"CIVIL RIGHTS!"

Matthew 5:38-42
5/21/2017

INTRODUCTION:

Sometimes, for the cause of Christ, WE MUST SURRENDER CERTAIN RIGHTS!

I. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own <u>DIGNITY</u> (v. 39b)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to <u>respect</u>)

II. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own <u>SECURITY</u> (v. 40)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to <u>necessities</u>)

III. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own <u>LIBERTY</u> (v. 41)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to <u>freedom</u>)

IV. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own <u>PROPERTY</u> (v. 42)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to <u>possessions</u>)

NOTE: The four key words in this outline "Dignity, security, liberty, and property" were adopted from John MacArthur's commentary on Matthew.

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INTRODUCTION:

V. 38

"Probably no part of the Sermon on the Mount has been so misinterpreted and misapplied as 5:38-42. It has been interpreted to mean that Christians are to be sanctimonious doormats. It has been used to promote pacifism, conscientious objection to military service, lawlessness, anarchy (the dissolving of government), and a host of other positions that it does not support" (MacArthur, 329). Still others explain away these verses by saying these are "Kingdom standards" that do not apply to us today (Walvoord, p. 50).

This quotation of Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20; and Deut. 19:21 "reflects the principle of lex talionis, one of the most ancient law codes. Simply put, it required that punishment exactly match the crime" (MacArthur, p. 329)

This law was given as a:

1) Restraint - to limit retaliation. So people in a passionate rage would not do more to someone than was done to them.

2) Deterrent - So others would hear and fear

V. 39

But I say unto you - shows the authority of Christ (cp. Mt. 7:29)

"Resist not evil" - Don't oppose the evil one (i.e. the one who is doing you wrong)

"Resist" - lit. to stand against; to oppose

Proverbs 24:29 - *"Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work."*

This law of non-resistance does not apply to:

1) Immorality or Doctrinal Deviation - We are to stand against the devil (Ja. 4:7), false teaching (Gal. 2:11), immorality (I Cor. 5:13), and offensive sin (Mt. 18:15-17).

2) Governmental Authorities (Ro. 13:4; I Pet. 2:13-14)

V. 38

The "eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth" law was not given by Moses to be a way of settling private disputes. Rather, it was the government that would execute justice (SEE: Lev. 24:16-22; Deut. 19:18, 20-21).

Both the O.T. and N.T. validate capitol punishment (Gen. 9:6; Num. 35:33; Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:1, 4)

V. 39

"But I say to you . . . ye" - Jesus is saying that we, as private citizens, must have a different way of settling problems.

In this context, Jesus is not describing public matters, but private interpersonal relationships.

NOTE: God's Law was not to be taken into the hands of individuals, "yet this is exactly what rabbinic tradition had done. Each man was permitted in effect, to become his own judge, jury, and executioner." (MacArthur, p. 330).

SEE: Romans 12:17-21

Paying back evil with evil is wrong on three counts:

1. Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is Saying that SIN JUSTIFIES SIN (Romans 12:17-18)

V. 17

The world's way of dealing with people is returning "evil for evil" and "good for good". . . "you stab me, I stab you" . . . "You tip me, I tip you."

"Evil for evil" - the word "for" ("anti") means "in the place of."

We are not to return evil to replace the evil that someone else gave to us.

Those who fight evil with evil are saying: "You sin gives me a right to sin" (one wrong deserves another).

Of all sinful tendencies, this one is the easiest to give in to, and justify.

We think: "He stabbed me, I'll stab him. He gossiped about me . . . robbed . . . cheated . . . slandered . . . spoke against my child . . . I will do the same to him. He didn't give to me, I won't give to him."

EX: Divorce - "You committed adultery . . . I'm going for a divorce."

EX: Lawsuits - "You ruined my reputation (injured my character),etc., so I am going to sue you!"

EX: Cheating an employer - "He doesn't pay me or treat me like he should, so I'm not going to do my best on the job."

Rather than seeking to justify evil for evil:

A. Seek to show SINCERE GOODNESS toward your enemies
(Romans 12:17b)

I Thes. 5:15 - "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

Even though they may have treated us with unfairness, deceitfulness, maliciousness, we are to return their evil with honest-goodness.

EX: If someone does you "dirty" or "stabs you in the back," you don't invite them over for dinner and then slip some arsenic in the food.

We are not to have any pretentiousness or false motives (of revenge) behind our good treatment of others.

"In the sight of all men" - what they see is what they get. We are not to get revenge by covering up our hidden feelings and acting like all is OK, when really we are seeking occasion to "move in for the kill."

B. Seek to live PEACEABLY with your enemies (Romans 12:18)

"If it be possible" - if you are able, do what is in your power to maintain peaceful relations with others.

"As much as lieth in you" = from your standpoint, seek to be peaceful.

We cannot control whether or not someone else will be peaceful but we can control the peace from our end, from our side of the problem.

Too often you worry about the other side of the problem; you are concerned about their attitude and action toward you, and fail to remember you will not answer to God for them, but for you. Pay attention to how well you are doing to promote a peaceful relationship.

