

## **THE OTHER WAY**

### **Matthew 5:38 – 42**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

We've all been offended by people. In life, that's not optional. People will insult you, offend you, hurt you and mistreat you. That is not optional. You cannot decide that you will never be hurt. All you can decide is how you will respond when people hurt you.

A truck driver was sitting in a crowded roadside diner ready to eat his lunch. But it is not just any diner and any lunch. It's his favorite diner on the road and his favorite lunch.

Just as the waitress brought the truck driver's meat loaf, green beans, mashed potatoes and gravy, the door to the diner bursts open and a motorcycle gang swaggers in. Most of them seat themselves at the table next to the truck driver but there's not enough room at that table for all of them. The gang members left standing turn to the truck driver and bark, "Move! We want that table!"

The truck driver calmly says, "I haven't finished my meal." One of the motorcycle toughs takes his dirty finger, swipes it through the mashed potatoes and gravy, sticks his finger in his mouth and says, "Hey, not bad grub." Another gang member takes the trucker's cup of coffee and slowly pours it over the remaining food on the plate and snarls, "You're finished now!"

The trucker stands, takes his napkin, wipes his mouth, walks to the cash register, pays for his meal, and silently walks out the door. All the bikers are laughing now. One of them says, "Ain't much of a man, is he?"

The waitress says, "And he's not much of a truck driver, either. He just backed his rig over your motorcycles."

When people offend us, one way to respond is with paybacks ("do unto others as they have done to you so they will see how it feels and they'll stop doing it"). The problem with paybacks is that the other guy probably lives by the same code so he's likely to pay you back, too. So offenses perpetuate.

Another way to respond when people offend us is with escalation ("do unto others *more than* they have done to you so they'll never do it to you again"). The problem with that approach is, again, the other guy probably lives by that same code, too and he's likely to pay you back with more than you did to him. And then you pay him back with more yet and the offenses just escalate: they grow out of proportion.

But Jesus taught that there is another way. We do not have to perpetuate offenses and keep the cycle going. We do not have to escalate offenses and keep the cycle growing. We can choose terminate offenses; we can get off the cycle.

#### I. **The Other Cheek (turn it) (5:38-39)**

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ <sup>39</sup>  
But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said...” Where did they hear that it was said? Who said it?

Well, the fact of the matter is, they heard that in their church. The Old Testament Law said “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” It is found in Leviticus 24:17-21.

You need to understand the context of Leviticus 24:17-21. One of the Israelites had committed a serious sin against God so the people who knew about it brought the matter to Moses, their national leader, and asked him what should be done with this guy. Moses ordered the man held while he prayed and asked God to tell him what to do with someone who commits a serious crime. God said that the punishment should fit the crime. If a person takes another person’s life, he should lose his life: he should be put to death. If a person takes the life of another man’s animal, he should replace the animal. If a person injures another man, the same injury he inflicted on that person should be inflicted on him.

Let me make some points here:

1. This was given as an instruction for how society is to handle people who break the law. This is not a license for people to take the law into their own hands and punish people.
2. Second, when people are taken to court, the court is to sentence them with a punishment that fits the crime. An eye for an eye and neither more nor less; a tooth for a tooth and neither more nor less.

But people had taken that instruction from God and had begun to misuse it. They were using this as a justification for paybacks. But do you remember the problem with paybacks? Either they perpetuate the conflicts or they escalate the conflicts. There is another way and that is to be willing to accept the offense and stop the hurting, stop the retaliation and stop the madness.

It makes no earthly sense to submit to insults, offenses and hurt without striking back. It makes no earthly sense but it makes perfect sense from

heaven's point of view. Jesus tells you that when you are offended, you are to turn the other cheek. Are you willing to **Submit?**

## II. The Other Coat (give it) (5:40)

<sup>40</sup> And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

In Jesus' day, it was typical that people wore a tunic, which William Barclay describes as a "long, sack-like inner garment made of cotton or of linen." Barclay adds that even "the poorest man would have a change of tunics."

Over the top of the tunic, people wore cloaks. The cloak was a heavy outer garment that would almost resemble a blanket. In fact, while people wore them during the day, they would use them as a blanket at night.

Cloaks were rather valuable. While a man would have at least two tunics, he usually only had one cloak. It was for Jesus' cloak that the soldiers gambled while he was hanging on the cross. A tunic could be torn to make rags but a cloak was too precious to tear.

