

Righteousness and Retaliation

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[0 : 00] Matthew 5, 38 through 42, one of the hardest teachings, I think, in this entire sermon.

! Would you stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together?! Jesus says, May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word.

Would you please be seated? In Matthew chapter 16, verse 21, Jesus prepares His disciples for the fulfillment of the mission of His first coming.

He tells them that He is going to go to Jerusalem, and there He will suffer and He will die, but on the third day He will rise again. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, pulled Him aside to express His objection to Jesus' plan.

He said to Him, Far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. Jesus responds to Peter with a harsh rebuke. Jesus tells him, Get behind me, Satan.

[1 : 48] You are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Jesus came to die as an atonement for our sins.

This was His mission. This was His mission. And anyone who attempted to thwart that or get in the way of that was doing the devil's work. And having rebuked Peter, Jesus turned to the rest of the disciples and He said this to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

When a person carried a cross in Jesus' day, it meant only one thing. Death by crucifixion. To carry a cross was to face the most painful and humiliating means of death devised by human beings.

Today, Christians view the cross as a cherished symbol of atonement, forgiveness, grace, and love. But 2,000 years ago, in Jesus' day, the cross represented a gruesome death.

When the Romans ordered a person to die by crucifixion, they forced them to carry their own cross from the place of judgment and sentencing to the place of execution.

[3 : 19] A person bearing a cross was a person sentenced to death. A person bearing a cross was a dead man walking.

A person who had no rights. Jesus says you cannot follow him without bearing a cross. He demands total commitment.

He expects complete surrender. No longer living to self or for self, but dying to self. A willingness to sacrifice self.

To promote the gospel. To live for Christ. You must die to yourself. The reality of what it means, what it really means to follow Jesus, is a reality that our text confronts us with this morning.

It's another reality that is hard for our sinful flesh to stomach. I have wrestled with Jesus' words in this sermon this week. It's been a struggle.

[4 : 22] It's been a reminder that following Jesus is both the highest of callings and the hardest of callings.

Because it means surrendering whatever rights that we think we have to Him. That's the main idea of this morning's sermon from this passage.

That being a Christian means surrendering your rights to Jesus. Being a Christian means surrendering your rights to Jesus. We are Americans.

And we know our rights. We are big on rights. We're very conscious of our rights. We're very protective of our rights. And understandably so, at least to a point.

Sometimes we think we have rights that we don't truly have. For example, road rage. I once had a student in youth ministry.

[5 : 24] His name was Brian. And he was an inexperienced driver. He needed to make a turn. He cut in front of the guy behind him. And that guy followed him to the next light, which was red.

Got out of his car. Which Brian quickly locked his doors when he saw that. Got up to his driver's side window. Yelled and screamed at him. And was trying to open the door. He pulled on that handle so hard that he ripped it off. And he set it on top of his car. And he walked away, I guess, feeling like he had gotten his pound of flesh. He had gotten justice for the wrong that he felt done to him. And Brian was scared to death. Whether a person is an American or not, deep down inside every human heart is a retaliatory, vengeful, spiteful, sinful spirit. Some of our heroes in America are those who embody a spirit that takes nothing from nobody. [6 : 31] People who gave it back worse than they got it. Characters in movies played by men like John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. They are national symbols of tough guys.

Folk heroes who take matters into their own hands. Giving it worse than they got it. That's basically the attitude that the scribes and Pharisees and most Jews had. They misunderstood the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. They used that principle as license to exact vengeance. They believed that principle gave them biblical permission and a right to not only hold grudges but get payback for personal offenses. But this wasn't Jesus' way. Following Jesus means surrendering whatever right we think we have to get revenge. Why does this matter?

Christians, if you really want to follow Jesus, if you truly desire to obey Him, then you will gladly exchange a sword of vengeance for a cross of self-sacrifice.

[7 : 44] Our mission as Christ followers is not to seek retribution but reconciliation. Both with our fellow believers when we've sinned against them or they against us.

And unbelievers who face an eternity in hell for their sin against God. If you truly follow Christ, then you truly desire to be like Christ.

