

Counter Culture

"Avoiding Revenge and Loving Your Enemies" Matthew 5:38-48

Matthew 5:38-48 - "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

1. Jesus said that as Christians, we are to refuse to retaliate against those who wrong us.

A. The context makes it clear that He is addressing individuals in personal relationships, not the role of government or those who as agents of the government are called to enact justice.

Jesus is addressing how we treat people personally. In fact, the Scripture tells us in Romans 13:1-7 that God ordained government for the purpose of seeking justice, and therefore, the individual was not to take matters into their own hands.

He gives four examples of when not to take revenge:

1) Getting slapped in the face in an insulting manner.

Jesus is not saying that someone threatened with harm is to simply not defend themselves or others. What He is saying is that we should not seek to get revenge - or to seek to bring about justice on our own.

1 Peter 2:21-23 - "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;"

2) Getting sued in court. - before we would try to get even if sued unjustly, we should be willing to give the wrongdoer even more.

3) Being forced into serving someone.

4) Being asked for money.

When we allow ourselves to be wronged in ways like these, without taking revenge or trying to get even, we are imitating God.

2. Jesus said that as Christians, we are love your enemies.

Jesus says that if someone is seeking our harm, we should seek their good. If someone speaks badly of us, we should speak well of them. We should even entreat God on their behalf. Why?! This sounds absurd! But the reason why is made crystal clear by Jesus.

We are to love our enemies - because that is how God has treated us.

Matthew 5:45 - "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."

Romans 5:8-10 - "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son."

When we refuse to seek revenge on those who wrong us and when we love our enemies, we are imitating God, our Father. We are proving whose children we are.

1 John 4:7-12 - "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us."