



07.09.17 | Retaliation and Loving Your Enemies

Matthew 5:38-48

Matthew 5:38-48

“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow. You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who

persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Deuteronomy 19:16-21

If a malicious witness comes forward and accuses someone of a crime, then both the accuser and accused must appear before the Lord by coming to the priests and judges in office at that time. The judges must investigate the case thoroughly. If the accuser has brought false charges against his fellow Israelite, you must impose on the accuser the sentence he intended for the other person. In this way, you will purge such evil from among you. Then the rest of the people will hear about it and be afraid to do such an evil thing. You must show no pity for the guilty! Your rule should be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

“Love your enemies is good... there is nothing to be said against it except that it is too difficult for most of us to practise sincerely.”

- Bertrand Russell

- 1) Who is my enemy?
- 2) What does it mean to love?
- 3) What does it mean to love your enemies?

First, who is my enemy?

Your enemy is anyone who you view as less than yourself. In doing so, you refuse to see them as an image-bearer of God.

Second, what does it mean to love?

Love is “to will the good of another.”

- Dallas Willard

“Agape is something of the understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill for all men. It is a love that seeks nothing in return. It is an overflowing love; it’s what theologians would call the love of God working in the lives of men. And when you rise to love on this level, you begin to love men, not because they are likeable, but because God loves them. You look at every man, and you love him

because you know God loves him. And he might be the worst person you've ever seen.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

What then does it look like to love our enemies?

Jesus loved perfectly in every situation and interaction.

Definitions of love:

“willing the good of another”

“redemptive goodwill towards all men”

Love is a dynamic force.

Love requires wisdom.

At the core of loving your enemies is believing the truth that all men and women are made in the image of God and that God loves them and they are of infinite worth to Him.

“But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!”

Jesus links loving your enemies to praying for them.

Praying for our enemies affirms their worth and value in the eyes of God, and over time, in our own eyes as well.

“Certainly these are great words, words lifted to cosmic proportions. And over the centuries, many persons have argued that this is an extremely difficult command. Many would go so far as to say that it just isn’t possible to move out into the actual practice of this glorious command. They would go on to say that this is just additional proof that Jesus was an impractical idealist who never quite came down to earth. So the arguments abound. But far from being an impractical idealist, Jesus has become the practical realist. The words of this text glitter in our eyes with a new urgency. Far from being the pious injunction of a utopian dreamer, this command is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. Yes, it is love that will save our world and our civilization, love even for enemies.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.