And to be like Christ means surrendering your rights, your life to Him. In particular, this teaching of Jesus instructs us to surrender our rights to Him that center around personal offenses.

This passage has been misapplied by Christians who suggest that Jesus is calling for complete and total pacifism in every form and every aspect of life. But that is simply not the case.

And as we go through this passage, we'll use Scripture to interpret Scripture and remind us or get to the heart of the matter, I should say. Which in this case is, once again, the matter of our hearts and our sinful desire to want to draw the sword and seek revenge instead of bearing the cross and seeking reconciliation.

[8 : 58] And so in these verses, Jesus gives us four rights that Christians surrender to Jesus as we follow Him. Four rights that we surrender to Jesus as we follow Him.

The first right. Christians surrender the right to retaliate. We surrender the right to retaliate. In verse 38 again, Jesus says, You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And here is yet another example of a principle taught in Scripture that the scribes and Pharisees misinterpreted and misapplied. That quotation is taken directly from a few Old Testament passages and reflects a principle that scholars refer to as *lex talionis*.

That's a Latin phrase which literally means law retaliation. The earliest record of *lex talionis* is the code of Hammurabi, a Babylonian king who lived about a hundred years before Moses.

But even though Hammurabi was the first to make mention of the principle, it is likely that this principle was in existence long before his time. In the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, just as in the code of Hammurabi, the principle of an eye for an eye concerned punishment that matched but did not exceed the harm inflicted by the crime.

[10 : 30] Of specific significance for us is that in the three Old Testament passages where the principle of an eye for an eye appear, they all refer to the civil justice system.

In some cases, the punishment was sometimes carried out by the victim but only after a trial and sentencing were handed down by a judge or a jury of sorts.

In Scripture, the principle of an eye for an eye was an instrument of the court. It was a means of preventing someone from becoming their own judge, jury, and executioner as they sought retribution for personal offenses committed against them in ways that exceeded the original offense done to them.

It's like the story of a little boy whose neighbor saw him shoveling dirt back into a hole that he had recently dug. The neighbor asked the little boy what he was doing.

And the boy replied, I'm burying my goldfish. The neighbor, seeing that the hole that he was filling was much larger than what was needed for a goldfish, asked the boy, that's a pretty big hole for a little goldfish.

[11:49] The boy looked at his neighbor and scowled and said, that's because my goldfish was in the stomach of your stupid cat.

So he killed the cat for killing his goldfish. Human vengeance is seldom satisfied with justice. It wants a pound of flesh for an ounce of offense. That is how the scribes and Pharisees misinterpreted the law of an eye for an eye.

They used it as a mandate for vengeance. What God gave as a restriction to carry out justice in civil courts, they turned into personal license for seeking revenge.

We see how they did this to Jesus, don't we, in the Gospels? Jesus often criticized them rightfully, speaking the truth for their hypocrisy and their self-righteousness. How did they handle that?

[12:51] They took such offense at his words that they orchestrated his crucifixion and his death. And they felt satisfied in doing that. Punishing, killing an innocent man.

So Jesus begins to correct their misinterpretation of this law in verse 39. He says, But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. Now, some people have taken Jesus' words here to an extreme that he did not intend.

Some believe wrongly that this is a call to not stand against evil at all in any way and promote some kind of pacifism that actually contradicts Scripture, like Romans 13, 1 through 7, which teach that the state is a divine institution that has the power to punish wrongdoers, which would be impossible for them to do without the use of force.

And some of those who work for the state to do that are Christians. Jesus also resisted the profaning of God's temple himself. Remember when he made a whip out of... He made a whip and he drove the money changers out of the temple.

Scripture likewise commands us as believers to resist the devil. For example, James 4, 7 says, Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

[14:14] 1 Peter 5, 8 through 9 says, The kind of resistance that Jesus is talking about here specifically addresses harm done to us on a personal level by someone with evil intentions.

Jesus is talking about resisting the one who is evil by resisting the sinful desires that arise within you that seek to take matters into your own hands, that seek to exact vengeance, that seek to get revenge.

