

Redefining Retaliation

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] Jesus. Tonight we'll study the fifth of six examples that Jesus uses to contrast his teaching! with the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees.

The examples follow Matthew 5.20 where Jesus said, In the previous lessons we've seen Jesus redefine anger, lust, divorce, and swearing or oath-taking.

Verses 38-42 of chapter 5 will show us how Jesus redefines retaliation. So let's read Matthew 5, verses 38-42.

Jesus said, You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

[1 : 21] John MacArthur wrote, It's probably no part of the Sermon on the Mount has been so misinterpreted and misapplied as chapter 5, verses 38-42. It has been interpreted to mean that Christians are to be sanctimonious doormats.

It has been used to promote pacifism, conscientious objection to military service, lawlessness, anarchy, and a host of other positions that it does not support.

The Russian writer Tolstoy based one of his best-known novels on this passage. The thesis of war and peace is that the elimination of police, the military, and other forms of authority would bring a utopian society.

But Jesus already had made plain that he did not come to eliminate even the smallest part of God's law, which includes respect for and obedience to human law and authority. Another early Christian refused even treatment for life because, in his mind, ridding himself of the bugs would be to resist evil.

So those are just some of the examples of what the passage cannot mean. Here's what Jesus really is teaching here. What he's teaching is, in personal relationships, believers are never to take the law into their own hands.

[2 : 37] Instead, we are to model Christ's behavior. That's the main idea for tonight. In personal relationships, believers are never to take the law into their own hands.

Instead, we are to model Christ's behavior. We'll break tonight's verses into only two sections. In verse 38, we see the leader's teaching.

The leader's teaching is your first section. Verse 38 is where Jesus said, You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

This teaching uses the concept of *lex talionis*, or the law of retaliation. The purpose of this law was to ensure that punishment was proportionate to the offense.

The penalty had to fit the crime. The teaching is very biblical. Listen to these verses. Exodus chapter 21, verses 22 through 25 say, Notice though it mentioned that it says, Keep that in mind as we look at the other passages now.

[4 : 13] Here are Leviticus chapter 24, verses 19 through 22. God is speaking here, and he said, If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done, it shall be done to him.

Fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, and whoever kills a person should be put to death.

You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the Lord your God. And then one last cross-reference for this part. Deuteronomy chapter 19, verses 16 through 21 include

these words from Moses.

Moses said, You can tell by the context that the context shows that this was an instruction to the judges of Israel.

We just heard the judges mentioned in two of the three cross-references that we looked at. The principle is of an exact retribution. The purpose was both to lay the foundation of justice by specifying the punishment which a wrongdoer deserved, and to also limit the compensation of his victim to an exact equivalent and no more.

[6 : 10] It was designed to have a double effect of defining justice and restraining revenge. It also prohibited taking the law into your own hands. The law of an eye for an eye was a just law because it matched the punishment to the offense.

It was also a merciful law because it limited the propensity of the human heart to seek retribution beyond what an offense deserved. It was a good law because it protected society by restraining wrongdoing.

What do we normally want to do if we believe somebody has wronged us? Yeah, we want to get even. We want to take revenge.

Often we tend to overreact. And that tendency goes all the way back to Lamech, the descendant of Cain. Listen to Genesis chapter 4, verses 23 and 24.

Lamech said to his wives Ada and Zillah, Hear my voice, you wives of Lamech. Listen to what I say. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.

[7 : 18] If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold. The law of retaliation had yet to be given when Lamech said those words, but he clearly went beyond a common sense reaction.

All of us have that tendency to overreact, regardless of whether we want to admit it. That's because overreaction is a natural response of sinful human nature.

We're tempted to do more than just get even. Anger and resentment demand the sort of retaliation that Lamech glorified. Human vengeance is never satisfied with justice.

It wants a pound of flesh for an ounce of offense. And that's one reason why God restricts vengeance to himself. So what's wrong with the Jews' teaching here?

It looks biblical, and we just saw that it is biblical. But what's wrong with it is this. What God gave a restriction on civil courts, Jewish tradition had turned it into a personal license for revenge.

[8 : 21] Instead of properly acknowledging the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth as a limit on punishment, the scribes and the Pharisees used it as a mandate for vengeance.

And it's often been viewed that way throughout history. Using the civil law as a mandate for personal revenge is something that God's law actually forbids.

Listen to Leviticus chapter 19, verses 15 through 18. Leviticus chapter 19, verses 15 through 18 is where God is speaking again.

God said, Listen to verse 18 again.

That's where God said, You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. The truth that punishing lawbreakers should be left to God and the civil authorities is taught throughout the New Testament too.