Because a person's cloak was so important, Jewish law specified that a man's cloak could not be taken as security on a loan. You could take his tunic but not his cloak. Exodus 22:25-27a states:

<sup>25</sup> "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest. <sup>26</sup> If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, <sup>27</sup> because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in?"

Knowing all of that, it seems arresting that Jesus would say that if a person takes you to court and sues you for your tunic, your shirt, to settle a debt, give him your cloak, too.

You cloak?!?! That most precious piece of clothing you have? If, by law, someone cannot force you to let him have your cloak, why on earth would you choose to let him take it? Hold that question for a moment.

Have you ever heard someone say, "You can't make me"? Maybe a teacher has asked a student to do something the student doesn't want to do... "You can't make me!" Maybe mom or dad has told their child to do something around the house... "You can't make me!" Maybe a boss has asked one of his workers to take on some extra responsibilities... "You can't make me!"

For the disciple of Jesus, the issue is not what another person can legally force him to do. The issue is not that he has certain rights that are

protected by law. The person who clings tenaciously to his legal rights is not living like Jesus. In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul wrote:

<sup>5</sup> *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

<sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,*

<sup>7</sup> *but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!*

Do you get it? Our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. He had every right to cling to his position as being equal with God. But he did not cling to his rights, he sacrificed them for the benefit of others. And we are to do the same. So the question is, are you willing to **Sacrifice**?

### III. The Other Mile (walk it) (5:41)

<sup>41</sup> *If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*

Israel, at the time of Jesus, was occupied territory. The Romans had soldiers stationed there to keep the peace. The Roman government ruled Israel. And the Jews HATED that! They resented the Romans and some of the more zealous and patriotic Jews even carried out sneak attacks on the Romans, killing every one they could get their hands on.

One way of asserting Roman authority over the Jews was the practice of the Roman soldiers of requiring Jewish citizens to carry their armor or other baggage for them. By law, a Jew could be forced to carry a Roman soldier's things for up to a mile. At the end of the mile, he could put the soldier's things down and the soldier could require someone else to pick it up and carry it another mile.

Can you imagine the inconvenience? A person might have been on his way home for lunch and now, all of a sudden, he has to walk a mile carrying a soldier's heavy load. And then he has to walk a mile back just to get where he had started. Or maybe he was on his way to an important appointment. Or to see a friend. It didn't matter. It didn't matter at all. If the soldier said, "Walk a mile with me carrying my equipment," the Jew had no choice but to walk a mile. He may have resented every step but he had to walk it.

Then Jesus raised the bar. He said, if you are forced to walk one mile, go two. Do more than you are *required* to do. Make it your practice to exceed expectations, to surpass your obligations, to go beyond the minimum.

Again, doesn't this beg the question of why anyone would do more than he has to do? The reason is because Jesus did. So those who follow Jesus will live like he did and they will do more than the minimum they can do to get by. I've already asked, are you willing to suffer and are you willing to sacrifice...now, I must ask, are you willing to **Serve**?

### **CONCLUSION:**

I know that some people will react to Jesus' teaching by saying, "Well that's just stupid. It may have made sense in his day but it won't work today. I'm not going to turn the other cheek, give my other coat or walk the other mile."

And I want you to know that you don't have to, either. Jesus' teaching is not for everyone...just those who wish to follow him. You can reject Jesus' commands. You can reject Jesus. But you will not spend eternity with him then if you do not walk with him now.

Sandy and I will be going on vacation this week. When we leave Clay City, the roads we travel will be determined by the place we want to finish. Because we are going to see my brother in Tennessee, we will not drive north on the Dietrich blacktop!

So you decide where you want to end up. If you want the road of your life to lead to eternity with Jesus Christ, that will determine whether or not you decide to follow him now.

Jesus said, **"If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."** But what then? What comes after you've walked the second mile? The legalist says, "I'll walk one mile because I have no choice and a second because Jesus said to but then I'm done." A servant will walk the second mile and then, if need be another; and, if need be another; and, if need be... Surely you wonder where all this will end. The Reverend Johnson Oatman said,

*"When I've gone the last mile of the way,  
I will rest at the close of the day,  
And I know there are joys that await me,  
When I've gone the last mile of the way."*

**INVITATION:**        *"The Last Mile of the Way"*