Paul reiterated this truth in Romans 12, 17 through 19. He said, Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine.

I will repay, says the Lord. Christians are called, they're commanded, to put aside vendettas, personal resentment, and spiteful attitudes.

[15:46] Instead, as Romans 12, 12 says, Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Charles Spurgeon said, Christians are to be as the anvil when bad men are the hammers, to which John Stott added, But an anvil is one thing, a doormat is another.

In other words, neither Jesus' teachings nor His personal example endorse us to be passive pushovers. We should stand against injustice.

We should resist Satan and his schemes, but we aren't permitted to do so in a sinful kind of way.

We are not to overcome evil with evil, especially when the personal attacks made against us are because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Craig Keener comments on this passage and says, Jesus is prohibiting our efforts to vindicate and defend ourselves when someone insults us or seeks to humiliate, degrade, or exploit our Christian character.

He is not calling us to be stupid and self-destructive when it comes to our physical warfare or that of others, nor are we being called upon to give ourselves over to mutilation and unnecessary martyrdom.

[17:11] Jesus is not describing an attack on your health, but on your honor. And so Jesus continues in verse 39. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

To a Jewish person living in this time, a slap across the face was an incredibly demeaning act.

To strike someone else on the body might cause more physical harm to them, but a slap across the face was deemed as an attack on someone's honor.

I think the same is true in our culture. To slap someone across the face is a major sign of disrespect. It's an affront to someone's sense of dignity.

But look, Jesus adds another layer to this indignity by noting here that the slap strikes the right cheek. About 90% of people in the world are right-handed.

[18:20] So for a right-handed person to slap someone on the right cheek, they would have to use the backside of their right hand. And according to rabbinic law, to hit someone with the back of the hand was twice as insulting as to hit them with the flat side of the hand.

To hit someone with the backside of your hand meant calculated contempt. Because you don't see that coming as much as you see it coming from this way, right? In this case, the contempt is directed towards someone for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus says that when we are insulted or abused for our allegiance to Him, we are to turn the other cheek.

Because in doing so, we communicate our security and our status before God and not our insecurity and our feeling the need to defend our own honor.

When the leaders of the Sanhedrin and later the Roman soldiers abused Jesus and mocked Him, Isaiah 50 verse 6 says, He gave them His back, gave them His back for scourging and allowed them to pluck out the hairs of His beard.

[19:44] When they blindfolded Jesus and repeatedly slapped Him in the face, challenging Him to prophesy who it was who hit Him, Jesus endured it.

When they stripped Him of His clothes and they hung Him on a cross, Jesus did not pray to the Father to exact vengeance on His enemies, but pleaded for Him to have mercy on them.

He said, He prayed, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Jesus did not pick up a sword of retaliation, but a cross of reconciliation.

So should you. Christians give up their right to retaliation when they are personally insulted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Because you know what?

Such people, they need Jesus. They need our witness, not our clenched fist. In giving up our right to retaliation, we gain an opportunity for reconciliation.

[20:56] Again, Romans 12, this time verse 20, points that out. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

For by doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head. To heap burning coals on someone's head is a reference to an Egyptian custom in which a person who wanted to show public remorse for their actions would carry a pan of burning coals on their head.

The coals represented the burning pain of their inner sense of shame and guilt for whatever it is that they had done. When Christians give up their right to retaliate, they bring shame to those who insult them in the end.

And the Lord can use that feeling of shame, that feeling of guilt to lead them to repentance and faith in him through your witness.

So we give up our right to retaliation. Second right we give up that we see from this text is that Christians surrender their right to possessions or the right to possessions.

[22:08] Look again at verse 40. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. Now a tunic was a shirt often worn as an undergarment.

A cloak was an outer garment like a coat and it served also as a person's blanket at night. Most people in Jesus' day, they owned maybe one or two tunics.

Few people owned more than one cloak. When a person had no money or any other possessions, the court could require them to pay a fine in clothing.

However, a cloak was deemed so valuable that even if someone's opponent won it in court, he had to return it to them every evening at night so that they could use it as a blanket.

