

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 20

by Zac Poonen

Jesus teaches us to not take revenge, to love our enemies, and to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect by being merciful and loving.

Duration: 25:29

Scripture: Matthew 5:21

Topics: "Christian Living", "Righteousness"

Description

This sermon focuses on the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5, emphasizing the importance of right attitudes and eliminating wrong attitudes in the lives of Christians. It delves into the deeper meaning behind Jesus' instructions on anger, lust, lying, revenge, and loving one's enemies, highlighting the call to a higher standard of righteousness and mercy. The message stresses the need to understand the spirit of Christ's teachings and to live out these principles with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Our theme for these studies is all that Jesus taught. We are seeking to obey what Jesus commanded in Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20 to go into every nation and make disciples and teach them every single thing that I commanded. All that I commanded.

And it's with this in mind that we've been looking at the things that Jesus taught and commanded beginning with the Gospel of Matthew and we are now in Matthew chapter 5. As we began this chapter we looked at the 9 right attitudes that a Christian should have. And that's described in Matthew 5, verses 3 to 12. Nine right attitudes or more commonly known as B attitudes.

And then after that he spoke about our righteousness being greater than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees should be greater. And he explains that with 9 wrong attitudes that we should not have. And that we should eliminate from our lives.

The first wrong attitude is the wrong attitude of anger. Matthew 5, verse 21 to 26. And the second wrong attitude is that of sexually sinful ways of thinking and divorce.

Both of which amount to adultery in verses 27 to 32. And then the third wrong attitude is that of lying. We need to eliminate lying completely from our lives so that we are totally truthful.

And now we come to the fourth wrong attitude which is the attitude of taking revenge. Which is also very common unfortunately even among those who call themselves believers. In the Old Testament the law was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Now this was a law that God gave in Exodus 21, Leviticus 24 and also in Deuteronomy 19. And what he was saying was not that if somebody takes out your eye you must take out his eye. What he was saying is don't take out both his eyes.

If you took out only one eye of yours. I mean you can forgive him and let him go and don't take any eye of his out. That would be the best way.

So God was limiting the punishment by saying an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But here now Jesus raises the standard higher and says do not resist the one who is evil. If somebody slaps you on the right cheek turn the other.

And if someone sues you to take your shirt, give him your coat as well. And if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him too. Like the Roman soldiers would sometimes force the Jewish people who were their slaves as it were, carry my baggage, my military equipment for a mile.

And the Jews were slaves, they had to do it. He said go two miles, don't fight with him about it. And give to him who asks of you, verse 42.

And don't turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. Now we need to take these words in the spirit in which they are spoken. We need to see what exactly did Jesus mean.

Was he telling us to be like doormats that people just walk over and we lie there and let people do whatever they like to us? It cannot be. Like I've often said, whenever you don't understand a scripture properly, look at the example of Jesus Christ himself. There is the word made flesh.

In the Old Testament they had scribes who examined the law to explain every jot and tittle in it. But in the New Testament we don't go analyzing verses as much as looking at Jesus. And there we have an example.

What did Jesus mean by if someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek? We read about Jesus himself when he was standing before the chief priests in the trial, just before his crucifixion. They slapped him. And he didn't turn the other cheek.

He said, if I've spoken what's right, why do you slap me? And they didn't respond to that. They probably slapped him again. And he didn't fight back.

When they slapped him, he didn't say, okay, here's my other cheek, slap me on this side too. So we need to be careful to understand the spirit of what Christ is saying. Otherwise we would have to accuse Jesus himself of not practicing what he preached.

The principle here is, I don't desire revenge. I'm not seeking to get back at you for what you did to me. If you call me a devil, I'm not going to call you a devil.

If you slap me, I'm not going to slap you. I'd rather just sit back and trust God to protect me from you taking too much advantage of my non-resistance. So, if you sue me, what does he mean when he says, if somebody sues you in court, takes your shirt, give me your coat also.

For example, if somebody unrighteously tells a lie and sues you for your own property, saying it is his property and gets some false documents in court and wants to take away your house from you, what are you supposed to do? Are you supposed to say, okay, take my house, and I've got another house, you can take that as well. Is that the meaning? That's not at all what Jesus meant. It's a spirit.

If somebody forces you to go one mile, go within two miles. In other words, if someone forces you to do something, do more? You've got to understand the spirit of it. And from anyone who wants to borrow from you, don't turn away.

