

Matthew 5:38-42

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Date: 15 April 2018

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] If you'll turn to Matthew chapter 5 and verses 38 to 42.!

It's written by a man called Samuel Stone. Samuel Stone was a vicar in East London. He was walking along in Hackney one Sunday morning.

And he saw a woman being attacked by four men. Samuel Stone was quite handy with his fists. He knocked the first one out clean cold. He broke the jaw of the second one.

And the other two ran off. Edward Irving was a minister. In the 19th century in Scotland. He heard that a man called Thomas Chalmers. Was going to preach in Edinburgh.

And so he took six of his congregation. They walked 22 miles to Edinburgh. To hear Thomas Chalmers. When they got there the steward wouldn't allow them to sit.

[1 : 18] Edward Irving repeatedly asked the steward. Can we sit down? Can we sit down? Steward refused. In the end Edward Irving said. Let me sit down.

Or I'll break your arm in pieces. Robert Pope was a minister in the 1700s. In the north of Scotland. He's a man of great and bodily strength.

He carried with him a kind of heavy cudgel. A kind of club with him. And he preached. Didn't preach very well. In a service in the north of Scotland. And he sat down on a stone outside the church manse.

Church manse was opposite a pub. And out of the pub came four men. And said Pope you'll drink whiskey with us tonight. And Robert Pope said no. They went back into the pub.

They came back with 40 people. Not 40 people. They came back with 20 men. A bottle of whiskey. And a tumbler. They poured a healthy dose of whiskey out before Robert Pope.

[2 : 15] And said you'll drink with us tonight. He said no. So the man threw the bottle of whiskey at him. Smashed the glass. Robert Pope got up.

With his cudgel. Not one of them flat. Two minutes later. Five of them lie on the ground. And the other 14. Pick up their friends. Who lay prostrate on the floor.

And carry them home. Were they right. To do that. Was Samuel Stone right? Was Edward Irving right? Right. Was Robert Pope right?

Does Jesus forbid that? Shouldn't they just have turned the other cheek? Well I would argue no. Is Jesus teaching us to be wimps?

In this passage. Is Jesus teaching pacifism? As it's called. What is Jesus exactly getting at?

[3 : 13] That's why we need to ask some questions. Of the text. The first question. Is from verses 38 to 42. How is Jesus opposing us? How is Jesus opposing us?

You'll see. There's that familiar phrase. At the end of. Start of verse 38. You've heard it said. That's the traditional teaching. You've heard it said. Jesus says.

An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. Or a tooth for a tooth. Depending on how you say it. But I say to you. Don't resist one who is evil. What's Jesus getting at here? What is Jesus opposing?

Well we need to go back. Into the situation. And we need to see. When it says. An eye for an eye. Or a tooth for a tooth. That it's an illusion. He's pointing us back. To the Old Testament. To Exodus 21.

22 to 25. Or Leviticus 24. Or Deuteronomy 19. Where this is quoted. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth.

[4 : 12] It's a formula. In the Old Testament. And the idea. Behind this. Command. Was that. If a life was. Unjustly taken.

Then part of the formula. Was like for like. Someone murdered. Or something like that. Then their life. Should be forfeit. For the life that they took. Life for life.

And in the Old Testament. There was. Legislation for capital punishment. But if there was. Some other injury. It was. Like an eye.

Or a tooth. That was taken out. When it says. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. Wound for wound. The idea behind it. Is that there should be. Just an equitable. And fair punishment.

That fits the crime. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. That is. An eye for an eye. And no more than an eye. A tooth for a tooth.

[5 : 09] And no more than a tooth. So. This formula. For justice. It's a formula. For exact justice. That is.

The death penalty. Ought to be proportionate. And proper. And just. For the crime. Or misdemeanor. Committed. It's a formula. For exact justice. And it's a formula. For public justice. If you look at Exodus 21. Then it's a formula. That was meant for justice. Judges. To help judges. And magistrates. They were the ones. To decide. What was proper.

And a fair. Kind of penalty. It's not something. For the private individual. To do. A private individual. Who's been a victim of crime. Did not. Decide. What kind of penalty.

