

'What Do You Do When You've Been Personally Wronged?' Matt. 5:38-42

Series title: What does it mean to live a good life?

I. Legal retaliation 5:38

Three times the OT gives this quote. It simply means that the punishment must fit the crime. It is a wise statement to help a judge or jury to decide how to punish an offender. It was actually a merciful law because it limited man's natural desire to seek retaliation way beyond what an offense deserved.

But what was an instruction for their legal system, the Jews had misinterpreted this into meaning they could take the _____ into their own hands and personally inflict revenge.

II. What does non-retaliation mean? 5:39-42

A. He is teaching the principle of non-retaliation. If someone offends you, you are not free to grab a knife and stab them in the back or even to verbally stab them in the back. He is saying, all that personal retaliation, cut it out.

B. However, He is not saying to take no stand against all evil and thus simply let it go on. But many have interpreted it that way. illus. Jesus in the temple, Paul in 1 Cor. 5:13, Peter and the authorities in Acts 4, Francis Schaeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

C. So, as they concluded, as Peter did, as Paul did, as Jesus did in the temple, there are times when evil, wherever it is found, must be resisted. Not to restrain evil is neither just nor good. It fails to protect the innocent and it encourages bad people to just keep going. However, Jesus is saying that when it comes to personal retaliation, to personal insults and offenses, don't seek _____. It's just as Paul taught in Rom. 12:17-19. Let it go. Move on. God will deal with it in the right way at the right time.

III. The freedom of non-retaliation.

A. So Jesus takes this principle of non-retaliation: '*do not return evil for evil*' and applies it to 4 basic human rights as seen in four common offenses back then. When someone else was being hurt, Jesus stepped in to stop it but when He was personally being picked on, He didn't retaliate.

1. The right of dignity. To slap someone on the cheek back then was a huge insult. Jesus said to just turn the other cheek. Don't get into a fight over that. Leave the guarding of your dignity with God.

2. The right of security. 5:40 In an actual lawsuit, be willing to go along with the court order and even be willing to go the second mile here and show that you're not bitter by even offering your coat as well. Paul later says a similar thing in 1 Cor. 6 about being willing to be wronged rather than seeking personal revenge. So they insulted you, big deal, move on; there's more important things for you to do.

3. The right to liberty. 5:41 Even your time is in God's hands too. Jesus said to be willing to go the second mile and do it gladly, setting a _____ example, knowing that we have a freedom in Christ that no one can take away. And it will speak well of the good news.

4. The right to property. 5:42 We tend to be very possessive, we tend to cling to things tightly. As even little kids say: 'this is mine.' But God says it's all His. We're not actual owners, but stewards.

B. So, I want to say that this kind of gracious, generous spirit that doesn't pursue personal retaliation, comes from the Lord. Properly resisting evil in this world and not seeking revenge is itself a great freedom. It frees you up to then enjoy God, His creation, your life and His plans for your day without worrying about or trying to cling furiously to all these little things or getting all bent out of shape by mean people.

There will always be mean people around, but be sure we're not one of them. And remember how often God has gone the second mile with us, let us do so with others this week.