

**Message #16****Matthew 5:38-42**

In the early centuries of Christianity, some positively refused to render any military service based on these verses. Is that what Jesus was after? Did Jesus mean that you should let someone break into your house and kill you and your family? Did Jesus mean you should allow another country to come and take over your land and never raise a finger to try and defend yourself? Did Jesus mean that the believer is to be a “sanctimonious doormat?” The answer to that is absolutely No! In fact, when Jesus was about to leave this world, He told His disciples to buy a sword (Luke 22:35-36).

Jesus Christ, as righteous King, is presenting a kingdom Gospel and kingdom righteousness. He is showing Israel that she does not have the righteousness necessary to get into His righteous kingdom. She did not have the perfection necessary to inherit her kingdom (5:48).

**KINGDOM RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH DOES NOT CONTINUALLY SEEK REVENGE FOR EVIL NOR DOES IT CONTINUALLY RESIST EVIL PEOPLE.**

Now a key to understanding this passage is to realize that Jesus is combating what Israel had been taught versus what God demands. The Pharisees and Scribes had taught Israel the wrong way. Christ is straightening out Israel’s understanding of righteousness. The righteousness presented by the Scribes and Pharisees was greatly lacking when compared to true kingdom righteousness (5:20).

Now **verse 38** gives the main teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees concerning how one should react when wronged. Their teaching was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” This principle did come right out of the O.T. Law – Ex. 21:22-25; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:18-21. When one examines these passages, one sees that there was a careful, legal investigation of the wrong. What was overlooked by the Pharisees and Scribes is that there were also legal challenges to leave revenge to God – Lev. 19:17-18; Deut. 32:35; Ps. 94:1; Prov. 20:22; 24:29. This was the trait that was lacking and this is the trait that Christ addressed as the righteous King.

**RIGHTEOUS RESPONSE #1** – The response of not revenging evil. **5:38**

Jesus Christ was trying to show Israel that true righteousness is not a continual attitude of revenge. The Pharisees and Scribes promoted the legal idea of retaliation—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The seeking revenge attitude was the prevailing attitude of Jewish religion and Jesus is saying real righteousness does not always seek revenge. We have many N.T. challenges that exhort us to leave vengeance to God.

**Paul said** in Romans 12:19 - “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God for it is written “vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

**Paul said** in I Thess. 5:15 - “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.”

**Peter said** in I Pet. 3:9 - “not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult...”

Clearly the principle of not taking revenge is one that not only reflects kingdom righteousness, but also Grace Age righteousness.

**RIGHTEOUS RESPONSE #2** – The response of not resisting evil. **5:39-42**

**(Challenge #1)** - Do not resist him who is evil. **5:39a**

The word “resist” is a Greek word that means to stand against, to oppose (Smith, p. 37). Jesus is telling His disciples that your job is not to stand against or oppose those who are evil. What we may observe from Scripture is there were times when the right thing to do was to resist evil. For example, Jesus went into the Temple and physically drove out sellers and money changers (Matt. 21:12; John 2:15). Paul withstood Peter to his face because he was to be condemned (Gal. 2:11). We are to resist the devil (James 4:7; I Pet. 5:9) and the evil he promotes (Rom. 12:9). There are times when people are to be put out of the church (I Cor. 5:13; Matt. 18:15-17). Righteousness does not continually stand against evil; it presents the Gospel to evil.

**(Challenge #2)** - Let one who slaps you on one cheek slap you on the other. **5:39b**

Jesus Himself was slapped in His face (Matt. 26:67; John 19:3). He literally had this happen to Him. Now this is not a challenge to let someone beat you up. In fact, there are instances in Scripture when one was slapped and they actually challenged the reason for being slapped. This was true for Jesus (John 18:23) and for Paul (Acts 23:3). There were many times in the life of Christ in which He actually moved away from dangerous situations (Luke 4:30; John 7:1, 10; 10:39; Mark 9:30). So this is not a challenge to let people beat you up. The context is against instant vindictive retaliation. What we are to surrender is our dignity. The principle is when our personal dignity is attacked, don't seek instant revenge. Leave the defense of your dignity to God.

**(Challenge #3)** - Give one who wants your shirt, your coat. **5:40**

Often the debt could be paid by clothing. The court could not demand that a person give him a coat; but if the believer wanted to do right that is what he should do.

**(Challenge #4)** - Go with one who forces you to go one mile, two miles. **5:41**

This was in the context of a public courier. In other words, a Jew was made to carry a burden or load for someone else. Foreign powers were subjugating Jews to do some heavy work. Under Roman law, a Roman soldier could demand that a citizen carry his pack a Roman mile, which is a little less than our present mile. Jesus said if you are asked to do this, carry it two miles.

**(Challenge #5)** - Give anything to anyone who wants to borrow it. **5:42**

To get into the kingdom, one would have to totally die to self. Now of course the one who truly laid aside His personal rights was the one teaching this—Jesus Christ. Talk about forfeiting personal dignity—He was God, the second member of the Trinity and He willingly came to this earth in the form of a man, willing to die on the cross so we could be saved from our sins.