Was fit. It was for judges. And the magistrates. It was a principle. They were to operate by. When they. Made decisions. And in fact.

[6 : 07] It's a principle. That restrained. Of restraining justice. That is. When something was committed. A crime. Or a misdemeanor. Or whatever. Then it would give.

That appropriate. Kind of penalty. That much. And no more. An eye for an eye. And no more than an eye. Or you could put it this way. Only an eye for an eye.

Or only a tooth for a tooth. That it was. That is. It was meant to. Put a break. On vengeance. On revenge. On unrestrained.

Blood fields. That sort of thing. We know what happens. Don't we. When it's left up. To an individual. He might. She might.

In anger. Take more. Than is appropriate. And then in return. Receives more. Back more. And so on. And so you have.

[7 : 01] A blood food. On your hand. And this was meant. To be a principle. Of restraining justice. An eye for an eye. And only an eye. A tooth.

For a tooth. And only a tooth. But over the passage of time. In tradition. And in the way. That it was used. People begin to read. This differently. And they read. The words.

An eye for an eye. And a tooth for a tooth. And they said. If someone. Offends me. If someone. Assaults me. I must have. An eye for an eye. I must have. A tooth for a tooth.

I have a right. To an eye. And so. This principle. That was meant. To restrain. Vengeance. Became. A formula. An excuse.

For vengeance. It's not. The Old Testament. Formula. That Jesus. Is countering. It's the abuse. Of that formula. It's how it was being mistreated. And abused.

[7 : 58] And so. What Jesus. Is countering. When he says. When I say to you. You have heard. That it was said. But I say to you. Verse 39. Do not resist.

The one who is evil. He is saying. Get rid of the passion. For vengeance. Get rid of the spirit. Of revenge. Get rid of the lust. For retaliation.

Get rid of the drive. To have your pound of flesh. I'll make them pay. He's not saying. You should be a doormat. But he is saying. That my disciples.

My followers. Should have control. Of themselves. He's not saying. You should be a wimp. But he is saying. That you should be a peacemaker. Verse 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 the other. Also. Get rid of this. Passion. For vengeance. Get rid of this.

[8 : 53] Personal. Retaliation. That is what Jesus. Is opposing. Now the second question. We need to ask. Is then. What is Jesus teaching? What is he teaching? In detail.

Verses 39. To 42. And at this point. We have to make a comment. I think it's really important. That we understand. The scope. Of what Jesus.

Is teaching here. So again. And again. I try to remind you. Remind you. What is the audience. That Jesus is talking to. Who is Jesus. Speaking to.

Jesus is speaking. To his disciples. So please notice that. He is not talking about. To governments. He is not talking.

To political. Entities. So. Sometimes. Verse 39. The words. Do not resist. The one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you.

[9 : 48] On the right cheek. Turn to the other. Also. That is. That is used. To kind of leave up. All sorts of points. By people. This isn't actually. Speaking about. Capital punishment.

Or wars. But sometimes. The idea is. That people teach. A kind of pacifism. That governments. Ought to not. Arm themselves. In defence. But that is. What Jesus is saying here. Jesus. Is not. Legislating. Government policy. He is not talking about. Anything in terms. Of capital punishment. He is not talking to. Nations. And governments. He is talking to his. Disciples. Can you just see that. In chapter 5. Verses 1 and 2. He is talking. Primarily. To his disciples. Who have entered. The kingdom of God. And to those. He charges. And he says. You must show. A righteousness. You must show. That you follow. The Lord Jesus. In every part of your life. So that your. Righteousness. Surpasses. Those of the theologians. [10 : 44] And the priests. And the pronouns. In the second part. Of verse 39. To 42. Are second person singular. That is. They are addressed. To individual.

Disciples. To followers. Of the Lord Jesus. I am not saying. That the Bible. Doesn't speak to national matters. Okay. It does. But it is an abuse. Of this text. To try and take it. And apply it. To the government. To apply it. To something. That Jesus simply. Didn't have in view. Let me say.

