

# Three Hammer Blows to the Legal Spirit

by Sam Caldwell

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**Scripture:** Matthew 5:38, 1 Corinthians 6:7, Isaiah 50:5

**Topics:** "Non-resistance", "Sacrificial Love"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I'm very excited to study this portion of Scripture with you all today. We're just going to take a little chunk here, what our Lord says, but it's a precious, precious chunk. It's even a part of Scripture that our society knows pretty well.

So you'll hear some of these phrases just talked about in the world around us, because we've grown up in this Judeo-Christian Western world. But we want to make sure we're understanding these phrases as Christians, right, as born-again believers, that we're really getting it right and not just using them as Christian catchphrases. So let's look at Matthew chapter 5 and verses 38 through 42.

Incredible portion of Scripture. Matthew chapter 5, verse 38. Here's our Lord on the mountain preaching.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain too. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Amen.

I want us to focus today on verses 38, 39, and 40. Just those three verses. And the name of this sermon today is Three Hammer Blows to the Legal Spirit.

Three Hammer Blows to the Legal Spirit. And as you could imagine, what we want to talk about today is how our Lord just strikes down the legal spirit in each one of us. Our tendency toward legalism, toward being just very strict in our minds.

Here he strikes it, and strikes it, and strikes it again. So we're going to study Three Hammer Blows to the Legal Spirit. I'll pray for us one more time.

Lord Jesus, I praise your holy name, and I thank you for your friendship with each one of us. And we praise you, Lord, for shedding your blood for each of us who believe, who repent. Lord, and we praise you for your resurrection power.

And Lord, I ask you to come startle each one of us with your truth today. Lord, amaze us with your truth today. Make your truth fragile, fresh to us, Lord.

And help us to hear from Jesus, and not from a man here. Help us, Lord, to hear from you on the mountain, those 2,000 years ago. Help us to hear your word fresh to our souls, Lord.

I bless your holy name. Amen. Amen? Amen.

As I'm preaching, I just want to say it's all right if you all say amen, or if you say hallelujah, or if you say glory, or if you participate with me. Let's revel in his word here. Think about this, brothers and sisters.

The devil's master plan. What is the devil's master plan? The devil's master plan is to get this whole world believing that they can be saved by works. That's the deepest thing that the devil has in his arsenal.

Because he can disguise himself as an angel of light, and he can make everybody think that they're being good people, and that they're on their way to heaven, and all at the same time, they're all walking down toward hell. And then another part of the devil's master plan is to make Christians be legalistic, go back to some sort of works-based salvation. And if he can't do that, then he'll make Christians ruthless, and legal, and mean about how they see things.

So I hope you all hear me. Think of just the grip that the devil wants to have on this world. He'd love it if he could get everybody trying to get to heaven by works, right? So he can get Islam, and Catholicism, and liberal Christianity, and every other world religious system trying to get up to heaven by works.

And then if at the same time, he can fool as many Christians as possible into being just sort of legal, ruthless jerks, then he would have a massive amount of on this world, wouldn't he? But here our Lord comes against that. And again, I'm titling this sermon Three Hammer Blows to the Legal Spirit. This is our Lord Jesus Christ saying, no, you don't, Christians.

Don't have a legal spirit. Don't approach the world in that way. We must approach the world by way of mercy, by way of grace.

That's what our Lord is teaching here. So I want to start by asking one question, and then we're going to look at those Three Hammer Blows to the Legal Spirit. The first question we have to ask though is this, and this is very important.

What is Christ correcting right here? So look at verse 38, and we have to get this right. What is Christ correcting? It says, Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you. Okay.

There's a viral debate going around that I would encourage all of you to watch on YouTube. Maybe you've heard of it, James White and Jeff Durbin, and they have debated Brandon Robertson. Has anybody heard of that? Go home and watch it.

I haven't studied the whole thing yet, but I'm sure it will be fascinating to watch. But at one point in that debate, this man, this heretic, this promoter of LGBT filth, who is a TikTok teacher, and he has just thousands going after him, right? Brandon Robertson. At one point, he says in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ contradicts and rewrites the scriptures.

