

Do Not Resist . . .

AS WE HAVE SEEN in our studies, each time Jesus says, “you have heard . . . but I say” He is about to correct a false teaching of the Jewish religious leaders. So it is no surprise that as we come to Jesus’ next “but I say . . .” we find a corrupted teaching from the Mishnah that He is addressing. Listen . . . “He who boxes the ear of his fellow pays him a *sela* . . . if he smacked him, he pays two hundred *zuz*. If it is with the back of the hand, he pays him four hundred *zuz*. If he (1) tore at his ear, (2) pulled his hair, (3) spit, and [the] spit hit him, (4) pulled off his cloak, (5) pulled apart the hairdo of a woman in the marketplace, he pays four hundred *zuz*. This is the principle: Everything is in accord with one’s station [in life].” (Mishnah Baba Qamma 8.6). This is why Jesus said,

You have heard that it was said, “AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.” “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 . . .”
(NASB) Matthew 5:38-39

EYE FOR AN EYE. Jesus starts by quoting from one of three Old Testament passages,

And the judges shall investigate thoroughly . . . Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. And the rest will hear and be afraid . . . Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.
(NASB) Deut. 19:18-21

The other passages are found in Exodus 21:24 and Leviticus 24:20. All three passages deal with legal cases. God set up a judicial system with judges and principles of law or guidelines to be used in deciding various situations. Exodus 21:24 is about miscarriages,

And if men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no further injury . . . he shall pay as the judges decide. But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.
(NASB) Ex. 21:24

Since Matt. 5:21, Jesus has been correcting the false teachings of the religious leaders in the area of divorce, marriage, oaths, and vows. Now Jesus’ next target is their hard hearts and their selfish legal practices, “An eye for an eye . . .”

OFFER YOUR LEFT CHEEK. So Jesus responds, “But I say, do not resist him who is evil . . .” Now does that seem right? Does it seem right not to resist an **evil man**? The Greek word for “resist” is ANTHISTEMI which means “to oppose,” “rebel against,” “stand up against,” or “stand your ground.” Did you notice the kind of person this is? Jesus calls him or her an **evil person**. Jesus says to not resist this person. Do not stand your ground, but if someone slaps your right cheek - turn your left cheek so he can slap that one too! This was the opposite of the teaching of the religious leaders. To a Jew, a slap was a personal insult. Their rules required death, money or some form of penalty for every wrong. The religious leaders had taken God’s legal principles and twisted them into principles of personal gain and vengeance.

I must have been about 13 years of age. I was in the school library. I do not remember the boy or why he was angry with me. All I remember is that he slapped the left side of my face. I remembered Jesus’ teaching, so I turned my face and encouraged him to slap my other cheek. He was shocked. He

became very quiet and sat down. But this is not what Jesus was talking about. If we take Jesus literally and someone hits you in the nose, do you have another nose to offer? What do you offer if you are hit in the stomach? Jesus is saying, “Do not seek to get even,”

GIVE AWAY YOUR COAT. Jesus’ target was their hard hearts. His next illustration is a legal one.

And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. (NASB) Matt. 5:40

In Jesus’ day, most of the people wore an undergarment or “shirt” and an outer garment called a “coat.” According to God’s law, if you had loaned your outer “coat” to someone, they had to return it to you by sunset (Ex. 22:26-27). Jesus does not tell us if the lawsuit was justified or not. That is not Jesus’ point. Jesus is saying, give them your coat - do not resist - show them Jesus’ love. How often we seek to protect our own rights (Phil. 2:3-4). Jesus is saying give them up.

GO THE EXTRA MILE. Some folks in the crowd probably disagreed with Jesus by now, but He was not done,

And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. (NASB) Matt 5:41

Jesus was referring to a Roman law that gave a Roman soldier the right to force a civilian or his animal to carry something for a MILION, which is a Roman mile. So, Jesus says to go two MILION. The Jews hated the Romans. Just imagine how the crowd must have reacted. Probably few if any in the crowd really wanted to help a Roman soldier.

GIVE AND LOAN. Each statement was getting worse but Jesus was not done, He has another illustration,

Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (NASB) Matt. 5:42

The Greek text implies that this person was asking and asking. Few people will ask and ask. Only those in real need will repeatedly ask. Jesus tells us to help them. Jesus was not talking about giving to someone who makes unreasonable requests such as asking for your home, ALL of your money (1 Tim. 5:8) or asking you to commit some sin (Acts 5:29).

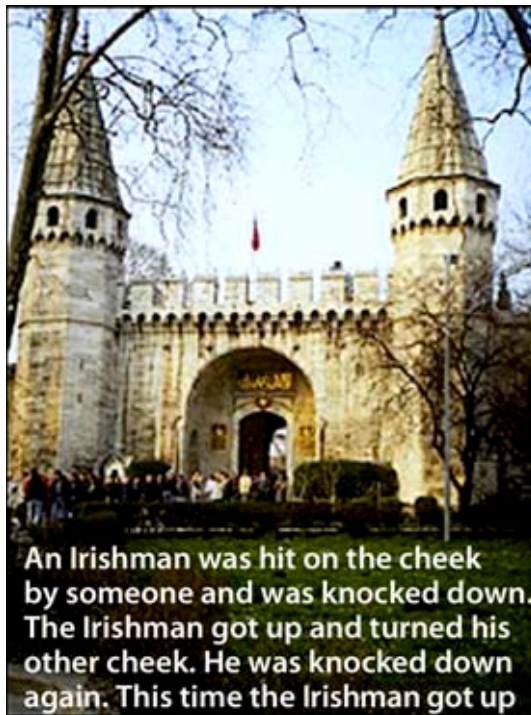
CONCLUSION. Jesus was talking about our heart . . . He was illustrating unselfish love. He was showing us how to show love to those who insult us, sue us, compel us to help them, who beg for help and who request to borrow money.

These religious leaders had twisted God’s holy law to serve their own selfishness. God had established the principle of an “eye for an eye” and a “tooth for a tooth” to limit punishment and bind justice. We are like them in many ways. When someone is controlling, indifferent, excessive, or unkind, we too violate God’s principle,

“VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. (NASB) Rom. 12:19

God does not want us to think “Vengeance is for me, I deserve to be treated better.” Jesus was not literally talking about offering your “other nose” to be hit or to go about naked. He is not encouraging us to deprive our families of home, food and money. His target was the cold hearted and selfish. He was talking about yielding yourself, your rights, and your heart to another.

One of the great marks of mature Christians is their love from the heart, with their money, for the widows, orphans, those in distress, strangers and prisoners (James 1:27; 1 Tim. 6:17-18; Heb. 13:1-2). When was the last time you helped your neighbor or defended someone who was being slan-



dered? Jesus wants us to sacrificially reach out to others, to Christians (Gal. 6:10) and to **evil men** in love through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself . . .
(NASB) Luke 9:23