"Live peaceably with all men" -

Do your best to be what you should be to promote harmony and tranquility with:

- your spouse
- your in-laws and relatives
- your employer
- those who "hate your guts"
- your neighbors

V. 18

You cannot influence anyone for righteousness unless they can feel at rest (at ease) in your presence.

James 3:18 - "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Mark 9:50 - "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another."

2. Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is
Taking God's PREROGATIVES in their own hands (v. 19)

"Avenge" - lit. to "take out justice"; to seek to make a matter right by taking out revenge toward someone. To take justice into your own hands.

"Give place unto wrath" - it is not "our place" to vent anger; it is God's place; it is His prerogative.

When we seek to make right a wrong done to us by retaliating, we have entered into God's place as judge and executioner.

[NOTE: Government does have the right as "the minister of God" to judge and pay back evil doers - See following context, especially v. 4b. But we are not to take the law into our own hands.]

Why should we "give place to wrath"?

Answer: Because the Bible says so!

And because "For [because] it has been written: Vengeance belongs to Me, I will pay back," says the LORD. Paul is citing Deut. 32:35.

Don't be quick to defend yourself. If you do, then the Lord can't defend you. God does a better job at being a prosecuting attorney anyway.

Just as we would be fools to go to the court of law to defend ourselves without a lawyer, so is the Christian who attempts to defend himself.

David said, "Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me." Ps. 35:1

Remember, if God commands us not to "get even," then just the thought or desire to "get even" is wrong (sinful).

3. Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is Not practicing the LAW OF LOVE (v. 20-21)

Note the balance in the context between the negative prohibition and the positive injunction.

God says, "Recompense to no man for evil" (v. 170, "avenge not yourselves (v. 19); "be not overcome (v. 21).

Then in each case, He balances it out by commanding something we are to do. We are not merely to stop the negative (not give evil for evil) but we are to go a giant step further and replace it by doing the positive ("provide" [v. 17], "live peaceably" [v. 18], "feed him" [v. 20], "overcome evil with good" [v. 21]).

EX: How Elisha treated his enemies (a whole host of Syrian soldiers who had come to take Elisha captive (II Ki. 6:22, 23).

EX: Joseph's response to his brothers.

"Heap coals" = to pile up fiery coals of conviction.

Each good deed is another coal, a re-confirmation of the inexcusability of your enemy's behavior and attitude toward you.

When you do good in return for the bad that someone else did to you, you cause the other person to be ashamed or embarrassed because of their wickedness. Such shame, brings conviction, and conviction, if responded to correctly, will bring about repentance!

Observe how God treated us when we were enemies (Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:3-4).
The goodness of God has as its goal to bring man to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Paul is quoting a Proverb (a portion of true wisdom) - Prov. 25:21-22 - "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Doing good to an enemy will not only have an effect on your enemy, but will have a benefit for you.

Prov. 25:22 adds this phrase: "...and the LORD shall reward thee."

I Peter 3:9 - "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

God sees how you treat those who are your enemies. Though your enemies may never repay you, God will!

Jesus promised in Matt. 6:4 that our Father who sees our alms (righteous deeds) [though they are done in secret, with no one else knowing] "shall reward thee openly."

The best way to fight fire is not to add fuel to the fire, but to pour on that which robs the fire of its fuel.

"One element of the great American philosophy of life is that we all have certain inalienable rights. Among the most important privileges that our Declaration of Independence espouses are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (MacArthur, p. 327).

We live in a day and age when everyone is quick to defend their rights.

Today, we hear alot about rights, but not a whole lot about responsibility.

It is a day when everyone wants their rights!

The gays want their rights, the feminists, union workers, the whites, Indians, blacks, Hispanics, etc. The prisoners, animals, etc.

The only ones who really deserve rights but don't have the ability to ask for it are the unborn.

In a world of wrong, not everyone can always have every right.

An over-concern for one's own rights stems from a preoccupation with self.

"Selfishness is at the core of people who live to get their own way." (Ja. 4:1-2 NKJV - *"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.")*

When our # 1 goal in life is to get and keep what is "rightfully ours", then whoever or whatever gets in our way becomes the object of retaliation.

Much ungodly legislation has been signed into law by evil people under the guise of "civil rights" (EX: pornographic "art" which blasphemed Christ).

Paul willingly set aside his rights for the sake of the gospel and the welfare of others.

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? . . . Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? . . . If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ" (I Cor. 9:1, 4-6, 12).

Sometimes, for the cause of Christ,
WE MUST SURRENDER CERTAIN RIGHTS!

I. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own <u>DIGNITY</u> (v. 39b)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to <u>respect</u>)

Human beings ought to be treated with dignity and respect, since we have been created "in God's image."

"Whosoever (v. 39) . . . any man (v. 40) . . . whosoever" - We are to apply Christ's teaching to anyone (saved or lost).

"Among Jews, a slap or other striking in the fact was among the most demeaning and contemptuous of acts (cp. Mt. 26:67-68; Mk. 14:65; Jn. 18:22). To strike someone elsewhere on the body might cause more physical harm, but a slap in the face was an attack on one's honor and was considered to be a terrible indignity. It was to be treated with disdain, as being less than a human. Even a slave would rather have been struck across the back with a whip than be slapped in the face by his master's hand." (MacArthur, p. 333).

