

Peace With God And Men  
Luke 12:57-59

As I have read through and pondered the meaning that the Lord Jesus would have for us to know about these next few words of our scripture, my first thought is that while God always has some very deep spiritual truths that reside at the foundation of all of His word, these particular instructions being given within these words might be even more so. Why? It's because these words are so contrary to our ordinary human response that unless the Spirit of Christ intercedes within us, we will not find it an easy task to surrender up our pride and follow this course.

Listen to these words of the Lord Jesus, and then let's consider them for a few moments!

<sup>57</sup> . . . why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny." (Luke 12:57-59)

Deeply entrenched within the hearts and minds of most all of the people in our world today, especially within our American culture, is a strongly held belief in the rights and the privileges of each individual. And that is often so even to the complete disregard for the needs of the "many". And those individual rights and privileges are vigorously protected at all costs, both by the laws of the land and by the mindset of the culture.

And we can see that philosophy being played out within most every setting that we are involved in, within our personal relationships, within our families, within our workplace, and especially within the civil court system. Within every venue imaginable, individual rights are demanded and furiously fought for and protected.

And one doesn't have to look too far below the surface of that demand for "individual rights" to see the real reason for its existence. It's our most familiar advocate, an advocate that actually lives and thrives within our own souls. It's our "self", our "self". Or as these scriptures often call it, "the flesh".

I especially like the way that Oswald Chambers defines the demands that “self” makes. He calls it “my claim to my right to myself”. “My claim to my right to myself”!

And it seems that there is never a day that goes by that we don't read and hear voices calling out for and demanding “justice” for “self” in one cause or another.

And yes, some of those demands can be legitimate and necessary. But with that being true, we do really need to guard ourselves carefully. Because within some of those many seemingly “righteous” calls for justice, we need to remember that our “feelings” about many of those matters are very subjective, very opinionated . And if we are not careful, our “flesh” can interject itself and get the “real truth” about those matters out of perspective.

And to add to the difficulty of many of those battles, it seems that most any good idea or philosophy can get carried to the wrong extent.

And again, it is most often our old enemy, “the flesh” that is at the heart of our demands, often corrupting what might otherwise be a “good cause”, crying out for and demanding that our personal individual rights be “first” in every consideration.

But . . . as we read the “words of wisdom” given by Jesus regarding such matters as these, we quickly find that He is giving us a very different counsel. His counsel does not at all advise us to “demand our rights”. And neither does he counsel us to take an offensive stance.

In such words as those given in chapter 5 of the Book of Matthew Jesus tells us,

<sup>38</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*’ <sup>39</sup>But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. <sup>40</sup>If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. <sup>41</sup>And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. <sup>42</sup>Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

<sup>43</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*’ <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.(Matthew 5:38-44)

Take careful note within these words of the Lord Jesus that there are no demands being made for individual rights, only “humility”, “humility”.

And also note within these words given by the Lord Jesus that we are studying in today's passage, He gives counsel for us to “make peace” with our adversaries and our authorities. Listen again to those words!

<sup>57</sup> . . . why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.” (Luke 12:57-59)

Again, did you notice that within these words that there is no counsel at all towards the arrogant demands that is so much a part of our modern culture and court proceedings?

And also, again, what do these words have within them that's missing from the modern day culture and modern day court systems? It's “Humility”, “humility”!

In the heat of all our arguments we forget that it was the Lord Jesus who said, <sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

Again, please note the counsel the Lord Jesus is giving. It is to learn of Him and of his “humility”. He is “gentle and humble in heart”. And note also that it is about being in His very “presence”.

This is part of that “hidden meaning”, that “hidden element” that I mentioned at the beginning. And this is so very, very important. Within our Lord's words and within all these circumstances and times when our emotions run too high and too strongly, is the always-present “presence” of God.

Please, may we remember that our God truly is ever and always “omnipresent”. He is there within all the things that are taking place. And He is “omniscient”. He knows about everything that is taking place, every smallest detail. But that is not all. Our God is also “Sovereign” and He is “Providential”, meaning that He is personally involved in all those circumstances that are taking place. And not

just to help us in our time of need. He is there for that, yes. But oh dear Christian, please know that God was also there when the problem started. It is His hand that orchestrates and guides all those things that are taking place.

We really don't like to think that He's doing that, especially when we get involved in some very wrong behavior, but He is. He is! He was there when we first got into the problem that will bring us to the magistrate. And He is there while we are on our way to the magistrate. And He will be there if we don't reconcile ourselves to our prosecutors. And He will be there while we go to court and then suffer the consequences of our behaviors. That is why He counsels us to quickly make amends with our adversaries.

Scripture verses, like the one that counsels us to always "Do everything as unto the Lord, since it is the Lord Christ whom we serve", those words get lost within the heat of an argument.

And too often we make the mistake of isolating out verses such as those and only using them when they fit our feelings and our circumstances at the time. But our Lord's command is that whatever we are doing, we are to do "everything" "as unto Him". "Everything"!

Folks, if we were to humbly give ourselves over to that effort, "of doing everything that we do as unto the Lord", then when would we ever be "righteous" in making demands for our own "individual rights"?

God wants you and me to be humble, to when struck on the one cheek, turn the other cheek, when robbed of our cloak, freely also give them our tunic, and on and on, humbly giving, never asking back, and especially, never demanding back.

The promise from God that quietly underlies these commands is that, if we will humble ourselves, He Himself will take care of all our needs. And that is especially so when some unkind person mistreats us, or a thief steals from us. He counsels us saying,

<sup>19</sup> 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."<sup>20</sup> To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his

head.”<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.  
(Romans 12:19-21)

And please know that God Himself will replace all that is taken from us.