So what Jesus is saying here is that if someone sues you, directs their legal attacks against you for your faith, if they want to take everything from you, the shirt off your back, Jesus says to them, give them your cloak, that piece of clothing they cannot legally permanently take from you.

[23:17] Give it to them as well. This is radical. This is where I struggle. It seems extreme.

It's like Jesus is literally telling us to let people sue our pants off and be okay with it. I wrestled with this thought and what came to my mind or what the Lord, I believe, brought to my mind was the

story of Joseph in the Old Testament.

A cloak, remember, of many colors was given to him by his father and incurred his brother's wrath. They stripped him of it.

They sold him into slavery. And after years and years of suffering, after years and years of injustice, he rose to a high position in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

And through the suffering he endured, God used his brother's evil actions to accomplish a much greater good.

[24 : 33] A good that they, who were evil, benefited from. Joseph saved them and their families from starvation during the seven years of famine.

Jesus died with nothing. The soldiers gambled for his clothes at the foot of his cross. And his death, which they intended for evil, accomplished the greatest good of all.

I don't know that persecution, I don't know, I should say, what persecution will look like in our nation moving forward into the future. But it could come to this as it is the case in many other places in the world.

As it was for Christians centuries ago. What I do know, what Scripture tells us, is that whatever possessions are taken away from us for our faith, we should be willing to part with them because they may be used by God to accomplish a greater good.

The possessions that you should, or the possession I should say, that you should most cherish above all possessions is your salvation. And whatever you lose for following Christ will be worth what you'll gain in heaven.

[26 : 07] Jesus tells us in Matthew 5, 11 through 12, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Now the third right that Christians surrender to Jesus is their right to autonomy. Christians surrender their right to autonomy.

Verse 41, and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Autonomy means self-government or the right of a person to make their own decisions.

In Jesus' time, Judea was under, under Roman control. Roman law gave Roman soldiers the right to force a civilian to carry their gear for one mile.

[27 : 18] The law was designed to relieve soldiers as they marched long distances. The Jews hated the Romans.

So not only was this a major inconvenience to have to submit to this law and carry the gear of a Roman soldier, but they had to carry the same gear, the same weapons they used to oppress them and their people.

Apparently, Roman soldiers could also force people into carrying other things, as they did Simon of Cyrene when it became apparent that Jesus was so badly beaten and exhausted that he could not physically carry his cross to the place where they were going to execute him.

And a soldier forced Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus carry the cross the rest of the way. I know for me, I have a plan for what I want to get done each day of the week.

My desk is covered in post-it notes. I got rid of some today, but I wrote this morning after, you know, looking over the sermon again, the things that I plan to do need to get done this week.

[28 : 36] And I'm relieved whenever I'm able to cross things off that list and I'm even more relieved when I'm able to crumple it up and throw it away because everything on that list has been accomplished.

And I don't like being distracted by things that keep me from getting done what I plan to get done. And I'm sure the case is the same for you.

But the distractions that I encounter, the distractions I'm sure that you encounter are nothing compared to what this would have been like. I couldn't imagine a Roman soldier barging into my office, dropping all of his stuff at my feet, ordering me to pick it up and telling me that I'm going to go with him for a mile.

I've got to walk a mile with this gear and then I've got to walk a mile back. Especially if the weather is as hot as it's been in Oklahoma or as it gets in the summer.

But Jesus says not only should you go that mile, but you should volunteer to go another mile. That turns a two-mile trip into a four-mile trip, which for these people would have taken a large chunk out

of their day.

[29 : 56] These people who worked with their hands, these people who were farmers and carpenters and did all different kinds of things with their hand to lose that time was extremely valuable.

This was a major inconvenience for them. The point Jesus draws from this illustration is that we who follow him should be willing to be exploited and bear burdens we despise for the sake of the gospel.

And we should show how willing we are to give up our freedoms to serve our Lord as a testimony to the freedom that he's given to us.

is that not what Jesus did for us? You think this is too hard and it's asking too much, just think, is that not what Jesus did for us?

He left the comforts of heaven behind to submit himself to the Father's will on earth, to subjugate himself to sinful men who orchestrated his death.

