

## THE SAME MEASURE

When God created mankind, He created them in His own image, which is to say, He created them like Himself. The Scriptures say, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:27) A man's disposition toward his fellow man is also his disposition toward God, and the manner in which he treats his fellow man is the manner in which he would treat God. In the generations after God created mankind, men were wicked, and were given to acting violently against each other. God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:13) The violence of men became so great, that God destroyed mankind with a great flood, sparing only Noah and his household. After the flood, God commanded Noah and his sons, and, by extension, all mankind, to take the lives of killers. He said, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man." (Genesis 9:5) At Mount Sinai, God gave His people the Ten Commandments, and one of those commandments is, "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13) God's people understood that they ought not to kill a man. Even so, they hated each other, and hatred is the root of killing. If men cannot do violence to other men with their hands, then they do so with their tongues. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:21, 22) Saint James, following the Lord's teaching, exposed the hypocrisy of them that use their tongues both to bless God and to curse men. bless God, but curse men. He wrote, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." (James 3:9)

In the Gospel according to Saint Luke, Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, said, "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." (Luke 6: 27, 28) In the law of Moses, it says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Leviticus 19:18) The law does not teach that a man ought to be pleased with his neighbor, that he ought to have a fondness for him, or an affection for him, as a man loves his family. God is certainly not pleased with His enemies. The Scriptures say that God is angry with the wicked every day, and that He hates all that do evil (Psalm 7:11; 5:5) Rather, the love Jesus speaks of is the love of benevolence. It is, as Noah Webster defined it, "The disposition to do good; good will; kindness; charitableness; the love, of mankind, accompanied with a desire to promote their happiness." Jesus teaches, not that a man ought to have affection for his enemies, but that he ought to do good to them. If a man is cursed by another man, then he ought not to curse that man in return; he ought rather to bless him. If a man is mistreated by another man, then he ought not to mistreat that man in return; he ought rather to pray for him.

Jesus said, "And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." (Luke 6:29, 30) Jesus does not here teach that His followers should allow themselves to be beaten and robbed. He does not forbid men to defend themselves, or others, from those that would do evil to them. He does not forbid His followers to prevent injustice. After all, when the time for Jesus to die grew near, He instructed His disciples to sell their cloaks and buy swords, so that they might protect themselves. Jesus here teaches a moral principle, that the Christian ought to go out of his way to be at peace with people. The Christian ought not to respond in kind to insults and provocations.

Jesus said:

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:31-36)

God commands the Christian to love his neighbor as himself, which is to say, He commands the Christian to treat all men as he would have all men treat him. The Christian must not be a hypocrite. He must not have two standards: one for himself, and one for all others. That is the way of the infidel. The unbeliever does not love all men. The unbeliever does not do good to all men, including his enemies; he does good only to them that he has affection for. The unbeliever lends only when he believes he will be reimbursed. The Christian loves all men. The Christian does good to all men. The Christian lends even when he believes he may not be repaid. The Christian loves his neighbor, even his enemy, because he is a child of God, and God loves even His own enemies. Saint Paul told the pagans at the city of Lystra that God, “In times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” (Acts 14:16, 17) Most importantly, God gave His only-begotten Son as a sacrifice for His enemies, so that they might be saved. Saint Paul wrote to the Romans, “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10) Saint Paul and Saint Peter summarize the Lord’s teaching this way: Do not repay evil with evil; rather repay evil with good. (Romans 12:17; 1 Peter 3:9)

Jesus said:

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:37, 38)

All men are sinners. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Even the Christian continually falls short of God’s perfect standard. So, the Christian ought to take care how he judges others. He must not think that he is without sin, and he ought not to have a double standard. The Christian must judge, both himself and others, but he must do humbly and fairly. He must beware, lest God use his own standard of judgment against him.

The long feud between Jews and Samaritans is instructive for understanding Christ’s command to love one’s enemies. In the days of the divided monarchy of Israel, the Assyrian army conquered Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel, and carried the people away into exile. The king of Assyria sent his own people to replace the exiled Israelites. Those Assyrians intermingled with the Israelites that remained, and mixed their pagan religion with the true one. (2 Kings 17:41) After the Assyrian exile, the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judah, and carried those people away into exile. When the Jews in Babylon finally returned to their homeland to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple, the people of Samaria opposed them with violence, and the enmity between them continued until the time of Christ. (John 4:9) Saint John wrote in his gospel that, in the time of Christ, Jews did not associate with Samaritans. (John 3:9) Moreover, the two

peoples had separate places of worship. The Son of God came into the world, not only to die for the sins of Jews and Samaritans, but to remove their hatred of one another, and unite them in love. A few months after Jesus preached His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus planned to go to Jerusalem to worship, and he sent ahead of Him some messengers to make arrangements for Him. When the messengers came to a city in Samaria, the inhabitants of the city would not receive Jesus because He was going to Jerusalem to worship. When James and John heard this, they asked Jesus if he would have them call fire from heaven down upon the Samaritans, as Elijah had done to the prophets of Baal. Jesus rebuked them, however, and said to them, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” (Luke 9:55, 56) Before Christ came, the nation of Israel were God’s exclusive people, and God allowed the other nations to go their own way. (Acts 14:16) Christ came, not to destroy nations, but to convert them. (Acts 17:30) Christ came to slay all enmities, not all enemies.

