

Loving as God's People

Key Verse: *"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 on the unjust."*
—Matthew 5:44,45

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 5:43-48
compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."—Matt. 5:39-41

Thus, if a believer is insulted, exacting revenge should be resisted. The bearing of such offenses in a patient manner, trusting God for the strength to

ACCORDING TO THE MO-
saic Law, the judges of Israel were to follow the principle of "an eye for an eye" or strict justice for offenses that were committed. (Exod. 21:24; Deut. 19:21) This concept was applied by some of the people to individual relationships unwarrantedly, which tended to cultivate a hardness of heart or a lack of mercy.

To the worldly wise, one of the peculiarities of Jesus' admonitions is the principle of personal non-retaliation for evil and injustices. "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 cloke also. And whosoever shall

willingly suffer for righteousness as did the Master, would be an evidence of increasing Christlikeness. If a believer should unjustly sustain a loss of personal property or experience physical injury, he would be well within his rights to seek redress through any lawful means.

Our Key Verse contradicts the tradition of the elders that only neighbors should be loved but enemies hated. On the contrary, one of the evidences of a regenerated heart is the ability to love one's enemies. Additionally, believers are called upon to do good to those who persecute them. Such an attitude would be virtually impossible to attain without receiving divine aid through an increasing measure of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and by patiently endeavoring to imitate Christ by a willingness to suffer reproach for his cause. By studying the principles of Truth outlined in scripture, and noting the selflessness of Jesus in laying down his life to benefit all mankind, disciples who obediently follow the Master will take increasing pleasure from each evidence that they are overcoming the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the adversary. Such growth will motivate them to fulfill these commands as evidence of their supreme love for God.

Jesus concludes this lesson by setting forth the highest of ideals for which we must strive. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (vs. 48) This seemingly impossible admonition can only be achieved in us as it pertains to our heart attitude under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We must exhibit love and sympathy in our characters towards others while remembering it is God's province to mete out justice according to the principles of righteousness. How thankful we should be that the Creator is willing to accept our sincere intentions for actual perfection, because of our heart loyalty and appreciation of this glorious standard! ■