"<u>Right</u> cheek" - In order for someone (assuming he is right-handed) to slap you on the "right" cheek would require a "back hand" - Such action was considered an insult, more so than an attempt to injure.

Many times in our lives, we will have to swallow had and patiently endure ridicule, mistreatment, insult, and injury.

Jesus did not retaliate when humiliated and unjustly treated (mt. 26:67-68; Lk. 23:34; SEE I Pet. 2:20-23)

Too often, people want their deserved "pound of flesh" more than they want God to be glorified.

Turning the other cheek requires love and faith -

<u>Love</u> for the one who hurts us
<u>Faith</u> that God will right all wrongs and work everything out.

"It is the <u>strong</u> man who can love and suffer hurt; it is the weak man who thinks only of himself and hurts others to protect himself. He hurts others, then runs away to protect himself." (Wiersbe, p. 24)

II. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own SECURITY (v. 40)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to necessities)

Lawsuits are rampant in the USA (there are "more lawsuits than people").

Being a lawyer is big business today.

In ancient days, often penalties were paid by clothing.

"Coat" = tunic, your under-garment

"Cloak" = your outer garment

It's like saying, "If you wrong someone and it was proven in court, then to show remorse, you not only give him your 3 piece suit, but your overcoat as well!"

"If a legal judgment is fairly made against us for a certain amount, we should be willing to offer even more in order to show our regret for any wrong we did and to show that we are not bitter or resentful against the one who sued us" (MacArthur, p. 334).

It is better to suffer loss than to shame your testimony by being vengeful (I Cor. 6:1-8).

III. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own LIBERTY (v. 41)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to freedom)

"Compel" = to force; i.e. for someone to violate your liberty or freedom, by forcibly coercing you to do something.

"Roman law gave a soldier the right to force a civilian to carry his pack for a Roman mile, which was slightly shorter than our modern mile. The law, designed to relieve the soldier, not only caused great inconvenience to civilians but was made more despicable by the fact that the oppressed were made to carry the equipment and weapons of their oppressors. Outside of combat, the Roman soldier was probably never more hated than when he forced someone to carry his pack." (MacArthur, p. 334-5).

IV. Be Willing to Lay Aside Your Own <u>PROPERTY</u> (v. 42)
(Sometimes I must suffer the loss of my right to <u>possessions</u>)

This statement implies that the person has a real <u>need</u>.

Psalm 112:5 - *"A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion."*

Giving should always be done with discretion (to meet genuine needs)

We can justify our stingy-ness by saying, "It's mine! I worked for it! I earned it! I own it! And therefore, I am not obligated to share it! Who really owns it? Remember, we are only stewards."

ILLUS: A missionary in Papua New Guinea had a small garden next to his house. After trying many different vegetables without success, he finally discovered that pineapples would grow there. He had to wait 3 years for the plants to bear fruit, and he eagerly looked forward to tasting the delicious juicy pineapples. Unfortunately, he lived among natives that were the worst thieves in the world (including stealing the baby's diaper pins to use as earrings, the man's ball-point pen to put in place of the bone in their nose!). Before he could taste a single pineapple, they were all stolen. This happened again and again. He continually scolded, yelled at and rebuked the people. They in turn called him "Angry White Man." During furlough, he listened to a message about giving up all his rights to God, putting everything (even his pineapples) into God's hands. He returned to the field, telling God that the pineapple field was now His and he, the missionary, wouldn't even look at it anymore. The stealing continued as before, but the people noticed the difference in the missionary's attitude. Coming to him, they said, "Missionary, we see that you have become a Christian! You always used to preach to us about Christianity and we longed to really meet a Christian in person. Now you have become one!" Although humiliating to the missionary, this was the first step that led to the salvation of most of the tribe. (taken from "Pineapple Story" video)

CONCLUSION:

The only one who can suffer insult, injury and loss and never carry a grudge is the person who has died to self (Gal. 2:20 - *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now life in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."*

"George Mueller wrote, 'There was a day when I died, utterly died to George Mueller and his opinions, his preferences, and his tastes and his will. I died to the world, to its approval and its censure. I died to the approval or the blame of even my brethren and friends. And since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.'." (MacArthur, p. 336)

The one who surrenders his rights is like:

--Abraham, who gave the best to Lot

--Joseph, who blessed his brothers

--David, who honored King Saul

--Elisha, who fed his enemies (the Assyrian army)

--Daniel, who graciously entered the lion's den

--Stephen, who prayed for his executioners

Doing good to those who do evil to you does <u>not</u> come <u>natural</u>.

But whoever said, we as Christians were to do what comes natural?
We are to live above the world, according to supernatural (Holy Spirit) promptings and impulses, not according to the flesh.

This is life on the higher plane!

Who is it that has done you wrong. Call that individual (or individuals) to mind.

Determine in your heart, right now, what good thing you are going to do for them. Maybe write a card, letter, mail a gift, invite them over for dinner, etc. Pray for them also.

<u>Hymn</u> - "All to Jesus I Surrender"

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