

## **Sermon Outline**

# **“Jesus on Revenge and Rights,” Matthew Series, Part 14 – Matthew 5:38-42 Braden Greer – August 26, 2012**

### **Introduction**

1. In this passage, Jesus is addressing how a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven thinks about revenge and the underlying issue of how we view our rights.
2. Jesus addresses this issue in a way that would have been shocking to his original hearers.

### **Point #1 – The Background**

1. Jesus begins by quoting the Law of Moses (Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-20, Deuteronomy 19:21). This particular law was given to limit retribution and instill fear in those who would commit evil against their brother.
2. It was civil law, not personal command. It was to be carried out by the judges (Deuteronomy 19:21). The Pharisees, however, misinterpreted this law as allowing limited revenge.
3. Jesus expounds a greater righteousness than the scribes and the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). The true interpretation of the law brings conviction, driving us to the Savior for mercy (Luke 18:9-14). It also brings about transformation as the Spirit works to sanctify new covenant believers (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

### **Point #2 – Rights and the Disciple**

1. Jesus teaches against the abuse of the law that the Pharisees propagated. The Pharisees exploited the law and taught the people to exercise their rights according to the law—to get their revenge, but do so in a limited way.
2. Jesus teaches that when you have been ushered into the kingdom of Heaven by repentance, you will think differently about your rights. Disciples are to forgo their rights at times.

### **Point #3 – Three Illustrations of Refusing to Resist an Evil Person and a Command**

1. **Do not resist being insulted** (v. 39). The slap envisioned here is a backhanded slap (Jesus says, “the right cheek”; it is assumed the hearer is right handed). The purpose was not to harm the body, rather the person’s honor. A person so dishonored had the right to monetary compensation. Jesus instructs his disciples to forgo this right. Do not resist being insulted (e.g. Acts 5:41-42).

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2. **Do not resist being defrauded** (v. 40). Moses commanded that if a cloak was given in pledge by a poor person, it must be given back at night for warmth. The Israelite had a “right” to keep their cloak by law. But Jesus says to give your cloak in addition to the tunic. The tunic may have been won lawfully at court, but the cloak signifies the giving up of rights.
  - a. “Jesus says that if someone attempts to take our tunic, which may be his prerogative, give him the robe, though it is never his prerogative. Again, we must recognize the hyperbole. Jesus is not commanding us to give away everything until we are left cold and naked. He is commanding us not to devote ourselves to defending our honor and avenging all affronts. He chooses the lawsuit to illustrate the point because it is so offensive to be taken to court.” —Daniel Doriani
3. **Do not resist forced humiliation** (v. 41). Under Roman occupation of Israel, a soldier by law could force an Israelite to go 1000 paces (translated into English as a mile) with the soldier’s equipment. This was deeply resented and humiliating for the Jewish people. Jesus says, don’t just walk what the law requires, lay down your rights and go 2000 paces.
4. **Give your money to those in need** (v. 42). Christ intends for his disciples to reflect the heart of God by living generously. Our generosity should be wise and strategic.

## Conclusion

1. “[The illustrations] portray an unselfish and uncalculating benevolence which thinks only of the other’s needs or desires, not of protecting one’s own resources or even one’s honor.” —R.T. France
2. Jesus has the right to ask this of us because he is our creator. Also, he embodied these in his own life. He is our great example of rights forgone for the good of others (Philippians 2).

## Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 5:38-42.
2. When you are confronted with the true interpretation of the law, what is your initial reaction? Does it drive you to try to earn God’s favor or to rest in God’s mercy? Consider Luke 18:9-14. Does Christ’s teaching provoke you to change? Consider Ezekiel 36:26-27.
3. What are some modern equivalents of a backhanded slap? How do you react when you are insulted?

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4. Are you quick to lay claim to your rights even when it leads to others being harmed? How would life at home change if you decided to lay aside your prerogative for the sake of others?
5. Have you considered what Christ laid aside to come and save us? Have you allowed his example to put your own prerogative into perspective?