



Goodwill Church

What Does Jesus Say About Retaliation and Loving Your Enemy

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"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 the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would 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 makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." -Matthew 5:38-48

Reflection:

In this passage, Jesus challenges the conventional wisdom of His time and ours, urging His followers to respond to evil with radical love and generosity. This teaching goes against our natural inclinations and the cultural norms of retribution and self-defense. Jesus calls us to a higher standard, one that mirrors the perfect love of God.

Before we came to know Christ, we were enemies of God, living in sin and rebellion against Him. Romans 5:10 reminds us, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Despite our enmity, God reached out to us in love, offering forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus.

This transformative love of God is what Jesus wants us to emulate. Just as God loved us when we were His enemies, we are called to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. This kind of love is not just a feeling but an active choice, a commitment to seek the well-being of others, even those who wish us harm.

Loving our enemies does not mean we condone their actions or subject ourselves to abuse. Instead, it means choosing a posture of grace, seeking peace, and showing kindness, reflecting the heart of our heavenly Father. This love is a powerful testimony to the world of the transformative power of the Gospel.

Application:

- Reflect on God's Love: Take time to meditate on how God loved you when you were His enemy. Let this reflection deepen your gratitude and inspire you to love others in the same way.
- Pray for Your Enemies: Identify someone who has wronged you or whom you find difficult to love. Pray for them daily, asking God to bless them and work in their life.
- Act in Love: Look for practical ways to show kindness to those who may not deserve it. This could be through a kind word, a generous act, or simply choosing not to retaliate when wronged.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me even when I was Your enemy. Help me to reflect Your perfect love in my interactions with others, especially those who oppose or hurt me. Give me the strength to pray for my enemies and to act in ways that demonstrate Your grace and mercy. May my life be a testament to the transforming power of Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.