

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

MAY 1993

No. 089

THE BEST REVENGE

"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 whomsoever 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 whomsoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." (Matt. 5:38-41)

This is surely one of the most difficult teachings of the Bible to actually put into practice. Just when every fiber of our being is crying out for revenge (or even justice), we are instructed to refuse to fight back, and

THE HARVESTER
1120 Sun Hill Road
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Birmingham, AL
PERMIT No. 4624

even to assist our attacker! Why would the Lord place such a requirement on us?

I believe there are two common misconceptions which, when understood, will make this teaching much easier to understand and to practice. If my grasp of this subject is correct, then there is much more here than meets the eye. Some very profound truths are concealed in this simple passage.

The first misconception is, "If I turn the other cheek, I am giving up all hope of self-defense!" Or, to put it more bluntly, "I can't do that! I'll get stomped!" This simply isn't true. It is true that, if I turn the other cheek, I won't be the one doing the defending. But it does not mean that I won't be defended.

When I was a small boy, my parents made it a law in our house that I was never allowed to hit my sisters. Now, any brother can tell you that there are times when a sister *needs* to be hit! But I was forbidden to do it, no matter what the circumstances. But this did not leave me defenseless against their blows. All I had to do was appeal to my parents for justice.

My parents believe (and I fully agree) that it is not proper for one child to spank another. Spanking is the parent's job. And my parents were not prone to neglect this duty! So there was never an excuse for me to violate this law. (I won't claim I never did so, but it was never the right thing to do!)

In the same way, if we refuse to fight our fellow man, but instead turn the other cheek, we are not left defenseless. We have a heavenly Father who is well able to protect us. We know that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Do you suppose God finds it

pleasing when we take upon ourselves responsibility which properly belongs to God, simply because we don't think God will do it?

The second misconception is this: "The man who just struck me is my enemy!" He isn't. We don't fight against flesh and blood! No human alive is our enemy. Were this not true, then Peter would have been justified when he drew his sword to defend Jesus, for what worse sin could there be than killing the Son of God?

The real enemy is Satan. It is Satan who tempts us to strike our brother on the cheek. It is Satan who deceives us into believing we are just and righteous in doing so. For that matter, it was Satan who tempted our brother to strike us in the first place!

What form does this temptation take? Sometimes the attack is very direct. I may feel hurt and angry over some perceived wrong you have done. Satan may tell me that it is all your fault, and that hurting you will make me feel better.

But more often the attack is more subtle. Most of us would have to be hurting pretty bad to fall for such a direct attack. We are smarter than that; we know better. So Satan hides this evil motive behind a longing for justice. We may feel like we are doing the Lord's work, but in reality our craving for justice and punishment is just an excuse for us to exercise the un-Christian passions we hold in our heart against our brother.

And what of our brother's motives? Satan is also at work in his life, telling him similar lies. Each blow we strike against him gives Satan more ammunition. He tells him, "See? You were right! If this person were really standing

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus
3265 Fowlers Ferry Rd.
Gadsden, AL 35901-0306
Phone: (205) 442-4181

for truth and right, he would never have struck a righteous and just man like you! Anything you want to do to him is justified! He is nothing more than a minister of Satan, and Satan has no rights!"

Deceit is perhaps the most devastating tool Satan has. I am convinced that much, if not most, of the evil done in the world is committed by well-meaning people who are deceived by Satan. So how do we fight against evil? How do we keep Satan from winning?

I believe the best way is to focus our battle on the areas we have authority over. I have authority over my own life. You cannot fight my battles for me, neither can I fight yours. Satan knows this very well. That is why your mote looks so big to me, while my beam looks so small (Matt. 7:1-5). The last thing Satan wants me to do is to fight where I can do some good.

And so I should practice turning the other cheek. If I allow myself to strike you back, then I have indulged the evil motives hidden in my heart, and I have accomplished nothing good in your life, either. But if I turn the other cheek, I am resisting the evil in my own life. I am demonstrating my faith in the power of God to protect me. And I am depriving Satan of ammunition to deceive you and turn you against me. If I refuse to fight back, then

anyone can see the justice of my cause (even you!). This just might cause you to focus on the evil motives lurking in your heart, if such there be.

