

Matthew 5:38-48

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that is hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

The Most Powerful Sermon in the World, part 3

We're in Matthew chapter 5, this should be the last week. As we've been studying it, Jesus shares here about what the Christian life is all about. It is a super-ordinary supernatural life. In the beginning of Matthew 5, in the Beatitudes, we studied that, we studied this blessed life that Jesus speaks of, that it is a supernatural life lived on earth by believers in Jesus. In verse 6 of chapter 5, he's referred to men and women being filled. And we talked about that "filling," God himself imputing and endowing a man or a woman with his very own nature, his very own righteousness. He said, **verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."** Now that's supernatural, filled, God working in their lives. The way you get to verse 6 is you start with verse 3, in case you're wondering. A man that has been so filled or a woman filled with the righteousness of God is somebody that first of all is "poor in spirit," who realizes their true spiritual condition, and there's a poverty of spirit then. And then with that, there are those who mourn and then those who become,

as a result meek. When you're broken, *'Hey, this is the condition I'm in, man this is not good,'* there's a humility and brokenness, no more pride. And that leads you to verse 6, where I realize this is my condition. I need help, I can't fix my heart-problem. So I look to the only place I can look, I look to heaven, I look to God and I cry out, I hunger, I agonize, I thirst *'God, change me, God help me,'* and then in response God fills me with his righteousness, and the Spirit of God comes into me, I'm born-again. I'm a different man. It is a supernatural life, as we studied in the following verses, verses 7 to 12. It's there then that he says ***'Blessed are the merciful, this compassion of God is now in me, I'm different, I have this love of God in my heart towards those around me. It's there that I'm pure in heart.'*** I mean, I'm not pure on my own, that's for sure. ***'And then I'm a peace-maker, which isn't in a natural man either.'*** Of course, ***verses 10 to 12, 'I'm not a popular guy in the world's eyes either,'*** as we talked about persecution. But a supernatural life. ***'And it's a life that emits light,' verses 13 to 16, 'the Light of God, just the glory of God.'*** So, verse 16 with this life now, as God is in me and working through me, God is being glorified through my life, it's supernatural. Jesus wants this for the people that are listening, the people that are around him, you and I this morning, he desires that we would have this life. But so often people are, we're into self-improvement, you know, taking the self-improvement courses and classes, trying to better myself. [Ben Franklin was deeply into that, and because he was a very strong-willed and self-motivated man, he succeeded on a purely physical level, and was a very wise man, on a purely physical level. But it stopped right there. He could never attain to the righteous levels Jesus is talking about here, even at his very best.] Or using some sort of religious exercise, the latest deal, whatever it might be to improve yourself. And that just doesn't get you there, if you do that, you end up in the end empty, you're no better off. So he understands that this is the heart of people, and as we've studied in the last weeks, he's trying to get through the hardness of the men's hearts. And there's the religious deception, so he's trying to rip that away and reveal that we are in desperate need for him, he wants to give us life. It's only found in him. So he's hammering away, he's shooting away at the hearts, dealing with religious deception and so forth. Now, if anybody's wondered, if anybody's questioned, has listened to some of the things Jesus has said and wondered, *'Well, I'm not bad, I'm still in, I'm ok man, my heart's not so bad. Of course, I've got the favour of God.'* And yet they don't. He now says what he says, and what he says is ***so unnatural.*** It

is in no way the natural man to people that have heard this. To many it's bizarre that he would say these things. It is a supernatural life. It is a life that's been greatly impacted by God. If it doesn't settle it with you, and you happen to be here today, and you really don't have the life of Christ in you, the point is that we need the work of God in our heart, because what Jesus is describing here is not a natural man in any way, that's what Jesus is about to show us.

