

Sermon on the Mount – Eye for an Eye

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 5](#) • [Matthew 5:11](#) • [Matthew 5:12](#) • [Matthew 5:17](#) • [Matthew 5:20](#) • [Matthew 27:32](#) • [Matthew 5:38](#) • [Matthew 5:39](#) • [Matthew 5:40](#) • [Matthew 5:41](#) • [Matthew 5:42](#) • [Matthew 6](#) • [Exodus 21](#) • [Exodus 22:26](#) • [Exodus 22:27](#) • [Leviticus 19:18](#) • [Leviticus 24](#) • [Deuteronomy 19](#) • [Deuteronomy 32](#) • [1 Peter 3](#) • [Romans 12](#) • [Ecclesiastes 12:14](#)

Great. Well, as you all can see, I am not Pastor Matthew. He has asked me to come and cover for him today, and it's always an honor for me to do that. I'm so grateful for the blessing to be able to come up here and to share with you what the Lord has put on my heart. It was a blessing to worship with you all today and to hear the Torah portion. And before we get started, let's go ahead and pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for your love, for your Sabbath day that you have blessed us with this opportunity that it's not just a commandment, Lord, it is a gift to be able to come here, to be together, to learn from your word, to fellowship together, and to grow in your love and your character. And Lord, I just pray that you use me today to contribute to the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in all of us, to offer instruction from your word. Lord, I pray that you would use the words that you've given me to speak today, to bless your people, that we would walk out of here changed and empowered to live out your kingdom. In Yeshua's name, amen.

The Sermon on the Mount

All right. Well, as you all know, Pastor Matthew has been taking us through the Sermon on the Mount, and this, of course, is an important and powerful sermon from our Messiah, Yeshua. It is all about how we are to live as members of the kingdom of heaven, and that kingdom is being birthed. If you want to know what it means to live out the kingdom, this is the constitution. This is the rule that the Messiah gave us to live out his kingdom.

And so the past several weeks, we have been going through that constitution. And in particular, we have been going through a part of the Sermon on the Mount known as the antitheses. And so these are all of those teachings in [Matthew 5](#) that begin with that phrase, you have heard it

said. You have heard that it was said, do not murder, but I tell you, don't be angry. You have heard that it was said, do not swear falsely, but I tell you, don't swear at all, and so forth.

And so we've been going through each of these, and what's interesting about each of these lessons is that they are examples of how Yeshua, Jesus, fulfills the Torah and prophets. Last time that I spoke up here, we went through [Matthew 5](#), 17 through 20, and that is where Yeshua said that he did not come to abolish the law and prophets, but he came to fulfill them. And we learned what that means. Fulfill comes from the Greek *pleraou*, and in this context, it means to fulfill—to bring to full expression, to show it forth in its true meaning. So Yeshua came to fully teach and demonstrate how to keep the law properly. He did not come to abolish it. He came to show us how to keep the law properly.

Dr. Craig Keener, he's a New Testament scholar. He says that [Matthew 5](#), 17 through 20 is Yeshua's thesis statement. And so his statement that he came to fulfill the law is a summary of his argument, which is then unpacked throughout the sermon. He goes on to prove that statement, I came to fulfill the law throughout the rest of his sermons. And so if [Matthew 5](#), 17 through 20 is the thesis statement, then these antitheses that we've been going through, that is like the body of the essay, okay? These are all of the examples that he has given to prove his case that he came to fulfill the law. He is giving us these lessons for how the Torah is to be fulfilled, how we are to live out the scriptures today as members of the kingdom.

The Law of Retaliation

So we've already gone through four of these examples. We looked at murder, adultery, divorce, and taking oaths. And today we're going to be talking about an interesting one. It is the law of retaliation, or as it's known in Latin, the *lex talionis*, okay? How should we respond when someone wrongs us? How should we respond when someone wrongs us? And so Yeshua, he gives a very surprising answer to that question. And so let's go ahead and just jump right in here.

[Matthew 5](#), starting in verse 38, Yeshua says, And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. So what is going on here? Well, like the other antithetical sayings that we've been going through, Yeshua, he is setting up a contrast, right? He says, you have heard it said this, but I tell you this. And he is contrasting his teaching, turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and so forth. He is contrasting that with what his audience has heard about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Yeshua says, instead of that, resist the one who is evil. And then he

gives some illustrations on what that looks like. Turn the other cheek, give your cloak, give to the one who begs, and so forth.