Is he saying that every single person who wants to borrow from you, give him money? Once you get known as, get a reputation as one who keeps on giving to anyone who wants to borrow, you'll get bankrupt in no time at all, certainly in India. So, if you don't understand the spirit of these words, and you take it literally, you're going to get into a lot of trouble. I mean, the same thing applies to words that he spoke earlier.

If your right eye makes you to stumble, tear it out. Imagine if you actually tore out your right eye, because one day you lusted after a woman. And the next day you lust with your left eye, you like to tear that out.

Is that what he meant? Because you can still lust in your mind after both your eyes are gone. You think blind men don't lust? You can be totally blind and still lust in your mind without both eyes. So, you need to understand the spirit of these words.

He was talking about a radical attitude towards lusting, when he said be as a blind man, be as the one with an amputated hand. So that's the spirit in which we need to understand this as well. That I don't seek to take revenge, I'm willing to be taken advantage of.

I'm willing to die to myself. But it doesn't mean I have no rights. It doesn't mean that I have to give up my property to anybody who asks me for it.

Because we need to balance Scripture with Scripture. Let me illustrate that by the last statement here. Do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

If you look at a parallel passage, sometimes we understand things better by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Jesus said in Luke chapter 6 where he speaks about similar words. In Luke chapter 6 and verse 35, he says lend expecting nothing in return.

I remember a brother once came to me and said, brother, I lent 3,000 rupees to this other brother and he said he would return it. Now such a long time has gone by and he's not returned it. You know what I told this brother who had lent the money? I said, you're the one who disobeyed Scripture.

Because Scripture says, I told him, lend expecting to receive nothing in return. If you lend, Luke 6 34, expecting to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But when you lend, expect nothing in return.

So what he meant, what I told him was, I said, you should only lend that amount of money which you can write off as a gift. So you probably should not have given him 3,000 rupees. When he asked to borrow 3,000 rupees, you should have said, sorry, I can't afford to give you 3,000 rupees but I can give you 500.

In other words, you lent only that amount of money which you hope never to see again. You treat it as a gift if he doesn't return it, that's it. But if you didn't do that, then you've disobeyed Scripture.

So we need to understand the spirit in these things. Don't turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. I remember as a young Christian myself, I was earning a lot of money as a naval officer, far more than I needed, and I had plenty of money to spare.

And there were other poorer brothers in the church who knew that and would come to me and say, one of them came to me and said, Brother Zak, can I borrow some money from you? I'll return it next month. I said, sure, how much do you want? And I gave him. The next month came along and he came to me and said, I'm a bit hard up, I still can't return what I borrowed from you.

Can you give me some more? And I'll return it next month. I said, sure. Because I had in mind, don't turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

And I don't know for how many months I did that. I just kept quiet. I was obeying Scripture.

I was a young Christian, 21 years old, just been baptized. Or 23 years old perhaps. And I was doing what Scripture said.

But after a while, this person who took this money back slid. And he had gone into drinking and other bad habits. And when I heard that, then I wrote to him.

He had gone away from that town by then. I said, Brother, if you're going to use my money to buy alcohol and to finance the devil's kingdom, then you better return it to me. Because this is to be used for God's kingdom.

And he got so angry with me and he said, well, even when I was in that dead denominational church, they didn't demand like you are demanding, etc. And the Lord said to me, forget it. I never wrote back to him and I never got the money back.

And I said, Lord, what did I do wrong? I obeyed your Scripture which said, don't turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. And the Lord taught me something there which has helped me throughout all these nearly 50 years. And that is, you must compare Scripture with Scripture.

And what the Lord showed me was I treated that money as if it was my own. One Scripture said, I must lend to him who asks of you. But there's another Scripture which says that nothing that I have belongs to myself.

Everything on earth belongs to the Lord. The earth is the Lord's and everything that it contains. So when I receive a salary which I think is mine, it's not mine.

I should forsake it. I should give it to the Lord. So even though I collect my salary on the first of the month and it's in my bank account, I must say, that's not my money.

That's God's money. So, the illustration that came to me at that time was, if somebody had given me, say, 5,000 rupees to keep, and say, please keep this, I'll come and take it from you later. And another person comes to me at that time and says, Hey, Zach, I hear that you got 5,000 rupees with you.

