

Extra Teaching Points

Chapter 8

Matt. 5:38-48

[Matt. 5:38-39](#)

This is a smaller treatment of what was said in [Ex. 21:24](#); [Lev. 24:20](#); and [Deut. 19:21](#).

- The command says: If a person injures another in a certain way, he/she should receive a like injury.

Q: Is Jesus revoking the OT Law and introducing a new one?

- **This OT Law was instruction for the magistrates.**
 - They were to dispense justice based on equity.
- Jesus' teaching here is not bringing new judicial structure to tell judges to let guilty people go unpunished.
 - **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 **love mercy** ([Micah 6:8](#)).

- Mercy is like justice; or at least it's not the polar opposite of justice.
 - Both mercy and justice are concerned with the rights of another person.
 - Mercy goes beyond justice and does more for the other person than is required.
- Justice means, "I do not violate his or her innate rights." Mercy means, "I give him or her rights in addition to those innate rights."

Q: What does "Do not resist and evil person" mean?

- Resistance means coming against something and trying to prevent it from continuing.
 - It is the attempt to prevent something by action or argument.
- "Do not resist" means more than do not retaliate... it means accepting wrong treatment.
 - Jesus' following illustrations will demonstrate this.

Some Thoughts on Passivism:

Some think this is a command for total non-resistance or passivism.

- If that is what Jesus meant, then He is calling on us to trust God to address all evils.
 - [Rom. 12:19](#) could be cited to support that idea.

But it seems more likely that, once again, Jesus is using hyperbole.

- If Jesus were not using hyperbole here, then all forms of resisting evil would be prohibited.
 - Preaching the gospel is a form of resisting evil, and that's something we are commanded to do ([Mark 16:16](#)).
 - We are commanded to rebuke a brother who sins ([Luke 17:3](#)), which is a form of resisting evil.
 - We are commanded to resist the Devil ([James 4:7](#)) who is definitely evil.
 - All of these commands would be a contradiction if total passivism were Jesus' goal here.

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

- In all the examples Jesus gives of not resisting, it is **your time, your money, and your comfort** that is at risk... and you are not to resist.
 - However this leaves the question of resisting 'evil done to others' open.

- [James 4:17](#) makes it clear we should do the good we know we should.
 - It would be good to protect an innocent person from being harmed by an evil person.
 - It doesn't seem to be the case that we are told not to resist an evil person when we are in the position to protect 'someone else'; just when we are in the position to protect 'ourselves'.
- **Jesus' teaching about non-resistance seems to be about you surrendering your rights in order for you to be loving toward someone who is unkind toward you.**
 - **There is not necessarily anything in this teaching that would go against the moral teaching in the OT about stopping an evil person from harming another.**
- We are taught to surrender our rights, but not our obligation to our fellow man.
 - [1Sam. 11:2-6](#) tells of a time when Saul heard of the threat of Nahash the Ammonite against the people of Jabesh.
 - Nahash was demanding the people of Jabesh allow him to put out their right eyes to disgrace Israel, or he would kill them.
 - When Saul heard of it, we are told the Spirit of God came upon him; he burned with anger and went to the rescue.
 - The Spirit of God has not changed, and Jesus wouldn't contradict Him by saying such resistance of evil on the part of another is now wrong.
- In following Jesus, the ultimate guide of what a person should or shouldn't do seems to always be answered by, "What is the loving thing to do."
 - Giving up your rights and showing mercy is an expression of love; and so is standing up for the rights of another.
- Obviously Jesus' teaching here also has implications for whether or not a Christian should participate in war.
 - There is no teaching from Jesus or His apostles on what a Christian should do if asked to go to war.
 - Ultimately, the Christian will have to determine for himself or herself if participation in the war is an expression of loving God and loving people ([Matt. 22:37-40](#)).

Q: So it seems obvious that Jesus is teaching us to absorb injury and not press our rights; but how much injury should we absorb?

- "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek" has reference to an injury of insult, not of violence.
 - In the near East, both in Jesus' day and in the present, the most insulting physical blow that one can give another 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).
- **It seems what is being illustrated here is not the absorption of physical injury, but the absorption of insult.**
 - The same word for "slaps" is used in [Matt. 26:67](#) when Jesus was being beaten with fists and slapped, which was foretold in [Is. 50:6](#).
 - Jesus didn't retaliate... He absorbed both the insult and the physical damage in order to show mercy to the world.
- [Rom. 12:17-21](#) seems to be Paul's commentary on this section of the Sermon on the Mount.
 - Mercy goes beyond justice.
 - Justice says you will not injure another person.
 - Mercy says you will not injure him even if he has injured you.
- Mercy is a part of love. Mercy requires us to love... even an unlikeable person.

Q: Even though Jesus is picturing an insulting situation, how far should we go in non-resistance if there is a physical attack?