Before we go through each of these illustrations, what exactly is Yeshua talking about when he says, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? You have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. What is that? Well, this is a quotation from the Torah. It appears in a few places, like in [Exodus 21](#), [Leviticus 24](#), and [Deuteronomy 19](#). And this is a phrase that refers to a legal principle in the Torah of compensation for loss or injury. And this is a very well-known principle in the ancient world. It's actually found in other ancient law codes as well, the same type of phrase, eye for an eye. And the basic idea is that if you injure someone's eye, you must compensate them for the value of that eye. Hence, an eye for an eye.

And by the way, the expression is not truly intended to be carried out literally. The law is not calling for physical mutilation. That wouldn't really make sense from a legal perspective because how would literally poking out someone's eye make up for the fact that you lost your eye? Instead, the law was applied by assigning a monetary or some other value to the loss or injury, which was then a monetary compensation or whatever it may be, that was awarded to the victim as compensation. And so right away, right in that very same context, we see that the expression eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is not truly intended to be carried out literally. It's a metaphor to express this idea of a just and fair compensation for loss.

Justice, Not Personal Vengeance

And I just wanted to clear that up because sometimes you'll hear people say, oh, the Torah is just barbaric. You poke out someone's eye if they injure yours. No, that's not what's going on here. It's actually a very good legal principle. Our modern judicial system is based upon this same principle. It's all about justice. It's all about a guilty person being held responsible for his actions and being held responsible for making things right with the person that he has harmed. And if someone is injured in a car accident because someone rear-ended them or whatever, that person could be awarded compensation. So it's the same idea.

Now, what's important to recognize about this law, and this will be relevant when we start talking about Yeshua's teaching on this law, is that it is not about getting vengeance. It's not about getting personal vengeance. It's not about taking matters into your own hands to hurt somebody because they hurt you. That's not the point of it, okay? This isn't like the mafia, right? Have you guys ever watched those old mob movies? I know I'm not the only one, right? Please, I hope I'm not the only one.

Well, I was watching this show recently, and in the show there was like this crime boss whose son was tragically killed by a rival gang. And the whole show was centered upon this mob boss wanting to get revenge on this rival gang. And he wanted to send a message to the city that you do not disrespect him, right? And so he finds the guy that killed his son, and he kills him, and also his entire family. And so, not exactly eye for an eye. And then it went beyond that, because then that rival gang retaliated, and it started this whole big war in the city, and it just spiraled out of control from there. And it was a pretty good show, don't judge me.

But what's interesting about the eye for an eye principle in the Torah is that it's actually designed to prevent that sort of thing, right? The purpose of the law is to prevent personal acts of vengeance, right? It does that in two ways. Number one, it restricts what you are able to demand in damages to the value of the actual loss that you suffered. And so, for example, if someone kills your sheep, you can't take their entire herd, their ox, their grain field, and their firstborn child as compensation. You can only seek the value equivalent to the lost sheep. And number two, the law must be applied within the courts. It must be applied within the judicial system. So you can't go personally steal someone's sheep because they stole yours. If you desire compensation, you must bring the matter to the judges and they decide the appropriate punishment or the appropriate restitution, okay?

So this is a very good principle. And again, it forms the foundation of our modern judicial system. Eye for an eye, it's all about justice. It's all about law and order. It's about preventing vigilante acts of vengeance and requiring guilty parties to make things right with their victims.

So that is an eye for an eye. Before we move on, there's one more point worth mentioning. And that is that the Torah does not mandate that a person must seek compensation for their loss. All it says is that if you choose to seek compensation, it must be through the courts, and you can only demand what is just and fair. However, you could choose not to do that. You could choose to absorb the loss, to let it go. And in fact, elsewhere in the Torah, God conveys this idea that recompense belongs to him and that ultimately he will be the one to repay. We see that in, for example, the Song of Moses in [Deuteronomy 32](#).

Even within the Torah itself, there is this notion that God is the ultimate judge. He is the ultimate provider of justice, of vindication, and that we can trust him to vindicate us. So with that said, let's get back to Yeshua's teaching on this topic.

