

YOU HEARD IT SAID... BUT I SAY TO YOU...



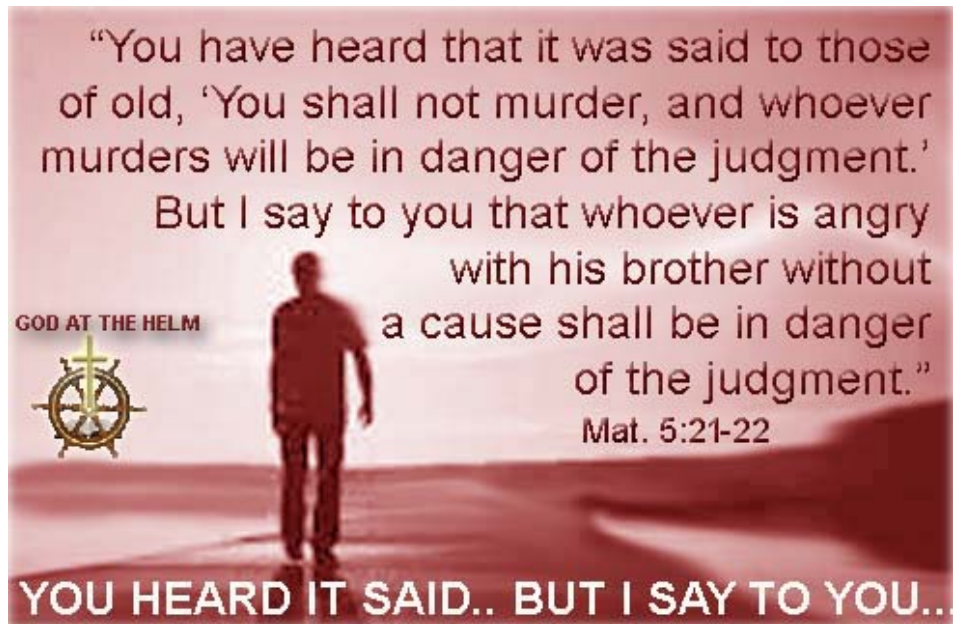
In Matthew 5, Jesus uses the expression “You have heard it said..., but I say to you...” 5 times, to illustrate the difference between the world’s traditions and religions, and what the pure Word of God says. Nothing is more damaging to our lives, than to allow the evil deceptions of the enemy to influence our beliefs and behavior.

Prov. 6:16-19 says, “These six *things* the LORD hates, yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness *who* speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

In this world, we face daily challenges because of our faith in God and Christ, and we must ensure that we don’t react through emotions, but rather use God’s wisdom, a testimony to a changed life and renewed spirit.

2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” In other words, if we trust God, we need not fear as Christ’s Spirit lives in us. Eph. 6:10-11 adds, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

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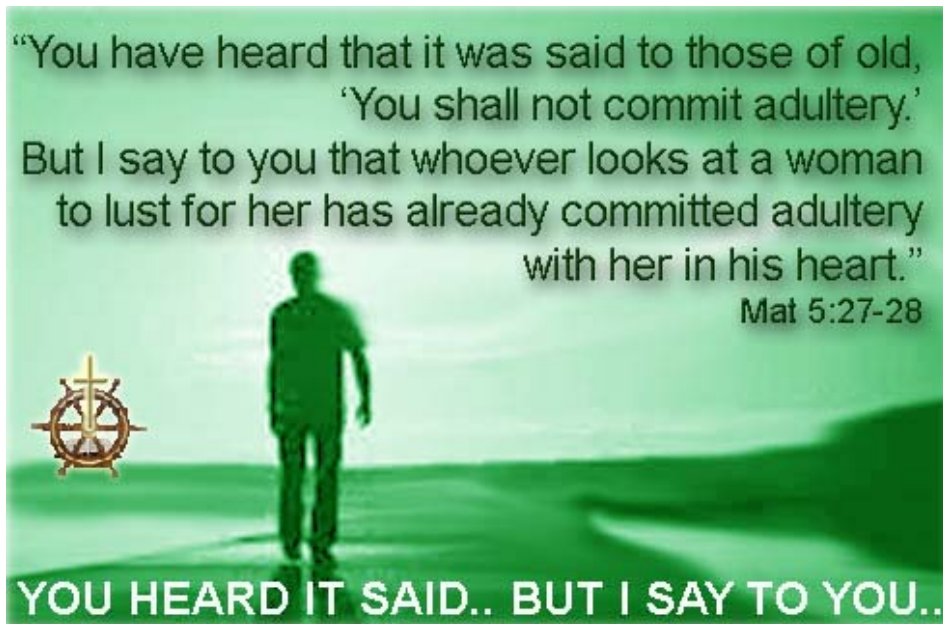
Some of the most prevalent emotions in our world include hatred, anger and resentment. Those emotions engender in people the most primitive level of justice, just like animals. That’s why we daily hear about murders, violence, rapes, and the list could go on.

James 4:1 defines the source of hatred in people this way: “Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members?” Evidently, the response is found in the heart, because hatred and murders always begin in the heart.

How then “MUST WE” (notice I didn’t say “should we”) react to the hatred and violence we see all around? The only solution is to allow the power of God’s love in our lives, and not allow the evil influence of the enemy to overwhelm and control us. The reality is that we must choose between the power of God and the deceptions of the enemy.