*Here's An Example, Richard Wurmbrand, Founder of
Voice of the Martyrs*

I think of Richard Wurmbrand, he founded *The Voice of the Martyrs*, and he speaks about Christians in Communist Romania, he was a minister there, and ended up in the Communist prisons for his Christianity [see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wurmbrand] And he refers to being in prison and seeing the way the Christians were treated in prison, the Christians in Romania. The Communist prison staff would torture them and mistreat them. They would actually take salt and just keep force-feeding them salt, and then wouldn't feed them or give them water for days, and they'd be starving, and leaving them out in the cold. They were chained with fifty pounds of chains and would be abused and beaten. Well, there was a season, and as often happens in an oppressive government, sometimes it even turns on itself, where in the prisons he was in, some pretty harsh prisons, some of the Communist torturers ended up in jail themselves, right alongside these Christians they'd been torturing. And Wurmbrand notes how he saw, you know, now this other prison staff torturing the Communists. He watched Christians then stand in their defense. Here's a guy who was force-feeding me salt, now he's in prison with me, and now this guy's going to torture him, and a Christian would stand in his defense. They were given one slice of bread a week, and he shares how he saw Christians who were at the point of starvation now concerned for these Communist torturers who now are in jail, giving them that one slice of bread. There were times where they were in need of medicine, you know, they were going to die, and rather than take the medicine, you know, *'You've got the flu Mr. Communist torturer, and you were force-feeding me salt, and I've got the flu, but I don't want you to die because I love you, and here's my medicine.'* You know, he saw that happen. There's nothing natural about that. That's a supernatural life, and it's

a true life where God has a life, and that's what we're now going to study in these verses today.

'Do Good For Evil, Show Love To Those Who Hate You'

Verses 38-48, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. And whoever compels you to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Now verse 38, for the fifth time he says, **"You have heard it said,"** He's dealing with religious deception and pride. He's ripping apart, taking away that veil that's just blinded people. Now he says, **'You've heard it said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'** That is something again, as before in certain instances, that was in the Law, repeatedly, that was stated in the Law a number of times. Turn to **Deuteronomy 19:21**, here's an example, **"Your eye shall not pity, life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."** That was repeated in different ways, slightly different renderings, multiple times in the Old Testament. God said this is the Law. So they had heard it a lot of times, but the problem was, the religious leaders, as they often did, reinterpreted it, and they made it fit their hearts and their lives. What was intended, God was through this seeking to restrain vengeance and sin in the nation of Israel, as a community of people, seeking to have justice upheld. So, this was a judicial statement, that in a society, in the nation of Israel, when somebody harmed somebody else, there was to be punishment for that, and the punishment meted out would be of the same kind and same measure, it would be fair. [And if you read Deuteronomy 19:15-21, you will see that in this instance this 'eye for an eye' punishment was to

be applied to false witnesses, what we would term as the punishment for perjury.] So if you mistreated somebody, in the nation of Israel, and had to go and stand before the magistrate, if you, because of your ugly heart, knock somebody in the mouth and knocked out their tooth, the judge and the magistrate would say *'Here's a pair of pliers, give it to whoever, yank out his tooth.'* That was the intention. And of course, that would restrain evil. In our society our courts have gotten really liberal, so you can do more than knock out a guy's tooth, and often even skate free. It would be a motivator to behave yourself. It would restrain you. Right? You'd think about it. *'You know, if I poke out his eye I'm gonna lose my eye.'* That was the intent, restraint. But also it would keep you from going overboard [in the punishment], where, you know, somebody's taken out your eye, you wouldn't be allowed to get the best attorneys and seek to have them loose both their eyes, both their legs and both their arms, you know, because you're so angry at what they've done. It would make it fair. Yet, it was not intended to be carried out on a personal level. It was intended to be applied judicially, as a nation in their court system. But the religious leaders interpreted this personally, on a personal level. And when you take this personally, you get way out of line with it. And so what would happen would be, as the religious leaders taught, say now somebody has come and harmed you, the Law, they said, **insists** that you go and mete out to them what they have done to you. So it's personal, and I would add, probably with no court supervision. You go do it yourself. Somebody comes and punches you, you go back, the Law says, and you give 'em a good whack for what they've done. Personal vengeance is the way they understood it. And it created a certain heart. Now Jesus comes and responds to that. **'You've heard it said,'** meaning in a certain way, **'But this is what I say to you.'** He says in **verse 39, "I tell you not to resist an evil person."** In fact, **"somebody slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also."** Jesus is again showing them that this is a supernatural life, when somebody's been impacted by the love of God. But he's referring to the heart, he's referring to a supernatural life, he's referring to somebody whose been so impacted by the love of God that they would do this. Just imagine, I'm standing here, and you're standing in front of me, or somebody you know, and maybe because of this message somebody will feel like this, but I'm a Christian, and you're just ticked off by who I am and you came and you whack me one. My face is all red, but what I do, is I don't come back with insult and anger. In fact, the tear in my eye is maybe more so seen in a compassionate way as a tear