If we do things the way Christ told us to, the progress of our fight might not be visible to anyone but us. But we will be hurting Satan where he lives. We will be inflicting blows that count on the real enemy. Surely this is the best revenge!

BOBBY D. RAMSEY
10841 East Placita Metate
Tucson, AZ 85749

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to the book of Numbers, how long was a person who touched a corpse considered unclean?
2. After Abraham's sojourn in the land of the Philistines, God did something to him. What was it?
3. What must a man be able to manage before he may be able to manage God's church?
4. What reflects the man as water reflects a face?
5. Why did Peter write his letters?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What was Elisha's servant's name? **GEHAZI**
(2 Kings 8:4)
2. In the feeding of the 5000, who brought the boy with food to Jesus? **ANDREW (Jn. 6:8-9)**

3. What happened to King Herod in Caesarea when he did not give praise to God but accepted the praise himself? **HE WAS EATEN OF WORMS AND DIED (Acts 12:23)**

4. In Psalms 22, what was wrong with David's bones? **THEY WERE OUT OF JOINT (Psa. 22:14)**

5. In the book of Samuel, why were there no blacksmiths in Israel? **THE PHILISTINES DID NOT ALLOW IT (1 Sam. 13:19)**

REPORT CARD TIME

As the month of May nears its end and turns into June, another school year will be completed. Throughout this country children of various ages will be bringing home report cards to their parents. These report cards will indicate the "grades" achieved by each student. Some will make the "passing grade". Others will "fail". But each grade will be based on what that particular child did during the school year.

The comparison to our spiritual life should be well noted. We also are heading for the end of our "school term". At that time we will likewise receive a "report card" with "grades" based on what we did during our lifetime. The question we need to be concerned about is this: what kind of a report will we bring home to our heavenly Father?

Will it be a "*false report*" (Exo. 23:1)? Sometimes students can bring home impressive grades but the grades were not earned honestly. There could have been cheating on tests or homework assignments that were not actually done by the student. Similarly, our final report could be one full of lies and deceit.

Will it be an *"evil report"* (Num. 13:32)? When ten of the spies gave their assessment of the land of Canaan, they brought up a report card full of "F"s! They saw "failure" in every possible way. Will our last report likewise read "failure" under every key subject? Will we "fail" under Belief, Repentance, Confession, and Baptism? How about virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Pet. 1:5-7)?

Will it be an *"honest report"* (Acts 6:3)? Most often students do not bring home "straight A's" but the grades they make do represent their honest efforts. As an example, David was not a 'perfect' man, yet he was called a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). By the same token, we must continually strive to love our neighbor, love God and obey his every commandment in order to rate an "honest report" among men and among our Lord.

Or will it be a *"good report"* (Phil. 4:8)? To the student, a report card which tallies a passing mark is considered "good". To the Christian, a report which earns the *"crown of life"* is considered ETERNALLY GRAND! Paul exhorts us to follow the things that are true, honorable, just, pure and lovely for these are some of the things which will lead to the *"God of peace"* and that is a good report.

In school we know exactly when classes will end and when our last chance will be to improve our FINAL grades. With our physical life, however, the end is not so clear. Our life is like a mist, one moment here and the next moment gone (Jas. 4:14)! Today or tomorrow could be the last opportunity we have to "better our grades". What are we waiting for? What kind of a report would we want to bring home and show our Father in heaven?

RAY

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
May 3 - 7	Blanchester, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 10 - 14	Chestnut Grove Church near Danville, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 14 - 16	Sun Hill Road Church Birmingham, AL	V. W. Boland (Gadsden, AL)
May 16 - 21	Marrowbone, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 24 - 28	Verona, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 31 - June 4	Westwood Church Ashland, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)



*If we work upon marble,
 It will perish;
 If we work upon brass,
 Time will efface it;
 If we rear temples,
 They will crumble into dust;
 But, if we work upon immortal souls,
 If we imbue them with principles,
 With the just fear of God
 And the love of fellow man,
 We engrave on those tablets
 Something which will brighten all
 eternity.*

-- Daniel Webster --