And that's one of his big arguments is Jesus Christ himself contradicts and rewrites the scriptures. And I've tried to teach you all as we've studied this. What have I tried to teach you? That in itself is heresy.

If you say that the Lord Jesus Christ contradicts the scriptures, that is heretical teaching, okay? We should be able to sniff it at this point because we've studied for so many weeks and months now the Sermon on the Mount. We have to be very, very clear about this because, again, people are being deceived right now on TikTok by that man. So what is Christ doing here? He's definitely not contradicting the scriptures.

But what he is doing is he's correcting the Pharisees' bad interpretation of the Old Testament. Everybody got that? He's correcting the Pharisees' bad interpretation of the Old Testament. And this is their error.

You might want to write this phrase down. They have made a totalizing interpretation. This is the type of error we can make when we come to interpret the Bible.

We can take a little portion of scripture and say, okay, that applies to everything. And that's what they're doing here. They've correctly quoted a piece of scripture, but they're acting like this little verse applies to everything in life, okay? They're acting like this little phrase is a principle for all of life.

And you can call that a totalizing interpretation. Look again at verse 38. He said, Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

I think the idea here is that there were people going around in Jesus' day who were saying, that's my motto as a Jew. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. That's how I'm going to live then.

You touch my eye, I punch your eye. You punch my tooth, I punch your tooth. And they were applying that to all of life.

Now, we can have totalizing interpretations of other parts of scripture, and we'll also go into error when we do that. For example, we might say, okay, the Bible teaches the headship of the father or the husband in a house over his family. And say, yes, that's true.

But if you totalize that, then you can make a whole cult out of it, can't you? If you just say, well, that's the totality of Christianity, then you get into a big amount of trouble. Amen? Y'all see that? I think that is the very clear error they're making. They're saying, I want to live an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth sort of life.

That's the foundation of my religion. It's an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth sort of life. That's what he's correcting.

Let me give us a little bit of nuance here, because we really need to understand this. What is spoken of in verse 38 is actually a good thing. Okay? It's just that they have totalized it.

What's the good thing spoken of in verse 38? It's called retributive justice. Everybody write that term on your heart. Get that with me.

You can say it after me if you like. Retributive justice. Retributive justice.

Amen. This goes by many different names. In Roman law, it was called *lex talionis*, which means the law of the payback.

So it was this thought that law centers around an economy of paying back. You do that to me, you're going to pay. You do that to me, you're going to pay.

It's also called eye for an eye justice. Some people call it exaction. And it's also the type of justice where the punishment fits the crime.

Now, I need to say this very clearly. Retributive justice is actually a good thing. So this is not Christ saying no more retributive justice ever.

This is rather him saying that principle is not for all of life. Let me go over this a little bit here. Retributive justice is a good thing in both testaments, both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

You'll hear many people saying, and maybe you've had this error in your past, the Old Testament is all law and the New Testament is all grace. Or the Old Testament functioned with retributive justice, but the New Testament functions with mercy. And we need to say once for all, that's not true at all.

That's a complete misreading of the Bible. In fact, let's go over this. I'll give you a few verses here.

In the Old Testament, retributive justice is good for civil law. And it's prescribed for the judges, for the executioners, for the priests. All of them at various places in Exodus 21, Leviticus 24, Deuteronomy 19, the judges, the priests, and the executioners are all taught to perform their functions with retributive justice.

So a man murders a man, he shall be put to death. Someone punches out someone's eye, they shall pay the penalty likewise. Again, that's a good thing.

But even in the Old Testament, that must be balanced with mercy. And so you find, and this is fascinating, and you have to get these verses, that mercy is prescribed for private persons in the Old Testament, while in civil law, retributive justice is prescribed. Here are two verses to consider.

Right in the middle of Leviticus, Leviticus 19, verse 18 says, Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Isn't that amazing? So if anyone ever says to you, Old Testament is all just retributive justice, there's no mercy, point them to Leviticus 19, verse 18. And right there, Moses says, don't do an eye for an eye type of thing.