Yeshua's Apparent Contradiction

So Yeshua says, "...you have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." So right away, someone is going to say that Yeshua is contradicting the Torah here. And it's logical. He quotes the passage from the Torah, and he says, But that's literally impossible. Why? Because several verses earlier, he explicitly prohibits us from thinking that he came to contradict the Torah. He said, I did not come to abolish the Torah or the prophets. I did not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

So if we interpret this passage to say that Yeshua is contradicting or undermining the Torah, then we are violating his commandment in [Matthew 5](#), 17, when he told us not to think that he came to do that. So what's going on here? If he's not contradicting the Torah, what is this contrast?

The Pharisees' Misinterpretation

So, like the other antitheses in this chapter, Yeshua is contrasting his teaching, not with the Torah itself, but with the way that it has been interpreted and misapplied by the scribes and Pharisees. That is the meaning of the expression used here, you have heard that it was said. He's talking about interpretation.

So Yeshua does not oppose the law of Moses. He opposes, as he says a few verses earlier in verse 20, the inferior righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. He says, if your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you're not a member of the kingdom. So if you want to be a member of the kingdom, your righteousness must be better than theirs. And then all of these antitheses, he's explaining how to exceed theirs.

And so he is explaining how to truly fulfill the Torah, saying the Pharisees are the ones who abolished the Torah. I'm here to show you how to live it out correctly. And so, that raises the question, how were the Pharisees misapplying this law of eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? Well, it's difficult to know for sure, but we can infer some things from the text.

Apparently, it was thought that you could take this principle of an eye for an eye out of its judicial context and use it as justification for pursuing personal acts of vengeance. And you can see that in the examples he gives. If someone slaps you, then the idea is that you have the legal right to regain your honor by slapping him back. You have the right by law to slap that person back if they slap you. But again, the actual point of this law of eye for an eye was to prevent that sort of thing by requiring that these issues be handled by Israel's judges.

The True Purpose of the Law

So using this law to pursue personal acts of vengeance not only distorts the purpose of the law, but it also explicitly violates the Torah. Because what does the Torah say in [Leviticus 19.18](#)? It says, "...you shall not take vengeance." So the law is being misused to justify personal acts of vengeance. And that is what Yeshua is correcting here. He is correcting the misapplication of the law.

I like the way Dr. Dale Allison puts it. He's a New Testament scholar. He says, quote, whereas [Matthew 5, 38 through 42](#) concerns personal acts of vengeance by one wronged, the Torah speaks to judges about how to administer the law. It is true that [Matthew 5, 40](#) refers to the court, but Jesus is not here delivering laws for the court to follow. He is rather speaking about interpersonal relations and declaring that it is illegitimate for his followers to apply the lex talionis to their private problems. So he is not overthrowing the principle of equivalent compensation on an institutional level.

So Yeshua, he is not abolishing the very foundation of all systems of justice in the courts. He is correcting a misapplication of this legal principle that was being misapplied outside of its intended context.

How to Respond to Wrongdoing

So, getting back to the text here. How, then, are we to respond when we are wronged, according to Yeshua? When we are wronged in our relationships, how are we to respond?

We aren't to seek personal vengeance. So how do we respond? Well, Yeshua says, do not resist the one who is evil. And then he gives examples of what he means by that.

Is Yeshua commanding us to just be pushovers here? Is he saying to let bullies walk all over you? When Yeshua says, do not resist, what does he mean there?

I would submit that he means do not respond in the same manner. Do not respond to their bullying, violence, or to their insults, or whatever they're doing to you. He's playing off the eye for an eye expression. If someone does something evil to you, do not do that same evil thing to them.

He is not saying that you can't or shouldn't oppose evil. He's actually saying quite the opposite. He is saying to oppose evil in such a way that you do not become evil yourself. To put it the way that the apostles Peter and Paul put it, they say, don't repay evil with evil. We see that in [1 Peter 3](#) and [Romans 12](#). Do not repay evil with evil, overcome evil with good. That is Yeshua's point. The way to respond to evil and injustice is not through becoming evil yourself. It is not through

resorting to personal acts of vengeance. It is to overcome evil with good and to trust that God is the ultimate judge and that he will bring about true justice.

Heavenly Rewards and Righteous Living

So before we get to these illustrations, there's one more thing I want to point out about the context here. And that is that all of these teachings on how to live out the Torah, the antitheses in chapter 5, they are nestled in between Yeshua's comments about heavenly rewards.