This turning the other cheek business. Doesn't mean. That you don't bring resistance. And stand up. If someone is being threatened. He's talking to you. As you're concerned. As an individual. He's not saying. That you hold back. When somebody else. Is receiving injustice. Now the principle. In verse 39. Let's look at the examples. Don't resist. One who is evil.

[11 : 39] That's the principle. And he gives you. Four examples. Of the situation. Let's look at them. First of all. He talks about. Well what about the one. Who's insulted. If anyone.

Slaps you. On the right cheek. Turn to him. The other. Also. Now I think. We need to understand this. That. That not even.

Jesus. Not even. Jesus. Assuming. He was consistent. With his own teaching. And I want to say. He was. Not even. Jesus. Followed this. Literally. Okay.

Or. Woodenly. How do we know that? Well in John 18. Verses 22 to 23. Jesus is being. Tried. By the high priest. Before his trial. Before Pilate. And they ask him.

About his teaching. And he says. I've always talked publicly. And in the open. If you want to know. About teaching. My teaching. Why don't you ask. The people who are there. And John tells us. That one of the disciples.

[12 : 35] One of the officials. Struck Jesus in the face. Is that any way. To answer the high priest. He demanded. What did Jesus do? Did Jesus.

Turn the other cheek. At him. And say. Well hit me again. No. Jesus didn't. Did he? Jesus said. If I've done something wrong. Testify me. Testify to me. What I've done wrong.

But if I spoke the truth. Why do you strike me? What about the apostle Paul? He was in front of the Sanhedrin. The main Jewish council. And in Acts 23.

The apostle Paul makes an opening statement. About the high priest. And the man who is.

Conducting the trial. Tells the attendant. To strike Paul on the mouth. What did Paul do.

When he did that? Did Paul turn the other cheek. And say. Hit me again. Well not exactly. He says this. God is going to strike you. You whitewashed wall.

[13 : 32] Are you going to sit. And judge me. According to the law. And yet. Contrary to the law. You order me to be struck. Jesus and Paul. Were not contrary.

To this position. Here in Matthew chapter 5. Here's a situation. In which Matthew and Jesus. Paul and Jesus. They are being treated.

Illegally. They are being assaulted. In a legal assembly. And they call the person on it. They say. That's out of order. That's out of line. Don't do that. And so.

What does Jesus mean. Here in Matthew chapter 5. And what's helpful. For you and I. Is that we understand. That this is a situation. Of insult. Not assault.

Can you get that? It's a situation. Of insult. And not assault. Right. Notice.

[14 : 26] Matthew says. Whoever strikes you. On the right cheek. John. John's over. Come up here. All right. Come up here. All right.

So. Most people are right handed. So stand there. This is why you have heard this. Okay. And so. If John's right cheek. Is there. Isn't it? If I was going to hit John.

Where would I hit John? I would hit John. Left cheek. Okay. That's how I do it. But Jesus says. If someone strikes you. On the right cheek. You wouldn't normally go. That direction. Those of you. Who follow boxing. So. When would you hit John. On the right cheek. You would hit John. Hit John. On the right cheek. In a situation. Of insult. Like that. All right. That's what you do.

It's a situation. Of insult. It's the back of his hand. I don't think Jesus. Was left handed. All right. That might ruin this. But. The point is. It's a situation.

[15:21] Of insult. You take the back of your hand. In the middle of the Middle East. Some of you. From an Iranian culture. Might be able to talk about that. It's a situation. Of insult. That's a gesture.

That's used in the day. And I think it's still used in the day. To show extreme contempt. To show that someone. Utterly despised you. They thought you were zero. Essentially. And notice.

It's a gesture. It's not an attack. It's an expression of contempt. It's not an. It's not an assault. It's not a fight situation. It wasn't as.

As if Jesus says. Let. When the guy strikes you. On the right cheek. And then he proceeds. With a left to the jaw. And then as you bend down. There's a right to the stomach again.

And you kneel him in the face. It's. It's not that. It's not an attack. It's not assault. He's not saying. When somebody attacks you. You can't defend yourself. Do defend yourself.