Don't do a tooth for a tooth. It says, you shall not avenge nor bear a grudge against the children of thy people. So you're all thinking with me here? Old Testament, civil law, retributive justice is good.

But then, in personal matters, you must be merciful. Here's one more, Proverbs 24, verse 29. This is so clear.

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. I will render to the man according to his work. You all hear that? That's deliberately speaking against retributive justice in the personal sphere.

The writer of Proverbs is saying, say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me. Don't do that. Don't function with a tit for tat sort of mentality.

So I hope I'm making that clear to you all. We've got the Old Testament. It's prescribing retributive justice in the civil sphere.

But when it comes to personal matters, even way back before the Lord comes to earth, there are clear commands that we must be merciful with one another. Amen? Now think through this with me. Think with me.

We go to the New Testament now, and retributive justice doesn't just disappear. So where as New Testament Christians would we still desire retributive justice or lex talionis? Well, yet again, we desire it in the civil sphere. We desire it in Romans 13, where the government is told to bear the sword against evildoers.

We desire it in capital punishment. So if we think about abortion, for example, if this were a just society, and we as Christians could have our say, then the abortionist, because he has committed murder, and the parents, the mother and the father, because they have committed murder, they should all be put to death. Ultimately, even in New Testament terms, according to Romans 13, in the civil sphere, we should have retributive justice functioning.

Where else do we have retributive justice? In parenting or in spanking. When a child is undisciplined, and we spank, that's a form of retributive justice. Now it should be cushioned with mercy, with love, shouldn't it? And we should never spank in anger whatsoever.

But ultimately, it's a penalty that fits the crime. So that's a form of justice that we want as Christians. You all following me? And one more place, in church discipline.

Sometimes there are places, there are times, many times in the last year, where I've had to say to someone, look, you're doing that, that has these consequences. And they might say to me, but what about grace? What about grace? I'm not attending church, but that doesn't really matter. And I have to say to them, no, there are direct consequences.

And so at times, we need retributive justice, even in the Christian life. Let me say those three spheres again, in civil law, in parts of parenting, and in church discipline. Amen? Now at the same time, in the New Testament, it must always be balanced with mercy.

So we need mercy in the private sphere with our neighbors, mercy with one another in the church, and of course, mercy with our children. Amen? So you could say this, brothers and sisters, that what we need in both Testaments of our Bible is just laws and merciful citizens. If you want to just sort of sum all of that up.

Ideally, and what we ought to be fighting for, are just laws and merciful citizens. Okay, all that said, and that really did have to be said. Why? Because I needed to prove to you that Christ is not contradicting the

Scriptures.

He's not saying, just get rid of that mean retributive justice. No. This is what he's saying.

Christ is correcting people who make retributive justice the main principle of their lives. Okay? Now, let's start to get a little more personal. Where have you made retributive justice the main principle of your life where you shouldn't have it? There are many people today who have this spirit, and we can call it a legal spirit.

Do you ever have a sort of tit-for-tat approach to life? Amen. You should not as a Christian. Do you ever have this feeling of, I'm going to take the law into my own hands? No one's standing up for me, so I'm going to do it myself.

That would be that eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth approach to life. Do you ever have a feeling boil up in you, something like this, I'm going to get him back for that. That's that bone of retributive justice kicking in, in a place where it shouldn't.

What about this? Christians who desire to sue people. If you're a Christian, and you're being litigious, and one of your first thoughts is, I'm going to get that person, I'm going to sue them back, then you're still functioning on the basis of retributive justice. And I've met so many people who claim to be Christians, but when a problem comes up in their life, they'll say, I'm going to take you to court for that.

And they threaten the court against people. And I'll just say, when that comes up in pastoral counseling, I know that it's bad news bears for that person. You just know that that person is going off the rails when you hear that they are ready to just take people to law, take people to court.

