

Matthew 5:38-42: You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye & a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.⁴⁰ & if anyone would sue you & take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.⁴¹ & if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, & do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Intro: Matthew 5:20: For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Last Week: Citizens of Christ's Kingdom (those born again!) love the truth, they tell the truth. And they love the truth and tell the truth because they know, trust, and love the God of truth!

This Week: Jesus is teaching us in these verses that to follow Him we must deny ourselves. We must have a heart of submission, a heart of cooperation, & a heart of death to autonomy, death to self, death to our rights for the sake of others, for our witness to others, & for the glory of God. As followers of Jesus, we are to be so confident in God & satisfied in God that we know God will bring justice to all wrongs, God will protect us, God will provide clothing & everything else for us, God will give us strength to endure, God will help us and provide for us – always, perfectly!

Matthew 16:24-25: If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

1. God Loves Justice

Matthew 5:38: You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye & a tooth for a tooth.'

- **Exodus 21:22-25:** When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine.²³ But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life,²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

- **Leviticus 24:19-20:** If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him,²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him.

- **Deuteronomy 19:15-21:** A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.¹⁶ If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing,¹⁷ then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.¹⁸ The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely,¹⁹ then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.²⁰ And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.²¹ Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

a. This law ensured equality of punishment: No different levels of punishment were allowed for rich & poor!

b. This law prevented unjust punishments in the legal system: The punishment had to fit the crime.

2. The Pharisees Used God's Law To Pervert Justice

They applied this law meant for the state or governing legal system to personal, individual relationships! This law was meant for the judges of Israel who were responsible for maintaining justice, not for individuals.

They used these laws as an excuse for personal revenge! They used these laws to say "It's my duty to take an eye for an eye!" Whatever you do to me, I will be sure to do back to you!

(Instead of the golden rule: **Matthew 7:12:** So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.)

We're all little Pharisees! We're all prone to retaliation! Your life; anger; marriage; children; Pastor's golf story

Because of our sin, we deserve to have all of our eyes and teeth knocked out. We deserve to be cast into the lake of fire that burns forever and ever with the evil one. We deserve to be slapped in the face with shame forever and ever. We deserve to lose everything we've ever owned. We deserve to be forced to walk forever in the fires of God's wrath and justice. We deserve to beg for mercy from God forever, and never get it. But God! **GOSPEL!**

3. Jesus Teaches Extravagant Mercy

Matthew 5:39-42: But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ & if anyone would sue you & take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ & if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, & do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

a. But I say to you: Jesus is the God-Man, the final and right interpreter of God's Law and Word.

b. Do not resist the one who is evil: What this does not mean:

1) It doesn't mean we don't resist those who would tempt us to do evil: **Ephesians 6:12-13:** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **withstand [resist]** in the evil day

- **James 4:7:** Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

2) It doesn't mean Christians can't serve as police officers or in the military: **Romans 13:1-4:** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

3) It doesn't mean there is never a time for Christians to use self defense: **Luke 4:29-30:** And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away.

- **Acts 23:6:** Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees & the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope & the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial."

What it does mean: **D. A. Carson:** In the context of the *lex talionis*, the most natural way of understanding the resistance is "do not resist in a court of law." (Die to your rights! Die to your right to be right! Die!)

Sinclair Ferguson: The word resist in verse 39 is an explicitly legal term and might be translated, "take to court" or "give testimony against." Jesus is expounding the desire of God in this way: do not stand on your legal rights as Christians, and bleed this law and others for all they are worth.

James Montgomery Boice: These verses teach that a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ has no right to retaliation, no right to things, no right to his own time, and no right to his money. In other words, he holds all his possessions in trust from the Lord, and he is obligated to use them as Jesus did, to help others.

Lloyd-Jones: Our Lord desires to produce in us a spirit that does not take offense easily . . . that does not seek immediate means of retaliation. He wants us to reach a state in which we are indifferent to self and self-esteem.

c. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also: A backhanded, insulting slap. Don't put your hands on me! Followers of Jesus are to have a different mindset, heart-set – humble, slow to react, loving.

Lloyd-Jones: Let me give you two illustrations of men who, we must all agree, put this teaching into practice. The first is about the famous Cornish evangelist, Billy Bray, who before his conversion was a pugilist, [a boxer], and a very good one. Billy Bray was converted; but one day, down in the mine, another man who used to live in mortal dread and terror of Billy Bray before Bray's conversion, knowing he was converted, thought he had at last found his opportunity. Without any provocation at all he struck Billy Bray, who could very easily have revenged himself upon him and laid him down unconscious on the ground. But instead of doing that Billy Bray looked at him and said, "May God forgive you, even as I forgive you," and no more. The result was that that man endured for several days an agony of mind and spirit which led directly to his conversion. He knew what Billy Bray could do, and he knew what the natural man in Billy Bray wanted to do. But Billy Bray did not do it; and that is how God used him.