[16:18] Train yourself for that. Pacifism. It's not Christian. So it's not an attack. It's not a danger to your life. It's a danger to your pride.

Isn't it? It's a matter of insult. He's not saying. If you're. Attacked. Or your loved one is attacked. You can't go to their defence.

That's ridiculous. That's not in the scope of the passage. It's an insult. And what is essentially. Being done here. Is your reputation. Is taking a hammering. Somebody is saying.

Publicly. I really can't stand you. I despise you. And Jesus is saying. If they want to despise you. If they look on you with contempt. Then allow them to do it. Let them carry out.

The gesture on the other cheek. If they want. Don't get hung up. Because people don't esteem you. Because they don't cherish you. And if they despise you.

[17:15] They despise you. Don't be enslaved. To someone else's opinion of you. When Jesus gives the example. Of injustice. He says in verse 40.

He says to the one who wants. To take your coat. He wants to take your shirt. Let him take your coat as well. It's a bit of a switch.

In the Old Testament. You give. In Exodus 22. You give your outer garment. As a kind of collateral on a loan. The security on a loan. And the fellow. Who loans you money.

He could take your outer garments. To make sure. That you were going to pay it back. But there was one stipulation. The one stipulation was. That the guy. Always had to get it back to you.

Before sundown. Because your outer garment. Your cloak. Your coat. It functioned as your sleeping bag as well. With your blanket. And you needed it to keep warm. And the Lord said.

[18:11] When you take the outer garment. As collateral. Get it back to them overnight. So they can sleep. You don't keep it all the time. But Jesus says. When someone. Takes you to court. They want to take your shirt away. Let them have your outer cloak as well.

In principle. He's saying. Is they don't always be insisting. On your rights. My rights. And so on. Now if someone does that.

Let them go ahead. And take it. Don't always be. He can say. Don't be a prisoner. To your rights. And then Jesus gives. An example of coercion. He says. And somebody forces you.

Or compels you. To go one mile with them. Go with them two. Do you. You remember. What the situation is. They're an occupied people. The Romans. Are in control. Of Palestine.

And the Roman soldier. Has a right. To come up to you. And tap you on the shoulder. With the flat of your spear. And say. Carry my bags. Carry my luggage. And you were press ganged. Into service.

[19:10] And when somebody did that. It wouldn't make you feel. Would it. All lovely. Dovey to the Romans. The same verse. In Matthew 27. Where Simon of Cyrene. Is press ganged.

To carry Jesus cross. The same word. Compelled. And so Jesus says. If you're a Roman soldier. I come up to you. And presses you into service. And forces you to carry.

His heavy baggage. For a while. For a mile. Don't be imprisoned. With resentment. For the irksome duty. Show him something. Shock him. Carry it two miles. And he'll think.

That is remarkable. He's never had anyone. Do that before. He can force them. To carry it so far. But you carry it a mile further.

Without even being asked. And that will really surprise him. He'll never get over that. Go with him too. Don't be resentful. Over the situation. For Jesus says in verse 42. Give to the one who begs.

[20 : 06] From you. And do not refuse. The one who would borrow from you. And I think we read that. And we think. How stupid can Jesus be? How stupid can Jesus be? We people don't we.

I was in Ealing yesterday. That has been an increase in beggars. In Ealing Broadway. I think I passed three or four. With signs. Asking for money. Is that what we're to do?

Are we to give money? And so on. Are we to give money? Even if we. We know those people have been trafficked. And they'll give it to gangs. Are we to give it. Even though we know.

That it'll be spent on drugs. Or on alcohol. I don't know about you. But I turned down all four people yesterday. I've been around a while. I know what they'll do with their money.

I'll offer them to. Maybe buy them breakfast. Get them a sandwich. That's okay. But I'm not going to give them money. Because we know. Don't we? We're not naive. We know what it'll be spent on. Is that going against Jesus' command here?

[21 : 05] I don't think it is. Jesus isn't saying. You can't use discernment. Jesus' teaching. Is never ridiculous. He doesn't speak nonsense.