[31 : 04] Philippians 2, 5-8 says, Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself.

By taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even that shameful, gruesome death on a cross.

Hebrews 12, 2 tells us, as we follow Christ, we're looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus calls for a revolutionary response to difficult situations. burdens. Jesus calls for a revolutionary response to bear burdens that make us feel like we've been robbed of our autonomy. Jesus calls us to a revolutionary response to bearing burdens that we would rather not bear. He calls them to bear them, calls us to bear them, as he did, and to do it with a smile on our face, to do it with joy.

[32 : 39] Imagine a hardened Roman soldier asking a Jewish civilian to carry his gear for a mile. And imagine that person quickly snatching up his gear, going with him that mile, and then when he's gone that mile and the Roman soldier is ready to take his gear back, that man says to him, you know what, with a smile on the face, I got you.

I'm going to go with you one more mile. Don't you think that Roman soldier would think, what is with this guy?

He has something that I don't. If you obey Jesus, he will open up hearts through your cheerful service that would otherwise remain close.

Christ. Now the fourth right that we surrender to Jesus as we follow him, Christians surrender the right to ownership. We surrender the right to ownership.

In verse 42, Jesus continues, give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. The implication here is that the person asking has a genuine need of something that you can provide.

[33 : 59] Again, we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. 2 Thessalonians 3.10 says, For even when we were with you, we would give you this command, if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

Though Paul had a right to support himself or get support from the churches for his ministry, he chose to earn his own living as an example for other believers to follow.

follow, we also should be wise in our giving. We don't want to give money to someone who will use it to purchase things that aren't good for them.

That would be a disservice to them. Neither should we give someone something like a gun. Hey, can I borrow your gun? Probably not a wise decision because we don't know what they're going to do with that gun.

So it doesn't mean that we should give to anybody anything without using discernment. There are limits on what Jesus is talking about here. And we must, again, be wise and discerning.

[35 : 01] But what it boils down to is you knowing someone is legitimately in need and knowing that the need comes from no fault of their own and in such cases you being willing to meet that need.

For example, say someone's loved one died and let's say it's an older woman whose husband passed away and they were very poor and she scratched together what little she had to pay for the

funeral and had nothing left to cover the expense to use a church or to pay someone to officiate the funeral.

Say that person she asked to do those things or for those things was me. And you found out that I told her, you know, your husband wasn't a member of this church, you're not a member of this church, so you can't use our building and I won't do your funeral unless you pay me.

Go find someone else. Right? Maybe the Methodists will do it. Wouldn't that bother you? If you heard me talking like that to somebody, wouldn't that bother you?

Good. If I refused an opportunity to serve someone in which I knew that opportunity would give me the chance to share the gospel with people at a time when they need to know the hope that we have in Jesus, if I refused to do it over something like money, that should bother you.

[36 : 43] God, there are some services that you can provide and in providing them, you have an opportunity to share the gospel.

Bottom line, we don't own anything. You really don't own anything. My favorite parable is the parable of the stewards in Matthew 25 and it's my favorite parable because it contains the truth that I often need to remind myself of that I don't own anything.

This is not my church. My kids, especially when they're younger, they think, well, you're the pastor of the church and they thought that we own the building. No, we don't own the building.

This is not my church. I don't own this church. I don't own this pulpit that I stand behind. Whatever God puts in my hands or your hands, he has the right to take away.

That's his right. My task is to use whatever he puts in my hands and your task is the same.

Whatever he puts in your hands, he gives you to advance the gospel.

[38 : 00] Not to clutch onto it as if you own it, as if it belongs to you, everything belongs to God. We are stewards. He is the owner ultimately of everything.

And whatever he wants you to give, whatever possessions you have, your life, you use in service to him. And so how should we adjust our lives to this teaching?

I think it's this. Submit your life to Jesus if you haven't already. And I think it's something we need to do every day. Just an everyday reminder when you wake up and you pray and remind yourself, Lord, my life is yours.

Lord, the salvation that you've given me by grace is your doing. You have the right to send me wherever you want to send me today to cause me to do whatever it is you want me to do.

