The right cheek signifying the right hand, which is most commonly used. It's a backhand upon somebody. It is just a blatant sign of disrespect. So when you feel disrespected, you're supposed to forgive.

[36 : 05] And when you know you're in the right, and if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him take the cloak also. When you know you're right in the argument, you still offer forgiveness to the person.

Forgive when you're being taken advantage of. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Roman soldiers have the ability just to go out and whoever was there say, hey, carry my bag for me.

Go with me a mile. And they were saying, you know what? You're going to take advantage of me? You want me to go a mile? I'll go two miles with you because you don't take anything from me because I am complete.

And so we forgive even when we've been taken advantage of. And we forgive when we'll be willing to let go of our stuff. Give to him that asketh thee and from him that should borrow thee. Turn not thou away.

We already see that there's a system in place where you can go and there's civil action and judges can do that. But in your heart, the thing you can take control of is that you provide forgiveness. Even if something's going on in a civil way and they're arguing about material, your decision in your heart and the courtroom of your heart is I'm going to go ahead and forgive and I'm going to hand it over to the court system to take care of that.

[37 : 11] But that isn't where most of us live. We live with petty things that are between brother and sister, between friend and neighbor. So do both of these things by remembering you are complete. We are motivated to lie when we want to gain something we do not currently have.

We are motivated to seek revenge when we feel like something was part of us was taking. And as children of God, I want to remind you, you are complete. We know we live in the presence of God, so we live with integrity.

We don't need to lie because our self-image is not part of being perfect, but we have been seen by God at our worst and we know that we're still loved. And we can trust God and not seek our own vengeance.

We know He cares for us and He's better to us than we would be to ourselves. And we know that nothing matters for eternity that can be taken from us because we are in the hands of God.

So I kind of just remind you of my simple illustration here in here is that we can be people of honesty and integrity in our conversations because there's nothing that you have that I need to wrongfully take from you so I don't need to lie.

[38 : 11] I don't need to be misleading. I don't need to try to handle you in my relationship. I just tell you who I am. And if that affects my self-image, let it because I know I'm enough in Jesus Christ and so I don't have to create something.

And also when it comes to vengeance and forgiveness, whatever was taken from you did not break you. Whatever was taken from you did not make you less of anything. It did not make you a fraction because you are complete in Christ.

So if it was respect or if it was tangible and you lost something in here today then you should do what the Bible says. Not what the world tells us the Bible says but really what the Bible says in this area of forgiveness and letting things go to other people.

So I'll pray in here today that you'll respond according to God's Word. Not what has been said but what the Word of God says. And in here today two sides of the same coin.

Do you know that you're complete in here? Are you living a life of integrity? And are you offering forgiveness when it's asked upon you? Because you know you are complete in Christ. Heavenly Father, I thank you for your Word today.

[39 : 17] Lord, I thank you how all these thousands of years later, Lord, two thousand years later we read it and it's very applicable to where we are today. Lord, I don't know to the extent that it makes application in the hearts of the people hearing today but I know the work of the Holy Spirit will do it.

So I first of all pray for those that are in here that are unbelievers that have a form of self-righteousness and they have mishandled the Word of God to tell themselves that they are good and that they don't need forgiveness.

So my prayer is the day that they will come to you asking for forgiveness knowing that they did not meet the standard. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia.

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