Can you lend me 3,000 rupees out of that? What will I say? I'll say, I'm sorry, brother, that's not my money. It's somebody else's. He's just asked me to keep it, and let me ask him if he allows me to give it to you, then I'll give it to you.

Wouldn't that be righteous? Because it's not my money. Now, if I had treated my salary as the Lord's money, then I wouldn't have given it out like this. If somebody came to borrow from me, I'd say yes, that's fine.

It's right for me to lend somebody who's in need. But let me go and ask the one to whom the money belongs, in this case, the Lord. Lord, do you want me to give it to this person? And maybe the Lord will say yes or no.

God speaks. He's a living God. And maybe the first time he'd say yes, the second month he'd have probably said no.

But I didn't wait to listen. I went by the letter of the law. And I got into bondage.

But I'm very glad that I learned a lesson very early in my life to how to obey Scripture. It is written, and it is also written. I need to balance Scripture with Scripture to be able to understand.

I'm willing to lend to everyone who asks of me today, just like it says here. But I also want to recognize that all that I have belongs to the Lord. So I cannot give that out without asking the Lord.

And that's what I've followed subsequently when people have come to me and asked me for money. I said, let me seek the Lord. If I have freedom in my spirit, I give it to you.

And there are times I've given. I've never got it back. And there are times when I've not given.

Because the Lord didn't give me freedom to give. My heart was willing. So here we need to understand the spirit in which Jesus spoke all these things.

It's not that we allow people to treat us like doormats. The principle is that I do not take revenge on anyone. I'm not wishing to hit back at someone who hit me.

I remember a brother testifying in a church meeting. He was a bus driver. And he said in bus driving down the streets, he would sometimes see someone coming at night with him in the opposite direction.

A car perhaps with glaring headlights that would blind his eyes. Now they're supposed to dip their lights when there's another car coming the other direction. And he saw that these people didn't do it.

They were blinding his eyes. So he felt like making his bus headlights also glare back at it in much greater brightness and blind him to teach him a lesson. But he suddenly realized that he was a Christian and he shouldn't take revenge.

And he decided not to do it. See the light that that brother got in what it means to take revenge, to hurt another person the way in which he hurt me. If he says something or does something to hurt me, let me hit back at him.

So if I understand the principle, I will discover the application of that principle even when I'm driving down the road and somebody is allowing his headlights to glare into my eyes which may not be written in

scripture somewhere, but I will understand the principle. So in all these things, I need to understand the principle to be willing to yield but recognizing that my time and my money and my energy primarily belong to the Lord. I'm not a slave of men and I'm not going to reduce every Tom, Dick and Harry I'm not going to allow every Tom, Dick and Harry to reduce me to become their slave because I'm primarily a slave of the Lord and I'm not going to be a slave of men.

So if I keep that in mind, I understand these principles. I never want to take revenge. I never want to treat that person the way he treats me.

I don't want to speak back to him the way he spoke back to me. I want to yield. I want to be gracious and I want to give up my rights.

And he goes on from there to something very closely connected. This wrong attitude is not taking revenge. And the next wrong attitude is to hate people.

Hatred is another wrong attitude. You have heard it said, verse 43, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Well, that's how it was in the Old Testament.

They hated the Canaanites, they hated the Philistines, they hated the Amorites, Moabites, etc. and they were to destroy them. But I say to you, love your enemies.

Has God changed through the years? No. Man has now got a higher possibility to live like Jesus Christ which he was not capable of living in the Old Testament. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to really love your enemies the way God wants you to love them.

You may love your enemy to get some honor as a very gracious person, but to love your enemy for the glory of God, only a person filled with the Holy Spirit can do that. So, I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Now remember, these are commandments that we're supposed to teach every single believer who is a disciple around the world.

If I am to build a church, I must build a church where every single person in that church loves every one of his enemies. If he's got ten enemies and he loves nine of them, he has not obeyed that command. Go into all nations, make them disciples and teach them to obey and do everything I've commanded.

In other words, I have to go through that experience myself first. And that's why every servant of God, God allows him to face enemies in his life so that he can love them. That's how we can teach other people to love their enemies.

And that's why every true servant of God has to face persecution because it's only then that he can learn how to pray for those who persecute him so that he can teach others how to pray for those who persecute him. That is how, he says in verse 45, you can be sons of your Father who is in heaven. And he says, look at your Father in heaven, verse 45.

He makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Think of two farmers. One is an atheist and the other is a God-fearing farmer.

Their farms are next to each other. One man prays regularly. The other man says, there's no God.

It's all rubbish. And yet God makes the sun to rise on both of them, their farms. God makes the rain to fall equally on both of their farms so that they get good crops and good fruit in their trees.

How good God is! He pours it equally on the atheist and the God-fearing farmer. He says, be like that. Be like God is.

Good. Equally good to the person who's good to you and to the person who's evil to you. This is impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's why we don't read such commands in the Old Testament. And Jesus goes on to say, if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Don't even the tax collectors and evil sinful people, murderers love those who love them. And all types of false religions and groups, they love those who love them.

Then you're no better than them. But you should be better than them because you're a Christian. And if you greet only your brothers, what's greater than that? Even the Gentiles greet those who greet them.

I want to ask you as a Christian, have you ever gone out of your way to greet somebody who doesn't want to greet you? I've done that numerous times. As a servant of the Lord, many people are upset with me because of the truth I proclaim. The truth of God's word, just like they were upset with Jesus and Paul and many other servants of God through these 20 centuries.

And many would not greet me if they passed me on the road. Sometimes I cross the road to go and greet them. Because the Bible says, greet those who don't have an interest in greeting you.

Show that you've got nothing against them. Someone once asked me, how many friends do you have? I said, well, as many people as there are in the world. And it keeps increasing every day.

There are 7 billion people in the world. As far as I'm concerned, they're all my friends. I don't have any enemies.

I love them all. They may consider me as their enemy, but I don't consider them as an enemy. People have done harm to me, persecuted me.

I want to pray for them. People have cursed me. I want to bless them.

Bless those who curse you. Do you do that? You know that no curse can ever harm you. That's impossible.

Because we are under the blessing of God. Christ took every curse on the cross, and now we're under the blessing of God. The person cursing me is not going to hurt me in any way.

He doesn't know that. I can bless him. I can say, God bless you.

I can turn to every human being in the world and say, God bless you. That's sincerely what I desire for every single person. Now, whether God blesses him or not depends on his attitude, etc.

But I certainly desire that God will bless him. The Lord says, finally, you are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. What does that mean? In what area am I supposed to be perfect? I can't be perfect in love and holiness and wisdom like God.

That is impossible. He's not saying here also, one day you will be perfect. What he's saying, you must be perfect.

There you compare scripture with scripture, and you read in Luke chapter 6 and verse 36, the Sermon on the Mount in Luke's Gospel. The same verse is mentioned as Luke 6, 36. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.

Love your enemies and be merciful just as your Father is merciful, Luke 6, 35 and 36. That's a parallel passage. So then I realized there's one area where I'm supposed to be perfect.

And that is in the area of mercy. I must be merciful, perfect in mercy. That means I must forgive 100% of the people who have harmed me.

I must love 100% of my enemies. I must bless 100% of those who curse me. I must do good to 100% of people who hate me.

That should be how I live. So, be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. When we compare scripture with scripture, it's something possible.

Many people haven't taken it seriously. Have you ever looked at this verse and seen this not as a promise that one day you will be perfect? That is 1 John 3, 2. One day when Christ comes back, we will be like him. We're not talking about that now.

Here it says, you must be perfect. And he's giving the example of the Father in verse 45 who makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good. Be good to that person who is evil towards you like God makes the sun and the rain to fall upon people who are evil and who don't even believe in his existence.

Isn't that a wonderful way to live on the earth? This is true Christianity. And if you're not able to live like this, I want to tell you there's only one reason. You don't want to live like it.

You don't take the words of Jesus seriously. You don't tremble at his word. Or you're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is not something that will make us giggle and laugh and fall down and roll on the ground. It's something that will make us love our enemies and greet those who don't greet us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who persecute us, and be merciful to every single person who is evil towards us, just like our Heavenly Father is merciful to us. Think of how merciful God has been to you.

Think of the millions of sins God just overlooks and forgives us. Can't we forgive those other people in the same way? So let's take these words seriously and free ourselves from these wrong attitudes that the Lord wants us to be free from. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the high standard that you have shown us in your word that we need to live by. We thank you also for the gift of the Holy Spirit that can come within us and enable us so that these things are not merely theory, but we can actually practice them and live according to this standard in our daily life. We thank you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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