

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Personal Relationships - Part 6 Retaliation and Vengeance

Text: Matthew 5:38-42 Part 2

Introduction: The eye for an eye law was a good law to prevent excessive punishment by personal justice. It was designed to keep the offended person from personal vengeance. However, it had been abused to extract personal justice. The do not resist an evil person statement does not mean we should turn a blind eye to injustice and crime. Nor does it mean we should allow thieves to rummage our home and help them load up what they want. An evil person may have a personal issue with your faith, what you believe or the convictions you have. Romans 12:17 **“Never pay back evil for evil.”** Note: laws passed in Canada that will prevent churches from preaching “conversion” for those in the homosexual, LGTBQ, transgender lifestyle. It is known as C4.

Application: As we look at these passages, I find them trying my own rebellious nature. I want them to say something different...Jesus gives us four ways in response in our text. But let's remember that the human heart is bent towards retaliation. That's our natural response. Of course, speaking of Jesus and His response, God, yet fully human too, 1 Peter 2:23 **“and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.”** Aren't we to respond like Christ? Aren't we to reflect what love Christ has for those who despise Him? The law was designed to avoid personal vengeance. Not one to look the other way.

Human relationships and law courts are two different things. You don't want the courts to act in human relationships and vice versa. We have ample Scripture to help with this. We are to oppose the devil and his wickedness. We are to oppose sin, wickedness and evil. We are to point people to righteousness and holiness in Christ.

Point 1 - Your Dignity

The context of what our Lord is saying here concerning *“turning the other cheek”* again doesn't mean to be pacifist. To slap someone in this time (cultural context) was the most degrading and inhumane thing to do. It was a strike to your dignity. Isaiah 50:6 **“I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.”** Sometimes we think our human dignity is what matters most, but we are children of the Most High God. Men despise Christians. Governments hate the truth of the gospel. People are made fun of, ridiculed and harassed because they are believers. Often they embarrassed and humiliated. To turn the other cheek is not to respond with retaliation and vengeance.

It means to not stoke the fire, but to move on and let God be the one who acts. We trust in the providence of God to extract judgement. Many times an enemy wants a reaction to further his anger. Matthew Henry notes about this passage, **“it will ordinarily be the wisest course to pass it**

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by, and take no further notice of it: there are no bones broken, no great harm done, forgive it and forget it; and if proud fools think the worse of thee, and laugh at thee for it, all wise men will value and honor thee for it, as a follower of the blessed Jesus, who, though he was the Judge of Israel, did not smite those who smote him on the cheek." Proverbs 25:22 "For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the Lord will reward you." However, our recompense is in Christ's hands, who will reward us with eternal glory for the shame we thus patiently endure.¹

Point 2 - Security

If we are all honest, we will say that there are times when we put our security in what we have. The shirt was a type of undergarment (tunic) and the coat was the outer garment. The coat also served as a blanket at night. Most people did not have more than one coat. According to the Mosaic Law, the coat was to be returned at sunset, cf. Exodus 22:25-27. The court could not order the coat to be surrendered. However, it could be given voluntarily to meet the obligation or debt owed. In other words, if a judgment was for \$100 but the debt was \$150, you could voluntarily make up the difference by giving your coat. The point is doing more than is required expresses love and grace. In 1 Corinthians 6 believers were allowing "outsiders" to judge matters between themselves. These matters should have been handled among themselves. Therefore, don't let the court settle these matters, do what is right and honest. Again, letting a secular court decide spiritual matters only opens the door to problems.

Point 3 - Liberty

Human bondage and slavery have been a consequence of the fall. The best of human government have tried to give their citizens freedom and liberty. Freedom can't be cherished at the alter of righteousness. In other words, we are to be righteous before earthly liberty. Roman law gave a soldier the right to require of any citizen to carry his pack for a "milion" which is just short of our mile. It was a relief to the soldier but a burden to the citizen. To make matters worse, the soldier was viewed as the enemy. Many viewed this as giving up some of their liberty as citizens to do this. Instead of being bitter and vengeful, Jesus says, go another mile. Show them the love of Christ, the signs of a redeemer. It has been said "it is better to serve than to quarrel."²

Some of you may have had your liberty robbed of you. Asked or required to do things. Yet, your freedom is better than any constitution can give. Your freedom is in Christ. You're not a bond slave to sin but a slave of Christ. You aren't bound by death's grip, but free from death's grip. Galatians 5:1a "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." So liberty isn't eternal on earth. But our liberty is eternal in Christ.

¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Mat/Mat_005.cfm (accessed 1.21.22)

² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Mat/Mat_005.cfm (accessed 1.21.22)

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Point 4 - Property

Possessiveness is a trait of human nature. We dislike giving up even temporarily belongs to us. Even as Christians we tend to forget that nothing truly belongs to us. We are only stewards of what God has given us. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 *“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”*

Definition of steward primarily denotes *“The manager of a household or estate.”* A governor or treasurer is an example of a steward as the manage other people’s stuff. Elders, pastors, and teachers are steward of handling God’s word. Titus 1:7a *“For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward.”* Furthermore, the idea is that we respond to genuine needs, even before they ask. When we see a need we should, in fact, be generous is at all possible. And we aren’t suppose to respond to every foolish, selfish need that people ask for. Honestly, that may be doing them more harm than good.

Application: This isn’t speaking of giving begrudgingly. This is speaking of giving as a matter of grace and compassion. It would not be a good steward for you to give away what is needed for your family, but being wise about it would remove your attraction for holding onto what you think gives you peace. And it’s not wrong to have extra either.

What we must be on guard against is thinking that what we have is our hope and peace. Everything we possess can be gone in a matter of seconds. Luke 12:15 *“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”* (ESV). Matthew Henry *“If thou has an ability, look upon the request of the poor as giving thee an opportunity for the duty of almsgiving.”* *When a real object of charity presents itself we give at first word.*³ Psalms 112:5 *“It is well with the man who is gracious and lends.”* Having this heart towards giving, removes a heart towards giving to the idle and unworthy.

In all of these four points our Lord gives us we can draw a main point from them. They all remove the strings we have attached to worldly things, prideful attitudes and set our focus on eternal not temporary. George Muller said, *“There was a day when I died, utterly to George Muller and his opinions, his preferences, and his tastes as well. I died to the world, to its approval and censure. I died to the approval or the blame of even my brethren and friends. And since then I have studied to show myself approved unto God.”*

What we are learning in these passages is the fact we often put aside our pride, rights and other self elevating things to reflect the gracious mercy of God. Our home isn’t here. Our liberty isn’t here, our security isn’t here, and our possessions and property isn’t here. Ephesians 1:11-14 *“In*

³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Mat/Mat_005.cfm (accessed 1.22.22)

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him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” We are just pilgrims and strangers in the earth, we are sojourning towards home. If we lose all of these things, we won’t lose our eternal hope in Christ.