[9 : 55] Let's look at a few cross-references in Romans to see that. Romans chapter 12, verse 19 says, 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.

And then the first four verses of Romans chapter 13 say this, Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Therefore, whoever resists the authorities, resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.

Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Listen again to that last sentence about the governing authority. It says, For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

[11 : 15] The Pharisees and scribes' main trouble was that they tended to ignore entirely the fact that this law was meant for judges only. They made it a matter of personal application.

They actually made it a matter of right and duty to have an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. To them, it was something to be insisted upon rather than something which should be restrained.

They were turning a negative injunction into a positive one, and they were interpreting it and carrying it out themselves, and they were teaching others to do the same thing.

So instead of seeing that it was something that was to be carried out only by the appointed judges who were responsible for law and order, the individuals were taking matters into their own hands. It's important to note that in no instance did the Old Testament allow an individual to take the law into his own hands and apply it personally, but that was precisely what the scribes and the Pharisees were teaching.

[12 : 15] So you can see what's wrong with their teaching. Now that we've looked at the leader's teaching, let's move to the second section of the lesson. In verses 39 through 42, we see the Lord's teaching.

The Lord's teaching comes along in verses 39 through 42. Here are those verses again. Jesus said, Before we dig into the verses individually, let's do an overview of what the verses do and do not mean.

Christ's illustrations are not to be taken as a command to ignore an unscrupulous tyrant, a ruffian, a beggar, or a thug. Jesus' purpose was to forbid revenge, not to encourage injustice, dishonesty, or vice.

True love, caring for both the individual and society, takes action to deter evil and to promote good. Christ teaches the restraint which renounces evil rather than the irresponsibility which encourages evil.

So once again, Christ teaches the restraint which renounces revenge rather than the irresponsibility which encourages evil. For the sake of God's righteousness, as well as for the sake of human justice, believers are obligated to uphold the law themselves and to insist that others do so as well.

[14 : 07] To report a crime is an act of compassion, righteousness, and godly obedience, as well as an act of civil responsibility. To belittle, excuse, or hide the wrongdoing of others is not an act of love but an act of wickedness because it undermines civil justice and divine righteousness.

So what we're saying is that if someone assaults your neighbor or your spouse or your child or someone weak and helpless, we should go to that person's defense. Jesus is not suggesting that we stand idly by while others are being injured.

He's not forbidding us from opposing evil when it threatens our families or our society. He's forbidding the taking of revenge for purely personal reasons when nothing is ultimately at stake except our pride, our reputation, and our so-called rights.

That last part is key. Jesus is not forbidding us from opposing evil when it threatens our families or our society. He is forbidding the taking of revenge for purely personal reasons when nothing is ultimately at stake except our pride, our reputation, and our so-called rights.

Jesus' illustrations and his personal example depict the strong man whose control of himself and love for others are so powerful that he rejects absolutely every conceivable form of retaliation.

[15 : 34] We're taking a few months to go through the Sermon on the Mount. That makes it easy to forget sometimes that everything in chapters 5, 6, and 7 is part of one continuous sermon.

Jesus' illustrations in tonight's verses go back to the Beatitude about meekness. Several weeks ago, we looked at Matthew 5, 5, and Matthew 5, 5 said, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Remember, we learned then that meekness means power under control. Jesus' four examples in verses 39 through 42 highlight biblical meekness.

We'll look at each of the verses now. Here is Matthew 5, 39 again. Jesus said, But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil.

But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. We need to talk about what Jesus means when he says not to resist the one who is evil.

[16 : 38] John Stott wrote, The first clue to a correct understanding is to recognize that the Greek words here are masculine, not neuter. What we are forbidden to resist is not evil as such, evil in the abstract, nor the evil one, meaning the devil, but we are forbidden to resist an evil person or one who is evil.

It can also be translated as a man who wrongs you. Jesus doesn't deny that the person we are to resist is evil. Jesus asks us neither to pretend that the person is other than what he is, nor to condone his evil behavior.

What he forbids again is that we retaliate against that person. Jesus strongly resisted evil that was directed against others, especially his father, such as when he cleansed the temple of those who defiled his father's house.

But he did not resist by personal vengeance any evil that was directed at himself. When the leaders of the Sanhedrin and later the soldiers physically abused him and mocked him, Jesus did not retaliate either in words or in actions.

As Isaiah had predicted of him, Christ gave his back to those who struck him and his cheeks to those who plucked out his beard. Here's that prediction from Isaiah.

[18:01] It comes from Isaiah chapter 50, verse 6. Isaiah chapter 50, verse 6 says, I gave my back to those who strike and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard.

