

The Greatest Sermon – Enemies

Vengeance. Humans love retribution.

Matthew 5:38-42 “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.⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also.⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.⁴² Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

- Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. Where did they hear this said?
- Mosaic Law.
 - **Exodus 21:23-25** But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life,²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.
- Why was this part of the law?
 - Eye for eye was put in the law to prevent excessive punishment. People desire to go beyond reasonable.
 - **Proverbs 17:14** The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.
 - When a dam breaks, it does not release just a reasonable amount of water.
 - The law’s intent was to inhibit man’s rage.
 - Jacob’s daughter Dinah gets raped. Her brothers go to the town of the man that did it and they convince them to all get circumcised. During their recovery, the brothers kill all the inhabitants of that city. Then they loot the city and take captive all the remaining inhabitants.
- Specifically, this was put in for judicial reasons. For courts to carry out the law. This was not for individuals other than for them to know the punishment. We do not take the law into our own hands.

It is not wrong to love justice or to admit you have been wronged.

- **Ephesians 4:26-27** “*Be angry, and do not sin*”: *do not let the sun go down on your wrath,*²⁷ nor give place to the devil.

- **The problem with allowing others to manipulate our responses is that it inevitably leads to sin.**

And God has reserved justice for Himself.

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord.

What exactly are all these scenarios Jesus is describing?

- Slap on cheek – an insult. This is not getting beat up. It was an insult.
 - But Jesus says to bear it. And to even turn the other cheek. No retribution.
- Sued for your tunic. An unjust suing. Suffering loss because of others.
 - Cloaks were important and it was against the law to keep someone else's
 - **Exodus 22:26** If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down.
 - **Deuteronomy 24:13** You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God.
 - But Jesus says instead of trying to get back what is yours, be generous and offer even more.
- Go 2 miles - Judea was under Roman military occupation. Under military law, any Roman soldier might command a Jew to carry his soldier's pack for one mile – but only one mile. Jesus here says, "Go beyond the one mile required by law and give another mile out of a free choice of love.
- Give and lend to others freely. Share.

In this life we may be insulted to our faces. We may be sued unjustly. We may lose our possessions. We may be forced to do things against our will. People may take from us and may even not return borrowed things.

Every one of these scenarios is someone trying to pull a response out of you

So what does Jesus say about this?

You have heard it said... But I say.

Again, Jesus is not upturning the Old Testament. It is not that the Old Testament God is one thing and the New Testament God is another.

In everything we have looked at so far, Jesus has been the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

- Turn the other cheek is the fulfillment of an eye for an eye.
- What is that fulfillment?

The original intent of the law was to limit rage. To control the response to be proportionate to the crime.

Jesus says there is a better way.

- Don't just limit rage.

In all these scenarios, others are manipulating your response.

- Get insulted – insult them back
- Get sued, countersue
- Get compelled to go that mile – complain bitterly about it.
- That person you don't like wants to borrow something – no way!

But Jesus is not like that. Jesus is reviled, but He does not revile in return.

- **1 Peter 2:21-23** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² *"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";* ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

The best thing is to be forgiving.

- **Romans 12:20-21** Therefore *"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- When we respond the way Jesus responds – forgiveness, kindness, generosity – we are turning the situation upside down and taking manipulation and turning it into an act of love.

Our happiness is not dependent on others actions.

Listen to Jesus...

Matthew 5:43-44 "You have heard that it was said, '*You shall love your neighbor* and hate your enemy.'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

- The law said to love your neighbor. But people were adding to it. Hate your enemy. That was never part of the law.
- Jesus flips this completely around that we love our enemies.
- When people curse us – we bless them.
- Pray for those that persecute us, insult us and use us.

Those who oppose us need help.

- We need a mindset shift to not see them as enemies, but as people that need help.
- Everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about.
- What do they need from you? More battle? No. Compassion.
- Should we have mercy on people that hurt us?
- Does Jesus have mercy on us when we have hurt Him?
 - **Luke 23:34** Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.
 - **Acts 7:59-60** And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."⁶⁰ Then he knelt

down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

- Jesus heals the ear after Peter cuts it off.

Christians are different from the world.

How?

- **Matthew 5:45** 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.
- We are to act in accordance with our spiritual DNA. Live out your identity.

Matthew 5:46-47 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

- We are not only kind to those we like – that's how the world looks. We are called to be different.
- We commit to a divine standard.

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

You are perfect because you have been declared perfect. The power of Christ in you empowers you to be more than you are without Him.

In closing

We continually have people that speak harshly to us, treat us poorly, wrong us, cheat us, and even speak to others lies about us. We are not treated kindly all the time.

How do we as Christians respond?

Psalm 4:1-8 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in *my* distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. ² How long, O you sons of men, *Will you turn* my glory to shame? *How long* will you love worthlessness *and* seek falsehood? Selah ³ But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; The LORD will hear when I call to Him. ⁴ Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah ⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD. ⁶ *There are* many who say, "Who will show us *any* good?" LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. ⁷ You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. ⁸ I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

When our response is to God and not to our flesh, the result is peace.