So in [Matthew 5](#), starting in verse 11, he says, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you "and utter all kinds of evil things against you falsely on my account. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." And then in chapter 6, right after the antitheses, he talks about how the hypocrites who do things only for the praise of men, that they already have their reward. They've received their earthly reward.

But you who are genuinely righteous, your reward is in heaven. You will be greatly rewarded by your Father. So each of these illustrations that Yeshua is going to give in this passage, it fits within that framework. Do you want to fight for your earthly reward? Or do you want your heavenly reward? Do you want to take matters into your own hands to get justice for yourself? Or do you want to trust the true judge? Do you want to do what is right and allow God, the true judge, the true provider of justice, to vindicate you? So keep that in mind as we go through these.

Turning the Other Cheek

[Matthew 5](#), 39. This first illustration, he says, if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

So what is Yeshua saying here? Is he prohibiting self-defense? A lot of people have taken it that way. Many people conclude we should all be extreme pacifists, but I would submit that's not really the point.

That's not really the point of what he's getting at here. Yeshua, when he's talking about people being slapped, he's not talking about a fight per se. In the ancient world, slapping someone was considered an insult to their honor. If you wanted to hurt someone, you would punch them. You wouldn't slap them across the face. It was a customary way to shame someone in the ancient world. And this was often done in public to humiliate or degrade someone's honor, to convey to them that you are inferior to me.

And so that is what Yeshua is describing when we understand the ancient context going on here. And how does he say to respond to this very serious insult to your honor? When someone degrades you, someone who is saying you are nothing, you are less than me, how does Yeshua say to respond?

He says, do not respond in the same manner. You are not to slap them back to try to regain some sense of honor for yourself. He doesn't say that you're to do that.

However, and this is interesting, he also says that you're not to just cower in shame. You're not to just drop on your knees and beg for forgiveness or cower in shame. You're right, I am inferior. No, that's not what he says either.

Instead, he says, reject the entire premise of their insult.

An Act of Defiance

How do you do that? By inviting them to slap you again. And this is amazing. I just love this so much. Because what does turning the other cheek accomplish in this historical context? It's an act of defiance. It demonstrates that your honor does not depend upon what some goofball does to try to shame you. By turning the other cheek, you're literally undermining the entire value system of the world. You are saying your attempt to shame me literally means nothing. It's nothing. And remember, this goes back to heavenly rewards, right? Rejoice when you are persecuted because your reward in heaven will be great. So you should be begging this guy to hit you again. Like, come on, come on, hit me again. Maybe a little harder this time, right? I want my heavenly rewards. Come on.

You're demonstrating that you care more about your status in the kingdom of heaven than about your status in this world. And turning the other cheek, it effectively undermines the person's insult because it shows that your honor does not depend upon the worldly systems of honor and shame. Your honor is determined by God. You are saying, I am not defined by your insults, I am defined by who God says that I am. And so this is actually a very empowering message, I think. It's the opposite of the way it's so often taken as—you're just supposed to be a pushover and let people walk on you because that's the loving thing to do or whatever. No, it's saying your value is not determined by that system, that earthly worldly system. And think about the people watching, because this would only happen in public, right? That's the entire point, to shame someone in public. Think about what this says to the people watching, that you're undermining the entire system. They're like, wow, I mean, this guy's kind of a nut, but he has a point. Like, what are we even doing? Like, this is crazy. And I just love this so much.

Undermining Evil

And so the next example continues this theme of undermining evil. And let's continue here. In verse 40, this next illustration, Yeshua says, and if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. All right, so what's going on here? In Yeshua's time, unless you were wealthy and could afford to have more, you typically only owned one set of two types of garments. You had a tunic, which was your inner garment, and then you had a cloak, which was your outer garment, right? That's usually all you had. And what's interesting is that there's actually a command in the Torah that relates to this illustration.

The Torah states that if a poor person gives you their cloak as a pledge—like they give you it as a pledge to say, "I'm going to pay you back, I'm going to pay back a debt. Here's my cloak to ensure that I'm going to do that."—The Torah actually requires you to return it to them at the end of the day, even if they haven't paid you back yet. It says you're supposed to return it to them, and that was because the poor person's cloak was what they used as a blanket at night. And God is concerned about the well-being of the poor. They need that cloak more than you do. And so in [Exodus 22](#), starting in verse 26, it says, "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak and pledge, "you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, "for that is his only covering, "and it is his cloak for his body. "And what else shall he sleep?" And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate."