for you. But I just slowly, if you hit me on the right cheek, I slowly turn to you the left, and I look at you with a certain look. Very powerful. In fact, in Romans chapter 12, Paul said the same sort of thing, **'Overcome evil with good.'** And when you do so, when your enemy comes at you, and you come back with good, it's as if you're heaping coals of fire upon his head, they're overcome with shame, conviction, their heart is melted, their heart is moved. And it is very powerful for a man or woman to do this. It's this, *'I love you so much, that yeah, you've hurt me, and yeah you're brutal with me, but I have the love of God, and God loves you, and I wished you knew Jesus Christ, so yeah that hurt, but I'm not gonna come back and hurt you, because I want you to come to Christ. I want you to know the love of God, I care about you.'* Turn to Matthew chapter 26, verse 67. Verse 67, and then we're going to turn to Isaiah 50, verse 6. Remember, this is Jesus. **Matthew 26, verse 67, "Then they spat in his face and beat him, and others struck him with the palm of their hands."** That word "struck" there is the word *rapiso*, in the Greek, it's the same Greek word that we have here in verse 39. Now turn to Isaiah 50, verse 6. We have Jesus there, spat in the face, being beaten, being struck, and then Isaiah the prophet saying before how he responded. **Isaiah 50, verse 6, "I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard. I did not hide my face from the same and spitting."** You know, I read that and I think of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, we see, we understand Jesus, the soldiers, they beat him, they slapped him, of course they took the scourge to him. Isaiah says that the heart of God looking forward to Jesus, the way he was, he says **'I gave my back to them, I did not hide my face from them, and I was dying for the sin of the world.'** In Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, you remember that one point where they're just beating the daylights out of Jesus, and he's down on the ground and he stands up again and he offered them, just as the Scriptures said, he offered them his back, and he didn't hide his face. And so Jesus himself, I mean, that's what this Christian life is all about, is Christ in me, the old man gone, the new is come, and it's the Christlike life in me. So Jesus says **'This is me, I tell you, they knock you on the right cheek, give to them the left cheek.'** There are times in my life, in fact there are times in the Scriptures where we see this, we see Jesus reacting that way. But later in the Book of Acts we'll see Paul a number of times where he is mistreated, where he'll actually stand up for his rights. The one time before Festus, and these Jews want Paul delivered to them so they

could just kill him, and Paul just doesn't stand there and go along with that, Paul says, **"I appeal to Caesar."** There's another time where he's just been abused and they just want to put him away, and he says, **'No, no, you bring the people here, I am a Roman citizen, and the people abused me, you have them brought to me and then escort me out to them under Roman protective guard.'** There are a number of times he stands in truth and in righteousness. [And in legal situations it is within a Christian's Biblical rights to defend themselves, in the legal sense. There are some excellent legal defense organizations set up in the United States. See, <http://www.unityinchrist.com/Christian%20Legal%20Defense%20Organizations.htm>] So, what Jesus is saying here, he's addressing the heart. I don't discard wisdom, and I don't get bizarre, but it's the heart, it's the attitude of the heart. And I, with the heart of Christ, am no longer concerned about myself, I'm concerned about you. But there may be times where I'll stand for my rights, and I'll certainly stand for others.

If Somebody Sues You

Verse 40, "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also." He then goes on, talks about finances. If somebody sues you and comes at you that way, in a way that's harsh and unjust, and they take away your tunic, give them your cloak also. In Exodus, on the basis of humane grounds, if you got in a situation where somebody had your cloak, they could only have it for the day, they have to return it at night. And God said this in Exodus, in compassion for the poor and needy, you can only have that for the day, you have to give it back so that a man or woman doesn't lie there in the cold at night without his or her covering, give back his cloak, you have it just for the day. So the Law made it very clear that there was protection, you couldn't be stripped naked by somebody and just left there in the cold. So, people would stand on the Law in that case, in ancient Israel. But Jesus is saying, this evil person comes at you, and now you have this supernatural life, this heart of God, they come at you and they want to take advantage of you financially, hey man, be gracious and don't worry so much about what you're going to sacrifice and what you're going to go without or what you're going to suffer, man be gracious. Now when I read this, I think of alimony and court battles that go on with divorce. Boy, they're brutal, aren't they? But I know of circumstances where a Christian man has said to the judge, *I'll give her even more, I'll*

give her even more, for this very reason, because I'm concerned for her, I'm not going to be divided over physical things, I'm not going to let that keep me from expressing love to somebody, I'm not going to get in the flesh, I love you, I care about you, so if you want, take it, I don't care.' That's not natural. There's nothing natural about that. That's not being a doormat, when it's done in love, when it's done in love and concern for someone else.

