

## The Garden – Matthew 5:38-42 – April 5, 2022

### Retaliation

The definition of retaliation according to the Cambridge Dictionary: the act of hurting someone or doing something harmful to someone because they have done or said something harmful to you.

Our passage for today is Matthew 5:38-42.

38. You have heard that it was said 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH'. (Ex. 21:24, Lev. 24:20)

39. But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.

42. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

So why did Jesus teach this during the sermon on the mount? Is he teaching us to be doormats and allow others to hit us and steal from us whenever they want to?

Before we go any further let's examine one verse to get our minds in the right place concerning scripture.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

Now let's continue our examination of this passage.

Spurgeon explains it this way:

"The courts of our Lord's day were vicious; and his disciples were advised to suffer wrong sooner than appeal to them. Our own courts often furnish the surest method of solving a difficulty by authority, and we have known them resorted to with the view of preventing strife. Yet even in a country where justice can be had,

we are not to resort to law for every personal wrong. We should rather endure to be put upon than be forever crying out, "I'll bring an action." At times this very rule of self-sacrifice may require us to take steps in the way of legal appeal, to stop injuries which would fall heavily upon others; but we ought often to forego our own advantage, yea, always when the main motive would be a proud desire for self-vindication. Lord, give me a patient spirit, so that I may not seek to avenge myself, even when I might righteously do so!"

John MacArthur says in his MacArthur Daily Bible, "In Israel, the principle of legal justice (called *lex talionis*, "law of retaliation") or "eye for eye" was given to encourage appropriate punishment of a criminal in cases where there might be a tendency to be either too lenient or too strict. Jesus confronted the Jews of His day for taking this law out of the courts and using it for purposes of personal vengeance."

Not taking revenge is a way of thinking that is different from the way the world thinks. The world, which included us at one time, says "Don't let anyone push you around" and "You must look out for yourself. If you don't, no one will". I wouldn't say I was born ready for a fight but I was extremely competitive. If there was a prize to be won I always wanted it. I didn't fight with my fists (except for a couple of times) but I did fight in other ways. I certainly was not looking out for other people and the Kingdom of Heaven was not my goal. Because of God's grace I see much more clearly today how self-centered and proud I was. Our passage, upon closer examination is not necessarily telling us to be doormats and let ourselves and our children be bullied but instead to have the mindset of humility and the goal of peace.

#### Matthew 5: 3-6

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

#### Matthew 5:7-10

7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.  
10. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:11-12

11. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.  
12. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Those who are poor in spirit, gentle, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, are merciful, are pure in heart and are peacemakers are the ones who are blessed.

As we have learned, blessed means \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 5:39 says to not resist the evil person. The Greek word for resist is anthistemi. This means to set against or withstand. We are called upon to be gentle and peacemakers not fix every evil we come across. Being obedient to what Jesus calls us to do takes away the fight from us. When we are seeking the kingdom of Heaven it is not about our glory or our justice. It is about the glory of God. Our primary citizenship is in Heaven and we are pressing towards it.

This passage also is teaching us to not hold on to our possessions so tightly. As children of the King we know we will be provided for so it is ok to give our things away even by force or loan to people.

Matthew 6:25 For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; not for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?

Matthew 6:31-33 Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

The fight for our rights and our personal respect can be a distraction from the furtherance of the kingdom of Heaven. In the church it is especially condemned.

1 Cor 6:6-7 ...but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not be defrauded?

The world cannot help themselves in their fight for their rights. They are fighting so hard because this is all they have. It is very sad. We can show them a better \_\_\_\_\_!!

1 Cor 6:10-11 not thieves, not the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Mt 5:12 Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We read in Matthew 5:12 that we are to \_\_\_\_\_, for when we have difficulties because of making a choice to think and act in a heavenly mindset our reward is \_\_\_\_\_!

The apostle Paul also taught not to retaliate.

Romans 12:17-19,21 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 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. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Jesus lived his entire life pressing on toward Heaven. He laid aside the glory he was due, in order to bring the kingdom of Heaven to us.

Phil 2:6-9 ...who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance

as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name....

We also should be humble.

Phil 2:3-5 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...

Matthew 23:12 And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

James 3:17-18 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Discussion questions:

Think about and write down what it means for you to not retaliate in today's world.

Think about and write down what it means for your children to not retaliate in today's world and how you teach that to them.