So we're not to exploit the poor. We're supposed to have compassion on people, and the law is intended to ensure the well-being of people. So with that in mind, what is this scenario that Yeshua is setting up here? He describes a situation where someone sues to take your inner garment because the Torah prevents them from keeping your outer garment. So it's like a loophole. All right, I'll take your inner garment then. And this example is purposely ridiculous, all right? The point is that everyone would hear this and think it was totally absurd. Like, how could someone be so spiteful? Like, this guy is a jerk. That's like suing someone for their underwear. Come on. It's like, what a jerk.

Exposing Injustice

And so Yeshua's instructions here are so brilliant because he says, if someone is so ridiculous that they are going to sue you for your tunic, first of all, that is just spiteful, right? If someone's doing that, they just want to hurt you. They're just going after you to hurt you, right? But Yeshua says that if someone is willing to do that, give them your cloak too. Like here, just, all

right, you think you need this? You clearly need it more than me apparently. So here, take everything. Of course, you know what happens when you do that though. That means you would be standing there completely naked while this total jerk is there with all your stuff. And this is in a public courtroom, so everyone would be seeing this and be like, look at what's going on here. Like, look at this poor guy. He's totally naked. He has literally nothing. And this jerk just took everything from him. And so the whole thing exposes—no pun intended—the unjust system for what it is and makes a total mockery of it. It just undermines the system entirely.

The Power of Nonviolence

I'm reminded of the Civil Rights Movement, which was all about demanding justice and equal rights for black people. And there were these protests that were carried out peacefully. That was Martin Luther King's vision. It was very much in line with this principle in the Sermon on the Mount of nonviolence, right? And non-retaliation and being peaceful. And during the 1960s, there were a series of protest marches that took place in support of giving black citizens the right to vote. And during one of these marches, the protesters were brutally attacked by state troopers. And they were whipped and beaten, and it was evil. It was just totally unjust and crazy.

However, the violence of these authorities was captured by the media. The media was there and they broadcast these images to the whole world. And it led to widespread public outrage. People started becoming a lot more supportive of the cause. Maybe people that were indifferent before, seeing this, thought, "Oh my gosh, this is horrible what's happening." And so it shifted public opinion in a dramatic way in favor of the civil rights movement. And this was a huge deal because now suddenly politicians were facing a lot of pressure from the public to correct some of these injustices against black people. And eventually this led to lawmakers passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited racial discrimination in voting. And so this all happened because the protesters did not repay violence with violence. They did not respond in the same manner. They just kept boldly marching forward. And this is a good example of the principle here, because again, it's not about being a pushover. It's not about being like, "Oh, whatever. I'll just let you walk all over me." No, it's about undermining the system entirely.

Overcoming Evil with Good

We can also mention the pro-life movement as a more recent example of this sort of thing. I don't think I can even conjure up in my brain something more evil than abortion. I mean, think about it. You are murdering an innocent little baby. That's what it is. It is totally unjust and evil

that this is allowed, that people are allowed to do this. So how do we fight against this injustice? How do we fight against it? Well, we don't repay evil with evil. We don't resort to violence, but we overcome evil with good. And I'm proud of the efforts of organizations and groups that do the hard work of ministering to pregnant mothers and providing for their needs and meeting them in a situation that is very difficult for them. Also educating people, exposing to the public the evils of abortion.

I was listening to a political commentator one time, someone that I follow. And he's really known for debating. He's really known for being very persuasive in rhetoric and making convincing logical arguments. And someone asked him, what is the best argument against abortion? And I was getting really excited because I'm like, all right, I'm ready for like the premise one, premise two, conclusion kind of thing, like pure logic, let's go, let's hear it. And he said, the best argument against abortion is to show them a picture of an aborted baby. And that was powerful. It is so powerful. Why? Because it shows people the reality for what it is. It shows people the injustice. It puts it in front of their faces so they can't ignore it. And these efforts are saving lives. It's not just about making abortion illegal because we can't depend on the worldly systems of justice.