Go The Extra Mile

And then he says in **Verse 41**, **“Whoever compels you to go a mile, go with him two.”** Now as you read that, if you don't know some of the history, you will not completely understand all that's there. But the history is this, a Roman soldier, you could be in this time as a Jew, and a Roman soldier, if he came up to you and just kind of tapped you with his spear, and he compelled you and said *'I want you to carry my luggage [it was usually the mail the soldier was carrying, official Roman mail]*, according to the Roman government and the way it was in the society at the time, if a soldier said that to you, you would have to pick up his luggage [i.e. the mail sack], and you would have to take it a thousand paces, which was a mile in that Roman culture. You may be busy, you know, like Simon the Cyrene, here comes Jesus with the cross, and that's a picture of that. Jesus is coming with the cross, this man's just standing there in the crowd, maybe he's even busy, he's got somewhere to go, but a soldier came up to him and compelled him, that's the word “compelled him,” *'You pick up that cross,'* and he had to, according to the Roman law, pick up that cross. So, whoever compels you. Now, of course, especially the Jews, the Jews, they despised the Roman government. You've got these nationalistic Jews, called Zealots, who were nationalistic to the point of military insurrection, what we might call today *freedom fighters*, these radical Jews. If you came up to him as a soldier and tapped on this radical Jew, or religious Pharisee and said *'Pick up my load,'* he'd have to do it. But oh, he'd do it in such a way, dragging it across the ground, and maybe sneezing on it a few times. I mean, do it, but with such attitude. And now you're a Christian or Messianic Jewish believer in Yeshua, back in the 1st century, you know, you're a Jewish man that's come to Christ, and the soldier comes up to you, and you think, *'Ah hey, here's an opportunity for witnessing now. I mean, I was busy, I was heading to work, but I've got to do this anyway.'* So you pick up his baggage, the Roman mail sack, and rather than going a thousand paces, you take it right to his doorstep,

doesn't matter how far. And you're using the opportunity, you're loving him, being kind, you're polishing it, treating it really well, *'Anything else I can do for you, Sir?'* But using the opportunity, because of your love, you want to witness to him, you want to reach out to him, you want to be a blessing to him. And that's the heart of what Jesus was saying here. Somebody compels you, take it, and work hard at it, and use it as an opportunity to show him that you love him and you want to do things that are helpful to him. Well, go the extra mile.

Give To Them Who Ask To Borrow Of You

He says in **verse 42**, **"Give to him who asks of you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."** You know, freely you have been given to you, so freely give. Right? Give freely, **"Give to him who asks of you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away."** Give freely, you've been so blessed. Again, don't hold onto your possessions, whatever you've been given, just by God and received by God, don't hold onto it, freely give it away. Especially in showing the love and heart of God. The average man, the natural man, you have things that are given to you, you have obtained them, you know, you've worked hard, you've got these possessions, and there's somebody in need, the average person wants to ignore that need. Especially somebody who hasn't been very nice to you. But in the context here, you've got somebody sitting across your desk, somebody calling at your house, or you've been told of a need, a person that just has not been kind to you, been pretty brutal and unfair, and they have a need. The heart of God, this supernatural life moves you and you want to go and help. I think of the story of the Revolutionary War, this man named Peter Miller, and he walked sixty miles to go talk to General Washington. A guy in the community had been put in jail, he had been accused of being a traitor, so he was in jail. Well Peter Miller goes before Washington, he says *'Hey, listen...'* and kind of intercedes, begs and essentially prays, *'Please, General Washington, let this man out.'* And General Washington responds and says *'Your friend, I can't do that for your friend.'* And Peter Miller responded, *'My friend? The guy is not my friend. The guy you've got in jail, I have never had anybody in all my life treat me so brutally.'* And Peter Miller is a pastor. *'He has been so harsh with the people in our church, but I'm asking you to let him go.'* And General Washington evidently heard that and said, *'Well, now I see it a little differently.'* And he released the guy. But he went sixty