James Montgomery Boice: The black evangelist Tom Skinner was converted to Christ while he was leader of the largest, toughest, teenage gang in New York City, the Harlem Lords. His conversion was so real that he left the gang the next day, turning from a life of fighting and violence to preach the gospel. There was an immediate victory over crime and cruelty. Soon there was a victory over hate and bigotry also. Several weeks after his conversion he was playing a football game in which . . . the boy whom he had blocked jumped in front of him in a rage and slammed him in the stomach. As he bent over from the blow he was hacked across the back. When Skinner fell, the boy kicked him, shouting, "You dirty black N-word! I'll teach you a thing or two." Skinner said that under normal circumstances the old Tom Skinner would have jumped up from the ground and pulverized the white boy! But, instead, he got up from the ground and found himself looking the boy in the face and saying, "You know, because of Jesus Christ, I love you anyway." Later Skinner said that he even surprised himself, but he knew that what the Bible had promised was true. He was a new creature in Christ, and it was no longer necessary for him to operate on the old level of tit for tat, hate for hate, or retaliation. Moreover, when the game was over and [the boy who attacked Tom had] some time to think about it, he came to Skinner and said, "Tom, you've done more to knock prejudice out of me by telling me that you loved me than you would have if you'd socked my jaw in."

d. If anyone would sue you & take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well: Exodus 22:26-27: If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep?

Be so humble, patient, and dead to self that you are even willing to give up what you have a legal right to keep!

e. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles: D. A. Carson: [This] refers to the Roman practice of commandeering civilians to carry the luggage of military personnel a prescribed distance . . . Jesus' disciples . . . must not be spiteful or vengeful but helpful – willing to go a second mile.

Mohler: Roman soldiers oppressed the Jews. They made old Jewish men carry cargo & military gear to humiliate them. Jewish boys knew to run away if they saw Roman soldiers, knowing they might force them to carry baggage.

Instead of grumbling, complaining, and hating, followers of Jesus were to finish the mile and go two more!

f. Give to the one who begs from you, & do not refuse the one who would borrow from you: We who follow Jesus should be generous, giving people. But you say – they don't deserve to be given anything! What have you received from God that you deserve?

Mohler: Giving them what they ask for doesn't mean you're giving them what they need. (Pan handlers/drugs)

1 John 3:17-18: But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

George Muller: There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will, died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends, and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.

Jesus is teaching us in these verses that to follow Him, we must deny ourselves. We must have a heart of submission, a heart of cooperation, & a heart of death to autonomy, death to self, death to our rights for the sake of others & for our witness to others and for the glory of God. As followers of Jesus, we are to be so confident in God & satisfied in God that we know God will bring justice to all wrongs, God will protect us, God will provide clothing & everything else for us, God will give us strength to endure, God will help us and provide for us – always, perfectly!

Matthew 16:24-25: If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Romans 12:16-21: Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ 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." ²⁰ 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." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

4. Jesus Loves Justice And Mercy

We are being called in these everlasting Words of Jesus to follow Him, trust Him, and act like Him. How? Cross!

To satisfy God's justice, Jesus gave more than both His eyes and all of His teeth. He gave His life that we might have mercy and new, glorified bodies forever someday!

To satisfy God's justice, Jesus did not resist evil in the court held against Him. He was silent before His accusers and did not defend Himself and allowed man's injustice to prevail so that God's justice might be fully paid so that we might obtain mercy: **Isaiah 53:7:** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

To satisfy God's justice, Jesus allowed Himself to be beaten and slapped so that we might have mercy: **Isaiah 50:6:** I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

To satisfy God's justice, all Jesus' clothes were taken; He was crucified naked so that we are clothed with mercy!

To satisfy God's justice, Jesus was forced to walk so far on the road of suffering that He was unable to walk or carry His own cross anymore! All so that we might walk with God in Paradise forever!

To satisfy God's justice, Jesus gave all He was and had to save sinful beggars Who begged Him for nothing. All so that we might have mercy and find our all in all in Him and inherit the whole world!

Christ Gave Us More Than Tooth And Eye
God's Perfect Justice Magnify
We Take And Take "For Me!" We Cry
But He Gave All For Sinners Die
And Bore God's Wrath Forsaken Why
So It Is Finished Risen High

Now Death Shall No More Terrify
By Faith Alone He'll Justify
Our Heart's He'll Change And Purify
All Selfishness We'll Crucify
To Give And Give And Glorify
Our God Alone Will Satisfy!