



- The Pharisees and law-makers in Jesus' day were experts in adding layers of laws, demands for holiness and for distinction for the Jewish people.
- Jesus seeks to clarify and apply the OT Laws concerning justice: matters of retaliation, revenge, and restitution for one's injury against another. (Ex.21:24; Lev.24:20; Deut.19:21)

THE '*LEX TALIONIS*'...a punishment that fits the crime.

- The problem that prompted God's law is that, when it comes to "justice", everyone wants to do what is right in their own eyes. We are naturally "*red in tooth and claw*."
- God gave us His Law as a check upon our sinful nature, insisting on the principle of equality and equity. God's law was intended to control excesses in the pursuit of justice.
- God's Law was never about *eye-gouging* and *tooth-extricating* revenge; not literally about "*an eye for an eye*"—but a monetary or compensatory exchange equal in scope to the damage or injury.
- Laws concerning personal injuries were given to the judges, and not to be taken up personally. God was interested in restricting excesses, valuing life and encouraging mercy!

A LAW OF NON-RESISTANCE?

- The Pharisees had taken God's law, intended to control excesses, and made them more excessive, demanding retribution...*a strike first, ask questions later* form of justice.
- Jesus calls us to control our desire for personal revenge, to subdue our desire to set everything straight!
- Some have misinterpreted Jesus' words, claiming it supports military pacifism, dismissing the need for police, security or judges—that evil is to remain "unrestrained."
- Jesus was not pretending that the evil in man would be eradicated if we would just stop resisting it.
- Jesus is calling us back to the intentions/spirit of the Law, with four practical examples to understand and apply it.

(turn over)

1. When We Get Insulted v.39.
 - Jesus is describing a deeply insulting backhanded slap that showed contempt, and possibly to those who might get insulted this way because of their faith in Christ.
 - *Lex Talionis*? Jesus says—don't! The winsome ways of the Kingdom of God are not like that. Jesus calls us to swallow our pride and give up our 'rights' to retaliation.
2. When we Get Ripped-Off v.40
 - Dealing with one's response to mean-hearted people who take advantage of the very poorest among them; who, perhaps due to following Jesus, had taken a hit financially.
 - Though Mosaic Law forbade creditors to keep the tunic overnight, Jesus urged to "*give them your cloak too,*" to sew guilt in the offender, if not point them to Christ.
3. When we Get Taken Advantage Of v.41
 - "*If someone forces you...*", same thing: shock them with a spirit of service rather than jumping into attack mode whenever you get wronged!
 - We can chafe at the unjust expectations people impose on us, or use them as an opportunity to look past the offense and serve the person *another mile*, out of our love for Jesus!
4. When Facing a Faulty Borrower v.42
 - We are to lend even to those who might attempt to hurt us through borrowing. (Luke 6:34-36)
 - Jesus is not saying to disregard discernment, but not to be uncaring in the financial applications of *an eye for an eye*.

CALLED TO A HIGHER STANDARD

- Biblical justice is always about restoring God's order when there has been a violation of God's law. We're called to a higher standard of justice than revenge.
- Jesus modeled it best through His own response to persecution and offenses, enduring insult, abuse and false treatment all the way to the cross. (Isa.50:6)
- When you repay good for evil, you provide a remarkable opportunity to witness what Christ did for you!

TAKE IT HOME...for personal reflection

1. Was Jesus refuting the Mosaic judicial principle, *lex talionis* (eye for eye)? Explain.
2. Compare Jesus' teaching on "turning the other cheek" to Paul's in Titus 3:1-2.
3. What is the theological reason to motivate the believer's conduct in Titus 3:3-8?
4. Are there situations of personal offense or injustice in my life that the Lord is calling me to humbly accept, instead of seeking justice or plotting revenge?