miles, to save his worst enemy, seeking to get him out of jail, and they were about to hang him, but Miller just being good to him. And that's the heart of what's there in verse 42, and of course financially, just giving, giving to a need and being kind. Now, everything balances out. But don't discard wisdom. I see a homeless person come up and wants a dollar, I don't necessarily give him a dollar, I often don't. If I have the opportunity, I'll maybe give him some food. But in many instances, giving financially to somebody in need, you may actually be hurting them, not helping them at all. Pastor Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, told of one of his members who organized the church to go on a mission of mercy on a cold winter's day with hot thermoses of soup, and blankets, taking them down to a section of New York City called *The Salt Mines*, where all the male and female prostitutes lived in squalor out in the cold, handing them blankets and thermoses of hot soup, and inviting them all to come back to the Brooklyn Tabernacle for a hot meal. That was using wisdom, and helping those in need with your resources, used wisely. A few came to Christ as I recall, while most were fed with a hot meal, had nice blankets to keep them warm. Not being judgmental, just loving them where they were at, in their poor and desperate situation. And they all sat through one of Pastor Cymbala's sermons while they ate their hot meal, small price, and then went back to *the Salt Mines*. But they all got a good taste of what a Christian is like, a true Christian loving, non-judgmental. Jesus came to save the sinners, not those who think they are well, and you do that by first loving them unconditionally, as Pastor Cymbala does.

*'Love Those Who Hate You, Pray For Them Who
Spitefully Use You And Persecute You'*

In Verses 43-48, he says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun to 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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Now that statement *'You shall love your*

neighbour and hate your enemy' is not in the Law. You cannot go back and find that. That's what was being taught, and it's the sixth time he says that. It said clearly in the Old Testament, **'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'** That was there, **'Love even the foreigner that's come in, that's living in your community, love your neighbour.'** But in no instance did it ever say *'hate your enemy,'* although this is a natural law of man. David at times, as he's writing in the Psalms, he's really struggling with his enemies, and he writes certain things (of course, under direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God). Although David never names them individually, so what he writes he's writing corporately, as the enemies of God. So they took things like that evidently and came up with this principle, *'Love your neighbour, but hate, despise your enemy.'* [Comment: With what Jesus is bringing out here, and throughout verses 38-48, some Christian denominations have interpreted these to mean that it is wrong for a Christian to join the military, because it is impossible to fight and kill an enemy without hating them. I find this logic to be true, when you really meditate on it. The Sabbatarian Churches of God, strong followers of the Sermon on the Mount, are for the most part conscientious objectors, and their members do not join the military. I respect them for that belief. Although I also know of Christians who have been soldiers, airmen and sailors, and have been real Christians. Let your Christian conscience guide you in such matters. You may join the military to fight for what you genuinely think is a "righteous" war in God's eyes (World War II would have been one of those wars), and yet may end up finding yourself bound to the military in a war that you come to find out is unrighteous---or a war that you thought was a righteous cause, but is now being fought by unrighteous standards. Use wisdom before making such choices. Here's another interesting historic snippet. General Robert E. Lee, standing there before the President or someone like that, and there's mention of this particular commanding officer, and when he's brought up in conversation, Robert E. Lee just said wonderful things about him. Well, another soldier, officer standing there, turned to Robert E. Lee and said, "General Lee, that guy is like your worse enemy, I mean, he's brutal with you." And Robert E. Lee responded, "You know I was asked about my opinion of him, not his opinion of me." I like that, I really like that, to just be guarded about what you say about somebody else. And if you can say anything, say something kind. He says, **'Love your enemies, love your enemies, bless those who curse you. Be kind to them, it'll blow their minds.'** It is a powerful thing to do, it melts the heart, it

convicts the conscience. Do good to those who hate you, they come at you and want to be awful with you, you instead do good, do good to those who hate you.