We just cannot depend on governments to enact justice. We can try, and we should fight in that arena, don't get me wrong. We should try to get legislation passed to protect life and all of that, but we can't depend on that. We have to undermine the system entirely. We cannot just focus on making it illegal, but also unthinkable—demonstrating why it's wrong, demonstrating the injustice of it, and overcoming evil with good. Loving people where they are, and even women that have gone through that sort of thing and they're dealing with the grief of the horrible choice that they made. Loving them, saying there's forgiveness, and you can be a great advocate for the cause. God can redeem you in this situation and use you in a mighty way, and people need to hear that. It's undermining the injustice.

So, this illustration of giving your cloak is about fighting against injustice without using the same tactics of the world.

It is about trusting in God's ability to bring justice and vindication rather than fighting within the worldly system to get vengeance. And we're going to continue to see that.

Go the Second Mile

Let's continue here in [Matthew 5](#), starting in verse 41. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Okay,

what's this about? What is Yeshua referring to? Well, in this time, he's actually referring to something, I would submit to you, very specific, that his audience was well aware of. They would have immediately understood what he was talking about.

Because in this time, Roman soldiers had the legal right to compel citizens to carry their equipment for a mile. They were required by law, by Roman law, that they're not allowed to make them carry their equipment for more than one mile, but they could tell someone that you have to carry my equipment. And so they can literally just force someone on the side of the road to drop whatever they're doing and carry their equipment for a mile. It's crazy. We actually see this in the Gospels, by the way. The Romans compelled a man named Simon to carry Yeshua's cross. We see that in [Matthew 27](#), where they say, hey, you, come here, come pick this up, and come carry this.

And now, understandably, the Jewish people at this time widely criticized this, and they considered this practice utterly degrading, and you can understand why, because it obviously was. I mean, imagine spending time with your family, and then some random Roman soldier just walks up and commands you to carry his stuff. Like, hey, hey you, drop what you're doing, come, pick this up, carry it for a mile, walk with me for a mile. So, man, what an utterly depressing reminder, right? In that context, that you are under Rome's thumb, that you are powerless, you are nothing. Like, hey, you, you're nothing. Here, come here.

You can imagine some of the ways that you could try to get vengeance in that situation, right? Like, you're carrying the guy's stuff, right? And maybe you find a little knife in his bag or something, and you wait until he's not paying attention, and you stab him and run away, right? And there are probably many Jews who had that thought. They're waiting for their opportunity to fight back.

We know that there was one sect of Jews, the Zealots, that was their M.O., right? They're like, we need to fight against Roman oppression. We need to use violence to restore some sense of honor and dignity for ourselves. The problem is that doesn't solve anything. In fact, it creates more problems.

So once again, instead of responding in the same manner, Yeshua's instructions are once again just brilliant here. He totally undermines the system. He says, instead of stopping at the one mile required by Roman law, go a second mile. Why is this incredible? How does this undermine the system?

Because going two miles is not something that oppressed citizens do for Roman soldiers. By definition, if you're going two miles, it's voluntary, right? So by definition, you aren't acting like

an oppressed citizen at that point. Going two miles is something that you would only do for someone you care about, someone who is an equal.

So Yeshua transforms the situation from a legal obligation for oppressed citizens. He transforms that to a voluntary and loving action that you do for an equal. You are not being a pushover and you are not taking vengeance. You're not perpetuating the injustice. You are subverting the entire system and you're earning heavenly rewards in the process, by the way.

So once again, Yeshua's message is the same. You are not defined by who the Roman soldier says you are. You are defined by who God says you are.

Humanizing the Enemy

And here's the even more brilliant part about this. Because think about the witness that this provides to the soldier. You're humanizing him too. Because imagine what he thinks about how these oppressed citizens think of him. He probably feels like, oh, they all hate me, understandably. So you're humanizing him too. You're loving him.

That goes into the next command to love your neighbor as yourself and love your enemy, to love even your enemy, and it humanizes the Roman soldier. It totally changes the dynamic of the relationship. It's no longer this hierarchy of oppressor and oppressed. I'm going to respond, I'm going to treat you as an equal. Even in this unjust system, I'm going to treat you as an equal. I'm going to love you. I'm going to humanize you because you're made in the image of God just like I am. We're all sinners. We all need grace. Gospel 101.

And it just changes everything. It did change everything.

Give to Those Who Ask

The last example is a little bit more straightforward. [Matthew 5, 42](#), it says, give to the one who begs from you and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. And so... This is straightforward. Yeshua expects his followers to be generous and to value people more than wealth or possessions in this world. Goes back to heavenly rewards, right?