It's a slippery slope from there. You're all thinking with me? So Christ's point here is we could still be Christians, but we could have an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth sort of attitude. And I'm trying right now to root that out in your own souls.

So let's think again. When we try to put up a fight, or when we have a, well, I ought to attitude, I'm going to get him back for that. And you know it can crop up.

You know that even as regenerate Christians, we can fall back into that, can't we? Also, let's go a little deeper. The Christian who thinks he's got providence figured out, that Christian can also have this legal spirit bubbling up in his soul. So when we think there's sort of a one-to-one correspondence in how the world works.

So, okay, Lord, I did those three good things last week. So this week, things must go good for me, right? Or, you know, those three bad things, that person did three bad things. So Lord, you must punish them.

We can think that way as Christians, can't we? And that's that legal spirit bubbling up in us, that lex talionis, that retributive justice bubbling up in the heart of Christians. We can say, if I do this, this will happen. And there again, we're basically thinking in terms of law, in terms of payback, and not in terms of a God of grace and a God of mercy.

We can also have pride in reaction to religious things. And I think we've actually seen that in reactions to the Asbury revival. There have been people who say, wait, if that's happening, if there's Arminianism there, then there's no way God could be blessing it.

And some of that thinking can be a retributive justice way of thinking. It's a legal spirit bubbling up in us. And I was really, really grieved to see John MacArthur just recently speak that way.

And he just, just like a passing comment, he just said, there's Arminianism there. And that seemed to be his way of dispelling the whole thing. And we ought to detect in that a legal spirit, a legal spirit.

When we think we've got it all worked out, we think we can see a one-to-one correspondence between everything in this world. That's what Christ is addressing in verse 38. I hope I've started to make that clear for you all.

He is correcting people who make retributive justice the main principle of their lives. And I want to beg you all to search your hearts for that. Is there any place in your life where you, that just starts to bubble up? Now, three hammer blows to that legal spirit.

This is how Christ deals with it. And we're just going to look at verses 39 and 40. Verse 39, he says, but I say unto you.

So here comes his correction to the legal spirit. And how does he start? That ye resist not evil. Okay.

Here's his first hammer blow to the legal spirit in our hearts. What does he say? I'll summarize it this way. Do not put up a fight.

Do not put up a fight. His wording is really beautiful in the Greek. He says, resist not evil.

The idea is literally, don't take a stand against an evil person. Okay. Now with each of these three points, I want to give you a scenario or a character to think about.

The first character I want you all to think about is the insulted husband. Imagine the husband who's at work and someone does evil to him. Someone comes up to him and says, you're worthless.

The work you're doing here is absolutely worthless. And they just scathingly rebuke this person. Right? How would that husband follow verse 39 when Christ says, okay, here's what you do.

Resist, not evil. Well, how are we usually prone to react in that sort of situation? Someone insults me and I would tend to say, that's wrong. I don't deserve that.

Why are you doing that to me? Why are you insulting me? And I come home and I would say to my wife, I've done it. Have I not? I'd say to her, they insulted me and then I get all angry and I get all bent out of shape. What is that called? It's right here.

Taking a stand against an evil person. That's called resisting evil. Right? And Christ is saying, don't you dare do that.

If we are Christians, we don't do that. We don't take a stand. You all picture the insulted husband.

What are the consequences when that husband comes home and meets his family? I wrote these down. Think of these with me. When we put up a fight like that, first of all, we get obsessed, don't we? And we say, how could they have insulted me? Why did they say that? What was on their heart? Why are they so messed up that they would say that to me? Right? And we just get obsessed about it.

Secondly, we become impotent. You look at that man who's obsessed like that and you say, that's a man without strength. That's a pathetic man.

That man starts to look really silly, doesn't he? What else happens? That man gets distracted from the rest of life. He can't enjoy his new baby. He can't enjoy what's going on at home.

He can't enjoy his supper. Because why? He's taking a stand against evil. Right? You all following me? What else happens when you resist evil? You take a stand against it in that way.