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. Look at the last part of verse 39. Jesus said, But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

We need to realize that among Jews, a slap or other striking in the face was the most demeaning and contemptuous of acts. To strike someone elsewhere on the body might cause more physical harm, but a slap on the face was an attack on somebody's honor and it was considered to be a terrible indignity.

It was to be treated with disdain and you were actually saying in that culture that the person to you was less than human. Even a slave would rather have been struck across the back with a whip than be slapped in the face with his master's hand.

To strike someone on the right cheek would be a vicious, angry reaction indicating an act of insult. Yet when we are insulted, maligned, and treated with contempt, we are literally or figuratively struck on the cheek by someone and Jesus says we are to turn to him the other cheek also.

[19:27] But Jesus' point pertains more to what we are not to do than what we are to do. Turning the other cheek symbolizes the non-avenging, non-retaliatory, humble and gentle spirit that is to characterize the kingdom's citizens.

Often for the very reason that we belong to God and go by the name of his son, we are going to be mistreated, ridiculed, and held in contempt. It's the way that we react to this mistreatment and insult that Jesus is talking about here.

Turning the cheek is more of an illustration of a principle than a literal action. It shows an attitude that's the opposite of retaliation. Turning the cheek is more of a heart attitude than a physical posture.

It's a principle that says I will not fight back and retaliate but will leave the execution of the judgment to the Lord. Some of you out there might be saying but wait a minute, Jesus objected when he was slapped in the face during his trial before the high priest.

And you're right, he did object to being slapped. But his objection was a perfect example of what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Listen to John chapter 18 verses 19 through 23.

[20:46] John 18 verses 19 through 23 say, The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world.

I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them.

They know what I said. When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand saying, Is that how you answer the high priest? Jesus answered him, If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong.

But if what I said is right, why do you strike me? The distinction there is that Christ was being tried by the law and he insisted rightly that the Jewish maxims without not striking an accused person be enforced.

The New Testament values the law as does the Bible from beginning to end. None of these examples in our passage tonight suggest that the Christian is to forgo the rights that the law affords him.

[21:57] In fact, Christians should be thankful for those rights and pray for those in authority. So do you see what Jesus is saying through his words and his own examples?

If others are being mistreated, we are to act. And in legal matters, we should expect the law to be upheld. But in matters of personal insult, we should give the person insulting us the benefit of the doubt and avoid taking revenge against that person.

That brings us back to the main idea for tonight. Remember, that's in personal relationships. Believers are never to take the law into their own hands. Instead, we are to model Christ's behavior. The law gives us rights, but the law also gives us the liberty to forgo our rights so that we might show the righteousness of Christ. We have our rights and our rights are protected by the word of God, but we also have liberty to forgo our rights to manifest the love of Christ.

Look at verse 40 now. Jesus said in verse 40, And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

[23 : 10] Jesus here is not speaking of robbery in which somebody tries to steal your clothes, but of a legitimate claim from somebody who wants to sue you. In that society, when a person had no money or other possessions, but was fined or sued successfully in the court of law, the court would often require the judgment to be paid by clothing.

So what he's talking about here is when you've been rightfully sued and you do owe the person something, you should be willing to give up not only your tunic, but your cloak as well.

To fully grasp what Jesus is saying in this verse, we need to understand what the tunic and the cloak were. A man would have many undergarments or tunics and these were light and they would correspond to a suit or a dress in our day.

But typically, he would have only one cloak and that was the heavy outer garment that corresponds to our heavy coats today. Jewish law recognized that this garment was necessary for a person's well-being.

So although he could be sued for his tunic, he couldn't be sued for the cloak which would keep him warm in winter or protect him from the chill of the night air if he had to sleep outside.

[24 : 27] Listen to God's words in Exodus chapter 22 verses 26 and 27. God said, If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down.

For that is his only covering and it is his cloak for his body. In what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

All the poor and the rich among Christ's listeners knew this law. When Jesus said that people should be willing to part with their coat, he was saying that even if the law protected them, they were still not to live by the rights of their possessions.

What he's saying was that the attitude of a kingdom citizen, one who is truly righteous, should be willing to surrender even his extremely valuable outer garment rather than cause offense or hard feelings with an adversary to which he legally owed something.

The court could not demand the coat in that day, but it could be voluntarily given to meet the required debt. And that's precisely what Jesus says Christians should be willing to do.

[25 : 39] If a legal judgment is made fairly against us for a certain amount, we need to be willing to surrender even our most valuable possessions to show our regret for any wrong that we cause the other person.