Lord, help me to be obedient in submitting my life to you. I started this sermon talking about Peter. Sometime later, after Peter thought he could put Jesus in his place, Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane.

[39 : 09] But Peter had still not learned his lesson. As Jesus was arrested, Peter drew a sword and sliced off the ear of the high priest's servant.

And Jesus said to him, good job, Peter. Let's get out of here. Let's go. Anybody got any more swords? Let's slaughter these guys. No. Jesus said to him, put your sword back in its place.

For all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so? No matter how unjust Jesus' arrest was, Peter did not have the right to take matters into his own hand.

Those who seek revenge will have revenge meted out against them in a cycle that is vicious and never ends. Later, Peter would deny Jesus three times.

[40 : 19] And after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus appeared to him, he forgave him. And in forgiving him, he told Peter this, John 21, 18 through 19.

Listen to the rights that Peter has now following Jesus moving forward. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.

And after saying this, Jesus said to him, follow me. And what did Peter say? That's too much. That's too extreme. No. Jesus transformed his life.

Peter followed him and he followed his example. And we encounter a much different Peter throughout the rest of Scripture. For example, in 1 Peter 2, 13 through 15, listen to this man who once thought that the answer was to draw the sword.

[41 : 24] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or the governors or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. This is a Peter who no longer bears the sword of retaliation but the cross of reconciliation. And I ask you, which Peter are you more like this morning? The one in the garden or the one who later went to his own cross for his faith in Jesus Christ?

When you're offended, what should you do? Well, we know you should not retaliate. Here's a few things that I think could help. First of all, very simply, you've heard this probably since you were a child.

Think before you speak. Think before you speak. Sometimes you need time to think about what you're going to say and think about what was done so that you can say it in the right way.

[42 : 40] Secondly, pray for the person that you're going to speak to before you speak to them. I've noticed that when I've done that, the Lord has changed my attitude from wanting to get back to wanting to seek reconciliation.

And then finally, speak the truth in love. Speak the truth in love. Speak for what is true. Speak for what is right. But do so not to shame the person, but in the hopes that they will be reconciled to you if that's a believer or the hopes that they'll be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ if that's an unbeliever.

This is a hard teaching. Bottom line, without Jesus and His bearing the cross, none of us would have salvation. None of us would have hope.

None of us would be able to follow Him in this way. If you have revenge, if you have vengeance in your heart, the Lord is calling you today, brother, sister in Christ, to let it go and to seek reconciliation instead of retribution.

For those of you who are unbelievers, you have to understand that apart from Christ, there is no reconciliation for you. Vengeance is mine, the Lord says, I will repay. For those in this world, as they mock Christ, as they mock our faith, for you, there is an eternity in hell that awaits, and it's horrible, it's awful, and it's forever.

[44 : 17] And so I implore you, the Lord implores you through His Word, be reconciled to Him through your faith in Jesus Christ. And I hope and I pray that if you have not been reconciled to Him, today is the day of salvation for you, and I would love to hear about that after our time this morning.

Come and find me, please. Let's pray. Lord, what a hard teaching this is for us.

Because, God, we would rather give it back worse than we've gotten it. Lord, so often we are concerned with our own honor instead of yours, and we believe we're doing the right thing by not turning the other cheek, but clenching our fist and pounding somebody's face.

God, this is a truth that we need your help to be convicted of and to apply. Because, Lord, we live in a world that hates you, that mocks you, that ridicules you, and those of us who follow you.

Yeah, God, you've told us, Lord Jesus, you've set the example for us, that our mission is not one of revenge, our mission is not one of retaliation, but reconciliation.

[45 : 46] And in the ways that you work, which are mysterious to us, you often use the persecution we endure, to bring transformation to those who hate you, to save them, to give them new life through faith in Jesus Christ, your Son.

And so, God, I pray for each one of us that we would surrender ourselves completely to you, knowing, Lord, that that's what you ask and nothing less, but that it's worth it.

It's worth it. Help us, Lord, we need your help. We pray that you will help us. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.