

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt12a

3. Retaliation 38-42

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

I'm sure many of you have heard it said, "Don't get mad, get even". You probably have also heard this quote, "Revenge is a dish best served cold". This means that taking revenge at a later date is better than enacting it immediately. That way you have more time to plan and savor your revenge and it comes when they are least expecting it.

That is the way of the world. But it is not the way of the Kingdom of God. God does not exact revenge on us for our betrayal of Him, instead He shows mercy and grace to those who avail themselves of Christ's atoning sacrifice. How then can we take advantage of his mercy and grace, if we are not willing to extend that to those who have attacked and betrayed us.

What the Lord is trying to tell us is that as Christians, we should be the ones that try to deescalate things. The last time I threw a punch in anger I was in middle school. I've avoided many altercations. Slapping someone back will only tend to escalate things.

Conflict and disagreement are a part of life, albeit often an unpleasant one. Whether caused by a disagreement in values or simple miscommunication, we all encounter conflict at some point in our lives. Unfortunately, when conflict is not addressed productively, it can escalate, sometimes to the point of violence.

I have learned the art of de-escalation.

- Decide what the desired outcome of the confrontation is. Is it to prove you're right, to get an apology, or to come to an understanding of the situation?
- The louder some talks, the softer you talk. The more irate they become, the calmer you have to seem. Learn to regulate your own emotions and stay calm.
- Don't mirror their behaviors. Emotions are contagious. When we encounter someone who is experiencing stress, we pick up on their stress.² The same is true for other emotions, including anger, which is why we might feed off of someone else's anger, causing a conflict to escalate further. In general people want you to feel their desperation, if

you remain calm and look at things objectively, 9 times out of 10, you can defuse a situation.

- Read the behaviors. Sometimes people aren't ready for a conversation, give them time and space to calm down.
- Learn the art of active listening by repeating to them what they said in the form of a question.
- Don't attack them or use generalizations; instead, use I statements that address their behaviors, such as when you do such and such it makes me feel...
- At the very least, make them feel like you've really heard them as they express their complaint. Don't make them feel discounted. Put yourself in their shoes and try to see their side. As noted above, it is tempting to get caught up in your perception of a conflict and vision of an appropriate resolution, forgetting that there is another side to the story.
- The other party has its own agenda and priorities for the outcome as well. Recognize your values as well as what you might be able to bend in order to come to a solution that is mutually agreeable.
- Once you've acknowledged that you have heard them, give them options.

We need to understand that they are not the enemy, they are victims of the enemy.

Luke 23:34

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In verse 39 He says, "Do not resist the one who is evil". In other words, "don't put up a fight or a defense".

The wording in the Greek, to me at least, sounds different than what is translated into English. Looking at the Greek, I would have translated it this way: "Not that you shouldn't resist evil, but allow room for God to work in the person doing evil by turning the other cheek."

Don't get me wrong, I will get physical, and I will react if someone is trying to harm my wife or my family. But if you're just trying to show off what a big shot you are, or if you're just running your mouth, I just don't think it's worth it to try and get back at them. If I react to you, then you've won.

What Jesus now is saying is, remember who you are in Christ and be the bigger person that you may be an influencer for good in this world.

So, where does this saying that He is quoting come from?

Deut 19:19-21

So you shall purge the evil from your midst. 20 And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among

you. 21 Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

God established this as a means of maintaining justice and purging evil from His people. It was intended to prevent inappropriate and disproportionate punishment. This was a civil law intended to be executed by civil authorities and is meant to fit the punishment to the crime.

Finally, does this rule out self-defense or protecting my family or property?

There is a time and a place for everything, and all things need to be considered before we act.

Luke 22:35-38

And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." ³⁶ He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. ³⁷ For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." ³⁸ And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

At one time He said to completely trust in God and to make no provision or defense. Now, He is saying to take provision and to be prepared to defend yourself.

How do we know the difference? It is all about hearing God and being obedient.

Just a few verses later this happens:

Luke 22:47-52

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹ And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

This seems to be a contradiction. First, He tells them to get a sword, but now He is chastising them for using one. Well, the sword was for the defense of the women and for their own defense.

He does not want or need a defense because He knows that what is happening is ordained by God and has to happen.

Just because you have a sword, doesn't mean to have to use it.

After we had someone break into our bedroom while we were sleeping at the old house, I bought a gun for defense that I keep on the nightstand next to our bed.

In Florida we have the castle doctrine that says that if someone breaks into your home, you have the right to shoot them. The moment they pass the threshold of your door, they are fair game. What they don't tell you, is that you have to be in fear for your life or the lives of your family, before you pull the trigger. Even then, if you are fully justified in shooting because someone poses a clear and present danger to your family, you have to realize that you're going to have to live with that decision for the rest of your life.

Are things that important that you would use a gun to protect against someone who wants to steal your TV?

⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Things are not more important than people or your testimony.

Does that mean that we have to give our stuff to anyone who wants it?

We should help out those who are truly needy and therefore forced to beg. But we are not required to give foolishly to a lazy person or those who are not in need, or where giving would bring harm rather than benefit.

2 Thess 3:10-12

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.