

Matthew 5:38-47

Verse 38

- **Exodus 21:22-24** “If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that [u]she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman’s husband [w]may demand of him, and he shall pay [w]as the judges *decide*. ²³ But if there is *any further* injury, then you shall appoint *as a penalty* life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, [x]bruise for bruise.
- **Leviticus 24:17-20** ‘If a man [f]takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸ The one who [g]takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life. ¹⁹ If a man [b]injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has [i]injured a man, so it shall be [i]inflicted on him.
- **Deuteronomy 19:15-21** “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin [a]which he has committed; on the [c]evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. ¹⁶ If a malicious witness rises up against a man to [s]accuse him of [t]wrongdoing, ¹⁷ then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days. ¹⁸ The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has [u]accused his brother falsely, ¹⁹ then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. ²⁰ The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. ²¹ Thus [v]you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

*This law was established to ensure proper, fair, and just retribution in civil cases. This was to ensure that the punishment for crimes fit the crime.

*We must be reminded that Jesus did not change the law but was explaining it.

*This law was not intended for personal acts of retaliation and revenge.

- **Romans 12:17-21** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. [a]Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but [b]leave room for the *wrath of God*, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- **Proverbs 20:22** Do not say, “I will repay evil”; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.

Verse 39

In these verses Jesus instructs His followers to live a life that can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit in that person. Jesus speaks against seeking retaliation and revenge in personal matters.

Christians are not to return slap for slap but are rather instructed to turn the other cheek. There is a small detail in this verse that gives insight into the meaning of this verse. Since most people are right hand dominant, to be slapped on the right cheek would mean that one would be slapped with the back of the hand. Being slapped with the back of the hand is insulting, degrading, and showing disdain for someone. We see this in our own culture today with the phrase “that was a slap in the face” to indicate something that is hurtful, insulting, and ever slanderous. Jesus is teaching to avoid personal retaliation which would result in sin just as the one who slaps you, but rather we are to show the love of God and be salt and light. We often want to get one up and get more than revenge on people that wrong us, but we are to let God take care of the vengeance. What is implied by turning the other cheek is that being in this world that hates God and the things of God, those who bear His name and live for Him can expect continued persecution, slander, and difficulty. Jesus

is speaking in this context to personal matters and not to matters of self-defense, government/law enforcement to maintain law, or necessary military defense.

- **Isaiah 50:6** I gave My back to those who strike *Me*, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.
- **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, ²² who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ ^[w]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;
- **Luke 18:7-8** now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, ^[d]and will He delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find ^[e]faith on the earth?"

Verse 40

If a lawsuit is brought and there are grounds for the suit, the Christian should go above what is necessary to make peace and make the situation right without making an enemy. If it requires losing and giving up an extra piece of clothing to right a wrong and make peace, it is worth it. We are to be repentance and remorseful and act in love if we wrong anyone and be eagerly willing to make any wrongs right. We are to live as peaceably as we can with all men **(Romans 12:18)**.

Verse 41

Roman authorities and officials had legal jurisdiction to enforce or compel a person to carry a load, to serve as a guide, or courier for up to one mile. This is how Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus' cross **(Matthew 27:32)**. Christians should be willing to go the extra mile to show the love of Christ and the freedom we have in Him to go above what is required to love our neighbor.

Verse 42

Christians are to have a heart of compassionate and help those in need as is within reason from a heart that has proper motives and not just adherence to outward actions.

- **Proverbs 3:27-28** Do not withhold good from ^[i]those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do *it*. ²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give *it*," When you have it with you.

Verse 43

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

There was no verse or command to love your neighbor and hate your enemy. The Jews had twisted this verse to justify their hatred toward their enemies. They consider loving their neighbors to mean their fellow Jews and then twisted the Scriptures to justify hatred to toward their enemies including Gentiles.

- **Leviticus 19:33-34** 'When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.

Verses 44-45

Jesus teaches that we are to love even our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. We are to respond in this manner as we are sons of God.

- **Matthew 5:9** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- **1 Corinthians 4:11-13** To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; ¹²and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; ¹³when we are slandered, we try to ^[a]conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, *even* until now.
- **Romans 12:14** Bless those who persecute ^[a]you; bless and do not curse.
- **1 Peter 3:9** not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but ^[a]giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.
- **Romans 12:20** “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.

Christians are to live differently than those who are unbelievers. Christians have been born against and are now adopted as sons of God. We are to imitate our heavenly Father and how He shows love. God shows love upon both the righteous and the unrighteous. There is a distinction between three types of love: benevolence, beneficence, and complacency. His good will toward His creation speaks to His benevolence. Beneficence refers to His actions of which He pours out benefits to all people which is often referred to as common grace. He shows this love toward His creatures both righteous and unrighteous in various ways including sending rain (**Acts 14:16-17**) and allowing His creation to enjoy and use the sun. There are more ways in which God shows benevolence toward non-believers as He allows them to have children, a spouse, good jobs, etc.

The elect of God not only are shown benevolent and beneficence, but also are shown a special salvific, everlasting love which is not shown upon the non-elect. This love is known as the love of complacency. The Latin root word for complacency means delight or pleasure. The primary object of God’s love is His Son. This love speaks to the delight and pleasure God the Father takes first in His only begotten Son and is the love He had for His Son before the foundation of the world (**John 17:24**). We see this pleasure and love of complacency toward His son at Jesus’s baptism where the Father declares “this is My beloved in who I am well pleased (**Matthew 4:17**). As this love is upon His son, those who are in Christ are shown the same love as is shown upon His Son as believers are adopted as sons of God and are in union with the Son. The Father takes delight in His elect because they are in union with His Son and His love of complacency spills over to His elect as a result.

- **Romans 8: 26-39** – Read

Verse 46-47

- **Mark 12:30-31** and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.

To the Jew the tax collector was considered a traitor and was considered the worst kind of person. The Jews also considered Gentiles to be unclean. If we as Christians show kindness to those who are kind to us, we are no different from even the most despised Jew at that time and the Gentiles in our actions. We are children of God with hearts that have been born again which is the only way and hope we can respond and react in the way that Jesus is commanding and teaching, as the things He is teaching is against our fallen human nature. Let us love our neighbor as ourselves and not seek retaliation. We are in the world, not of the world and we must be different and peculiar to the world and let us live as Christ who set the example (**1 John 2:6**). We are His sons by adoption as He shows His love of complacency, delight, and pleasure upon us as believers by our union with His Son. Let our actions bring about His pleasure and delight.