Pray For Those Who Spitefully Use You

“and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” You know, John Huss, so many examples of this, and of course the following example of Christ. This man during the time of the Reformation, teaching the Word of God, having some of William Tyndale’s notes, Bible translation, teaching the Word of God, there in the medieval time, time of the Roman Church, authorities from the Roman Catholic Church take John Huss because he’s teaching the Word of God, and he’s interpreting Biblically the Word of God, and they denounce him and have him convicted of whatever the crime was, sentenced him to be burnt at the stake, which they did at that time. But as the story goes, and there’s so many like this, John Huss, what did he do when he heard this? The story is, he fell to his knees, and just as Jesus prayed, he said, *“Lord forgive my enemies, forgive them, work in their hearts.”* He just started to pray for them. There can’t be anything more painful than burning at the stake. And John Huss fell to his knees and started to pray for those who sentenced him and for his enemies. And that’s what Jesus did. That’s what Stephen the first martyr did (cf. Acts chapters 6-7, esp. Act 7:60). He just turned around and prayed *“God forgive them.”* Jesus on the cross said **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** That is not natural, that is a supernatural life, it is not a religious deal. ***‘You’re gonna burn me at the stake, ah man, I just pray for you, you have such poison in your heart, O Lord, work in that guy’s heart so that he’d see the poison, it’s so dark, and my heart breaks for him, for him.’*** He says pray for them who spitefully use you and persecute you. You know, the cool thing about doing that, I know many of you know this, but if you pray for your enemies, they won’t be your enemy for long, at least in your heart. ***‘Do this, that you may be sons of your Father which is in heaven,’*** You’re going to be God-like, Christ-like, ***‘for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust.’*** He’s kind to all, he doesn’t, you know, in your town, it isn’t like we’ve got green lawns and nice yards, and then the people that own the porn shops and bars or whatever, and you go over there, and dry, no rain, lawns all browned out. He doesn’t do that. He just shows kindness to all, to draw people, he so much

wants people to come to him in salvation. So he's kind, he's patient, he's longsuffering. He says, **'When you're this way, when you bless when you're cursed, when you do good when you're hated, when you pray for those who are persecuting you and using you spitefully, you're being just like God.'** In fact, don't forget, he was just like that with you, just like with you when you were in your old life, your old ways, heart against God, doing your own deal, living pretty ugly. He was pretty kind to you. So don't forget that. **"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"** If you just do what these other guys are doing, what's the difference? **"And if you greet your brother only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors so?"** You should be better than them, that's what he's saying, you should do better. You have been infused with the love of God, the righteousness of God, so you should not be like the tax collectors, the Gentiles, the pagans, the people that just live like everybody else. And if you're only kind to the people in the church, if you're only giving a hug to the brother that walks through the door, or the handshake, and yet you ignore your neighbours and the ungodly, what kind of example is that? Stand for the truth, don't throw aside wisdom, there's law, there's judicial issues, but yet love, and love.

"Be Ye Therefore Perfect, Even As Your Father Which Is In Heaven Is Perfect"

Therefore, **verse 48, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."** If you haven't got the point, he's basically saying **'Be perfect, be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.'** Paul uses the same Greek word many times, and when he uses it, it's actually translated as "mature." And the real thrust of that word is **"be mature."** It isn't necessarily "be sinless," I mean, I can never be sinless. And so there are people that will come up with this doctrine, that when you get saved you should be perfect, and that you can reach a point of perfection in this present physical life of yours. You know, if you can, man, I don't know about it, because I ain't even close, that's for sure. But there is a striving for the standard of God in my heart, and there is a desire, a longing to be more like Christ, so there is a maturing process that goes on (it's called the sanctification process).

In Closing

No doubt, the standard is, the ultimate standard of my life should be perfection, in the sense of having the heart of God, the character of God, the integrity of God, the truth of God, to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. I know that I'm maturing, I know that this perfection is in me when love is abounding in me, super-abounding in me. You come, strike me on the cheek, I give you my other cheek, because I love you. You want to sue me and take me to court, be brutal with me, man, I'm broken-hearted for you, but take the stuff, it's not important to me. You compel me and force me to do something, man, I'll love you, man. I'll serve you, I'll wash your feet. You have a need, and yet you've never been kind to me, man, I'm not gonna say *'I got ya, payback time!'* I'm gonna come and help you in your need. I'm going to love you and pray for you and bless you, and do good to you. And you will see in me, this is **not** a religious trip. God has got a hold of my life, and the love of God has been shed abroad in my heart to others.

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