



## Personal Retaliation

September 21

**INTRODUCTION:** To live righteously Jesus' disciples must live the way He commands. More than correcting misinterpretations of the Law Jesus also stresses the humility we need to be His disciples, even when we are personally wronged we mustn't retaliate.

**KEY POINT:** Personal Wrongs and Retaliation/Revenge

**CHALLENGE:** In one sitting, read the whole sermon often over the coming months.

**FIRST, A.M. SERMON RECAP** (Gal 6:10)

- How does Jesus want us to love our neighbour as ourself?
- What is the context of Paul's command?
- What does "doing good to everyone" look like?
- How is "as we have opportunity" liberating?
- Where is such goodness first to be expressed? How is this contrary to some church-growth wisdom?

**READ:** Mt 5:38–42

### QUESTIONS:

1. **Can you share a time that you wanted to 'get even with someone,' or 'show someone a thing or two'?**
2. *V. 38- This is a reference to verses such as Ex 21; Lev 24; Dt 19. They summarize the law of retribution (lex talionis), that punishment needed to be proportional to the crime/injury. Thus verses such as these were actually restrictive.*
3. *V. 39- In Jesus' day, as in many cultures today, there existed a revenge culture (embedded in an honour-shame system), i.e. that if you injure someone by \$100 they'll injure you by \$1000, or cut off a finger they'd in turn cut off an arm. This ultimately spirals out of control until someone (or some family/tribe) dies. Though the Law restricted this many took these laws prescriptively as a means to establish how much revenge was justified and missed their original intent!*

4. **In what ways does our society show signs of being a revenge culture? How does this compare to what you know of 50 years ago?**
5. *V. 39a- Rather than seeking revenge, or retaliation, for personal wrongs Jesus says, "do not resist the one who is evil." Why can that be so hard? What resources does God offer us to ease this?*
6. In vv. 39b–42 Jesus gives four examples of this in action:
  - a. Backhanded slap
    - b. If Jews were right handed, how do we know this was a backhanded slap?
    - c. **This then is referring to \_\_\_\_\_?**
  - d. Lawsuit
    - e. *A tunic is equivalent to a suit of clothes. Would someone go to court over something so small? (c.f. 1 Cor 6:7)*
    - f. **This then is referring to litigious spirit/demanding my rights vs. \_\_\_\_\_?**
  - g. Commandeering civilians
    - h. *Roman soldiers could commandeer civilians, to a point, to assist them in their tasks, even menial ones they could actually perform.*
    - i. **This then is referring to \_\_\_\_\_?**
  - j. Giving
    - k. *It would obviously be unwise (and bankrupt you) to do this in every situation.<sup>1</sup>*
    - l. **This then is referring to \_\_\_\_\_?**
7. **How do we know Jesus is speaking of personal wrongs and self-sacrifice, especially for the Gospel (vv:10–12), and not necessarily self-defence, legitimate lawsuits, wider injustices or unwise giving, etc.**
8. **How does pride lay at the centre of retaliation?**
9. **How is our passage rooted in the characteristics of the Beatitudes and ultimately in the person and example of Jesus (including His trust in God's wisdom and justice)?**

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Pr 11:15; 17:18; 22:26. I am often slandered in Toronto when I offer real food rather than money to beggars. Some take the food!

10. What does it show of God's grace and the Gospel when we act in these ways? Can you think of historic or personal examples (c.f. the *Cross and the Switchblade*).

**Next Week:** Love Your Enemies, Mt 5:43-48