Well, your family feels neglected. They know that you're just thinking about that insult that happened to you. They know that you're not concentrating on them anymore.

And what else happens? They might too get brought into a critical spirit. So the rest of your family says, they insulted my dad. They insulted my husband.

And now the whole family is getting judgmental and critical. You see how that sin spreads? What else happens? The whole mood of the house is thrown off. And finally, Christ is thrown out of the picture.

When you resist evil, like that, it throws everything out of whack. So what's the first thing our Lord says? The first blow to our legal spirit is this. Do not put up a fight.

Isn't that amazing? Have any of you ever been in that position? Have any of you ever tried that? Someone gets you. They insult you. They do something mean to you.

What if you literally do what Jesus says right here? Resist not evil. Just don't engage. Don't take a stand.

Don't clench your fist. Just disengage entirely. Okay, that's the first blow to the legal spirit.

The second blow is this. Radically offer yourself up for more abuse. Oh, this is really difficult.

This is really difficult. The first one was easy enough, maybe, right? Because you could just sit in your car and you could say, I'm not going to think about how they insulted me. I'm going to go inside.

I'm going to focus on my family, right? But here it gets much more difficult. Let's read what he says. Verse 39.

Ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. This is radical. This is the very depth of radical Christianity.

And we use this phrase so flippantly in our culture, don't we? Oh, turn the other cheek. Turn the other cheek. But can we think a little bit about what it really means to do this? Look back at verse 38.

If you're functioning in your personal life with retributive justice, then what happens? Someone punches you and you say, I'm going to punch them back, right? Here, what does Christ say in verse 39? Someone punches you and you say, punch me again. That's very disarming. And you do that to someone.

Someone punches you and you say, here, pick the other side. Has anybody ever been in that situation? The closest I got, and I'll give you myself as a character analysis, was in Chicago when I was stupidly walking through a back alley and I got mugged for the second time in my life. And when these guys mugged me, my instinct was actually to go with it, to almost submit to it.

So I just fell to the ground and they really hammered me to the ground, holding both of my arms. And then they took my money and I said, ha ha, it looks like you picked the wrong guy. I only have four dollars.

And they got incredibly disarmed and they got really angry and they chucked my wallet and they left. Okay, now let me make clear, that was not me functioning as a good Christian, right? But what happened is they were disarmed by the fact that I actually gave in. I let them take my wallet and then they found themselves to be really, they were like, what do we do? We didn't get anything here.

It's only four dollars. And they just took off and they ended up throwing my card so that I still have my debit card there. I was so thankful for that.

This is before I was a Christian. But think about this, how disarming it is when you just give in, rather than again trying to punch back. You give in.

So the second principle here is you radically offer yourself up for more abuse. Now I gave you an imperfect example of myself, but let me give you a perfect example. Our perfect Jesus, did he not do this? When someone punched him, what did he do? Let's study this for one moment, okay? I want to give you two texts and I'd like you to turn to both of them with me.

The first time as Jesus was going to be taken toward the cross in that passion night, the first time someone actually punched him on one cheek, we have to note what he did. Let's turn to John chapter 18 verse 22. John chapter 18 in verse 22, they found Jesus in the garden.

They cornered him and in 1822 it says, and when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, answerest thou the high priest so? Did you all see that? He literally struck him with the palm of his hand. Now here's a question. Does Christ turn the other cheek? Verse 23, Jesus answered him, if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me? Isn't that interesting? Think with me, Christians.

Is Christ contradicting Christ? Do you see the dilemma? In Matthew 5, he says, if someone strikes you, give them the other cheek. What does he do here? He doesn't give them the other cheek, but I believe our Lord is teaching us right here is that when someone abuses us, it is legitimate for us to point out our abuser's evil. What does he do in verse 23? If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why are you hitting me? Isn't that incredible? Again, he's not contradicting himself, but he is saying that as we go to turn the other cheek, as we radically offer ourselves up for more abuse, it is right to say to the person, what are you doing? That's evil.