So what is the burden. He's laying on us here. Well again. Remember Deuteronomy 17.

Deuteronomy 15. Verse 7 and 8. Jesus is saying. If anyone is poor. Among you.

If anyone is poor. Among the people of God. One of their brethren. In any of the towns. Don't harden your heart. Against them. Don't shut your hand. Against your poor brother. But you hold your hand.

Open to him. And you lend him. What is sufficient for his need. Or you give to him. What is sufficient for his need. What is Jesus getting at here? He is saying. Don't hog your resources.

Don't say. I need so much for my security. And harden yourself. Against someone in need.

Especially when you know.

[22 : 07] It's one of your brothers. Or sisters in Christ. Don't turn away from them. Be willing to lend it to them. Don't say to them. Yeah. You can have it. At 15%. Lend it to them.

Jesus is saying. Basically. Isn't he? Be generous. Be open handed. Use what you have. For the good of others. Jesus is not wanting you.

To be stupid. But he wants you. To be generous. It's the same principle. The apostle Paul outlines. In Ephesians. So come with me. To Ephesians 4.

It's a really really helpful verse. Ephesians chapter 4. And verse 28. It's on page 978. In the Black Church Bibles. And in Ephesians 4. 28.

Jesus says. Let the thief. Let the person who steals. Steal no longer. But rather let him labour.

[23 : 02] Let him work hard. Doing honest work. With his own hands. That he may share. That he may have something to share. With anyone in need.

So do you see. Let there be honesty. Let there be honesty. And let there be industry. He doesn't steal anymore. He is honest.

But he's not just honest. He is industrious. He works with his own hands. He does what is good.

And it's not just honesty. He doesn't steal anymore.

It's not just industry. He works hard with his hands. But Paul says. Let him that stole. Steal no more. But rather let him work with his hands. Doing that which is good. In order that he might.

Give to him who is in need. In other words. Not just honesty. And industry. But generosity. So why do you work? Why are you in employment? Why are you in a job? In order to make a living.

[23 : 59] Well yes but no. You work in order to make a living. Yes. But you also work in order to give to those who are in need. You work not just to support yourself.

And that's what Jesus is essentially underscoring. He's saying. Don't be tight. Give to the one who asks you. The one who wants to borrow from you.

They may ask to borrow from you. Don't turn away. Don't shut them off. Well that's some of Jesus teaching us. And now we have come to the third question.

How is Jesus opposing us? What is Jesus teaching us? And thirdly and briefly. Where is Jesus calling us? Where is Jesus calling us? What I think is I've studied this week.

Where is Jesus calling you and I as followers of his? I think Jesus is calling us for suffering. Do you remember at the start of the Sermon on the Mount?

[25 : 01] In the last Beatitudes. Jesus says. Blessed are those who are persecuted. On account of righteousness and so on. And the first three examples.

That Jesus gives here. Striking on the cheek. And the cloak. And being pressed into service for a mile. All have to do with someone acting upon us. And I think that what he's.

Trying to prepare his disciples for. Is something like this. He's saying. You are going to suffer for my sake. When you go out to serve. And you will have people that abuse you.

And hold you in contempt. And you are going to have people. That will not give you your rights. And so on. And he's trying to prepare them for that. And so he's saying.

Get ready. He's saying in words. I guess the Apostle Paul could say. Philippians 1 verse 29. He says this. For it has been granted to you.

[25 : 58] That for the sake of Christ. You should not only believe in him. That's great privilege. You get to believe in the Lord Jesus. But also to suffer for his sake.

And so I think Jesus is calling us to suffering. I think Jesus is also calling us to freedom. Freedom. When you look at four examples. That Jesus gives in 39 to 42.

And you see. What they deal with. If that's someone. Giving you an insult. Saying.

You are not worth anything. It has to do with your reputation. Doesn't it? And it has to do with what other people. That smack on the side of the face.

It's to do with. Your public reputation. And is Jesus not saying. Just turn the other cheek. If people want to insult you. Isn't he saying to you.

[26 : 59] And I don't be a slave. To your reputation. If other people. Don't think of you properly. If they don't esteem you.