It also shows that we're not bitter or resentful against the person who rightfully sued us. Think about what will happen in that case. In doing so, we will show the love of Christ and we'll show that we are sons of our Father who is in heaven.

Here's verse 41 now and we'll move to the next example. Jesus said, if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. This third example, the one here in verse 41, may have been the most shocking example for Jesus' original listeners.

This example dealt with how the Jews should treat the occupying Roman soldiers. In that day, Israel was overrun with Roman soldiers and those soldiers moved from place to place. and the soldiers would conscript local men to carry their baggage for them. When a Roman soldier moved from one village to the next, he would take some able-bodied man from the village and make him carry his things to the next village.

[26 : 56] To protect those who lived in occupied territory from the Roman soldier's right, Roman law said that the soldier could only conscript a civilian to carry his burden for one mile.

After that one mile, then the man was to be released and the soldier had to find somebody else or had to carry his baggage himself. Jesus said that if someone conscripted you to carry his baggage the required mile, you should gladly carry it further for that person.

Once again, we see that the conscripted person had his rights and those rights were protected by law, that he could give up those rights to manifest the righteousness of Christ.

When you think about it, if somebody is compelled to carry something for somebody else, that person's attitude is probably not going to be very good. Think what an impression a person would make on a Roman soldier if that person said, not only will I carry it for you for one mile, I'll carry it for you for two miles.

During those two miles, he would have the opportunity to explain to the soldier why he was so willing to help out that soldier. Do you see how fundamentally different this would have been from what the scribes and the Pharisees were teaching in that day?

[28 : 14] The scribes and Pharisees would have out their tape measure and as soon as they crossed that last inch, they would say, I'm not going any further. The scribes and the Pharisees were teaching people to do the minimum and they were always seeking revenge if a person considered himself to be insulted or wrong.

Jesus said that our reactions and our actions then should demonstrate God's character. This same principle is evident throughout the New Testament.

We looked at Romans chapter 12 verse 19 earlier. Listen now to the broader passage. This time we'll read Romans chapter 12 verses 17 through 21.

Paul wrote there, Repay no one evil for evil, evil for evil. But give thought to 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. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

[29 : 24] If he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Jesus gives us a fourth example and that fourth example comes in Matthew 5 verse 42. Jesus said in Matthew 5 42, Give to the one who begs from you and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Even as Christians, we often forget that nothing truly belongs to us and there were only stewards of what belongs to God. But as far as other people are concerned, we do have a right to keep what we possess.

By right, it's ours to use and dispose of as we see fit. That right also should be voluntarily relinquished if required. When someone asks to borrow something from us, we should not turn away from him.

In other words, we should give him what he wants. Here's the balancing part, though. The implication is that the person who asks has a genuine need. We're not required to respond to every foolish, selfish request made of us.

[30 : 40] Sometimes, to give a person what that person wants actually does a disservice to that person because we give him something that would be harmful to him and it does more harm than good.

For example, if you run into a drunk who wants money for a drink, giving him money for the drink would be contrary to what is good for him and we actually should refuse that. We see both sides of that statement illustrated elsewhere in scripture.

Listen to what James wrote in his letter. These verses are James chapter 2 verses 15 and 16. James chapter 2 verses 15 and 16.

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? Notice in those verses James makes it clear that the brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in food. So we're not to let that go by. We're to help out that person. It does the person no good if we just simply say, well I hope you find some clothes and food somewhere.

[31 : 50] Contrast that though with what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 verses 10 through 12. Here are 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 verses 10 through 12.

For even when we were with you we would give you this command. If anyone is not willing to work let him not eat. We hear that some among you walk in idleness not busy at work but busy bodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. So in other words if a person is able to work then we actually help the person by refusing to give them everything they want.

We encourage those people to work instead. Similar to how the example of giving up a coat assumes a legitimate judgment against the person giving up the coat, this fourth example assumes that the person asking for help has a legitimate need rather than just being lazy.

Here's a modern example of how to apply that principle that Jesus teaches in verse 42. We are not to retaliate for some wrong done to us by refusing charity to that person when the person has a need.

[33 : 09] And here's the example. If a man at work was rude and would not give you needed help with your work and you don't retaliate later then if when you're driving home you see him with a flat tire and no spare.

Actually what you should do is stop and help him out. Instead of retaliating by refusing to give help, we give that help and actually serve as a witness to Christ.

So those are the four examples that Jesus gives us to show how Christians should behave. Listen to how John Stott summarizes them. He says, we cannot take the four illustrations with wooden, unimaginative literalism.

