

Matthew 5

God's will concerning retaliation 5: 38-42

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek; turn the other to him also.

- **Exodus 21:24.** 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
- Retaliation back in the day in the Middle East was common practice. It often led to vendettas, which eventually led to vengeful acts, which lasted for generations.
- The Jews tended to view the law of retaliation as God's permission to take vengeance. That was never God's intention (**Read Leviticus 19:18**). He simply wanted to protect them from excessive vengeance and to curb vendettas.
- As God had permitted divorce because of the hardness of man's heart, so He permitted a certain amount of retaliation under the Mosaic Law. However, His intention was that His people would avoid divorce and retaliation entirely. He wanted us to love one another and to put the welfare of others before our own.
- **"But I tell you not to resist (take aggressive action against) an evil person..."** When evil people do bad things to us, Jesus' disciples should accept the injustice without taking revenge.
- To accept injustice without retaliating expresses trust that God will faithfully care for us, His own. The Old Testament taught that the Jews were to leave vengeance to God (read Leviticus 19:17-18)
- **But whoever slaps you on your right cheek; turn the other to him also.** Back in the day, a backhand slap on the right cheek was a huge insult. This was another example of hyperbole sayings. Jesus' point was that we should accept insult or injury without retaliating.

Matthew 5:40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

- Read **Exodus 22:26- 27**. According to (**Exodus 22:26- 27; Deuteronomy 24:13**). Under Mosaic Law, a person's outer cloak was something he or she had a strong right to retain. This is another example of hyperbole. Jesus did not

intend His disciples to walk around naked, but to be generous—even toward enemies—even if it meant parting with essential possessions.

Matthew 5:41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

- The Romans sometimes ambushed civilians to carry the luggage of military personnel, but the civilian did not have to carry the luggage for more than one Roman mile.
- Jesus advocated going an extra mile. The disciple is to respond to unjustified demands by giving even more than the adversary asks, and he or she is to return good for evil.
- What Jesus is saying is: 'Don't be always thinking of your liberty to do as you like;
- Be always thinking of your duty and your privilege to be of service to others. When a task is laid on you, even if the task is unreasonable and hateful, don't do it as an inconveniencing duty to be resented;
- Do it as a service to be gladly given.

Matthew 5:42 "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away.

- If it is within your power,
- Give it with a cheerful and generous heart as seen in **Deuteronomy 15: 7-11**. This applies to loans as well as gifts as seen in **Exodus 22:25**. **"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.**
- This does not mean we should give all our money away to individuals and institutions that ask for our financial assistance. Our giving to certain individuals should not encourage them to be lazy and jobless, nor should it lead us to being in debt. **Proverbs 22:26 Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, One of those who is surety for debts; 27 If you have nothing with which to pay, Why should he take away your bed from under you?**
- However, we must also remember that it's better to give to so many comen than to risk turning away someone in real need.
- Love must be the disciple's governing principle, not selfishness.
- Let us also realise that Jesus is not asking us to be doormats. We should stand up for our rights. But when we are taken advantage of we must respond with love.

God's will concerning love 5:43-47

- **Read Luke 6:27-36**

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'

- Jesus again quotes the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18) but adds a saying added by the rabbis but not by Moses.

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- Love. What kind of love was Jesus talking about here?

Exodus 23:4-5 "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.

5 "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

- He was talking about agape love. The kind that includes emotion as well as action. The parable of the Good Samaritan in **(Luke 10:30-37)** is a good example.
- It must involve action, warmth, generosity and costly self-sacrifice for another's good.
- Love your enemies. Who are your enemies? Those who curse you hate you; provoke anger, hatred and retaliation from you.
- According to Jesus, Praying for someone like that is a true manifestation of love for him or her.
- Even Jesus prayed for His tormentors. **Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34).**
- The surest way of killing bitterness is to pray for those we are tempted to hate.
- **45 That you may be sons of your Father in heaven;** by loving and praying for our enemies, we show that we are God's sons because we do what He does.

- ***For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*** When God blesses His enemies as well as His disciples it is known as common grace by some theologians. As God's disciples, we should do as he does. ***Galatians 6:10 therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.***
- ***46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?"*** According to verse 46, if you love your enemy, a reward awaits you.
- ***Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*** Tax collectors were local Jews who collected taxes from their countrymen for the Romans. Matthew was one of them. The whole Roman system of collecting taxes was very corrupt, and strict Jews viewed these "tax collectors" as both traitorous and unclean, because of their close association with Gentiles. They were among the most despised people in Palestine. However, even they, Jesus said, loved those who loved them.

Matthew 5:47 "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?"

- Proper greetings were an evidence of courtesy and respect. However, if Jesus' disciples only gave them to their brethren, they didn't do more than the Gentiles, most of whom were pagans.

Matthew 5:48 "Therefore you shall be perfect,

- Perfection here refers to uprightness and sincerity of character.
- It refers to maturity in godliness or attaining the goal of conforming to the character of God. While sinless perfection is impossible, godliness, biblically, is attainable.

Just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

- *Man was created to be like God.* One of the great characteristics of God is His love to saint and to sinner alike. No matter what men do to Him, God seeks nothing but their highest good.
- Good children in the ancient East normally imitated their fathers. Jesus wished the same for His disciples. ***Leviticus 19:2 "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'you shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.***

Ephesians 5:1 therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Jesus condensed all the debates about the law to one single attitude of the heart, utter devotion to God and radical love of thy neighbour.

While we are definitely to strive for perfection in our conformity to the will of God, we must beware of the dangers associated with perfectionism. In one sense a perfectionist is someone who strives for perfection, but in another sense it is someone who is obsessed with perfection. It is ungodly. God is not constantly "on the backs" of people who are less than perfect, and we should not be either—whether on other people or on ourselves. In fact, He gives us a great deal of "space" and is patient with us, allowing us to correct our own mistakes before He steps in to do so.