

Matthew 5:38-48 “Enemy Control”

5 Message Sub-series on the Sermon on The Mount:

- How to be a faithful Christian among others:
 1. 5:21-26 “Anger Control”
 2. 5:27-30 “Lust Control”
 3. 5:31-32 “Marriage Control”
 4. 5:33-37 “Contract Control”
 5. 5:38-48 “Enemy Control”

38 “You have heard that it was said,
'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

- **“Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth”** is an expression of one of the oldest recorded laws, appearing in Babylonian law as well as in the Old Testament.
 - As harsh as it sounds, this law was actually a first step toward mercy because it limited revenge. For example, if you lost one eye in a dispute you were not allowed to completely blind your adversary.
 - “It limited revenge by fixing an exact compensation for an injury”¹
 - If judges cease to fit punishments to crimes (“an eye for an eye”), if authorities turn the community’s other cheek by not penalizing criminals, havoc occurs
 - Jesus’ New Command is for disciples who want to follow Jesus’ way of life. The gracious and just OT “law of the tooth” is still legitimate civil legislation and will always remind the community that God wants justice and is not pleased when the taking of an eye goes unpunished. It is an important part of love that there be social justice. The old commandment stands guard forever against all sentimental interpretations of love.²

Exodus 21:23–25

23 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.

Leviticus 24:19–20

¹ Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Mt 5:38). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

² Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 247–248.

19 'If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—

20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him.

Deuteronomy 19:21 Your eye shall not pity:

life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

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.

- **The blow on the right cheek was the most grievous insult possible in the ancient world** (apart from inflicting serious physical harm), and in many cultures was listed alongside the “eye for an eye” laws; **both Jewish and Roman law permitted prosecution for this offense.** ³

Four Second Person Singulars are found in this section:

- 1. Don't resist evil people**
- 2. Let them sue you**
- 3. Go twice as far as they compel you to go**
- 4. Lend freely**

1 Peter 2:22–24

22 “He committed no sin,

He did not tell people what they wanted to hear, He told them what they needed to hear.”

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.

Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

40 If anyone wants **to sue you** and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

- Simply put – if someone is suing you – let them have all they want rather than misrepresent Christ and His Name through fighting over the points.
 - **Divorce settlements**
 - **Probate settlements**
 - **If you take steps to limit what the courts have given your adversary to have as their reward, then you misrepresent Christ and the Cross.**

³ Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:39). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

- **Bruner:** “The text speaks of the two major garments worn in Palestine: the long underwear or shirt next to the body with sleeves, and the loose-fitting coat that went over it and in which the poor man slept at night. These were the only two pieces of clothing most persons wore. What is asked for here, then, is drastic.”⁴
 - **In short: You’d rather go naked than fight**
- **Matthew Henry** said that the slap represents a wrong to my body, the coat represents a wrong to my property, the forced mile a wrong to my liberty and the loan represents a wrong to my generosity.⁵
- **Spurgeon:** “**The courts of our Lord’s day were vicious; and his disciples were advised to suffer wrong sooner than appeal to them.**”⁶

1 Corinthians 6:1, 6-7 (LEB)

1 Does anyone among you, *if he* has a matter against someone else, **dare to go to court before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?**

6 But brother goes to court with brother, and this before unbelievers!

7 Therefore it is already completely a loss for you that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

- This very thing was done to Simon of Cyrene who was thus compelled to carry the cross of Christ (Matt. 27:32, ἠγγαρευσαν [ēggareusan]).⁷
- **Roman soldiers had the legal right to impress the labor, work animal or substance of local residents** (cf. Mk 15:21).
 - Although impressment may not have happened often in Galilee, it happened elsewhere, and the fact that it could happen would be enough to raise the eyebrows of Jesus’ hearers at this example of nonresistance and **even loving service to the oppressor.**⁸

Roman Law – A Soldier can draft anyone to walk 1 mile with his pack.

⁴ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 254.

⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 254.

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Commentary on the Book of Matthew* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1893), 30.

⁷ Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Mt 5:41). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

⁸ Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:41). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

- Conflict will happen in this life – you may be forced to do things you don't want to do.
 - **The response** is not to flee from conflict, but use this moment to demonstrate love to another person.

42 Give to him who begs you,
and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

2 Issues here:

1. Giving

- Martin Luther:** Jesus “is not saying that we should give and lend to everybody, but [only] ‘to him who begs from us,’ that is, to the one who really needs it, not to the one who develops a whim that he would like to take something from us by force.” ⁹
- Augustine, LSM, 79–80, wisely pointed out that this text does not say “give whatever you are asked”;** rather, more personally and more carefully it commands a disciple to **“give to whomever asks,”** meaning that if persons ask us for something unjust or excessive, we do not give that to them, but we do give them something, if only an explanation or time. It is not the what that is in focus in this Command so much as it is the who—not things but persons are Jesus’ concern. ¹⁰
- Be prepared to give with no thought of return – not a “lending”, but a “giving”.**

2. Lending

Psalm 112:5 **A good man deals graciously and lends;**

He will guide his affairs with discretion.

- If you borrow something, return it in better shape than when you received it.
 - Washed, full of fuel, sharpened, repaired, possibly replaced!

43 “You have heard that it was said,

⁹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 257.

¹⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 256–257.

'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

- **And hate thine enemy (και μισησεις [kai misēseis]). This phrase is not in Lev. 19:18, but is a rabbinical inference which Jesus repudiates bluntly.** ¹¹

Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

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,
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.
46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?
Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (This coming from Matthew!)
47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others?
Do not even the tax collectors do so?

Romans 12:17-21. (NIV)

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

20 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."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. ¹²

Our Response to Hate as Christians

- To overcome Evil with good

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- **We are here as a church to show love to a lost world in need.**

¹¹ Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Mt 5:43). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

¹² *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Ro 12:17–21.

- Speak Love to Someone that Speaks Hate to you
- Show Love to those who show Hate to you

48 Therefore you shall be **perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is **perfect**.

- **Perfect** (τελειοι [teleioi]). The word comes from τέλος [telos], end, goal, limit. Here it is the goal set before us, the absolute standard of our Heavenly Father. The word is used also for relative perfection as of adults compared with children. ¹³
 - **Completed, finished work, a complete work of art, a fine finished sculpture, an account paid in full.**
 - ♣ **5055. τελέω teléō**; contracted telṓ, fut. telésō, from télos (5056), end, goal. To make an end or to accomplish, to complete something, not merely to end it, but to bring it to perfection or its destined goal, to carry it through. ¹⁴

John 19:30 (LEB) Then when he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, **"It is completed,"** and bowing *his* head, he gave up *his* spirit.

- **"So then, you folks are going to be a perfectly mature people, just as your heavenly Father is perfectly mature."** ¹⁵
 - The "you folks" (*hymeis*, plural) is strongly emphasized in the text. Jesus promises hearers of the Sermon on the Mount who want to do it that **they are going to be a special people.** ¹⁶

What if your Surgeon didn't have 100% as a goal?

What if your Dentist figured 50% of your teeth was a good enough goal?

Jesus' goal of love for us is a completed work of grace!

¹³ Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Mt 5:48). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

¹⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁵ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 276.

¹⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, Revised and Expanded Edition, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 276.