**Do Not Resist Your Enemies; Love Them**

Based on [Matthew 5:38-48](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt5.38-48)

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Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

The summary of Jesus’ teaching today is this: “Do not resist the one who is evil, but love your enemies.” The worldly wise cannot comprehend this teaching. But Jesus reveals it to his disciples, and calls them to live by it. They are cleansed by his blood, redeemed by his death, Forgiven of their sins and on that account they are children of God and are new people.

First Jesus teaches, “Do not resist the one who is evil.” This means when someone strikes you, do not retaliate or strike back. If someone sues you for spite and wins, do not seek revenge. If someone forces you to go a mile, do not drag your feet, double down or dig in your heels. Do not resist the one who does evil to you. You know that justice is not in your hands, but in the Hands of your Heavenly Father. “’**Vengeance is mine,’ says the Lord, ‘I will repay**.’” It doesn’t matter if you have to suffer injustice for a little while; you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.

An hour is coming, Jesus says, when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29). In the end everyone will get exactly what they deserve. God is just, and when the Son of Man comes again with his angels in the glory of his Father, he will repay each person according to what he has done (Matt. 16:27). **He will render to each one according to his works** (Romans 2:6). Therefore, “**If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also**.”

To the sinful man, there are two natural responses to attack: fight or flight. Jesus rejects both. If anyone slaps you, sues you, forces you, do not fight back, and do not flee. Do not run away from the one who strikes you, but stay and offer him the other cheek.

Now someone might say, “Does that mean if someone tries to mug me on the street, I shouldn’t run away? If someone steals my car, I should give him my house too?” No. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes clear from the beginning that he’s talking to his disciples who are called to suffer for righteousness sake. He means that, in the world, standing with Jesus will make you a target of attack, and in a way that looks legitimate to the world. And when this happens, it will be tempting to either retaliate in his name, or else abandon him. Instead, he calls his disciples to suffer with him.

An example from Scripture: When Jesus was unjustly arrested, Peter cut off a soldiers ear to defend him. Peter retaliated. But Jesus told him to put away the sword. Whoever lives by the sword dies by the sword, he said. Peter listened. He put away the sword but he didn’t stay and offer his other cheek. He ran. He abandoned his Lord, and it crushed him.

Peter fled for fear. But his guilty conscience wouldn’t let him leave Jesus altogether. He loved Christ and could not abandon him entirely. So he hovered a safe distance from Jesus—Jesus who did not run away, but went willingly with his captives.

Friends, you cannot keep a safe distance from the Word of God. You cannot be a spectator who keeps Jesus within eyeshot, but who does not stand with him and his teaching. Peter thought he could play it safe, but the devil always attacks the saints in order to get them to deny Christ and suppress his Word from the world to save their own neck. As he went three people accused Peter of being a friend of Jesus, and this time he increased his sin. He lied. He denied being Jesus’ friend three times. And he heard the cock crow twice and wept.

Peter never forgot this lesson, that when you are opposed on account of your faith, fight or flight is not the way of Christ. Years later Peter wrote in a letter to the Church, “**For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God**” (1 Peter 2:19-20).

There is always two sides to keeping God’s commands, (1) refrain from doing evil and (2) actively do Good. And so Jesus teaches his disciples to actively show mercy to everyone family and strangers; to friends and enemies. Does God withhold good from the sinner? Does he give food, clothing and shelter only to his own children? No he causes the sun to rise righteous and the unrighteous alike; he causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. And he gives daily bread to everyone, even to evil people. If God shows kindness equally to everyone, why then would you, his disciples, withhold any good thing from your enemies? Do not repay evil with evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary bless [everyone], for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing (1 Peter 3:9).

Let me ask you this, did Jesus Christ die for the righteous or for sinners? Did your heavenly Father give up His only son for those who do good? No I tell you, but God gave his Son for all, that all might receive him by faith. In his ministry, Jesus is the one who multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish into enough to feed 5000 plus people with twelve basketfuls to spare. This is to show that if any there were left hungry, it’s not because the Lord did not provide, it’s because they did not come to him to receive.

