

FIRM FOUNDATIONS

Study #9 (Updated 8-11-17)

Read Matt. 5:38-48 (NIV)

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.⁴³ You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?⁴⁸ **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**”*

Q: What is the “eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth” thing all about?

- Jesus is summarizing what was said in **Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; and Deut. 19:21.**
- The command is: If a person injures another, the same injury is due him.

Q: Is Jesus revoking the Old Testament Law, and introducing a new one?

- This OT Law was instruction for the judges and courts.
 - Jesus is teaching His disciples *how they should respond* to evil people, not *how the legal system should respond* to evil people.
- The Pharisees and others had used the OT Law to justify retaliation and vendettas; but Jesus teaches His disciples to surrender their rights for justice, and instead to **love mercy (Micah 6:8)!**
- **BTW:** Mercy is not the opposite of Justice... actually, they are a lot alike.
 - Both Mercy and Justice are concerned with the rights of another person; but Mercy goes beyond Justice, and does more for the other person than Justice would require.

Q: What does “Do not resist an evil person” mean?

- “Do not resist” means more than do not retaliate... it means accepting wrong treatment.

Q: So, is Jesus teaching us to be pacifists?

- No. Jesus is using hyperbole here. If He isn’t using hyperbole, then all forms of resisting evil would be prohibited, like preaching the gospel (**Mark 16:15**), rebuking a brother who sins (**Luke 17:3**), and resisting the Devil (**James 4:7**).

Q: If Jesus is using hyperbole, then in what way are we not to resist an evil person?

- In all the examples Jesus gives, it's *your time, your money*, and *your comfort* that are at risk... not your life or the lives of others.
 - Jesus' teaching about non-resistance seems to be about surrendering your rights in order to be loving toward someone who is unkind toward you.
- Giving up your rights, and showing mercy, is an expression of love; and so is standing up for the rights of another.
 - **James 4:17** makes it clear we should do the good we know we should; and it would be good to protect an innocent person from being harmed by an evil person.
- **BTW:** There's no teaching from Jesus or His apostles on what a Christian should do if asked to go to war. Each Christian will have to determine for themselves if going to war is an expression of loving God and loving people (**Matt. 22:37-40**).

Q: So is Jesus saying I should let people beat me up?

- In the near East, both in Jesus' day and now, the most insulting physical blow you can give is a slap with the back of the hand against the right cheek. It was punishable by a very heavy fine (Mishnah BK 8:6). This is what Jesus is describing.
- **Jesus' illustration is about absorbing insult, not physical injury.**

Q: Why doesn't Jesus want us to defend our property in court? (vs. 40)

- Jesus is probably using hyperbole again. His point is: You don't *have* to defend your property!
 - If we are children of the King, then really anything we have comes from Him and belongs to Him. He supplies our need, so we don't have to defend our property.
- Rather than promoting ill will between you and another person who is already hostile toward you, Jesus wants you to repay evil with good, and overcome evil with good (**Rom. 12:21**).

Q: Why does Jesus want us to go the 2nd mile (vs. 41)?

- Jesus was saying, "*Why should you demand your right to stop at one mile and force the soldier to find someone else... or allow another person to bear the burden?*"
 - It was Roman law that a Roman soldier could require a civilian to carry something one mile. There is an example of this in **Matt. 27:32**.
- You are not being merciful if you go just one mile... that's just duty; but you can go beyond duty to show God's love.

Q: Is Jesus' command, to give and loan to anyone who asks, a literal command?

- Again, this is obviously hyperbole (**2Thess. 3:10**). The point is, we shouldn't have a tight fist toward our money, or our time, or our convenience.
- We are called to love people more than things.

Q: Who is an enemy, and how are we supposed to love them?

- An enemy is one who curses you, hates you, spitefully uses you, and persecutes you (**Luke 6:27-28**). Jesus teaches us to love our enemies by 1) blessing them, 2) doing good to them, and 3) praying for them.
 - Love isn't so much a feeling as it is a decision and an action.
 - You can do all of these things without having any good feelings toward the person.
 - However, if you treat an enemy this way, you may start to notice your feelings toward them begin to soften and warm.

Q: What does Jesus mean when He says, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”?

- “Perfect” is the Greek word “**Teleios**” (*tel-i-os*), and it means “*complete*” or “*mature.*”
- **Jesus is saying, ‘Let your love be complete or mature like God’s love is.’**
- **Luke 6:27-36** is the parallel to this passage; but in **Luke 6:36**, Jesus says to be “merciful” instead of “perfect.”
 - Mercy gives to people more than they deserve... that’s how God is!
 - Most people will not do favors for someone who isn’t a friend, and definitely not for someone who is an enemy. But God does favors for everyone (**Luke 6:35**)!
- **Jesus is telling us not to be selective in who we will love; instead He wants us to love everyone like God does.**
 - We know we are supposed to love other Christians, but we are also supposed to love and do good to those who are not Christians (**Gal. 6:10**).

What About You?

Q: When was the last time you “turned the other cheek”? When was the last time you didn’t?

Q: When was the last time you repaid evil with good?

Q: How do you practice generosity, and with whom?

Q: How do you treat those who curse you, hate you, spitefully use you, and persecute you?

Q: What do your answers to these questions tell you about your spiritual maturity... your love of Mercy (**Micah 6:8**)?