

THE AL BRINSON STORY

Jesus is certainly a game changer - huge changer. For hundreds of years the Jews have tried to follow the laws that God gave to them with limited success. And now comes Jesus - not to do away with the law, but to be the fulfillment of the law. The Word has become flesh. The law has come to dwell among us as a person - to show us the true intent and manifestation of righteous living.

And in so doing, Jesus makes these statements, "You have heard it said. . . but now I tell you. . . No rabbi had ever made so radical a statement before but it says elsewhere in the gospels that he taught them as one who had authority. Where does the authority come from - two places.

This passage contains the essence of the Christian ethic, how we are called to live in a nutshell. Jesus' position is revolutionary - love for enemies rather than their destruction; unconditional forgiveness rather than retaliation, readiness to suffer, rather than use force, and blessing for peacemakers instead of hymn of hate and revenge. Jesus in his life of ministry set in motion a non-violent revolution, emerging from people's hearts, from a radical change in the ways we think, from a conversion.

He starts with an old rule: an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and turns it on its head. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is one of the oldest laws ever. In ancient time vengeance was a part of life and if someone of another tribe hurt or wounded a member of your tribe, vengeance would be exacted on the whole tribe. So, God's law in Exodus and Deut. is actually setting before its readers a higher ethic of limiting vengeance.

So then along comes Jesus and takes it to a whole other level. Turn the other cheek - it's not a surrender, but a strategy of operation. Turning the other cheek is taking the initiations in behaving in the freedom of Christ and His love.
(Al Brinson) Passive resistance Non-Violent protests

Then Jesus goes on to talk about love. You have heard it said, love your friends, hate your enemies. But now I tell you; love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. This is not the natural course of action for us. Only a disciple who has been born of the Spirit, who knows the empowering grace of Christ, can begin to live by this standard. It is an extension of the love of Christ in us, a love which becomes an act of the will more than of the heart.

Jesus bases His call to love on the very nature and practice of the Father, who in perfect love, without playing favorites, treats enemies and friends alike in His gracious providence. Jesus removes all the fences, He breaks down all the walls. He shows us that loving our enemies is of God and sharing God's kingdom is to share God's way of love.

The command to be perfect is to be understood in the context of love. God's perfect love is without discrimination, open to all people - and we are called to be the same - be open and loving toward all people - friends and enemies alike. Turn the other cheek. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

These are seemingly impossible tasks - and when we live in the flesh - they are impossible and even ill advised. And I would be the first to say Jesus is speaking here, I believe, about living in the context of normal human interaction.

I would never tell someone living in an abusive relationship that they just need to turn the other cheek or pray harder for their abuser.

But in the context of normal human interaction, something powerful happens when we let go of the need for payback - getting even - exacting vengeance.

And something transformative begins to happen when we pray for those who have wronged us and we pray that God would begin to teach and show us how to love people that drive us crazy.

You have heard it said. . . .but now I tell you.