This is partly because they are not given as detailed regulations but as illustrations of a principle and partly because they must be seen to uphold the principle they are intended to illustrate.

That principle is love, the selfless love of a person who when injured refuses to satisfy himself by taking revenge, but studies instead the highest welfare of the other person and of society and determines his reactions accordingly.

[34 : 18] He will certainly never hit back returning evil for evil. He has been entirely freed from personal animosity. Instead, he seeks to return good for evil.

He is willing to give to the uttermost, his body, his clothing, his service, and his money insofar as these gifts are required by love. With that thought in mind, are there limits to this requirement?

The answer to that question is yes. Listen to what John Stott went on to say. He said, the only limit to the Christian generosity will be a limit with which love itself may impose.

For example, the Apostle Paul once resisted, and that's the same Greek word used as in Matthew 5.39, he once resisted the Apostle Peter to his face. Peter's behavior had been wrong and it had been evil.

Peter had withdrawn from fellowship with Gentile brothers and he contradicted the gospel. Paul didn't give in and let him get away with it. Instead, he opposed him publicly and he rebuked him and he denounced his action.

[35 : 27] We can see there that Paul actually expressed love through his conduct because on one hand there was no personal animosity towards Peter. Peter, he didn't punch Peter or insult him or injure him in any way.

But on the other hand, there was a strong love for the Gentile Christians that Peter had wronged and for the gospel that Peter had denied. And here's the episode to which that last part refers. Paul documented it in Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 through 14. Here are Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 through 14. They say, But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

[36 : 46] So do you see what was going on there? Peter had no problem associating with the Gentiles as long as the Jews weren't around. But when the Jews came along, he decided to start acting like a Jew again and left the Gentiles behind.

And other people were starting to mimic his behavior. So when Paul saw that he made no attempt to husk the dispute or arrange for a private discussion, instead, the showdown in Antioch had to be public.

And that was because Peter's withdrawal from the Gentile believers had caused a public scandal. And the only way to deal with it was to deal with it in public, too. Everything comes back to the main idea, and that is that in personal relationships, believers are never to take the law into their own hands.

Instead, we are to model Christ's behavior. Real-life situations are never easy, and we have to rely on Scripture and the Holy Spirit to guide our behavior. But above all, we must avoid retaliation. Retaliation is a big problem, even among people that are church members. The scribes and the Pharisees tried to pamper the people's desire to retaliate by perverting the law on penalties for crimes.

[38 : 01] But this only actually increased the animosity among the people. If I injured Mike, and Mike retaliated by doing more against me, I would want to escalate it even more, and it would keep getting out of hand, and probably others would take sides and do the same thing to each other.

When you limited the penalty to just being what was required by law, you helped avoid that animosity. So we also must be careful to balance giving up our individual rights to show Christ's love and making sure that we uphold laws to protect others.

Christian law enforcement officers, judges, and government officials have to balance these things daily. The Christian is to be wholly free from revenge, not only in action, but in his heart as well. But as an office bearer in either church or state, he may find himself in trust with authority from God to resist evil and to punish it. So to sum up the teaching here, Jesus was not prohibiting the administration of justice, but he was forbidding us from taking the law into our own hands.

What Jesus demands here of all his followers is a personal attitude to evildoers which is prompted by mercy, not justice, which renounces retaliation so completely as to risk further costly suffering, which is governed neither by the desire to cause them harm, but always by the determination to serve their highest good.

[39 : 35] Can you think of somebody else who showed us mercy rather than judgment? Do you see why this is calling us to be like Christ? And our goal in avoiding retaliation is to be like Jesus taught in Matthew 5.16.

In Matthew 5.16, Jesus said, In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

We should strive to be the type of Christian that God can use to draw others to himself. After his conversion, Paul became that type of Christian. He voluntarily gave up some of his rights for the purpose of winning others to Christ.

Listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 11 and 12. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 11 and 12, If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

If others share this rightful claim on you, do we not even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

[40 : 51] So listen to that last part again. Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Being that unselfish is a tall order, but our motivation should be what God and Jesus have done for us to redeem us from the deserved penalty of our sins. Remember Romans chapter 5, verses 8 and 9, that God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. That's indeed good news, and with the Holy Spirit's help, the salvation we receive should motivate us to be like Paul and set aside our rights when appropriate.

Then we can also say we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Let's pray. Father, we thank you again for the reminder of the higher standard that you call believers to exhibit.

We also realize that it's hard enough to do this standard as it is, but it's impossible to do it without the Holy Spirit's help. Please continue to help make us more and more like your son as we go through this life, and let us reflect that righteousness to others.

[42 : 19] In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Amen.