**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Righteousness that Exceeds the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Pt. 3)**

**Matt. 5:17-48**

For the past couple of weeks we have talked about the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

In Matthew chapter 5, in Jesus’ sermon on the mount, several times Jesus would say, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old...”* and then He would state a particular teaching, and then He would say, *“But I say to you...”* and then give His teaching. As we have said before, to understand this passage it is important to recognize that teaching at this time could be divided into three different categories. First, there was the teaching of the Law. This is what the Law of Moses actually said, which was still binding at that time. Second, there was what the people were hearing that the Law of Moses said. What the Law of Moses actually said and what the people were hearing was not necessarily the same. Thirdly, there was the teaching of Jesus concerning how it will be in His kingdom. As I understand this passage Jesus is not comparing His teaching with Moses’ Law, but He is comparing His teaching with what they were hearing that Moses taught. Notice what He says in verse 20: *“ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* Many people viewed the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees as being what the Law actually was saying. But that was not true. What the scribes and Pharisees were teaching was one thing, and what the Law actually said was another. Jesus tells them that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. He gives examples of where their righteousness needed to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, concerning murder, concerning adultery, concerning divorce, concerning oath taking, etc. Today we want to look at two other examples and bring this series to a close.

Look and what Jesus says in verses 38-42: *“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 your 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 one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”* Now, it is important to understand that the law of retaliation under the Law of Moses, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth,” was a judicial law. It was to be administered by duly authorized magistrates. The Law of Moses never gave place to individual revenge. The phrase, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” is found three times in the Old Testament. It is found in Exodus 21:22-25, in Lev. 24:19-20, and in Deut. 19:16-21. In all of these passages the punishment that was to be administered was done under the authority of duly authorized judges. These passages were not giving an individual the right to administer personal revenge on someone. The Law of Moses did not give place to individual revenge. Lev. 19:17-18 says, *“'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”* Prov. 20:22: *“Do not say, ‘I will recompense evil’; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.”*  The spirit of the Law of Moses was not in favor of personal revenge, but rather to limit and check it.

Well, the scribes and Pharisees had perverted the law. They believed it lawful in many cases for the injured party, at his own hand, to avenge himself, provided in his revenge he did not exceed the measure prescribed in the law. But Jesus emphasizes that when someone does us harm, rather than retaliating, we should do him good. And He emphasizes this by using a figure of speech called a hyperbole, that is, exaggeration for emphasis sake. You see, His words to turn the other cheek and to let him have your cloak also etc., are not to be interpreted in a literal sense, but as an exaggeration to emphasize that we should not take vengeance, but do him good. We use this figure of speech in our talk. Someone says, “I have a million chores to do today.” He doesn’t literally have a million chores, but he is exaggerating to emphasize the fact that he has a lot of chores to do. Someone says, “She never stops talking.” That is not literally true, but he is emphasizing that she talks a lot. Jesus is not saying that we should literally turn the other cheek when someone hits us, but when he hits you, don’t hit him back, rather do him good. We know that to be true because when Jesus was struck with the palm of one’s hand, He did not literally turn the other cheek. In John 18:22 it says, *“And when He* [that is Jesus] *had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, ‘Do You answer the high priest like that?’”* Well, Jesus doesn’t literally turn the other cheek, rather He answered him and said, *“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?”* (John 18:22-23) In Acts 22:25, Paul is bound, about to be scourged. He doesn’t literally turn the other cheek, rather he used his right as a Roman citizen. He said, *“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”* It is not wrong to appeal to the laws of the land to protect one’s self from being harmed by evil doers. As a matter of fact, the governmental authorities are established by God to administer His vengeance on evil doers. Read Romans 13:1-5. Jesus did not intend that evil doers should be free to assault over and over again. But what Jesus is emphasizing is that I as an individual am not to take personal vengeance, but rather do good to the one who hurts me. He is saying that we should not be the kind of people who “always stand up for our rights.” “Nobody is going to run over me.” “If he hits me he will wish he hadn’t.” This kind of spirit is not the spirit of the Christian. The Lord is saying, rather than fighting back and always trying to get even with people, do them good. Paul says the same in Romans 12:17-21, *“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him;*

*If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

Now, back to Matthew chapter 5, consider what Jesus says in verses 43-48: *“You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor 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 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 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, the Law had said, “You shall love your neighbor,” but the scribes and Pharisees had added “and hate your enemy.” The Law of Moses never taught that. They were to love their neighbors, but their neighbors included their enemies. The scribes and Pharisees limited their neighbor to Jews, and maybe to certain Jews, devout Jews, Proselytes who were circumcised and devout. But Jesus included one’s enemy as his neighbor. Do you remember the parable of the Good Samaritan recorded in Luke 10? This parable was given by Jesus in response to a certain lawyer who asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In this parable Jesus answers that question. In this parable Jesus tells about a certain man who fell among thieves. These thieves stripped him of his clothes, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Jesus tells about a certain priest who came along and saw the man, but he passed by on the other side. Also a Levite came along and looked, and he also passed by on the other side. But then Jesus tells about a certain Samaritan who came where this man was. Now let me stop and say that Samaritans were a mixed race of people, part Jew and part Gentile. The Jews looked upon them as apostates, and not worthy of their fellowship. The Jews didn’t have anything to do with Samaritans. Samaritans were the Jews enemies. Jesus says in the parable that this Samaritan, when he saw the man, had compassion. And Jesus said, *“So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'”* Then Jesus asked the question, *“So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”* The Lawyer said, *“He who showed mercy on him.”* *“Then Jesus said to him, ‘God and do likewise.’”* Who is my neighbor? Jesus said that this Samaritan, who was despised by the Jews, was neighbor to the one who fell among thieves. The Law said, “love your neighbor as yourself.” That included their enemies. Jesus tells us to love our enemies. And He defines what love means when He says, *“bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you…”* To love someone means to act in their best interest. The apostle John said in 1 John 3:17-18, *“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”* Here is a person at night in bed thinking about his enemy and what that enemy has done to him, and he is thinking about what he can do to get back at him. He can’t sleep because he is filled will hate and a desire for vengeance. The Lord is saying to him, Get out of bed, get on your knees and pray for him. Get rid of the hate and ill-will in your heart and think about ways in which you can do him good. And then get back in bed and go to sleep. If you allow it, hate will take control of your heart and life, and it will destroy you.

Someone says how can you do that? How can you love your enemies? You do it by turning your heart over to God and letting Him take control. You begin to think as God thinks, to love as He loves. You no longer allow the world to influence your thinking and your living, but by the renewing of your mind you prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. You choose not to love the world nor the things in the world, but to love God will all your heart, soul, mind and strength. What do you do? You become a Christian. You commit your life to Jesus Christ who is Lord of heaven and earth. Why not come to Jesus today? Believe that He is the Christ the Son of the living God. Put your trust in Him as Lord and Savior. Repent of all sin, that is, turn away from all sin and commit your life to following Jesus. Confess your faith in Jesus, and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins. The Lord has promised that if you will obey Him, He will save you. Then you will be able to love as He loves.

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