The way that you think. You ought to be esteemed. Or the way you'd like to be esteemed. Or if people slight you. And people misrepresent you.

And they don't think that you matter. Don't be a slave to your reputation. Don't be a slave. To what other people think of you. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

In verse 3 and 4. But for me it is a very small thing. It's a very small thing. That I should be judged by you. Or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. It is the Lord who judges me.

It's not that it's not nice. And it's not helpful. And that it's not up building. To have other people think well of us. And encourage us. But you and I. We know don't we. When we are enslaved.

[28 : 08] To people thinking well of us. When that drives us. We are going to be shattered. We are absolutely devastated.

When other people don't think well of us. So many of us are like that. Aren't we? And Jesus says. Don't be a slave to your reputation. Don't be a slave to your rights.

In that second situation. Somebody. They want to take your shirt. And he says. Let them have your coat as well. And the principle is. Don't be a slave. To your rights.

He can't do that to me. You see. That is where it all comes down to. Isn't it? And where we have the problem with it. It centres on me. Don't be a slave.

To your rights. It's not fair. Don't be a slave to resentment. That would come wouldn't it.

[29 : 07] Really easily. If you've got a Roman soldier. Pressing you into service. And you can't do anything about it. Because you are part of a captive people. There's nothing like resentment. I would have thought. That can simmer at a time like that.

Go within two miles. A mile for nothing. It's so easy isn't it. For resentment. Against someone. To come into our hearts. And then the fourth hour is. Is don't be a slave to resources.

Don't say. I need to make sure. I've got enough money. I need to hoard up a little bit more. I need to save up a little bit more. And then I can give away. To this idiot brother or sister. Or to this situation. Don't be a slave. To your repetition. To your rights. To resentment. To resources. Don't have overwhelming anxiety.

About financial and earthly resources. That you can't be generous. Jesus is calling us to freedom. And the whole thing is basically.

[30 : 12] When we become too important in our own eyes. That's what Jesus is really getting at. My reputation. My rights. My resentment. My resources. You see.

The problem with this text. Is not that I don't understand it. And it's not so much. That you don't understand it. But the reason.

We don't like this text. Is because it cuts. At our self. Centredness. He can't do that to me. I've got my rights.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not pushing injustice here at all. But I'm getting you and I. To try and see that sometimes. Our selfishness. And sometimes. The principle. On which we operate. Is that. I am the most important person. In the universe. And when you operate like that. You find you're in bondage. I'm reading.

[31 : 14] The gospel according to peanuts. Hence a lot of Charlie Brown illustrations. It's a funny little book. Charlie Brown says to Lucy. He says. Lucy you are so self-centered.

All you talk about is me. Me. Me. Me. Me. Me. All you care about is yourself. Lucy says. I. That's great.

I. Jesus calls you to freedom. Freedom from reputation. And rights. And resentment. And resources. Does Jesus want you to be a wimp for Jesus? No.

If you're a disciple. He wants you to be a slave of Jesus. And when you are a slave of Jesus. You will be free from every other bondage. How? How do we do that?

This week. When we come to the Lord's tale. Because we see. Don't we. That the Lord Jesus. Was not a slave to his reputation. The king of the angels.

[32 : 10] Became less than the angels. He who was the Lord of all creation. Entered into creation. He made himself nothing. Taking the very nature of a servant.

He was not a slave to his reputation. He was not a slave to his resentment. That when they nail his feet. And his hands onto the cross.

He prays father forgive them. For they know not what they do. He didn't stand to his rights. The son of man. And he did not. Come to be served.

But to serve. And to give his life as a ransom. For many. And he. Did not. Was not.

A slave to his resources. That he who was rich. Beyond all splendor. All for love's sake. Became poor. He who was rich. Became poor. So that you might become rich.

[33 : 09] In Christ. And so you think. I can't do this this morning. Join the club. But we look for Christ. Don't we. We look in faith.

To him. Who is. More than able. To strengthen us. By his spirit. And the one who is able. To sustain us. And he is our only hope.

In life. And in death. To sustain us.