

The Power of Love **Matthew 5:38-48**

Huey Lewis was not the first to realize it but maybe just the best songwriter to sing it -

The power of love is a curious thing
Make a one man weep, make another man sing
Change a hawk to a little white dove
More than a feeling that's the power of love

Tougher than diamonds, rich like cream
Stronger and harder than a bad girl's dream
Make a bad one good make a wrong one right
Power of love that keeps you home at night

human love is so temporary, often flawed and incomplete - God's love is eternal, perfect and satisfying

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

1. The righteous perspective of love

distinction made between the moral law and the civil law throughout the ministry of Jesus

an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is a part of the civil law and it explains retributive justice

According to Stott: "But the scribes and Pharisees evidently extended this principle of just retribution from the law courts (where it belongs) to the realm of personal relationships (where it does not belong). They tried to use it to justify personal revenge, although the law explicitly

forbade this: 'You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people.' Thus, 'This excellent, if stern, principle of judicial retribution was being utilized as an excuse for the very thing it was instituted to abolish, namely personal revenge.'¹

***Love the evil person**

-Wrath has a place - God has a will for it
we are to give place to wrath

1 Peter 2:13-14: "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.

The law in taking the moral law and civilly administering it often expressed capital punishment as the means to value the principles and the persons being wronged

-wrath has a position - with the government - God has a way for it

Romans 13:1-5: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake."

Proverbs 8:15-16 "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth."

Romans 12:17-19: "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord."

-Wrath has a process
judicial review - innocent until proven guilty; evidence gathering; fair trial;

-Wrath has a purpose - verse 4 - avenge
reciprocal justice in the civil law faces in the mirror reciprocal love in the moral law - we are to do unto others as they have done in the civil law in order to value the principles and lives that have been wronged - we are to do unto others as we would have them do to us in

¹John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p. 104.

the moral law

Stott: “The point I have been labouring is that the duties and functions of the state are quite different from those of the individual. The individual’s responsibility towards a wrongdoer was laid down by the apostle Paul at the end of Romans 12: ‘Repay no one evil for evil (surely an echo of “Do not resist one who is evil”), but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all...Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” “ if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head” (i.e. shame him into repentance). Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. It will be seen that Paul’s prohibition of vengeance is not because retribution is in itself wrong, but because it is the prerogative of God, not man. ‘Vengeance is mine,’ says the Lord. His purpose is to express his wrath or vengeance now through the law courts (as Paul goes on to write in Romans 13), and finally on the day of judgment.²

***Love your enemies**

one of most famous sermons by MLK Jr was from this text

he spoke from this text - he spoke of loving your enemies

17:58-18:58 of his sermon

enemies made through persecution

We do not speak with love toward our enemies - we will never win them

We will not be like our father in heaven

2. The relational provocation of love

because you are children of your father

***Jesus demanded it**

He goes back to the distinction - you are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world - in the context of persecution

***Jesus demonstrated it**

World of meteorology

Acts 14:15–17: and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men

²John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p. 111.

with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,¹⁶ who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.¹⁷ Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Acts 17:28–30: “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

World of sociology

if you just love your friends then how distinctive are you - no different than anyone else

The father blesses both

3. The redeeming power of love

Father seeks redemption

Rahab

Ruth

Ninevah

Pharoah

Publicans - Matthew - my how Matthew must have loved these words

***Love has the purpose of redemption**

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

How has God loved you

biology - given your identity and

He has given you life - expression of his love

He has died to save you

***Love has the power of redemption**

Romans 5:8: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

We are called to this

For we who live are always delivered to death

1 Peter 2:19–25: “For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

***Love has the Person of redemption**

1 John 4 is the love chapter - love is of God - and the wellspring of all love comes from God and Jesus Christ

1 John 4:10: “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”