



**Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew:**  
Turning the Other Cheek  
Dec 17, 2017

TEXT: MATTHEW 5:38-42

CONTEXT

1. Verse 38 gives us a sense of the context. Jesus is quoting several Old Testament passages. (Exo 21:22-25; Lev 24:17-21; Deut 19:17-21)
2. In Old Testament jurisprudence, the principle was simple: the punishment always fit the crime. The type and severity of punishment was always in line with the type and severity of the crime. The response was proportional.
3. Importantly, some of the passage Jesus was alluding to were set in a judicial jurisdiction. It was the job of the judges to administer punishments.
4. Most believe that in the day of Jesus, the administration of an “eye or an eye” had spread beyond “state” boundaries to individuals. People were taking it upon themselves to personally extract recompense.
5. Now instead of wrongs being properly righted by governing authorities, the spirit of personal **revenge** had entered. Recall that even in the New Testament, “higher powers” or governing authorities are ordained by God with a specific set of powers. (Rom 13:1-4)

UNDERSTAND THE TEXT!

*Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

- As we have consistently said, Jesus does not lower the Law. Rather, He raises it! He consistently recasts the Law for two reasons: 1) That those in the Kingdom might truly understand the principle as well as the precept, and 2) That we might see our utter need for our **hearts** to be transformed by the Holy Spirit!

*Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

- I believe this has to do with enduring personal insult and suffering. A slap on the cheek in antiquity (and even today) is about as insulting as being spat upon. To be struck on the right cheek is very likely to be backhanded...the worst of all slaps. It is not only more painful due to the knuckles, but it is dismissive. It shows severe contempt and declares, “You and your issues are beneath me.”
- Jesus essentially commanding those who follow Him to be willing to joyfully and consistently endure **mocking** and ill-treatment, refusing to allow a vengeful spirit to take hold. This is the consistent testimony of Scripture. (Pro 20:22, 24:29; Rom 12:17-21; 1 Th 5:15; 1 Pe 3:8-12)
- Now, does this verse apply to physical altercations? I’d say yes. A slap is not life-threatening. Would it be better for a Kingdom person to endure the insult and walk away or escalate the level of violence?

*Mat 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.*

- If we observe the judicial, legal context of this verse (again, also the same context of an eye for an eye in the OT), then we find a Kingdom principle that encourages the believer to avoid legal proceedings by giving the “evil person” more than they would ask for.

- Again, as counter-intuitive as this sounds to the flesh, in the Kingdom it's better to lose a coat and cloak than risk greater **loss**, get sidetracked (get entangled in worldly affairs, 2 Tim 2:4), and lose our witness before a lost a dying world.

*Mat 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

- The word for “compel” or “force” here is generally thought not to be of Greek origin...perhaps Persian. It means “to press into public service.”
- Literally, our LORD is saying that when drafted into important service, don't argue or fuss. On the contrary, have the sort of heart that goes “the extra mile” even when you didn't **volunteer!** (This is where we get that phrase.)
- How different this mindset is from our current posture of self-centeredness! How far this is from the “What's in it for me?” (WIFM) standard?

*Mat 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

- Perhaps no other issue of life demonstrates the state of the heart like the area of money and possessions. Truly, if you want to see what one loves, look at their checkbook!
- Critically, the word “asketh” in our Text carries the connotation of begging. ESV says, “Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.” Jesus is very likely admonishing caring for those who are destitute.
- Friends, Scripture is replete with commands to be generous, particularly as it relates to caring for the poor. (Luk 6:38; Pro 19:17, 28:27; 2 Cor 9:6-8; 1 Tim 6:17-29, Jam 2:14-16)
- Luke's version of our Text gives a bit more “heart” detail:

*Luk 6:30-34 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. 32 "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. (ESV)*

- Now, are there reasons to say no? Yes! If one has **evidence** of trickery, manipulation, and fraud, “no” is the answer of proper stewardship.
- But here is the bottom line, since our LORD's command is quite clear: **In the Kingdom, when asked for money or possessions by those in desperate situations, and one has it to give, the Kingdom citizen should be looking for ways to help. Kingdom citizens should begin with an attitude of “yes,” not our normal attitude of looking for ways to say “no.”**
- This truth is extremely convicting for most of us, despite our riches. Perhaps this is why Scripture declares: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48b)

#### APPLICATIONS:

1. Consider the difficult heart issues Jesus covers in our Text: revenge, humble responses to personal insult, enduring losses for greater good, going the extra mile when one didn't want to go in the first place, and generosity. Whew!
2. It should be obvious that the Kingdom citizen needs the Power of God!
3. Ask a friend/family member to help you determine areas of deficiency in you. We rarely are able to identify our heart defects without help!
4. Spend some time praying for your heart to change...to conform to Christ's Word by Christ's power.
5. Ask the LORD to send the Holy Ghost afresh...to anoint and imbue us again that we might walk worthy of God, who called us into His Kingdom and glory. (1Th 2:12)