God’s love is perfect, complete, full. He left nothing undone for your salvation or the for the salvation of his enemies. Therefore, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Love those who don’t love you. Greet your enemies, and withhold no good thing from them that is within your power to give. After all, you were once God’s enemy. You were a child of wrath, born in iniquity, conceived in sin. Had Jesus come only to save the righteous he might as well have stayed home. But he didn’t stay at home. In spite of the world’s hostility towards him, he came into the world and he stayed in the world, showing mercy and grace to all.

Now, there is a false teaching about love that you need to be aware of, because it has twisted God’s Word into knots and constipated the churches ability to truly love her enemies. It teaches that the way you love your enemy is by forgiving their sins, *even if they don’t repent of them.* In other words, forgiving sins has come to mean ignoring them. Brothers, this is a lie of the devil. It’s a trick of the tempter. Do not be deceived. It’s a clever way to teach people to let their brother die in his sin; and perversely enough it teaches the undiscerning to do so in the name of forgiveness. That is not love. That is murder; taught by the one who was a murderer from the beginning, who does not hold to the truth because there is no truth in him (John 8:44).

It’s not that you shouldn’t forgive the unrepentant; it’s that you can’t. An illustration: You may see your enemy starving and desire to feed him, but you cannot feed him if he refuses to open his mouth and eat. Likewise, you may see your enemy hardened in his sin and want to forgive him, but you cannot forgive him if he won’t open his mouth in repentance. “If your brother sins, rebuke him; if he repents forgive him” (Luke 17:3).

Once a few years back a woman came to my former office, asking for some money because she was poor. I said that I was sorry for her situation, and asked her if she had a church, a place where she receives Jesus gifts of life and salvation. **You see, I loved her. I cared about her soul as much as her belly; so I asked where she was being fed the true bread from heaven.** Upon hearing this, she immediately got up, and went to the door in anger saying something like “**All you churches care about is judging people and preaching your beliefs to them**.” Naturally I went after her saying, “Now I didn’t say I wouldn’t help; I want to help you.” She said without even stopping to turn around, “I don’t need your money; you don’t care if my family starves” and with that she was gone. At the name of Jesus, she refused help. My heart ached and I prayed for her.

One day in his ministry, Jesus was teaching his disciples and said, “**I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst**.” He said, “**Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.**” He said, **Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in me and I in him.**” Some of his disciples said, “**This is a hard teaching, who can listen to it?**” And after this many of them turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve who remained, “**Do you want to go away as well?** Simon Peter answered him, “**Lord to whom shall we go? You have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”** (John 6)

Jesus leaves no one, abandons no one, forsakes no one. He loves all, shows mercy to all, but he does not relax his law, or distort his gospel to do so. He doesn’t fight those who are against him, but he doesn’t flee either, he stays. He speaks the truth, they revile with lies; He prays for their forgiveness while hanging on the cross, they scoff at his weakness; He stays to help them, they leave to spite him. They strike him so he will leave; he stays and offers the other cheek. And so they resorted to murder, and crucified the Lord of Glory who bought them.

But death could not hold him; the grave could not keep him. He was raised on the third day, giving consolation to all who believed in him. He ascended into heaven in glory and now, true God and true man, he governs all things for the good of those who love him, who were called according to His purpose.

God’s perfect justice may seem to fail at times, but that is only to human eyes. To the eyes of faith, his salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. **And he will come again, when the time is right, and every eye will see him.** Every knee will bow and every tongue confesses that he is Lord of all, some in great joy, others in great terror. But in this life, the weakness of his gospel does not prevent his glory; it brings it to perfection in the hearts and minds of true disciples who have believed all things, endure all things, and love all things as they await their redeemer who draws near.