1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” In other words, God’s love is the only power that we should allow in our lives. Ex. 14:14 says, “The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

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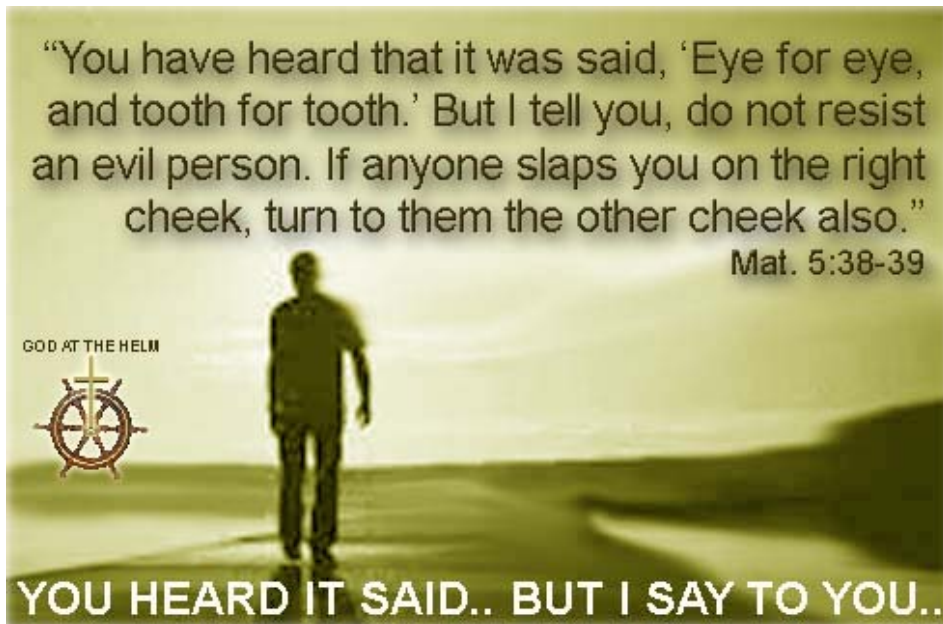
It is interesting that Jesus always brought sin to a common denominator... it all starts in the heart. In essence, what we feed our minds with, be it the Word of God or the trash of the world, it will have a corresponding impact on our heart's attitudes and will translate into either the righteousness of God or a propensity for evil.

The Jews of Jesus' time knew the scripture "You shall not commit adultery." (Deut 5:18) While some proud pseudo spiritual Pharisees might not have committed adultery physically, Jesus knew they nonetheless committed adultery in their hearts. That's why He called them hypocrites and whitewashed tombs, and said: "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mat 5:28)

Paul, speaking to believers, reminded us in 1Cor. 6:18-20 and said, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Adultery starts with the lustful desires of the heart that has its roots in evil, offends God and oftentimes leads to the tragedy of divorce.

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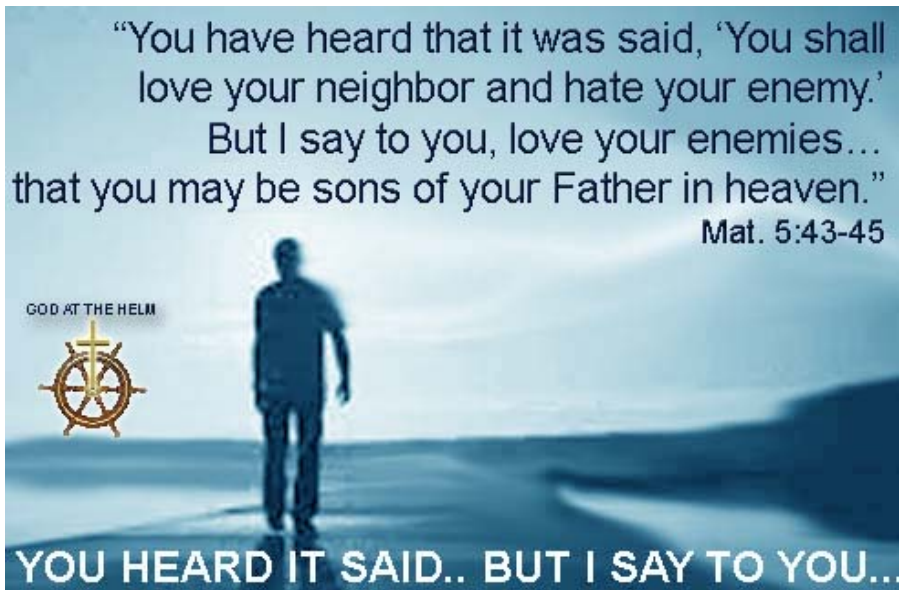
As we watch the daily news, we can see the prevalence of evil in people’s hearts to the extent that revenge is hypocritically encouraged. Revenge has its roots in pride as it seeks to get even with anyone who dares insult us or do us wrong.

Jesus not only taught us to forgive those who do us wrong, but most powerfully showed us how, asking God to forgive those who crucified Him in Luke 23:34; “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Paul, in Romans 12:19 said, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

True believers in Christ should never engage into revenge, as revenge demonstrates evil in the heart of whoever seeks it. Ecc. 7:9 tells us “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.” Additionally, revenge not only produces sin, but as well perpetuates anger into a ripple effect that has no end. James, the brother of Jesus enjoined us this way: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

Are we prepared to turn the other cheek to honor Christ?

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Love has been at the heart of God’s purpose for His creation from the very start, and will be throughout eternity. However, what best defines Satan and his angels, is the exact opposite; hatred, murder, pride.

Paul, in 1 Cor. 13:2 paints a picture of the importance of God’s love: “And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

Throughout the bible, love is the prevalent theme that describes not only who God is, but most importantly how we are to live to honor God, if Christ is Savior and Lord of our life. Jesus in Luke 6:35 is quoted “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.” Even Stephen, as he was being stoned to death for standing on his faith in Christ said, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”

If we say we believe in God and Christ, shouldn’t we live as He taught and enjoined us to do? The apostle John said, “Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” (1John 4:7) Let’s stop for a moment and see if our hearts and life testimony reflects Christ’s love for the world?

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