- [James 5:6](#) tells us what righteous people did when they were attacked by the rich.
 - How bad was the attack?
 - The righteous people were murdered.
 - We don't know what form of murder James is speaking of.
 - It is doubtful that rich people were going out and killing people outright.
 - It could be they were using the courts to take advantage of Christians who were not insisting on their rights.
 - It could be that they were impoverished and devastated by that kind of treatment, and ultimately died as a result of the injustice.
 - That would be similar to the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in [Luke 16:20-31](#).
 - [Matt. 10:16-23](#) teaches us that when we end up in court for our faith, our concern is not to be for our rights, but for the example we set for non-believers.
 - We are told not to worry about what we will say in these situations ([Matt. 10:19](#)).
 - **Perhaps because we would be inclined to think about how we can defend ourselves.**
 - **If we rely on the Spirit to give us what to say, we may be better equipped to give a testimony about Him, than a defense of ourselves.**
 - We are not instructed to fight for our rights in those situations.
 - It is fine to run from those situations, though ([Matt. 10:23](#)).
 - When Stephen was put on trial for his faith, he didn't defend himself. Instead he preached about the Kingdom ([Acts 6:10-7:53](#)).

Some Thoughts on Legalism:

What people often do with the Sermon on the Mount, is use it to construct a list of rules. "If this happens, you do this; if that happens, you do that."

- We lean toward legalism naturally.
 - We would like to have a list of all possible circumstances, and what we should do in each, but we don't have such a list available.
 - Possibly this is because such a list would remove the need for us to think for ourselves or walk in the Spirit.
 - In other words you wouldn't have to come to know God in order to please Him in a situation; all you would need to know is what page the answer is on.
 - Instead of a list of rules, God has given us a revelation of His heart.
 - **As Christians, our decisions should be a reflection of our pursuit of God's heart--an effort to know Him and please Him.**
 - **He in turn writes His laws on our hearts ([Heb. 8:10](#)), that we obey because we have the same desires He has; not because we have an exhaustive list of rules.**

[Matt. 5:40](#)

Q: What is your natural response to someone suing you?

- Generally speaking, we naturally want to defend our property.
- If you are being sued because you really wronged the person, you should be glad to give him what he is suing for and more.

- If you are being sued wrongly, you can still be merciful.
- 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 needs, 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, repay evil with good ([1Thess 5:15](#)), overcome evil with good ([Rom. 12:21](#)).
 - The idea here is to show the mercy of God. Why?
 - Because God does this kind of thing.
 - God gives His enemies more and better than they deserve.

[Matt. 5:41](#)

It was Roman law that a Roman soldier could require a person to carry something one mile when they were in occupied territory.

- A soldier could commandeer civilian labor.
 - We see an example of this in [Matt. 27:32](#).

Jesus was saying, "Why demand your right to stop at one mile and force the soldier to find someone else... or allow another person to bear the burden?"

- **You are not being merciful if you go just one mile... that's just duty.**
- You can go beyond duty to show God's love.

[Matt. 5:42](#)

Q: Is this a literal and absolute 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.
 - These are things that motivate the carnal person... they are so defensive and possessive of them.
 - Christians shouldn't be defensive or possessive of such things.
- **We are called to love the person more than the thing they are trying to take.**

[Matt. 5:43-44](#)

The NIV and NASB95 are translated from the Alexandrian codex, which is considered older and more reliable than the Textus Receptus codex which the KJV and NKJV were translated from. The NKJV has a longer sentence here than the NIV and NASB95. However, the parallel verse to this is found in [Luke 6:27-28](#). The lengthier command is found there, and all translations include it there.

Q: How are we supposed to love our enemies?

- Love is not so much a feeling as it is action.
 - Jesus teaches us how to love our enemies: by blessing them, doing good to them, and praying for them.
- You can do all of these things without having any good feelings toward the person.
 - Love is a decision and an action.
 - However, if you treat an enemy this way, you may start to feel your feelings toward them begin to soften and warm.

Q: Who is an enemy?

- An enemy is one who curses you, hates you, spitefully uses you, and persecutes you.

[Matt. 5:48](#)

Q: What does it mean to be “perfect as our Heavenly Father is Perfect?”

- Read [Luke 6:27-36](#). (This is the parallel to this passage.)
 - In [Luke 6:36](#) Jesus says be “merciful” instead of “perfect.”

In [Matt. 5:48](#) “*therefore*” summarizes everything said before it ([Matt. 5:43-47](#)).

- **Jesus is saying, ‘let your love be comprehensive or complete just like God’s love is’.**
- **Luke renders it “merciful”, one of the aspects of love.**

Everybody has people they will do favors for, but most people do favors for their friends.

- Most people will not do favors for someone who is not a friend, and definitely not for someone who is an enemy.
- But that isn’t the way God is. God does favors for everyone ([Luke 6:35](#)).
- **Jesus is telling us, ‘instead of being selective in who we will love, be comprehensive... be complete... be perfect’.**
 - [Gal. 6:10](#) Paul commands the same thing.
 - 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 too.

Chapter 8 Follow Up Assignment

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?