On another occasion, a Jewish lawyer tested Jesus by asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked the man what the law of God says. The man answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” (Luke 10:27) Jesus told the man that he had answered rightly, and that, if he would do those things, then he would have life. The man knew what the law said, but he interpreted it in such a manner that he did not need to follow it. He did not rightly love his fellow men, and so, wishing to justify himself, asked Jesus to tell him which man he ought to identify as his neighbor. In response, Jesus told him the parable of the good Samaritan. In that parable, a Jewish man was beaten, robbed, and left for dead on the side of the road. Firsty one Jewish man passed him by, and then another. A Samaritan, however, tended to the man’s wounds, and brought him to an inn to recover. He told the innkeeper he would pay all expenses. When Jesus finished telling the parable, He asked the man, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” The man replied, “He that shewed mercy on him.” Jesus said to him, “Go, and do thou likewise.” (Luke 10:37) A man’s neighbor, in this sense, is not a member of his family, his neighborhood, his ethnic group, or his nation. A man’s neighbor is a member of the human race. A man’s neighbor is his fellow man, and to love one’s neighbor is to do good to one’s fellow man; it is to help anyone in need. The Christian must love his neighbor as himself, even if that neighbor is his enemy.

This is not to say that God cares nothing for justice; He very much cares that justice be done. It is rather to say that justice is God’s prerogative; it belongs to Him. He says, “To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence.” (Deuteronomy 32:35) David wrote in the Psalms of the general principle that God renders to every man according to His works. (Psalm 62:12) So, David, in the Book of Psalms, prayed:

Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up. Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. (Psalm 28:2-6)

Concerning men that bore false witness against him, he prayed:

For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and

fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. (Psalm 109:1-5)

Of the wicked man, he wrote:

As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually. Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul. (Psalm 109:17-20)

David said to God, because his enemy loved to curse, then let curses come upon him; and, because he did not love to bless, then let no blessing come upon him. So Saint Paul taught that the Christian ought to leave justice in God's hands. He wrote to the Romans, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19) After the council of the Jews arrested Peter and John, and threatened them, the believers prayed to God to take note of the council's threats. The believers did not curse their enemies, did not call down upon them fire from heaven. They did, however, call upon God to deal with them as He saw fit. They prayed, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings." (Acts 4:29) Saint Paul wrote to Saint Timothy concerning one of his enemies, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." (2 Timothy 4:14) Because justice is in God's hands, the Christian must not take matters into his own hands. Because God is faithful and just, the Christian can trust Him to vindicate the righteous, and punish the unrighteous.

Jesus taught, not only by precept, but by example. Jesus was the Son of God, and the only perfect man. Yet, many mistreated Him. They lied about Him. They insulted Him. They cruelly mocked Him. Even so, He never responded in kind. He was sometimes angry with people, especially with hypocrites, and with good cause. He did dispute with them. He did rebuke them. He did denounce God's judgment upon them. He never did so, however, because of any unrighteous anger on His part, or because He took personal offense at how they treated Him. He never did so because He wished to hurt them, or because He sought revenge. He rather did so because He loved them enough to speak the truth to them. He did so because He loved them enough to wish for their repentance. He did so because He loved them enough to warn them of their coming judgment. If He did not love them, then He would have said nothing at all, and let them be destroyed. When Jesus was on trial before the council of the Jews, one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of His hand. Jesus did not lash out in anger. He did not curse His enemies. He did demand justice. He said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John 18:23) When Jesus was being crucified, He prayed for His persecutors, that they might have their sins forgiven. He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) Shortly after Pentecost, Peter and John went to the temple to pray, and there they preached the gospel. Saint Peter said, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17) Saint Luke records, "Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. (Acts 4:4) God answered Jesus's prayer that He would forgive His enemies, on condition of their faith and repentance, of course. As to them that did not repent and believe in Him, He, being the exalted Christ, avenged Himself by sending the Roman army to destroy them, and their city. Saint Peter wrote of Jesus's example:

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (1 Peter 2:21-23)

Jesus set a perfect example, and His disciples followed His example. When the Jews were stoning Saint Stephen to death, “he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” and Saul, also known as Paul, witnessed Stephen’s martyrdom, and himself came believe in Christ, and to suffer persecution for His cause. (Acts 7:58, 60)

Let us love the Lord or God with all our hearts, all our minds, with all our souls, and with all our might. Let us love our neighbors, even our enemies, as ourselves. Let us not avenge ourselves, but trust God to avenge.

Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.