And to actually confront them. But we confront them as we give ourselves sacrificially into the situation. And this is where it gets even more difficult.

So here's a second test. Turn to Isaiah chapter 50. Isaiah chapter 50.

Isaiah chapter 50, verses five through seven, teach us a bit more here. And I don't know if you've all noticed, but the book of Isaiah gives us information about Christ's life that we don't actually get from the gospels. The book of Isaiah fills in some of the holes that even the four gospel writers don't give us.

Look what Isaiah says here is so incredible. He's talking about the Lord Jesus and in verse five, it's the Lord Jesus himself speaking, says the Lord God has opened my ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the spicers and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting for the Lord God will help me. Therefore, shall I not be confounded? Therefore, have I set my face like a flint and I know that I shall not be ashamed. Are you all putting the pieces together? The first time on that passion night that Jesus was hit, he reacted by saying, what are you doing? Why do you bring this evil against me? But as that night went on and as he was brought to court and as his fate was being played out before sinners around him, what did he do? Verse six, I gave my back to the spiders.

He gave in and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. There's that word cheek, no? Someone hit him, he gave the other cheek. It's remarkable.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting. He gave in and what was he doing as he gave into this beating? He was actually disarming principalities and powers. He was actually spoiling and shaming the evil forces of this world by giving into them like that, no? Giving his back to the spiders, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, not hiding his face but giving more for shame and spitting.

Do you imagine them actually spitting on his face? This is Christian disarmament of the enemy. And one more thing, this is how we persevere if we follow Christ. Because look what he says in verse seven.

Why does he do all this? For the Lord God will help me. Therefore shall I not be confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

Okay, this is the way, the primary way that we as Christians persevere. I hope you're all getting this lesson. And I just want to admit to you that I'm still learning this.

This is very, very difficult. If we actually want to live out what our Lord says and someone slaps you and you turn the other cheek, I think the only way you can truly do it is if you have verse seven on your side. And you say, here is why I turn the other cheek.

For the Lord will help me. Therefore I shall not be confounded. You need that reason behind it all.

The last few years in church life I've been horribly treated by some people. And I was always tempted, the temptation is always to point it out, to fight back, to actually to give up, to never take another step. But what does our Lord teach us to do here? You give into it.

You actually offer up more of yourself knowing that the Lord will help you. And it's only on that basis that we can actually go forward. In verse seven he says he sets his face like a flint.

As he knows he's going to get hit and hit and hit and hit. It's because of his trust in the Lord that we can go forward. I can't apply that to every situation in your life, but I hope you take those three scriptures and you just consider that as you press on as a Christian.

You set your face like a flint. You let them hit you. At times, let's say you're in a difficult family situation, you even lean in more.

You say, I love you. I'll be there at Thanksgiving. You strategically lean in even more.

Even when you know they're going to smack you, man. They're going to hurt you again. You know they are, but you lean in more.

Why? Because the Lord helps you. That's the radical apex of Christianity right there. So we have said as we make these hammer blows against our legal spirit, you see how this transforms our whole approach to life.

The first one was do not put up a fight. The second one is radically offer yourself up for more abuse. And the third one is be defrauded.

Let's go back to Matthew chapter 5 and we'll end with this point. Matthew chapter 5, verse 40. We'll end here.

And the command is be defrauded. It says in verse 40, and if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Picture right here, brothers and sisters, the courtroom Christian.

Picture the Christian right here who is, he's taken to law. Someone says, I'm going to sue you. Meet me in court.

Here's the court date. And then these people end up taking his coat from him. And what does our Lord say? Again, he sort of says, give into it.

He says, let them have your cloak also. Let them take more. What does our Lord not say? He doesn't say, wait, they're taking you to the court? Sue them back.

Fight for your rights. Get litigious. Right? Stand up for yourself.

And again, I want to shock you by repeating this. The Christian should only very rarely, like 0.01% of the time, ever sue anyone. The Christian should only very, very rarely sue anyone.