In the next chapter, Yeshua talks about not being anxious about what you will eat, drink, or wear. Don't worry about those things. God's got you. He is the provider. He is the judge. You just focus on seeking the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you. Your reward is in heaven. And that's basically the message of this section of the Sermon on the Mount.

God Will Bring Justice

How do we respond when people mistreat us? We don't respond in the same manner. We don't repay evil with evil. We don't respond by asking, how can I get even in this situation? Or how can I regain my sense of honor in my own way? How can I get justice through vengeance? Because once again, you can't rely on this world to give you justice. And if you use violence, you're just perpetuating the problem.

Yeshua offers a complete way out. He says, you're a member of the kingdom of heaven. When you are mistreated, you get to shine God's light so that people see your good works and give glory to him. And you are earning heavenly rewards in the process. Your value is determined by the king of the universe who gave his only son to die for you. That speaks to your value.

God will bring justice. It's what it says at the end of Ecclesiastes, right? After the preacher in Ecclesiastes gives this long speech about how everything is vanity and there's so much injustice in the world. Good people suffer, wicked people prosper. It doesn't make any sense. And at the end of the book, the author comes in and he says, well, actually, that's not the whole story. That is only how things operate under the sun in this fallen, broken world.

But there is a kingdom coming and that kingdom has come in Yeshua. It is breaking forth into our world through his work. God is going to bring every deed into judgment, the author of Ecclesiastes says. There will be justice. So what do we do in the meantime? We fear God and keep his commandments. And by the way, that isn't only true for the age to come. We're not just going to receive our reward in the age to come. Of course, that is when everything will be made right. But walking out this kingdom ethic can change the world even today.

The Kingdom Ethic Changes the World

How do I know? Because it already has. Yeshua lived out this kingdom ethic fully. He did not retaliate when he was mistreated. He gave his life even for his enemies. And what happened? Well, for one, he was given honor in heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

But also, the world as we know it has changed. It has never been the same since. Christianity has done a lot to abolish the world's injustices. The slave trade in Europe, it was abolished in large part due to evangelical Christians walking out this kingdom ethic, where we oppose injustice and evil not through violence, but by overcoming evil with good.

Worship team, you can come back up here.

We still live in a broken world full of sin and injustice. We still live under the sun. It's the way it is. We'll be dealing with sin and death until the Messiah returns. But it's hard to deny that the world is in a much better place now because of believers walking out the kingdom.

Live Like a Member of the Kingdom

And the question for us is this. Do we want to contribute to the kingdom coming to earth? That's what we pray every week, right? Your kingdom come, your will be done. Do we want to contribute to that or do we want to perpetuate the injustices by adopting the world's tactics for our own personal vengeance and validation?

I would encourage you to ask God to show you where you might be falling short. I know it's hard. We all want validation, especially when someone insults us or mistreats us. But I would encourage you to be patient, to know that God is the judge, to ask him where you might be more concerned with human approval than you are concerned with his approval and your status in the kingdom.

How are you bringing him glory in the midst of oppression, in the midst of injustice? How are you turning enemies into friends by loving them, humanizing them, treating them like an equal? You are not defined by how you've been mistreated. You are a member of the Messiah's kingdom, so live like it.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you that you are just, that you are the righteous judge, that you will return. You will set all things right, Lord. And Father, I thank you that you are using us to set some of these things right even now. Your kingdom has been unleashed, Lord, into this earth through your Son. And Father, we are so grateful that you have called us to be part of it. That you've provided a way out, Lord, of the worldly systems of injustice.

You've provided a way out that we can undermine those systems for the sake of your kingdom.

Bless Everyone Here

Lord, I ask that you bless everyone here, that you be with them as they go about their week. Father, I ask that you would Write your words on their hearts that they would be impacted, that they wouldn't forget this message, Lord, but that they would be on their minds and on their hearts as they interact with people, that the world may see their good works, our good works,

Lord, and give glory to you, that your kingdom may come and your will be done. In Yeshua's name, amen.

Sing Shema With Me

Sing Shema with me. Hear, O Israel. The Lord, our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of our glorious King and His kingdom for all eternity. And may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another and for all people in order to strengthen your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all of His kinesi. And may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. In the name of our Sar Shalom, our Prince of Peace, Yeshua HaMashiach. Amen and Amen. Shabbat Shalom, family.

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