

## Matthew 5:38-42

- **THE IDOL BEING DESTROYED HERE = SELF**
  - We are infinitely great at and committed to OURSELVES—looking out for ourselves, protecting ourselves, providing for ourselves, defending ourselves!
  - As followers of Jesus, the call is DENY YOURSELF! Totally against our grain!
  - We can stomach the idea of suffering/persecution—giving it all up for Jesus but considering that we have to get rid of our “rights” is another thing altogether!
  - Not accidental it come after a text on divorce and then oaths
    - Divorce = not abiding by your vows! Be a person of your word
    - Divorce = offense, betrayal, abuse, neglect...YOU OFTEN HAVE rights you feel were trampled on and can harbor a sense of entitlement for revenge/retaliation.
- “you have heard it said, eye for eye”—5th of 6 of these type sayings in Matthew
  - Exodus 21, Lev. 24, Deut 19—given to control the excesses of anger, violence and revenge
    - Purpose of Mosaic Law—the punishment must fit the crime (eye for eye). Command was given to the judges, not individuals, for the upholding of justice and equity. The Law NEVER gave an individual person license to take revenge of any kind!
    - This law is about LIMITED RETRIBUTION not REVENGE
      - Meant to LIMIT punishment (meet the crime) and restrain future evil (fear of punishment)
      - God will JUSTLY punish evil.
  - Scribes and Pharisees—misused the law to allow for personal revenge rather than allowing the law to do what it was intended for—limit retribution and restrain future evil!
- “But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil”
  - “the one who is evil”—this is not about turning a blind eye to evil/injustice. It is about laying down our sense of need/rights to revenge and retaliation against PEOPLE.
    - not a call to a blind negligence that encourages evil but a divine forbearance that renounces revenge.
  - All that comes later will help define what “not resisting the evil one” looks like.
  - Never evade harm/protect one’s life? Stay in abusive relationship? Defend others in harm?
  - Jesus’ illustrations PROVE that what he is ultimately concerned with is how his followers view themselves in terms of rights and revenge and how they relate to others
  - The only limit here is LOVE—Paul “resisted” (SAME WORD) Peter to his face for living out of step with the gospel toward Gentiles—it was LOVING to resist him!
- We Must Lay Down Our Rights to Retaliation—“turn to him the other also”
  - Not about self-defense; not about pacificism...about dishonor/shame! Back-hand slap!
  - Retaliation and the Beatitudes
    - We respond with direct anger/vengeance OR passive aggressive anger/vengeance
    - Beatitudes = forgive, make peace, bless those who persecute
      - To go the route of direct/passive-aggressive retaliation = appeals to the sinful flesh
      - Forgive, peace, bless, love = play a part in the work of redemption!
  - Why retaliation never works = our motives are complex and selfish, our sense of justice is skewed and twisted. Are we willing to forsake our pride, ego and reputation? Do we feel a need to defend those things at all costs?
  - Jesus endured the ultimately humiliation and insult—all without revenge, without self-defense but in peaceful acceptance.
  - He allowed his resurrection to do all the talking and we must do the same!
- We Must Lay Down Our Rights to Possessions—“and if anyone would sue you and take your tunic”
  - Give tunic = the Law...giving the cloak = letting go of our rights altogether! Not just about “giving more” but laying down our rights to honor/possessions.

- A radically different relationship with our possessions—we live with them in open hands!
- **We Must Lay Down Our Rights to Our Time—“and if anyone forces you to go one mile”**
  - This would have been a Roman soldier, whom the Jews would despise.
  - **Are we willing to lay down our rights to our own feelings and need to be appreciated?**
  - Roman Law—Jew walk 1000 paces; Jesus saying, go further than the law (2000 paces)
- **We Must Lay Down Our Rights to Our Money—“Give to the one who begs”**
  - **A move from negative situations to GENEROSITY!** How we positively represent the spirit of the Law the character of God—God is a blesser, a giver!
  - **Open-Handedness in ALL OF LIFE is the result of laying down our rights!**
  - Jesus not replacing Pharisaical rules w/ new ones but getting to the heart of GENEROSITY!
- **Why did Jesus make these radical statements?**
  - He desires that generosity and blessing be our DEFAULT responses. That we FIRST think of giving and blessing, not loopholes!
  - Each scenario declares that Jesus is ENOUGH for us and is our satisfaction
    - We don't need revenge. We don't need security. We don't need more money.
  - **God makes no mistakes! He PLACES us in interpersonal difficulties because he designs and desires those difficulties to be WORKROOMS OF REDEMPTION**
- **How can we pursue loving and blessing and serving our enemies? What can motivate this?**
  - God is just and all vengeance is his—Vengeance is the Lord's and He WILL repay. All sin will be punished, either on the cross for those who repent or in hell for those who don't.
    - **Romans 12 = Paul's take on this concept!**
  - Our ultimate reward is in Heaven (Matthew 5)—we are blessed when we are persecuted FOR our reward is great in Heaven!
    - When we reject vengeance and love our enemies, we show the world that our worth, value and hope is OF ANOTHER WORLD!
- **What does living this way produce?**
  - A heart that will run TO not FROM God in the midst of pain
  - A sense of self that experiences the freedom of living for God's glory, not our own
  - A posture of humility that will learn and be shaped—God places us in the heat of interpersonal difficulty to teach, purify, refine and redeem us! We NEED that work!
  - A life that reflects God—opportunities to display his nature and values, even our enemies!
- **Jesus as Our Example and Power**
  - When wronged, our response is not retaliation and judgement but forbearance and peacemaking! This forbearance isn't a virtue/morality to achieve but a GIFT of the cross of Jesus Christ! He endured mental, spiritual and physical abuse/attack without sin, SO THAT when we are attacked, we would have ALL THE GRACE WE NEED to respond with love and grace!
- **Closing**
  - **When you have been ushered into the Kingdom by the gospel, you will think very differently about your rights!**
    - **Natural man—exert your rights to get what is yours**
    - **Follower of Jesus—forgo your rights to bless and serve others**
    - **THIS TEACHING IS HARD—it runs totally against the grain of our sin nature**
  - This is not a weakling who gets steamrolled but someone with such an inner strength, such a self-denial and self-control that he resists every form of revenge and retaliation.
  - **The follower of Jesus doesn't TAKE what he feels he deserves but is willing to give his honor, body, his clothes, his service/time and money to a person, even “the evil person.”**