The Commentator, Matthew Henry, tells us that,  
Christianity has reason and natural conscience on its side; and, if men would allow themselves the liberty of judging what is right, they would soon find that all Christ's precepts concerning all things are right, and that there is nothing more equitable in itself, nor better becoming us, than to submit to Christ's precepts and be ruled by them.

In other words, there is excellent common reasoning within the precepts of Christ, precepts that will guide us well, if we are only willing to accept them. But unfortunately, our old enemies, the world, our flesh, and the devil, intervene and interpose themselves into the equation and cause us to look elsewhere for our satisfaction.

And today's satisfaction is usually reached through going to our magistrates, and to our court systems, and especially, through seeking money settlements. And there are a whole host of trial lawyers who are willing to make their fortunes along with us.

On a personal note, I confess to you that my dear wife and I are currently involved in one such circumstance, an automobile accident where the insurance companies and the lawyers have chosen to use the court system and magistrates rather than simply settling the matter. And our consciences are in a continual upheaval because of the path that we are being compelled to take.

Here in Jesus' words, He counsels us that even if we don't understand such matters from God's perspective, "common sense" ought to tell us that there is a wretched sinfulness within men's souls, and that we would be wise to humble ourselves and make peace with our adversaries long before we ever enter a courtroom.

And why, in a practical sense would that be so in today's cultural climate? It is so because the judges that sit on our benches today have a bent towards large financial awards to the ones who complain. And the juries that listen to such cases are especially prone towards giving all the benefit to the ones who would

present themselves as a victim. Why? It is because the jurors themselves often consider themselves to be helpless victims in need of someone's help. And with that mindset, the jurors are most often excessively generous towards the one who is also a victim.

And with that knowledge, Jesus' common sense advice here becomes very practical. He tells us,

<sup>57</sup> . . . why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? <sup>58</sup> As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. <sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny." (Luke 12:57-59)

Let me hasten to add that these words of Jesus are not intended to give advice solely about civil disputes and argument between people and their neighbors. It is that, yes, but it is far more than that. This is Jesus speaking about our obligation and our response to Him regarding our own personal sinful nature, our own disposition and our own behaviors while we live out our daily lives on this earth. Because there truly will come a time when we will stand before Him, the Lord Jesus, the "Magistrate", the "Supreme Judge" over all men and over all the circumstances that take place on the earth.

In Hebrews chapter 9, God tells us clearly that,

<sup>27</sup> . . . it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)

And the judgment spoken about in these words will be sure and certain. You and I and every other person who has ever lived on this earth will be called before the Magistrate, the "Judge" over all the earth, the Lord Jesus, and we will be judged for all that we have ever done.

Too many people wrongly assume that the bible teaches that we who have Christ as our Savior will never have to stand before Christ in Judgment, that we will simply pass right on through into heaven.

And yes, we will get to go right on into heaven. But these scriptures are clear that there is still an accounting that we will have to give for the behaviors, the "deeds" we have done while in this flesh.

Those words are given to us clearly in 2 Corinthians 5,

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Take note that in those words, the Lord tells us that we must “all”, “all” appear before His judgment seat.

Also in Ecclesiastes chapter 12,

<sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

And also in Romans chapter 13,

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” <sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 13:10-12)

Let me say all this again clearly. The Lord Jesus is the Magistrate that you and I should be most concerned about, because the things that we do here while in this life will all be brought into account on that great and terrible day of judgment.

Listen to those words given in Revelation 20,

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. (And listen carefully to these next words) And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:12-15)

Folks, these words that I just read in verse 15 are real and they are absolute . . . those words . . . “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Please understand that while we are still in this life, we still have hope. But as those words of Hebrews 9 tell us, once our appointed time to die arrives, there will be no more opportunities left for us to receive Christ.

This is the judgment, and this is the penalty for rejecting Him as our Savior. Jesus is the Magistrate that we absolutely must make peace with because His judgment verdict is eternal.

But what about those of us who have received Him as Savior? What about our offenses and our sins? Yes, we will be in heaven with the Lord Jesus eternally. But please know that for us, there will also be a judgment. As we are told clearly there in the words that I just read for us in 2 Corinthians and in Ecclesiastes, and in Romans 13, in our judgment, Jesus will bring to our memory all of those things that have taken place throughout our lifetime, whether those things be good or evil, right or wrong. And at that time, "rewards", or the lack of rewards will be given to us. And blessed will be those who are found to be "faithful servants", blessed are those who will hear those sweet and precious words spoken by Jesus, "Well done my good and faithful servant".

Folks, this is what Jesus is ultimately speaking about in today's passage of scripture.

In both of those times of judgment, Jesus will do as He said in Deuteronomy 30, and He will call all heaven and earth as witnesses against us.

The first witness will be the "laws of God". Will we be judged as being obedient to the "Laws of God", especially the law that commands us to Love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our strength, and to love our neighbor as our self?

Secondly, as all the earthly witnesses gather to give testimony about us, will they have kind and generous words to say about us?

Here in today's passage, Jesus warns and encourages you and me to "make things right", to "make peace", both with Him and with our neighbor, here and now. Because that day of "reckoning" will surely come, and it may be very, very soon.

I urge, I plead with each of us to heed these words of the Lord Jesus. We need to make peace while we are still able to do it, both with God and with men.

We need to cast our arrogant natures into the pit of hell and be humble before the living God or He will surely demand a payment for our sin that we will not be able to pay.

Listen again to those words and we'll close!

<sup>58</sup>When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. <sup>59</sup>I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last penny."  
(Luke 12:58-59)

Let's pray.