

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5: 38-48 & Romans 12:14—13:8a

In last week's study of Luke 21 we briefly considered the prophetic words of Jesus concerning the potential for persecution of His followers increasing more and more as the day of His return draws near. We distinguished between persecution by empowered government entities and independent criminal aggression. We touched upon reactions to violent aggressors. In today's study we will examine in more detail the various teachings of Jesus concerning those who abuse us and the whole teaching of Scripture regarding legitimate defense of one's loved ones and oneself.

I. The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:38-48

- A. The essential message and teaching—turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, loving your enemies
- B. The counter-cultural nature of Jesus' teaching and the cultural context of these admonitions
- C. The message is one of attitude regarding abusive people outside of a life-threatening violent crisis
- D. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God

II. The Believer's Response to Evil Persecutors: Romans 12:14-21

- A. Bless those who persecute you
- B. Leave vengeance and retaliation up to the Lord
- C. Be at peace with all men to the extent possible
- D. Do not be overcome by evil

III.A Clear Biblical Distinction Between Murder and Justified Killing

- A. Genesis 9:5-6: Society empowered to kill the one who murders; human life is precious because we are made in God's image
- B. Exodus 20:13: You shall not murder [the Hebrew word is *murder* not *kill*]
- C. Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 24:17: Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death
- D. Romans 13:3-4: The governing authority and its officers empowered to carry and use the sword against evildoers

IV. Self-Defense and the Precious Value of Human Life Created in God's Image

- A. Some causes are worth dying for, and some are worth killing for—for the same reason
 - 1. to rescue those in peril,
 - 2. to protect those under one's care
 - 3. to preserve one's life in a life-threatening crisis of violent aggression
- B. Biblical basis for self-defense: Exodus 22:2-3; Exodus 21:16 & Deuteronomy 24:7; Nehemiah 4:13-14, 17-23; Esther 8:11-12, 9:1-5; Luke 22:35-39
- C. Biblical basis for developing skill with weapons: Psalm 18:34, 144:1
- D. Can you love a violent aggressor whose life you take to save the innocent? We protect and defend because we love and value life, not from hatred, retaliation, or revenge. Aid is given once the threat is stopped

"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.

Matthew 5: 38-48 NASB

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12: 17-21 NIV

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The primary teaching of the New Testament is that there is no room in a believer's life for hate or revenge. Our personal honor and our care comes from God and we have no need to defend our honor or cling to our possessions. The attitude of all believers is to be one of love, grace, and ready forgiveness for all who offend and abuse us...Christ died for them too and such were some of us (Eph 2:1-5). However, because life is precious, it deserves preservation and protection in the extreme. Because we love life and love people we are just in protecting and defending the innocents from those violent aggressors who would despise the value of life. Because we do not have a right even over our own life (we are bought with a price and we belong to Him) we are equally just in defending ourselves from those who would threaten our life. It is the violent aggressor who has made this choice and thrust it upon us, not we who have chosen retribution.

1. Explain the cultural context of striking a person on the cheek. What would be a similar insult in our culture?
2. Why should we not seek revenge against those who wrong us?
3. Who suffers when we harbor hate in our heart toward another person?
4. According to Jesus' teaching, do we have a duty to retreat and/or to de-escalate a developing argument? Support your answer with Scripture.
5. Is self-defense or defense of loved ones motivated by hate or love? Explain?

NOTES

authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13: 1-8a NASB

You shall not murder.

Exodus 20: 13 NASB

If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.

Exodus 22: 2-3 NIV

From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

Nehemiah 4: 16-18 NIV