We should be very, very cautious with ever suing anyone. What does our Lord, I mean, he's imagining a scene at the court of law. And you're a Christian and you're there.

And he, what's his answer? He says, let him have it. Let him take it. Don't you dare get caught up with lawsuits here.

Again, when we encounter people who want to go to law, especially Christians, we ought to say, look, buddy, you're cruising for a bruising. There's a deep lack of health in you. If your first instinct is, I'm going to sue them back.

Even again, if we take John MacArthur's case where his whole church sued the state of California, I'm not yet sure that that was right for them to do that. Now we aren't there. There's a bunch of wisdom that we lack in that whole legal proceeding, but it ought to be very, very, very rare that we as Christians ever sue other people.

Let me give you one verse right here that echoes what Christ is saying. First Corinthians six, seven. Paul says to the Corinthians, why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather allow yourselves to be defrauded? And what he's saying here is when people try to judge and to go to law and to start suing one another, Paul says, why not rather just get sued? Why not rather just get defrauded? Why not rather just let them take it and let them go? Think about this with me for a second.

That is the most liberating way that we can go. If you get caught up in lawsuits, you're bringing yourself into bondage. But if you just let yourself be defrauded, then what do you do? You lay down your rights, you let them take from you, you move on.

And even more, you let that situation crush your sense of entitlement. In a way, when we do what our Lord is saying right here in verse 40, it puts us in our place. We say, well, yeah, they sued me.

They took away my coat. They took away my cloak. And what do I deserve? Why do I have such a sense of entitlement? So our third way that we hammer against the legal spirit in us is right here.

We let ourselves be defrauded. We say, take it. Take it.

Take it. And let me just explain that one more time. If we don't do that, then what we're saying is, no, I deserve it.

I deserve to fight back. I deserve a lawsuit against you. Christ is saying, let it go.

You don't deserve anything. You don't deserve to function with a tit-for-tat, eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth sort of mentality in your personal life. Let me leave us with these few comments on how to apply these verses.

I've given you three commands, and we sum them up like this. Do not put up a fight. Radically offer yourself up for more abuse.

And thirdly, be defrauded. Let me say this. Those are actual commands.

Our Lord isn't just playing around. He's telling us we actually have to do those things. Apply these to your life in this way.

As you do these things, see yourself as deliberately unplugging from the system of this world. The whole world around us, like I said at the start of the sermon, is saying, you know, it's a dog-eats-dog world. It's a tit-for-tat system.

It's you do that to me, I'm going to do that to you. As we follow our Lord in these three commandments, what are we saying to the world? We're saying, I unplug from all of that. I want no part in any of that whatsoever.

I'm a Christian. I'm different. I don't engage with you along those lines.

Another application, watch your legal spirit crumble as you do these things. Like I said, watch your sense of entitlement crumble as you actually do what we've talked about. And finally, shame the devil and exalt Christ as you act in mercy.

The more we act with this legal spirit, with retributive justice in our personal lives, the more we actually give ground to the devil and the world. But the more we say, no, I'm going to be merciful. No, I'm going to unplug from that.

No, I'm going to just let myself be harmed here. It's then that the world and the devil have no say in us whatsoever, have no place, have no power in our lives whatsoever. You see, that's a really radical approach to the power and the strength of the Christian life.

It comes from extricating ourselves completely from the whole way that the world wants us to function. Praise God for these beautiful words. Let's pray.

Lord, all of us can have a legal spirit bubble up inside at times, and it can be so harmful for our families and so harmful for our lives and so harmful for our churches and our communities. Lord, so I ask you through these words that you've spoken to us here to crush these things in us, Lord. Crush our legal desire to take our rights upon ourselves and to fight for our own rights, Lord, and help us to obey you here to stop putting up a fight, to radically offer up ourselves for more abuse and to be defrauded.

Lord, help us please to learn these lessons. We bless you, Lord Jesus, for these crystal clear words of yours. We ask you to apply them to our hearts.

Make us more meek. Make us less legalistic, Lord. Make us more merciful.

And bless you, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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